

Sample Grant Proposal for a Nonprofit Organization

A complete foundation request for a \$48,000 adult reading program, written out section by section and ready to print

Request: \$48,000 for a twelve-month project period

Program: Evening adult reading classes at two sites, expanding from 96 to 144 seats per term

Applicant: Riverside Literacy Collaborative, a composite organization created for this example

Funder type: Regional community foundation, invited full proposal following a letter of inquiry

Total project budget: \$155,490. Amount requested: \$48,000. Balance from four other sources

Document version: September 2026

Read this first. Riverside Literacy Collaborative is a composite organization built for this example. It does not exist, it is not a reference to any organization operating under a similar name in any city called Riverside, and every figure attached to it is invented: the request amount, the waitlist count, the salaries, the assessment results, the partner descriptions. The numbers are here so you can watch them behave across eleven sections, where the total in the budget narrative has to match the total in the budget table and the participant count in the objectives has to match the one in the evaluation plan. Replace all of them with your own before you submit anything.

This document is a finished proposal rather than an outline. Every section is drafted in full prose, including the ones most templates leave as a bracketed instruction. The statement of need runs its full argument, the budget narrative shows the arithmetic behind every line, and the evaluation plan names an instrument and a person for each measure. Where you see a bracketed field, it marks a fact only your organization can supply: your EIN, your auditor, your state's charitable registration rule, the assessment your program administers. A bracketed field is correct. A section left blank would not be.

Nothing here is gated, watermarked, or shortened. Copy the structure, the section order, the budget format, and the evaluation table into your own document and write your own sentences inside them.

How to Use This Document

The proposal below follows the section order that most private and community foundations expect, and it is built around a single composite program so that the numbers stay consistent from the cover letter to the last attachment. Read it end to end once before you open a blank document. The point of reading a finished proposal is to see how long each section actually runs, where an argument stops being useful and starts repeating itself, and how a figure introduced on page three has to reappear unchanged on page eleven.

The fields you have to replace

Field	What appears in this example	What you replace it with
Organization name	Riverside Literacy Collaborative	Your legal name exactly as it reads on your IRS determination letter
EIN	[EIN]	Your nine-digit employer identification number
Tax status	501(c)(3) public charity	Your status, with the determination letter date
Funder	[Funder legal name]	The foundation's legal name as it appears in its own guidelines
Request amount	\$48,000	Your own total, built from your own costs rather than scaled from this one

Field	What appears in this example	What you replace it with
Project period	July 1, [Year] to June 30, [Year+1]	The period the funder's guidelines allow, matched to your fiscal year if possible
Service area	Delta Park, Willow Bend, and the Canal District, Latham County, [State]	Your neighborhoods, county, and state
Need evidence	214 adults waiting against 96 seats	Your intake logs, waitlist, attendance sheets, and partner referral counts
Assessment	[standardized reading assessment]	The instrument your program actually administers, named in full
Salary figures	\$52,000 coordinator base, \$26.00 instructor hourly	Your payroll register for the current year
Financials	[Audit firm name], fiscal year ended [date]	Your auditor or reviewer and your most recent completed fiscal year
State rules	[State] charitable solicitation registration	Your state's requirement, confirmed with your state charity regulator

What to keep and what to rebuild

Keep the section order, the three-column budget format, the objectives table with its baseline column, the four-column evaluation table, and the habit of naming a person next to every measure. Those are structural and they transfer to any funder. Keep the disclosure sentences too, the ones that say what the program does not yet know or cannot yet promise. Reviewers who read fifty applications a season notice which ones admit a limit, and the admission buys credibility for the claims around it.

Rebuild every number. In practice that means six data pulls before you write a sentence: your enrollment or intake system for the current waitlist and the length of the wait, your attendance records for last year's completion rate, your payroll register for salaries and percent effort, your general ledger for the non-personnel costs you actually incurred, your last audited or reviewed financial statements for the organizational figures, and your development records for what the other funding sources are and whether each one is committed or pending. Writing before those pulls is how a proposal ends up with a budget nobody can defend in a site visit.

Adapt in the order the sections are numbered here, not the order a reviewer will read them in. Evidence first, then objectives, then budget, then the narrative sections that describe them, then the executive summary, then the cover letter. Draft the summary first and you will promise a program the finished budget no longer funds.

One rule overrides everything in this file. Where the funder publishes its own instructions, page limits, section headings, character counts, or required attachment list, those instructions win. A well-written proposal in the wrong shape still loses to a plain one in the right shape.

Proposal Summary Sheet

Many foundations ask for a cover sheet with the request reduced to a dozen fields. Fill it out last, after the budget has stopped moving, and check every figure on it against the section it came from.

Field	Entry
Applicant organization	Riverside Literacy Collaborative, a composite organization created for this example
Legal name and EIN	[Legal name as it appears on the determination letter], EIN [XX-XXXXXXX]
Tax status	501(c)(3) public charity, determination letter dated [date]. Not a private foundation under section 509(a)
Project title	Evening Reading Program: Second Site Expansion

Field	Entry
Amount requested	\$48,000
Total project budget	\$155,490
Percent of project covered by this request	30.9 percent
Project period	July 1, [Year] through June 30, [Year+1], twelve months
Population served	Adults age 18 and older who read below a ninth-grade level and are not enrolled in a secondary credential program
Service area	Delta Park, Willow Bend, and the Canal District neighborhoods, Latham County, [State]
Number to be served	168 adults enrolled, 120 of whom complete at least 60 hours of instruction
Primary objective	By June 30, 120 enrolled adults complete at least 60 hours of instruction
Secondary objective	80 of those 120 gain one or more grade-equivalent levels on the program's standardized reading assessment
Organization annual budget	\$612,000 for the fiscal year ending [date]
Chief executive	[Name], Executive Director, [phone], [email]
Contact for this request	[Name], Director of Programs, [phone], [email]
Board chair	[Name], [affiliation]
Fiscal sponsor	Not applicable. The applicant holds its own determination letter

