

The Heart of Your Grant Proposal:

Developing a Strong Need Statement

Statement of Need

- Also known as problem statement, need statement, or needs assessment
- Statement of need establishes the focus and rationale for the grant proposal or project

Statement of Need

- If you do not have a compelling need, you do not have a compelling project
- The statement of need is a concise and coherent statement, supported by evidence, on why the project needs to be undertaken
- The statement of need drives everything else that is in the grant proposal

General Rules

- Don't use jargon
- Spell out acronyms
- Don't assume reviewer knows about the conditions that prompted the project
- Don't editorialize—state facts
- Need should be based on rational terms, not on emotional appeals

General Rules

- Avoid circular reasoning (stating the absence of your solution as the problem)
- For example: “The problem is that we have no youth center. The solution is to build a youth center.”

General Rules

- How do you know that the absence of a youth center is a problem? What kind of evidence (data) do you have to back that up?
- Remember: Your solution is not your problem

General Rules

- Make sure statement of need is locally based and focused
- The need/problem may be a national problem as well, but make sure that you establish that it is a local problem through relevant data
- Don't assume that a national problem is automatically a local problem

General Rules

- Like your whole grant proposal, your statement of need should be:
- Concise (stick to the main points)
- Complete (include everything asked for)
- Coherent (provide a logical case for your need/problem)

Statement of Need

- Statement of need should answer the following questions:

Statement of Need

- What is the problem/need? How do you know it is a problem?
- Statement of need should be supported by evidence (qualitative or quantitative data)
- The data should be current, not out-of-date

Statement of Need

- Sources of statistics on the internet:
- www.census.gov
- www.fedstats.gov

Statement of Need

- Other sources of data collection:
- Surveys/need assessments
- Local colleges/universities
- Regional Planning/Development Councils
- Local library

Statement of Need

- Always use comparative data
- For example: “The poverty rate in Acme County is 15%” (Nothing to compare the county rate with)
- Comparative: “The poverty rate in Acme County is 15%, compared with 12% in the state and 12.5% nationally”

Statement of Need

- What is the target population that you are trying to help?
- Describe the target population and the needs/conditions of that population

Statement of Need

- Don't confuse your organization's needs with the needs of your target population
- Funders do not fund your organization's needs, they fund what your organization can do to help your community
- Don't forget: The need is in your community/region, show the impact there

Statement of Need

- Is the problem/need urgent? Why does it need to be addressed now?

Statement of Need

- Why should it be your organization that addresses the problem/need?
- Make sure that the problem/need relates to the purpose and mission of your organization (and state this in your proposal)

Recap on Four Questions

- What is the need/problem? How do you know it is a need/problem?
- What is the target population that you are trying to help?
- Is the problem/need urgent? Why does it need to be addressed now?
- Why should it be your organization that addresses the problem/need?

Statement of Need (Examples)

- “Our youth have limited access to educational resources. They are mostly from low-income households, and the neighborhood in general is very distressed. We have one after-school program that is well attended, but we need more resources to reach more of our students. Please help us educate our youth.”

Statement of Need (Examples)

- Problems with this statement of need:
- No data or evidence
- Emotional appeal rather than rational
- How do you know that they are “mostly” from low-income households? How do you know the neighborhood “in general” is distressed?

Statement of Need (Examples)

- “According to the National Acme Education Center, 45% of middle school students across the nation do not have access to after-school programs, and in our state the figure rises to 58%. The same source also pointed out that our state education budget is being cut by 12%. These are trends that the students in our community must be able to overcome.”

Statement of Need (Examples)

- Problems with this statement of need:
- Does not focus on local conditions (is there an after-school program or other resources in the community?)

Conclusion

- Statement of need should be backed up by evidence
- Use comparative data
- Watch for circular reasoning
- Don't confuse your needs with your target population's needs
- Be concise and localize your need