

Attachments and Supplemental Materials

Attachments and supplemental materials can provide the winning edge when your proposal is compared with others. Throughout the proposal development process, collect materials that can be included with the grant request. You may not end up using them all but at least you will have a set of possible attachments to sort through when the time comes to package the grant request.

In most cases, your grant request initially goes to a program officer, who reviews it to make sure everything they've asked for has been included and that your request fits the grantmaker's goals and objectives. After the preliminary review, the next step is to distribute the proposal to a decision-making committee or the board of directors. The decision-makers will often not have the opportunity to "see" the attachments, so make it a point to refer to any attachments/supplemental materials that should be reviewed in the body of the full proposal. For example, if you quote from one of your letters of support in the project description section, reference this letter by adding: (Please see attached Letter of Support, Superintendent of Schools, Culver School District.). Quoting from an endorsement for your proposed project can build the credibility of your organization right into the narrative. However, use such quotes sparingly, or it dilutes the impact.

Read the application guidelines thoroughly to assess what attachments you are allowed to include. If the grantmaker is very clear that they only want three attachments, such as your IRS letter, profiles of the board of directors, and one letter of support, then do not ignore these directions.

If, however, they leave you a little room for creativity, rather than using run-of-the-mill materials such as brochures or annual reports, include an attachment that enthusiastically supports your project, for example a support letter signed by a number of local organizations.

If there are more than five attachments, include a separate table of contents (on top of the attachments) so that they are easy to review.

Never include video or film, DVD, CD, books, or audio tapes unless requested to do so. Here are some suggested attachments:

- Endorsement letters (each should make a different point or have a distinct focus)
- A profile of each board member (usually one paragraph each)
- Résumés or short bios of key staff and consultants
- Tables, graphs, and research supporting the problem or need statement
- Organizational publications, including brochures, annual reports, and newsletters
- Maps of the region, neighborhood, and community
- The organization's audited financial statement
- A copy of the IRS tax-exempt designation
- Photographs and architect's drawings (if applicable)
- A resolution or statement from the board of directors supporting the proposal
- Significant publicity reprints

- A list of foundations and corporations that have made previous grants to the organization

The Cover Letter

The cover letter, which also serves as a type of summary, might seem redundant after you have just written the executive summary or abstract. It is, in fact, somewhat repetitive as you'll be using your best quotations and phrases in each. However, don't worry about repeating yourself as the cover letter and executive summary are technically parts of two separate documents.

In the cover letter introduce yourself and your organization. Include a brief description of your proposal (your title may be enough), the amount you are requesting, and a simple but convincing explanation of why this project is important and timely.

Refer to the goals of the grantmaker as they apply to your project. If you know what is important to them, they'll be more open to what is important to you. Offer to answer questions and indicate how the grantmaker can contact you.

If you are applying to an out-of-state grantmaker, consider mentioning the time difference for phone calls if applicable or closing with the personal touch of a few words about the season or the quality of life where you are located.

Always submit the cover letter on your organization's letterhead as cover letters are often separated from the full proposal.

The cover letter should:

- Describe your project in one or two sentences, including the amount of money you are requesting.
- Outline the need or define the problem as you see it, and cite one or two supporting statistics.
- Show how your problem or need complements the mission and/or goals of the funding source.
- Briefly describe your solution to the problem or need.
- Remind funders of previous contact with them (if applicable), and changes you have made based on their input.
- Always have a top officer or the board chair sign the letter. You may want to sign it, too, if you have been working closely with the grantmaker.