Cover Letter

[Date]

[Contact name], [title]

[Funder legal name]

[Street address]

[City, State ZIP]

Re: Request for \$48,000 to expand the Evening Reading Program to a second site, [exact program or fund name from the Foundation's guidelines]

Dear [Contact name]:

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Riverside Literacy Collaborative, I am requesting \$48,000 over twelve months to open four additional sections of our evening adult reading classes at a second neighborhood site. The grant would raise our capacity from 96 seats per term to 144, and it would let us enroll 168 adults over the project year instead of the 112 we enrolled last year.

We are approaching the Foundation because your published guidelines name adult basic education in Latham County as a funding priority and because your last two annual reports show grants to programs operating at the neighborhood scale rather than the county scale. Our program runs three evenings a week out of a storefront on Delta Park's main commercial street, and the second site would open in a branch library eleven blocks from the largest concentration of adults on our waitlist.

The gap we are closing is a gap in seats. At the close of our last program year, 214 adults sat on the waitlist for evening reading classes against 96 available seats. Two thirds of them live in the three neighborhoods the program draws from, and the median wait for a seat has run past eleven months. People do not wait eleven months. They stop calling, and the referral partner who sent them stops sending anyone.

The request pays for a specific and separable piece of the program: the instructional hours for the four new sections, one third of the program coordinator's charged time, a portion of the intake and data position, the workbooks and assessment administrations for 120 learners, a quarter of the childcare contract at the new site, and a share of administrative cost. The other \$107,490 of the project budget comes from four sources listed in the budget narrative, three of them already committed.

We count a learner as served at 60 instructional hours, not at one intake appointment. That threshold appears in our objectives, our evaluation plan, and our reporting, and it is the number we would report back to the Foundation. Last year 62 percent of enrolled learners crossed it. We are proposing 71 percent, and the program design section explains what changes to make that increase plausible rather than aspirational.

The expansion is built to outlast the grant. Our state adult education services contract reimburses on enrolled seats, so a larger verified enrollment raises next year's contract allocation, and the branch library is providing classroom space at no cost under a three-year memorandum of understanding. The sustainability plan sets out what continues, what shrinks, and what stops if this grant is not renewed.

Our IRS determination letter, board roster, most recent audited financial statements, current-year organizational budget, staffing chart, and two partner letters are attached. I am glad to arrange a site visit on any class evening, which is the only way to see the program running.

Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,

[Name], Executive Director

Riverside Literacy Collaborative

[Name], Board Chair

Riverside Literacy Collaborative

1. Executive Summary

Riverside Literacy Collaborative requests \$48,000 from [Funder legal name] over twelve months to expand its Evening Reading Program from one site to two, adding four class sections and 48 seats per term. The total project budget is \$155,490. This request represents 30.9 percent of it.

The problem

Adults in Delta Park, Willow Bend, and the Canal District who read below a ninth-grade level have one free evening reading option in the neighborhood, and it has been full for three years. At the close of the last program year, 214 adults were waiting for 96 seats. The median wait ran past eleven months. Because the classes meet at fixed times in a single storefront, capacity is a physical constraint rather than a demand constraint, and the waitlist has grown in every one of the last six terms.

The program

The Evening Reading Program teaches adult reading in small sections of 12, twice a week, two hours per session, across two 18-week terms. Instruction is delivered by paid part-time instructors trained in structured literacy, supported by volunteer tutors who work one to one with learners during the second hour. Every learner is assessed at intake, placed into a section by reading level rather than by age or first language, and reassessed in month ten. The expansion replicates the model at a branch library site with its own four sections, its own instructors, and licensed childcare on all four class evenings.

The numbers

Illustrative targets for a composite program. Substitute your own capacity and your own prior-year performance before you use this table.

Measure	Last year	Project year	Change
Class sections per term	8	12	+4
Seats per term	96	144	+48
Adults enrolled across the year	112	168	+56
Adults completing 60 or more hours	69	120	+51
Completion rate	62%	71%	+9 points
Adults gaining one or more grade-equivalent levels	44	80	+36
Adults on the waitlist at year end	214	Projected 150 to 170	Reduced, not cleared
Cost per completing learner, all sources	\$1,716	\$1,296	Down \$420

The measure

Instructional hours are the base measure and everything else is reported against them. A learner counts as served at 60 hours, a threshold set because our own three-year records show that gains on the reading assessment appear inconsistently below it and reliably above it. The 60 hours may be accumulated inside one 18-week term, in which 72 hours are offered, or across both terms by a learner who enrolls in the fall and continues in the spring. Attendance is captured at the door at every session, not reconstructed at the end of the term.

The path after the grant

Three of the four expansion sections are designed to continue without this grant. The state adult education services contract reimburses on verified enrolled seats, and a full project year at 144 seats raises the base for the following year's allocation. The branch library space carries no rent under a three-year memorandum of understanding. What this grant buys is the year of verified operation that makes the larger allocation possible, plus the learner supports that the contract does not reimburse. The sustainability section names what would stop if nothing replaced the grant, which is childcare and the fourth section.

2. Organization Background and Capacity

This section exists to answer one question: can this organization run the thing it is proposing? A reviewer is not looking for a founding story. They are looking for evidence that the applicant has done something of a comparable size, has the staff and systems to do it again, and will still be solvent in twelve months.

