

Proposals

Proposals are a type of formal business document that represent the first step in a complex sales process. When a company or a person considers an ongoing business prospect like constructing a new building, purchasing new equipment, or starting a new program, they often begin by accepting proposals from other companies who will complete all or part of the work. Proposals usually offer

- To solve a problem
- To provide a service or product

Effective proposals suggest a specific plan for solving the problem or for providing the service or product; they are persuasive; and they follow the specifications of the requesters, which is called an RFP (Request for Proposal). You must follow the RFP to the letter to ensure your proposal is accepted.

There are essentially two kinds of proposals:

Solicited Proposals

These originate when a person, company, or government agency requests qualified companies and individuals to submit their qualifications

- To do work
- To submit bids to complete proposed work
- To submit proposals for manufacturing equipment according to specifications

Unsolicited Proposals

These originate when a new business tries to generate work by submitting a bid. These bids aren't requested by the company, individual, or government agency that receives them. Because of that, you

- Must convince readers that a specific need or problem exists before explaining a plan, cost, or qualifications
- Know that unsolicited proposals can be more challenging to write than solicited proposals

On the last two pages of this handout, we'll show you what a typical proposal looks like.

Most Proposals Contain These Conventional Elements

Proposals come in all types of formats, so you'll want to check with your professor about which type of format to use. However, proposals typically include the sections listed.

Introduction

- Includes an overview of the proposed work, its purpose, and its audience

Description of the Proposed Project

- Includes what the project includes
- Details what the project won't include (for instance, if you're a builder, you might not include the blueprints for the building because that work might be done by an architect)
- Includes an explanation of who the audience is for the project
- Details how will you complete the project

Qualifications

- Includes your qualifications
- Includes your relevant experience
- Includes other resources you have that will enable you to complete the project

Timetable

The timetable and the budget are often the deciding factors in the proposal process. Many businesses simply want to know how long the project will take and how much it will cost. The timetable section

- Details how long will it take you to complete the project
- Includes a traditional timetable visual like a Gantt chart or a bar chart. A Gantt chart lets you show overlapping tasks.

Budget

- Includes how much money will you need to complete the project
- Includes real numbers

Conclusion

- Indicates what the proposal offers readers
- Indicates how the proposal will benefit readers
- Details why readers should accept you and your company to carry out the proposed solution

Contact Information

Includes your name, email address, physical mailing address, and phone number including area code and extension if applicable.



Month Day, Year

Name of the Business

Name of the Person Who Requested the Proposal

Street Address

City, State 12345

Re: Writing the Proposal for Your Project

Dear Name of the Person Who Requested the Proposal:

In the opening paragraph of your proposal, you should describe the project you're proposing to complete. Explain who you're completing the project for, as well as why this person needs this type of project. Remember that you're trying to persuade your readers that your project is a good solution to their need for this type of work.

Scope of Work

In this section, you'll explain exactly what you'll include in your project. If you anticipate that your reader already has a base of knowledge about your topic, say so. If there's something that you won't include, say so. For instance, if your proposed work involves a complicated mathematical formula, you might state that you'll assume your reader has a basic understanding of calculus and that you won't explain how the formula works.

Work Plan

Explain task-by-task how you'll complete this project, including a brief description of each task. The task headings must be grammatically parallel. For instance:

Task 1. Gathering Information

To begin your project, you'll need to gather information about how to perform the task you describe in your project.

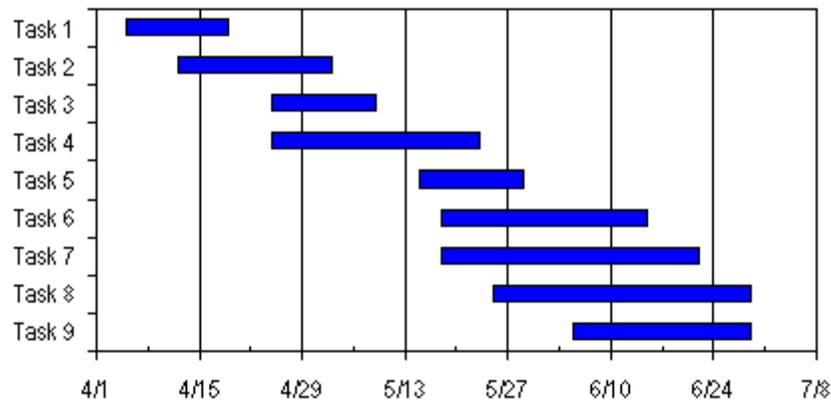
Task 2. Planning the Project Itself

The rest of the workplan section of the proposal will be a list and description of the other tasks you'll need to perform to finish your project.



Schedule

In this section, you should include some type of table so your reader can see how long it will take you to finish each section of the project. In a “real world” setting, this is one of the most important parts of the proposal. In the professional world, many writers use a Gantt chart for this portion of a proposal. A Gantt chart allows you to show overlapping tasks.



Cost Estimate

The cost estimate, together with the schedule, is usually the most important portion of a proposal in the “real world.” Use real numbers.

Qualifications

In this section, you’ll explain why you’re the appropriate person to complete this project. If you have any additional experience about your topic, say so.

Conclusion

Summarize your topic, your audience, and how this project will help your audience to complete the task you describe in the project. Conclude with your name, address, phone number, and email address.

Your Name

Your Street Address

City, State 76201

Phone Number Including Area Code and Extension If Applicable

Email Address

