

Project or Program Timeline

Despite its tedium, the timeline is yet another section of the grant proposal to sell your project to the grantmaker. Laying out the sequence of events in a timeline will provide the reader with a visual cue to better understand the process necessary for your objectives to be met. Once someone thoroughly comprehends this process, you are halfway to getting approval for your request.

The timeline is simply a way for the reader to see the relationship between what needs to happen, when it needs to happen, why it has to happen in a particular sequence, and who needs to make it happen.

If your project is fairly simple, you'll want to add detail to the timeline to demonstrate that even though it is a small request for a straightforward project, you have considered which elements need to be attended to and in what order.

If the project is complicated, the timeline can communicate benchmarks and reflect the goals and objectives to be achieved.

In addition, the timeline can be used outside of the proposal process to communicate with clients, board members, collaborative partners, and others who need to have a definitive understanding of the project and the complexity of tasks involved.

Quality Content

A visual timeline can be a powerful tool. It can convince someone that what you intend to do can be done. To develop the timeline, refer back to the Plan of Action worksheet (which you developed last week). Summarize the action items and the time dedicated to each one. You are trying to demonstrate to the grantmaker what steps it will take (and when they will be taken) to meet your objectives.

Presentation

You can develop the timeline in a very straightforward manner by listing deadline dates and tasks. Or, you can be a bit more creative and present this information on a chart. Any sort of visual presentation helps the reader understand how the tasks fit together over time. The critical thing to keep in mind is to design a timeline that is visually appealing and easy to read.

The timeline shouldn't be too long. In fact, it can be quite brief. That's why a visual presentation can be very helpful; it will break up the narrative and provide for easy reference.

Here are a few tips for developing an effective timeline:

- Color code your task bars
For example, if you're an arts organization undertaking an audience development

project, you could code all of the outreach tasks yellow and all of the design tasks blue. If you are a large organization, you could color code by department tasks.

- Keep the timeline concise
Exclude any sub-tasks. If you feel any particular task needs more detail, create a second timeline instead of putting everything into your primary timeline.
- Have different people review the timeline
Circulate a copy of the timeline you've created to everyone involved in the project. Let them each review their own responsibilities and benchmarks. Collect their feedback and incorporate suggestions.

By developing an informative and eye-catching timeline, you can capitalize on the opportunity to make your objectives resonate with the grantmaker.

Sample Timeline:

Home Ownership Center Timeline	6/15/17	6/30/18
Blue: Program Set Up		
Yellow: Program Launch		
Green: Program Management		
Task	Start Date	Completion Date
Program Set Up	6/15/17	9/10/17
Recruit/Hire Home Ownership Ctr Manager	6/30/17	8/1/17
Prepare program materials	7/1/17	8/1/17
Develop website pages for program	7/1/17	8/1/17
Develop marketing plan	8/1/17	8/15/17
Prepare marketing materials	8/1/17	8/20/17
Train staff	9/1/17	9/3/17
Develop workshop schedules	9/5/17	9/10/17
Recruit Advisory Committee (3)	7/1/17	9/5/17
Develop evaluation protocol	8/15/17	8/17/17
Program Launch	9/10/17	10/5/17
Initiate the marketing plan	9/10/17	On-going
Hold 1st Advisory Comm Mtg	9/15/17	9/15/17
Opening Event	9/18/17	9/18/17
Announce/market workshop schedule	9/20/17	On-going
Begin recruitment for 1st workshop	9/21/17	10/5/17
Hold 1st Financial Literacy workshop	9/10/17	9/10/17
Program Management	10/5/17	6/15/18
Monitor budget (on-going)	6/15/17	On-going
Counsel a minimum of 100 potential homeowners	10/5/17	On-going
Train a minimum of 200 via the Financial Literacy workshops	9/10/17	On-going
Prepare 20 applicants for home loans	9/18/17	On-going
Prepare quarterly and annual reports	8/28/17	6/1/18
Perform year end evaluation	6/1/18	6/15/18
Program adjustments/modifications		On-going
Refine Phase II Program Plan/Budget	5/1/18	6/15/18
Final program report	7/1/18	7/10/18
Financial closeout of grant award and audit	7/1/18	7/10/18
Initiate Phase II of Home Ownership Program	6/15/18	TBA