Who we are

Riverside Literacy Collaborative is a 501(c)(3) public charity founded in [year] to teach adult reading in the neighborhoods on the east side of Latham County. We operate four programs: the Evening Reading Program that is the subject of this request, a daytime one-to-one tutoring program staffed by volunteers, conversation groups for adults learning English, and a digital literacy series taught in partnership with the county library system. Last year the four programs served 342 adults.

The organization has held its determination letter since [year] and has never had it revoked or suspended. It is registered to solicit charitable contributions in [State] under [registration number], and it renews that registration annually. Confirm your own state's requirement with your state charity official rather than assuming it matches this one, because the rules and the thresholds differ by state.

What we run now

Program	Adults served	Annual cost	How it is funded
Evening Reading Program	112	\$118,400	State contract, foundation grants, individual donors
One-to-one volunteer tutoring	94	\$61,000	Individual donors, one family foundation
English conversation groups	88	\$44,200	State contract, in-kind partner space
Digital literacy series	48	\$29,800	County library partnership, corporate gift
Administration and fundraising	Not applicable	\$24,073, which is 9.5 percent of the \$253,400 in program costs above	Allocated across programs at 9.5 percent
Other organizational programs not listed above	Not itemized here	\$334,527	Balance of the \$612,000 organizational budget

The Evening Reading Program has run continuously for nine years. It moved from a church basement to its current storefront six years ago, added a second class night four years ago, and reached its current eight-section capacity three years ago, which is when the waitlist began to grow instead of turning over.

Staffing and governance

The organization employs six full-time-equivalent staff and nine part-time instructors, and it places 48 trained volunteer tutors. The Evening Reading Program is led by a program coordinator who reports to the Director of Programs. The coordinator holds a state adult education instructor credential and has run the program for four years. Instructors complete 18 hours of structured literacy training before their first section and 12 hours of continuing training each year.

The board has eleven members and meets six times a year. Its finance committee reviews monthly statements against budget and reports to the full board quarterly. Two board members have adult education backgrounds and two are graduates of the program, which is not decorative: the enrollment threshold in the objectives below was set at 60 hours partly because a board member who had been a learner argued that counting an intake appointment as a service was dishonest.

Financial position

The organization's annual operating budget is \$612,000 for the fiscal year ending [date]. Revenue is diversified across a state services contract at 41 percent, foundation grants at 26 percent, individual giving at 22 percent, and earned fee-for-service workplace literacy contracts at 11 percent. Unrestricted operating reserves stand at 3.8 months of expenses. Financial statements are audited annually by [Audit firm name]; the most recent audit, for the fiscal year ended [date], contained no material weaknesses and no going-concern language.

Replace all four of those figures with your own, and if your audit did contain a finding, say so and say what you did about it. A finding disclosed and remediated reads as competence. A finding a reviewer discovers in the attached statements after the narrative implied there was none reads as something else.

Why we can run the expansion

The expansion is a replication of a model already operating at scale in the same organization, not a new program. The curriculum exists, the assessment protocol exists, the instructor training exists, the attendance system exists, and the coordinator has hired and supervised eight instructors through four annual cycles. Three of the four new sections will be taught by instructors already on payroll who have asked for additional hours. The site agreement with

the branch library is signed and attached.

The one genuinely new element is childcare, which we have not previously offered and which the waitlist survey identified as the second most common reason people decline a seat. We are contracting with a licensed provider rather than staffing it ourselves, precisely because it is new. The contract, the provider's license number, and the ratio requirements are addressed in the program design section.

3. Statement of Need

A statement of need documents a specific gap in a defined population and a defined place. It is the section where local evidence outperforms national evidence, because a reviewer who reads a county poverty rate learns that the county has a problem, which was never in question. A reviewer who reads that 214 people are waiting for 96 seats learns that you have one.

Every figure below belongs to the composite. Replace each one from the source named beside it in the adaptation section at the end of this document.

The gap in seats

At the close of the last program year, 214 adults sat on the waitlist for Riverside's evening reading classes against 96 available seats. Two thirds of them live in the three neighborhoods the program draws from, and the median wait for a seat has run past eleven months.

That paragraph is the whole argument, and the rest of this section is the evidence behind each of its three claims. The waitlist figure comes from our enrollment system, counted on the last day of the program year and deduplicated against prior-term enrollments. The seat figure is eight sections of twelve, which is a physical count of chairs in a room. The eleven-month median is calculated from date of intake call to date of first class attended for every learner who entered a section in the last two years.

Who is waiting

Characteristic of the 214 adults on the waitlist	Count	Source
Live in Delta Park, Willow Bend, or the Canal District	143	Intake address field, current program year
Employed, working at least 30 hours a week	129	Intake questionnaire, self-reported
Have at least one child under 12 at home	97	Intake questionnaire, self-reported
Referred by a partner agency rather than self-referred	88	Referral source field
Declined a daytime seat because of work hours	76	Intake notes, coded
Named childcare as a barrier to attending	61	Waitlist survey, 168 of 214 responded
Named transportation as a barrier to attending	44	Waitlist survey, 168 of 214 responded
Previously enrolled and withdrew before 20 hours	31	Enrollment history

The composition matters more than the total. Because 129 of the 214 are working at least 30 hours a week, a daytime program does not reach them regardless of how many seats it has, which is the reason this request funds evening sections rather than expanding the daytime tutoring program that also has capacity pressure. Because 97 have young children at home and 61 named childcare directly, the childcare line in the budget is not an amenity; it is the mechanism that converts a seat into an attended seat.

