



# Best Practices in Grant Writing

## The Monsanto Fund

**A grant proposal is a clear statement of need, the plan to serve that need, and a specific request for funds to support the successful implementation of that plan.**

- **A good proposal should:**
  1. Explain the need/problem;
  2. Describe the strategy (project) to address the problem and specify expected (tangible and realistic) results of the strategy;
  3. Demonstrate that the organization has the ability to implement the strategies;
  4. Provide details on usage of the requested funds; and,
  5. Be clear, complete, easy to understand, and compelling!

- **Review thoroughly** – Read through grant criteria/ requirements and follow directions/ instructions.
- **Be specific** – Quantify where possible; provide data/research.
- **Be realistic** – Solving world hunger or providing 500 meals; improving number of students going to college or improving test scores.
- **Create confidence** – Share your success in implementing similar kinds of projects or share the research that the strategy has worked.
- **Be professional** – Review for grammatical and spelling errors, especially for online systems; format professionally; ensure all documents are submitted in English.

## Writing a Winning Proposal – Best Practices Part 2

- **Avoid Acronyms:**
  - A variety of professionals serve on review committees that help to make funding decisions. Thus, avoid using acronyms that are not explained.
- **Be Clear:**
  - Proposal reviewers will often try to summarize the proposed project in a brief description. A strong proposal articulates a complete and concise project description.
- **Spell Check:**
  - Proposals with errors make reviewers question your ability to carry out a proposed project. Be sure that your application has been reviewed for potential mistakes.
- **Consider the Reader:**
  - Be sure to provide the reader with all necessary information, even if you have applied to the Fund before or are applying for a renewal grant. Grant reviewers change so don't assume the reviewer has background knowledge.

- **Goal: Big picture, conceptual purpose**
  - **Example:** Our after-school program will help children read better.
- **Objective: SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound)**
  - **Example:** Our after-school program will assist **50 elementary** school children in improving their **reading scores by one grade** level as demonstrated by **standardized reading tests** administered after participating in the program for **six months**.

- **Behavioral** – A human action is anticipated.
  - Example: **Sixty-five of 70 (93%) children** participating will learn tangible gardening and nutrition information and skills by the end of the **six month** school garden program.
- **Performance** – A specific proficiency level is expected.
  - Example: **Fifty of the 70 children (71%)** will pass a basic nutrition **proficiency test** administered by our certified nutritionist by the end of the **six month** school garden program.
- **Process** – The manner in which something occurs is an end in itself.
  - Example: We will **document the teaching methods** utilized throughout the **six month** school garden program, identifying those with the greatest success.
- **Product** – A tangible item results.
  - Example: At the **end of the six month** course, a **manual will be created** to be used in teaching gardening and nutrition to **this age group** in the future.

## Qualitative Evaluation

- Observation
  - Change in knowledge
  - Change in attitude/motivation
  - Change in skills/behavior
- Interviews/Focus Groups
  - Change in knowledge
  - Change in attitude/motivation
  - Change in skills

## Quantitative Evaluation

- Pre/Post Survey or Test
  - Change in knowledge
  - Change in attitude/motivation
  - Change in skills
- Standardized Tests/Grades
  - Changes in test scores
  - Changes in course grades

The paragraphs on the following slides are pulled from actual proposals. Read them and look for ways each section could be improved.

- Comments in **RED** indicate proposal **weaknesses**.
- Comments in **GREEN** indicate proposal **strengths**.

To seek improvement in math and science instruction using Ipad technology.. To provide quality profesional development that will carry teachers and students into the future by utilizing technology. The district is in need of professional development to implement skills in technology that we currently do not possess.

To seek improvement in math and science instruction using *ipad* technology. To provide quality professional development that will carry teachers and students into the future by utilizing technology. The district is in need of professional development to implement skills in technology that we currently do not possess.

