

**Office of Sponsored Programs**

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**Writing Government Proposals**

A complete proposal for government grant programs typically has nine sections:

1. Abstract: This is sometimes called a Summary or Executive Summary. A funding agency typically limits the format of an abstract to one page or less. It is common for a funding agency to ask for specific types of information to be included with the abstract, such as the PI and other senior project staff.
2. Introduction: This section typically establishes the context for your proposal. This is often the place where you set up the credibility of the PI(s) and the institution. (For boiler-plate paragraphs on Lincoln, please see below.) The majority of your proposal will be discussing your research/project, but this is your opportunity to convince the funders that YOU are the best person to conduct this research and/or implement this project and that LINCOLN is the best place for this to happen.
3. Need or Problem: This section typically provides support for your research/project. You must identify that a need exists to complete the activities listed in your proposal. It is best if you can establish this need with scholarly/researched evidence and/or data.
4. Goals, Objectives, and Outcomes: This section typically follows the “Need or Problem” section seamlessly. In the previous section, you’ve identified a gap that needs filling. Now you will begin to explain to the funders how you will fill that gap. This section will focus more specifically on the types of information or the outcomes you hope to achieve with your project.
5. Methods: This section typically follows the “Goals, Objectives, and Outcomes” section in that this is the opportunity for you to explain how you will carry-out your research/project. Remember that funders want specific details, and it is generally the case that unsuccessful proposals are not funded because the proposal was not clear as to how the activities will be carried out.
6. Evaluation: This section documents your plans for evaluating the success of your project/research. We are all very aware of the importance of assessing student learning; the same holds true for assessing sponsored programs. Funders want to make sure that you can offer tangible evidence for the outcomes of your project. Some funding announcements ask for very specific details related to program evaluation, including a detailed assessment plan, draft evaluation form, and methods for analyzing the data.

1. Dissemination: This section links with the “Evaluation” section in that this is the place where you explain how/where you will disseminate the results of your evaluation.
2. Project staff: This section lists the personnel who will be working on your project. Even if they are not being paid by the grant (or receiving time and effort) they still need to be discussed in the proposal. This is your opportunity to explain why the staff members are qualified (usually completed with a brief bio-sketch). You want to make sure that there is a sufficient staff—and that they are of an appropriate rank—to support the project.
3. Budget and Budget Narrative: The budget should be an excel spreadsheet where you propose the funds used to carry out the project. Often, the funders will provide you with a template budget spreadsheet, which explains how you should categorize the items. Please pay special attention to this section of the funding announcement! If funders will not allow certain types of expenses, they will be clear about this in the funding announcement. However, you must also be aware that the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has put out a series of circulars which clearly explain what the government will pay for and what they won’t. Consult OSP to ensure that you are following Lincoln’s and the government’s guidelines when building your budget. The budget narrative is your descriptive explanation of your budget. This is where you will describe the PI’s time and effort, for example, or the specific equipment you will purchase.

It’s important to note, however, that these sections are not always identified as such in a proposal. An FOA may ask for your proposal to include 4 sections: Executive Summary, Goals, Project Activities, and Project Staff. The budget and budget narrative may be another part of the application separate from the proposal. Every FOA is unique, and it’s imperative that you follow the funder’s instructions, while remembering that they will require the above pieces of information in some form in your application. Consult with OSP to learn about the best way to structure your proposal if you are unsure.

Lincoln University Boilerplate

Lincoln University, the nation’s first degree-granting Historically Black College and University (HBCU), educates and empowers students to lead their communities and change the world. Lincoln offers a diverse student body of approximately 2,200 men and women more than 35 liberal arts and science-based undergraduate programs and select graduate programs to meet the needs of those living in a highly technological and global society. Since 1854, the University has possessed an international reputation for preparing and producing world-class leaders such as Langston Hughes '29, the noted poet; Thurgood Marshall '30, the first African American U.S. Supreme Court Justice; Nnamdi Azikiwe '30, the first president of Nigeria; Kwame Nkrumah '39, the first president of Ghana; Lillian Fishburne '71, the first African American woman promoted to rear admiral in the U.S. Navy; Sheila Oliver ’74, the lieutenant governor of New Jersey;  Saara Kuugongelwa '94, the first female prime minister of Namibia; and myriad others.