The neighborhoods

Delta Park, Willow Bend, and the Canal District sit along a four-mile corridor on the east side of Latham County. The three tracts share a single bus line, and the branch library that would host the second site is the only public building open past six o'clock in any of them. Our current storefront sits at the far southern end of the corridor, which means the adults with the longest waits are also the ones facing a 40-minute one-way trip on the only route that serves them.

For your own version, pull tract-level figures from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey for educational attainment, household income, language spoken at home, and vehicle availability, and name the table and the release year in the text. Pair them with your state education agency's adult education participation figures if it publishes them. Give the frame two or three sentences and then return to your own data, because the frame is context and your intake records are evidence.

What waiting does

A waitlist that turns over is a scheduling problem. A waitlist that does not turn over is an attrition machine. Of the 214 adults waiting at the close of last year, 63 had been on the list for more than a year, and our coordinator called that group to confirm continued interest. Of the 63 we called, 24 could not be reached at the number on file and 11 said they had stopped looking, a 56 percent loss among the households that had waited longest. Nine more had enrolled somewhere else.

The referral relationships erode on the same clock. Two of our four partner agencies reduced referrals last year, and both told us the same thing in different words: they had stopped sending people to a program that could not take them. Referral counts from the county workforce center fell from 71 to 38 across two years. Restoring capacity is the only thing that restores the referral pipeline, and the pipeline is what reaches the adults who would never walk into a literacy program on their own.

What we are not claiming

We are not claiming that 48 additional seats clear the waitlist. On current intake rates the list would still hold roughly 150 to 170 names at the end of the project year. We are not claiming that reading gains translate directly into wage gains, because we do not collect wage data and would not be able to substantiate it. And we are not claiming that this program is the only adult literacy provider in the county. There are two others, both operating daytime hours on the west side, and both were consulted before this request was drafted. Their letters describing the geographic and schedule gap between their services and ours are attached.

Say the equivalent in your own proposal. A need statement that claims to solve the problem entirely invites the reviewer to check, and the check will fail. A need statement that claims a specific, sized, verifiable piece of the problem invites the reviewer to fund it.

4. Goals and Objectives

Goals are directional. Objectives are countable. A goal says what the world looks like if the program works. An objective names a number, a population, a method, and a date, and it supplies the evaluation plan with something to measure and the budget with a caseload to staff. Write the objectives before you write either one.

Goal

More adults in Delta Park, Willow Bend, and the Canal District read at a functional level, and the neighborhood has enough evening capacity that an adult who asks for a seat gets one inside a single term.

Objectives

Objective 1. By June 30, 120 enrolled adults will complete at least 60 hours of instruction, and 80 of them will gain one or more grade-equivalent levels on the program's standardized reading assessment.

Objective 2. By September 30, four additional class sections will be operating at the branch library site with 48 seats filled and instructors trained, raising total capacity from 96 to 144 seats per term.

Objective 3. By June 30, the completion rate, defined as the share of enrolled learners reaching 60 instructional hours, will rise from 62 percent to 71 percent.

Objective 4. By June 30, the median wait between intake call and first class attended will fall from eleven months to five months or less for learners entering the program during the project year.

Objective 5. By March 31, at least 55 learners with children at home will have used the childcare offered at the branch library site, measured as distinct learners with at least one childcare session logged.

No.	Objective in short form	Baseline	Target	Data source	Due
1a	Learners completing 60+ hours	69	120	Sign-in system, compiled monthly	June 30
1b	Completers gaining 1+ grade-equivalent level	44	80	Reading assessment, intake and month 10	June 30
2	Sections operating at second site	0	4	Class schedule and payroll records	Sept 30
3	Completion rate	62%	71%	Sign-in system over enrollment record	June 30
4	Median wait, intake call to first class	11 months	5 months or less	Enrollment system date fields	June 30
5	Distinct learners using childcare	0	55	Childcare provider sign-in log	March 31

Why these five and not fifteen

Each objective here is either a direct measure of the outcome the program exists to produce or a direct measure of the thing this grant pays for. Objective 2 exists because the Foundation is being asked to fund four sections and is entitled to know whether four sections opened. Objective 5 exists because childcare is the single new element in the design and the one most likely to fail quietly. There is no objective about community awareness, capacity, or partnership strength, because none of those can be counted without inventing an instrument, and an objective with no instrument behind it is a sentence rather than a commitment.

Note what the objectives do not promise. They do not promise employment outcomes, wage increases, or high school equivalency attainment, because the program does not deliver those services and could not attribute those results to 60 hours of reading instruction. Reviewers see overreach constantly. The objective that stops exactly at the edge of what the program can prove is the one that survives the site visit.

5. Program Design and Methods

This section answers who does what, how often, for whom, and where, in enough detail that a reader outside the organization could reconstruct a week of the program from the page. The most common failure here is activity language with no dosage: classes will be offered, tutoring will be provided, learners will be supported. Offered how many times, for how long, to how many people, by whom.

The instructional model

Instruction follows a structured literacy sequence: phonemic awareness, decoding, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, taught explicitly and in that order, with each learner placed at the level the intake assessment indicates rather than at the level their grade of school completion would suggest. Sections hold 12 learners. The first

hour of each session is whole-group instruction led by the paid instructor. The second hour splits into three groups of four, one with the instructor and two with trained volunteer tutors, working on the specific skill the learner's last assessment flagged.

The curriculum is a published structured literacy program for adults, selected four years ago and used unchanged since, which matters for the evaluation because the assessment norms and the instructional sequence are aligned. Name yours in your own proposal, including edition and publisher, and say when you adopted it. If you built your own curriculum, say that too, and say who reviewed it.