*How? Through onsite trainings? Conferences?*

*How much training? How many teachers?*

As the student population decreases, it is becoming increasingly hard to offer a broad curriculum which meets the needs of the students. Teachers need to be cross certified and the curriculum needs to meld so that "real learning" can take place and the same curriculum can meet the needs of both the college bound and vocational students. The intention of this grant to fuse the efforts of our 30 teachers and 600 students so that all recognize that math, science, and agriculture are intricately linked and that the subjects would be best learned with hands on activities and practical experiences which will result in improved test scores in all three disciplines.

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## Describing Need and Purpose: Actual Proposal Paragraph

Over the past six years, our school district has made significant investments in technology infrastructure and staff development. All of our 50 classrooms are now equipped with interactive white boards; we have employed a full-time network technician; and we have developed a technology professional development strand to ensure continuous improvement in the integrated use of technology. The next phase in our digital conversion is the 1:1 initiative, which is based on research on best practices in other school districts. Through interviews with teachers, we have found that the stationary computer lab and our mobile computer lab are insufficient to meet the central need of our staff and students: immediate and consistent access to the local network and the Internet. We are seeking funding to supplement the costs for the initial capital outlay, staff development, and assessment of a 1:1 computer initiative for grades 9-12, comprising 300 students.

## Describing Need and Purpose: Review Committee Highlights

Over the past six years, our school district has made significant investments in technology infrastructure and staff development. All of our 50 classrooms are now equipped with interactive white boards; we have employed a full-time network technician; and we have developed a technology professional development strand to ensure continuous improvement in the integrated use of technology. The next phase in our digital conversion is the 1:1 initiative, which is based on research on best practices in other school districts. Through interviews with teachers, we have found that the stationary computer lab and our mobile computer lab are insufficient to meet the central need of our staff and students: immediate and consistent access to the local network and the Internet. We are seeking funding to supplement the costs for the initial capital outlay, staff development, and assessment of a 1:1 computer initiative for grades 9-12, comprising 300 students.

- \$10,000 for reading improvement; **for what? How many?**
- \$10,000 for reading improvement, including \$7,000 for teacher training for 10 teachers and substitute time and \$3,000 for materials and new books; **how were totals calculated?**
- \$10,000 for reading improvement, including \$5,000 for teacher training for 10 teachers at (10x\$500 each), \$2,000 for teacher substitute time (\$20/hr x 10 hrs x 10 classrooms), and \$3,000 for materials and new books (\$200 new books and \$100 materials x 10 classrooms); **Great detail!**

- The Monsanto Fund has a standard budget template that must be included with all applications.
- Instructions for filling out the budget can be found on the spreadsheet.
- Remember to show the total line item expenses, as well as the amount that you are asking for per line item.
- Be as specific on your budget as you can. Doing the research shows you are prepared to begin carrying out the project proposed.

# Budget Template: Program Expense



## Monsanto Fund Project/Program Budget Worksheet: Part II. Program Expenses

Expenses should include **all** program expenses, and please specify the allocation of the Monsanto Fund grant for each expense line (full or partial) in Column N.

Please Note: Complete only **shaded** areas, all other values will automatically calculate. Double-click below in the **shaded** areas to complete the Budget Worksheet.

Organization Name:

Expense Categories	Description of Expense <small>(i.e. counselor; professional development training; food for after-school program; laptop computers; etc)</small>	Cost Per Unit <small>(i.e. enter full time salary; enter cost for each meal; salary; enter percent for enter cost for equipment to be purchased; etc.)</small>	Total Quantity <small>(i.e. enter percent of tax rate; enter number of meals or laptops; etc)</small>	TOTAL Program Expense	Amount of Monsanto Fund Grant Allocated for Each Line Item	Remaining Program Costs Supported by Other Resources
Program Expense						
Salaries				\$0.00		\$0.00
Salaries				\$0.00		\$0.00
Salaries				\$0.00		\$0.00
Benefits & Payroll Taxes				\$0.00		\$0.00
Contractual Services				\$0.00		\$0.00
Trainings/Conferences				\$0.00		\$0.00
Printing/Publications				\$0.00		\$0.00
Travel				\$0.00		\$0.00
Vehicle Costs				\$0.00		\$0.00
Food				\$0.00		\$0.00
Technology (hardware, software, systems)				\$0.00		\$0.00
Equipment Purchase				\$0.00		\$0.00
Supplies				\$0.00		\$0.00
Other:				\$0.00		\$0.00
Other:				\$0.00		\$0.00
Other:				\$0.00		\$0.00
Other:				\$0.00		\$0.00

How do you plan to fund this program?

