Overview:
In the broadest sense, a grant proposal identifies a need or problem, makes a case for the action required to address that problem, and provides a clear understanding of the outcomes as a result of this action.

Everything else is in support of this premise.

Integral to the success or failure of any grant proposal is the relative depth and breadth of the content that makes it up. Consequently, the “content providers” are indispensable players in the process of putting together a successful proposal. Content providers are those people who are directly (and often times indirectly) connected to the program responsible for addressing the problem or need and may include faculty, directors, department chairs, finance personnel, and external experts. They are content providers because they know the program and the need and can provide the necessary content or information needed for the proposal.

The following are descriptions of the various components that make up the required content of a typical grant proposal:

1. Needs Assessment / Problem Statement / Statement of Need
   - Define the problem or need to be addressed.
   - Provide data to demonstrate the need
   - Connect the need or problem to the real world i.e. why it’s important
   - Show how funding will help solve the problem or meet the need

2. Goals and Objectives
   - Generally, information about what you will accomplish and the steps required to do so.
   - Goals can be broad, used to define the overall purpose of the program.
   - Objectives can be the measurable changes expected as a result of the program. Make the objectives specific: who will benefit from the program, how many and when.
   - If there are several goals, relate objectives to the appropriate goal.
3. **Project Description / Project Design**  
- Detailed information about your organization’s plans to address the need, including who or what will benefit from the program, and who will carry out the program and how.

4. **Program Budget**  
- Consider all the expenses to implement the program: salaries and benefits, supplies, transportation, training, equipment, technology, and administrative and indirect expenses.  
- Use a budget narrative to explain individual items in budget.

5. **Evaluation**  
- Describe plans to assess the program and measure impact.  
- Measurement tools may be client data collection, client satisfaction surveys, or other tools. Include what is being measured and how often each tool is used.  
- With ongoing measurement and periodic evaluation, adjustments and changes can be made to the program to improve the results.  
- Measurement and evaluation should relate to the objectives of the program plan and funding request.

6. **Collaboration Information**  
- Describe how your organization will work with other organizations to leverage resources.

7. **Other Funding / Sustainability**  
- Identify other funding sources, including fee for service, and recent grants awarded, pending and declined.

8. **Qualifications / History / Organizational Background**  
- In a brief history of the organization emphasize the accomplishments and expertise; describe your organization’s ability to do the work proposed; information requested may include: mission statement; organizational goals; EIN number; summary of key personnel qualifications

9. **Attachments / Appendices**  
- May include: IRS letter of determination; letters from other agencies; recent IRS 990; list of Board Members and affiliations; Table of Organization; current financial statements; audited financial statements; Anti-Discrimination Policy; Disclosures; Assurances; Letters of Support; or MOUs.

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**The Needs Statement**

**What is the Needs Statement?**  
The needs statement defines the underlying problem or issue the grant applicant is addressing. The needs statement is used to educate the funders and proposal reviewers about community needs the nonprofit organization seeks to change.

**What is the function of the Needs Statement?**
The function is to demonstrate the problem and engage the funder in wanting to address the problem.

1. **Problem + Action = Solution**
   - **Problem:** a community or external constituency need
   - **Action:** what your organization proposes to address the problem
   - **Solution:** the positive results of the action upon the problem

**Why is the Needs Statement important?**
A needs statement answers the question: —Why care? It demonstrates to the funder that there is a problem that is important, significant, and urgent.

A needs statement must relate to your organization’s mission statement and to the funder’s priorities.

The needs statement establishes the problem and describes the conditions in the community that your organization will address. The needs statement is an opportunity to demonstrate to the funder your understanding of the community issue and the organization’s ability to address the need.

**Needs Statement Process**
- Define problem
- Describe implications, importance
- Relate to your organization’s mission and funder’s
- Show gaps
- Back it up

**Needs Statements include:**
Problem description: what is the problem? Be sure to answer the questions: Who? What? Where? When? and Why? Use the needs statement to illustrate your understanding of the problem; don’t just describe the symptoms.

Problem recognition: why is it a problem? Who else sees it as a problem? What are the community stakeholder views?

Problem implications: what will happen to the population served and the community if the problem is not resolved? Is there a cost to society?

Problem hurdles: Clearly identify the challenges to addressing the problem. Describe the gap between what exists now and what ought to be? What has prevented resolution of the problem?

Problem urgency: why does it need to be addressed now? What is currently being done about the problem?

What solving the problem means: why should outside funding be used now to solve the problem or reduce the gap? Be clear about what can be accomplished within the time frame of the grant. Is the proposed action plan achievable and measurable?
Human interest story: provide a real example of how the problem is affecting someone's life and how the proposed program will impact his/her life. Make it real. Statistics can be informative or startling, but they're impersonal. Put a face on the problem by describing a similar client and circumstances that yielded a positive result.

Data and Statistics
The role of data and statistics:
• Supporting: should back up the issue you want to address
• Rely on Context: try to compare apples to apples
• Objective: provides outside information to substantiate the issue

Basic Rules
• Timely: data needs to be as recent as possible
• Unbiased: who did the research? Who funded the research?
• Reliable: it is considered reputable by other?

Data Searches
Demographic information clearinghouses, federal agencies, state agencies, foundations and other nonprofits, scholarly journals and articles, and industry publications are key resources for gathering statistics and data. Search engines, like Google, and knowledge-bases, like Wikipedia, can be good starting points, however you should only use them to reach other well-researched, objective, data sources.

Other nonprofits/agencies
Who is a national leader in your field? Especially consider policy/advocacy leaders. Many of these agencies have research arms or link to other research sites.

Statistics Wrap Up
Data functions to describe, compare, trend, predict and explain. Key sources include demographic sites; federal agencies; state agencies; foundation websites; article/journal collections; news outlets.

Qualities of Good Needs Statements
• Clear, Concise, Cogent and Compelling
• Written for the intellect and the emotions—contains both hard data and a human element
• The information flows logically to build a case for your proposal
• Engage the reader

The bottom line is that to have a fundable project, it must potentially solve the problem your organization and the grantmaker are interested in solving and must generate results that can be measured.