Schedule and dosage

Element	Current site (Delta Park storefront)	New site (Willow Branch Library)
Sections	8	4, two on Monday and Wednesday and two on Tuesday and Thursday
Seats per section	12	12
Class nights	Monday and Wednesday, Tuesday and Thursday	Monday and Wednesday, Tuesday and Thursday
Class hours	6:00 to 8:00 p.m.	6:00 to 8:00 p.m.
Sessions per week per learner	2	2
Hours per session	2	2
Weeks per term	18	18
Hours offered per learner per term	72	72
Terms per year	2 (September to January, February to June)	2 (September to January, February to June)
Childcare	Not offered	All four class evenings, licensed provider, 3 hours
Volunteer tutors per section	2	2

The dosage arithmetic behind the objectives: 72 hours are offered per term, the completion threshold is 60 hours, and a learner therefore has to attend 30 of the 36 sessions in a term, or accumulate the balance across two terms. Last year's completers averaged 68 hours. The 60-hour threshold was not chosen to be easy to hit; it was chosen because our own records show assessment gains appearing inconsistently below it.

Intake, placement, and the first six weeks

Intake runs continuously rather than only at term boundaries. An adult calls or walks in, completes a 25-minute intake appointment covering contact information, schedule constraints, barriers, and prior schooling, and takes the reading assessment in the same visit or the following week. Placement into a section is by assessed level and schedule availability. Learners who cannot be placed immediately go onto the waitlist with a specific expected term rather than an open-ended promise, and the coordinator calls every waitlisted learner at the start of each term.

The first six weeks carry most of the attrition risk, and the design responds to that specifically. Every learner receives a call from the instructor after a first missed session and a second call after a second miss. The coordinator reviews a six-week retention report for each section and meets with any instructor whose section has lost more than two learners. This is the operational change that makes the completion-rate objective plausible: last year the six-week calls happened inconsistently because the coordinator was carrying intake for all eight sections alone, which is why this budget funds a portion of an intake and data assistant.

Removing the barriers learners named

Childcare. A licensed provider staffs the branch library's community room on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings from 5:45 to 8:45 p.m., 36 weeks a year, for children age 3 through 11 of enrolled learners. Two

sections meet on each pair of evenings, so one qualified staff member covers each evening at the ratio the ages enrolled require. The provider carries its own license and liability coverage, and staff-to-child ratios follow [State] licensing rules, which you should confirm for your own state rather than assuming they match this example. Learners register children at intake. Capacity is six children per evening, 24 across the four class evenings, and usage is logged by name so it can be matched to the learner's attendance record.

Transportation. Learners at either site may request a monthly transit pass. Passes are distributed by the intake assistant against a signed log and are funded from unrestricted revenue rather than from this request, so the Foundation is not asked to pay for them.

Materials. Every learner receives the workbook set for their level at no cost and keeps it. Nothing in the program is charged to learners, including the assessment, the childcare, and the materials.

Staffing the project

Role	Effort	Responsibilities on this project
Program Coordinator	0.6 FTE	Instructor hiring and supervision, section scheduling, placement decisions, assessment administration and scoring, six-week retention reviews, funder reporting
Adult Reading Instructors (6 part-time)	2,160 hours total	Teach 12 sections, 4 contact hours plus 1 preparation hour per section per week, 36 weeks; make first-miss and second-miss calls
Intake and Data Assistant	0.25 FTE	Intake appointments, enrollment records, attendance compilation, waitlist calls, transit pass log, childcare log reconciliation
Volunteer Tutor Coordinator	0.15 FTE	Recruit, screen, train, and schedule 24 volunteer tutors across 12 sections
Director of Programs	In-kind, unbilled	Supervision of the coordinator, partner agreements, board reporting
Licensed childcare provider	Contract	Childcare on all four class evenings at the branch library site, 432 staff hours across the year

Partners and what each one actually does

Willow Branch Library provides the community room and two program rooms on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings at no cost under a three-year memorandum of understanding, and lists the classes in its own program calendar. Latham County Workforce Center refers adults identified during employment screening and receives a monthly roster of program completers with learner consent. Delta Park Community Health Center refers patients flagged during health-literacy screening. Two employers, a food-processing plant with 340 hourly staff and a hospital system's environmental services department, release shift workers 30 minutes early on class nights and jointly fund a fee-for-service workplace literacy contract that is separate from this project.

Partner letters that describe a specific commitment are worth attaching. Letters that say the partner supports the important work of the applicant are not, and a reviewer reading four of them in a row learns nothing from any of them. Ask each partner to name what they will provide, how much of it, and for how long.

Logic model

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Short-term outcomes	Longer-term outcome
\$155,490; 0.6 FTE coordinator; 6 instructors; 24 volunteer tutors; two sites; curriculum and assessment	12 sections, twice weekly, 2 hours, 36 weeks; intake and placement; retention calls; childcare on all four class evenings	168 adults enrolled; 864 class sessions; 2,160 paid instructor hours; 432 childcare staff hours	120 adults complete 60+ hours; 80 gain 1+ grade-equivalent level; median wait falls to 5 months	Adults read at a functional level and the neighborhood has evening capacity that turns over within one term