TOTAL COLUMN EXPENSES \$0.00 \$0.00 \$0.00

Should equal the amount requested from the Monsanto Fund

Deficit/ Surplus

Requested Monsanto Fund Grant	Other Anticipated Resources
\$	\$
\$0.00	\$0.00

Should equal the amount requested from additional resources



## Strong Proposals to the Monsanto Fund Will Include:

### **Project Description:**

- Clear project goals
- Clear project details, including the specific activities and timelines

### **Project Participants:**

- Clear description of who will benefit from the proposed project, including numbers of participants
- Clear description of why the target population is in need of the proposed project or services

## Strong Proposals to the Monsanto Fund Will Include:

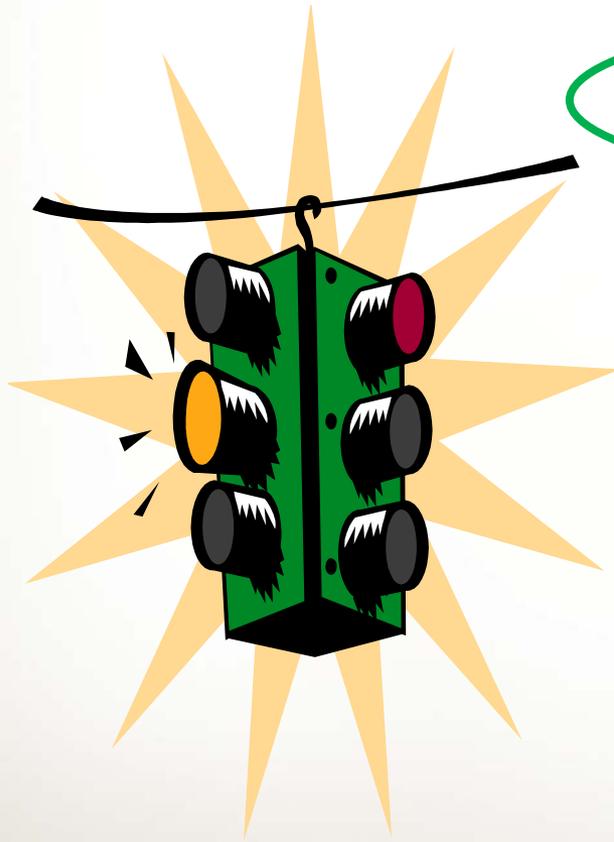
### **Project Impact:**

- Clear and realistic project goals
- Clear description of how the project's progress will be assessed, and what indicators will be used to determine impact
- Clear description of how the project's activities and impact may continue beyond the life of the grant

### **Project Budget:**

- Clear description of how the grant will be used, including clear calculations and relevant cost explanations

# Four Types of Proposals



**Good Project / Well Written**

**Good Project / Poorly Written**

**Unclear Project / Well Written**

**Unclear Project / Poorly Written**



- **School Tools on the AFGRE website** – includes a checklist and other grantwriting supports  
<http://www.americasfarmers.com/recognition-programs/school-tools/>
- **Colleague** – Ask a colleague to review the draft
- **Foundation Center** – short course & webinar  
<http://foundationcenter.org/getstarted/tutorials/shortcourse/index.html>  
<http://grantspace.org/Multimedia-Archive/Webinars/Proposal-Writing-Basics>
- **Monsanto Fund Information** – [www.monsantofund.org](http://www.monsantofund.org)



**Thank You!**