Twelve-month work plan

Months	Activity	Responsible
Month 1 (July)	Execute library site agreement; post two instructor positions; order materials for 168 learners; finalize childcare contract	Executive Director, Coordinator
Month 2 (August)	Hire and train two new instructors (18 hours); recruit 8 additional volunteer tutors; open second-site enrollment from the waitlist	Coordinator, Tutor Coordinator
Month 3 (September)	Term 1 begins at both sites; intake assessments for all new learners; childcare opens on all four class evenings	Coordinator, Instructors
Month 4 (October)	Six-week retention review for all 12 sections; first monthly attendance compilation to the board	Coordinator, Data Assistant
Months 5 to 6 (Nov to Dec)	Continuous intake and waitlist calls; mid-term instructor observations; interim report to the Foundation	Coordinator
Month 7 (January)	Term 1 closes; exit surveys administered; term 1 completion and retention analysis	Coordinator, Data Assistant
Month 8 (February)	Term 2 begins; placement of continuing learners; second-site section added to library calendar	Coordinator
Month 9 (March)	Six-week retention review; childcare usage review against objective 5	Coordinator
Month 10 (April)	Post-instruction reading assessments administered and scored for all learners at 60+ hours	Coordinator
Month 11 (May)	Exit surveys; data cleaning and matching of attendance, assessment, and childcare records	Data Assistant
Month 12 (June)	Term 2 closes; final analysis; report to the Foundation; state contract enrollment verification filed	Executive Director, Coordinator

6. Evaluation Plan

An evaluation plan names the measure, the instrument, the collection schedule, and the person responsible for each one. Four fields on every row are enough for a program this size, and six measures cover it. A paragraph of intentions about learning and growth gives a reviewer nothing to check, and the test on your own draft is whether someone outside your organization could execute the plan from the page.

Measure	Instrument or data source	Collection schedule	Responsible
Instructional hours attended	Class sign-in captured at the door at every session; compiled in the enrollment database	Every session; compiled monthly	Intake and Data Assistant
Reading level, grade equivalent	[Standardized reading assessment your program administers], same form and level protocol at both administrations	Intake (month 1 for each learner) and month 10	Program Coordinator
Retention	Enrollment record, active or withdrawn status with withdrawal reason coded	Week 6 and end of term, each term	Intake and Data Assistant
Learner-reported experience	Nine-item exit survey, paper, with a read-aloud option and no name required	Final class session of each term	Section instructor
Childcare usage	Provider sign-in log, matched by learner name to the attendance record	Every childcare evening; reconciled monthly	Intake and Data Assistant
Wait time	Enrollment system date fields: intake call date and first class attended date	Calculated quarterly for all learners entering that quarter	Program Coordinator

Choosing the assessment

The bracketed field in the second row is deliberate. Name the instrument you actually use, including its edition and the level or form, and do not name one you have not budgeted to administer. If you have not selected an instrument, say so and say how you will choose it and by when, which is a legitimate answer in a proposal and a better one than a vague measure. Four criteria are worth applying: the instrument is normed on adults rather than on schoolchildren, it reports in a unit you can explain to a learner, it can be administered by trained program staff rather than only by a licensed evaluator, and the per-administration cost fits the budget when multiplied by two administrations for every learner you intend to count.

Who analyzes the data and when

The coordinator compiles a monthly attendance and retention report for the Director of Programs and a quarterly summary for the board's program committee. The post-instruction assessment window is month 10, which leaves months 11 and 12 for scoring, matching, cleaning, and reporting rather than compressing all of it into the final two weeks. Assessment scoring is done by the coordinator and spot-checked by the Director of Programs on a 10 percent sample, because a single scorer with a stake in the result is a weakness a reviewer will find.

What happens if a target slips

The six-week retention report is the early warning. If enrollment across the four new sections falls below 40 of 48 seats by the end of month 3, the coordinator pulls names from the waitlist in the order they were added and, if the shortfall persists, moves one section to Monday and Wednesday, which the waitlist survey indicated a subset of learners prefer. If the completion rate at the end of term 1 sits below 65 percent, the retention calls move from the instructors to the intake assistant, who has the enrollment record open and can act on it the same day.

Saying this in the proposal costs nothing and buys credibility. Every reviewer knows that some targets slip. The applicants who have thought about what they will do when it happens are visibly different from the ones who have not.

Data quality, consent, and privacy

Learners consent at intake to the collection of attendance, assessment, and demographic data and to aggregate reporting. Consent for sharing an individual completion record with a referring partner is a separate signature and is not required to enroll. Records are held in the enrollment database with role-based access; the childcare provider receives only the names of registered children and their guardians. No learner name appears in any report to the Foundation or to any partner. Exit surveys carry no name field.

What this evaluation cannot tell you

The design is a pre-test and post-test with no comparison group, so it measures change in the learners who completed the program and cannot attribute that change solely to the instruction. Learners who withdraw before month 10 have no post-test, which means the reported gain figure describes completers and would overstate the effect if read as describing everyone who enrolled. Both limits are stated in every report we issue. If the Foundation would like a stronger design, a waitlist comparison is feasible here precisely because the waitlist exists, and we would price it separately rather than promise it inside this budget.

7. Budget Table

Project period: July 1, [Year] through June 30, [Year+1]. All figures in U.S. dollars. The Requested column sums to exactly \$48,000. The math behind every line is in the budget narrative that follows.

Line item	Requested	Other sources	Total project
A. PERSONNEL: SALARIES AND WAGES			
A1. Program Coordinator, 0.6 FTE of \$52,000 base	10,400	20,800	31,200
A2. Adult Reading Instructors, 2,160 hours at \$26.00	18,720	37,440	56,160
A3. Intake and Data Assistant, 0.25 FTE of \$38,000 base	1,900	7,600	9,500
A4. Volunteer Tutor Coordinator, 0.15 FTE of \$44,000 base	0	6,600	6,600
Subtotal, salaries and wages	31,020	72,440	103,460
B. PERSONNEL: FRINGE BENEFITS			
B1. Payroll taxes and statutory insurance, 10.0% of salaries	3,102	7,244	10,346
B2. Health and retirement, benefits-eligible staff	0	6,300	6,300
Subtotal, fringe benefits	3,102	13,544	16,646
Subtotal, personnel	34,122	85,984	120,106
C. OTHER DIRECT COSTS			
C1. Learner materials and workbooks, \$42 per learner	5,040	2,016	7,056
C2. Assessment licenses and scoring, \$6.50 per administration	1,560	390	1,950
C3. Childcare contract, 432 staff hours at \$22.00	2,376	7,128	9,504
C4. Instructor professional development, \$123 per person	738	246	984

Line item	Requested	Other sources	Total project
C5. Outreach printing, intake packets, community intake events	0	2,400	2,400
Subtotal, other direct costs	9,714	12,180	21,894
TOTAL DIRECT COSTS	43,836	98,164	142,000
D. ADMINISTRATIVE COST ALLOCATION			
D1. Administrative allocation, 9.5% of direct costs	4,164	9,326	13,490
TOTAL PROJECT COST	48,000	107,490	155,490

Not included in the cash budget above: in-kind contributions, listed separately below because most foundations want them visible but do not want them inflating the request.

In-kind contribution	Value	Basis of valuation
Classroom and community room space, Willow Branch Library	25,200	36 weeks, 4 evenings, 2 program rooms at 2 hours plus the community room at 3 hours, 1,008 hours at the library's published \$25 hourly community rate
Volunteer tutor hours, 24 tutors	34,560	1,728 hours at \$20.00, the published value of volunteer time for [State] in the project year
Director of Programs supervision time, 0.05 FTE	3,900	Salary base of \$78,000 times percent effort
Storefront site occupancy, Delta Park	9,000	Existing lease, allocated by square footage and hours of use
Total in-kind	72,660	Not included in the \$155,490 cash project budget

8. Budget Narrative

The table shows what will be spent. The narrative shows the reasoning. A funder reading a personnel line wants the percent of effort, the base it applies to, and a reason the number is what it is. A narrative that restates the table in sentences wastes the section.

A1. Program Coordinator, \$10,400 requested of \$31,200 charged

The coordinator is a full-time employee at a base salary of \$52,000. Sixty percent of that role's hours go to this program: instructor supervision and observation, section scheduling, placement decisions, administering and scoring the reading assessment, the six-week retention reviews, and funder reporting. Sixty percent of \$52,000 is \$31,200, which is the amount charged to the project. The Foundation is asked to fund one third of that charged time, \$10,400, equivalent to 0.2 FTE. The remaining \$20,800 is covered by the state services contract and unrestricted revenue. The percent effort is drawn from a time study conducted over four sample weeks last spring, and time and effort are documented monthly against actual activity rather than budgeted at the start and left alone.

A2. Adult Reading Instructors, \$18,720 requested of \$56,160 charged

Six part-time instructors teach 12 sections. Each section requires four contact hours a week, two sessions of two hours, plus one paid preparation hour, for five paid hours per section per week across 36 instructional weeks. Twelve sections at five hours for 36 weeks is 2,160 hours. At \$26.00 an hour, the hourly rate on our current payroll register for credentialed adult reading instructors, the total is \$56,160. The Foundation is asked to fund the four new sections

only: four sections at five hours for 36 weeks is 720 hours, and 720 hours at \$26.00 is \$18,720. This is the single largest thing the grant buys, and it maps directly onto objective 2.

A3. Intake and Data Assistant, \$1,900 requested of \$9,500 charged

A part-time assistant at a base of \$38,000 charges 0.25 FTE, or \$9,500, to this project for intake appointments, enrollment records, attendance compilation, waitlist calls, and reconciliation of the childcare log against attendance. The Foundation is asked for \$1,900, or 0.05 FTE, which is the share attributable to the second site. This position is the operational answer to the completion-rate objective. Last year the coordinator carried intake alone for eight sections and the six-week retention calls slipped; twelve sections without added intake capacity would slip further.

A4. Volunteer Tutor Coordinator, \$0 requested of \$6,600 charged

Recruiting, screening, training, and scheduling 24 volunteer tutors takes 0.15 FTE of a \$44,000 position, or \$6,600. It is shown in the total project column because the tutors are integral to the second hour of every class session and the reviewer should see the true cost of the model. It is not requested, because this position is already funded through the state contract for the full year.

B1. Payroll taxes and statutory insurance, \$3,102 requested of \$10,346

Employer payroll taxes and statutory insurance are calculated at 10.0 percent of salaries and wages: 7.65 percent for the employer share of Social Security and Medicare, and 2.35 percent for state unemployment insurance and workers' compensation at our current experience rating. Ten percent of the \$31,020 in requested salaries is \$3,102. Use your own rates, which differ by state and by your own unemployment experience rating, and show the components rather than a single blended percentage.

B2. Health and retirement, \$0 requested of \$6,300

Health insurance and the employer retirement match are available to staff at 0.5 FTE or above, which covers the coordinator and the tutor coordinator, at an employer cost of \$700 a month. Prorated to the 0.75 combined FTE charged to this project, that is \$6,300. The Foundation is not asked to fund benefits. The organization covers them from unrestricted revenue as a matter of policy, so that a grant that ends does not become a benefits cliff for an employee.

C1. Learner materials and workbooks, \$5,040 requested of \$7,056

Each learner receives and keeps the workbook set for their assessed level, at \$42 per learner from the publisher's current price list for the quantities we order. For 168 enrolled learners that is \$7,056. The Foundation is asked for \$5,040, the cost of materials for the 120 learners the objectives commit to carrying past 60 hours. Materials for the balance are covered by the state contract.

C2. Assessment licenses and scoring, \$1,560 requested of \$1,950

The reading assessment costs \$6.50 per administration including the scoring license. Every enrolled learner is assessed at intake and every learner reaching 60 hours is assessed again in month 10, which for 168 enrollments and 120 completers is 288 administrations, and we budget 300 to cover retests where a proctoring problem invalidates a result. Three hundred administrations at \$6.50 is \$1,950. The Foundation is asked for the 240 administrations attached to the 120 learners in objective 1, which is \$1,560.

C3. Childcare contract, \$2,376 requested of \$9,504

A licensed provider staffs childcare in the branch library community room for three hours on each of the site's four class evenings, 36 weeks a year, with one qualified staff member on duty for a capacity of six children an evening. One staff member times three hours times four evenings times 36 weeks is 432 staff hours. The contracted rate is

\$22.00 per staff hour and includes the provider's own license compliance and liability coverage, so the full-year cost is \$9,504. The Foundation is asked for one quarter of the contract, 108 staff hours, or \$2,376. One quarter is deliberately below the one third that the four grant-funded sections represent, because some branch-site learners carry into a term this grant does not fund.

C4. Instructor professional development, \$738 requested of \$984

Eight staff, six instructors plus the coordinator and the tutor coordinator, attend the state adult education association's annual conference at the \$123 member early-bird registration rate, for \$984. Travel is not budgeted because the conference is held in the county. The Foundation is asked for the six instructor registrations, \$738. Instructor turnover is the largest operational risk in a part-time teaching workforce, and paid training is the cheapest retention tool available.

C5. Outreach printing and community intake events, \$0 requested of \$2,400

Bilingual flyers, intake packets, and four community intake events held in partner spaces cost \$2,400 for the year. This line is funded entirely by unrestricted revenue and appears here so that the total project cost is honest. We are not asking a program funder to pay for outreach that also serves our other three programs.

D1. Administrative cost allocation, \$4,164 requested of \$13,490

The organization allocates administrative cost, meaning finance, human resources, audit, insurance, technology, and executive oversight, at 9.5 percent of direct program costs, a rate calculated annually from audited figures and applied consistently across all programs and all funders. Applied to the \$43,836 in direct costs requested, the allocation is \$4,164. That is 8.7 percent of the \$48,000 total request, comfortably within the Foundation's published 10 percent cap on administrative cost. Applied to the full \$142,000 in project direct costs, the allocation is \$13,490.

Two things to check in your own version. First, whether the funder caps administrative or indirect cost and whether the cap is expressed as a percentage of direct costs or of the total grant, because the two produce different numbers from the same rate. Second, whether you have a rate at all: if you do not, calculate one from your audited statements and apply it consistently rather than inventing a figure for each application. Organizations that also pursue federal funding should read the Uniform Guidance provisions on indirect cost rates at 2 CFR 200.414, including the de minimis rate available to entities without a negotiated rate, before setting a number they will have to defend twice.

Where the other \$107,490 comes from

Source	Amount	Status	Decision or renewal date
State adult education services contract	46,000	Committed	Executed for the project year
Unrestricted revenue: individual donors and annual appeal	34,000	Committed	Board-approved in the operating budget
Two family foundation grants, renewal requests submitted	15,000	Pending	Decisions expected in month 2 and month 4
Fee-for-service workplace literacy contracts, two employers	12,490	Committed	Both contracts signed through June 30
Total, other sources	107,490		
This request	48,000	Pending	This application
Total project revenue	155,490		

If the \$15,000 in pending renewals does not arrive, the shortfall falls on the fourth section at the second site and on the second childcare evening, in that order, and the objectives would be revised down to 105 completers and 70 learners gaining a level. We would notify the Foundation in writing within 30 days of learning the outcome rather than

at the end of the grant year. Say what your own contingency is. A reviewer who cannot tell which piece of a budget is at risk assumes all of it is.

9. Sustainability Plan

A sustainability plan answers what happens when the grant year ends. The weakest version promises future fundraising with no mechanism: we will seek additional funding to continue the program. The strongest version names the revenue that already exists, the specific event that would increase it, and the parts of the program that would stop if neither happens.

The mechanism that makes this expansion self-supporting

Our state adult education services contract reimburses on verified enrolled seats from the prior completed program year. The allocation is set each spring from the enrollment we can document. A full project year operating at 144 seats rather than 96, with attendance verified through the sign-in system and reported in the format the state requires, raises the documented base that next year's allocation is calculated from. That is the sentence this section rests on, and it is a mechanism rather than a hope: the grant buys the year of verified operation that the funding formula needs to see.

The second mechanism is space. The memorandum of understanding with Willow Branch Library runs three years and carries no rent, no utility charge, and no custodial charge. The largest recurring cost of a second site, occupancy, is therefore zero for the two years following this grant.

The three-year revenue path

Revenue source	Project year	Year 2 projected	Year 3 projected
State adult education services contract	46,000	72,000	78,000
Unrestricted revenue and annual appeal	34,000	37,000	40,000
Foundation grants including this request	63,000	40,000	30,000
Fee-for-service workplace literacy contracts	12,490	18,000	24,000
Total	155,490	167,000	172,000
Share from grants	40.5%	24.0%	17.4%

Those projections are illustrative and they are the part of any sustainability plan a reviewer discounts hardest, which is why the narrative matters more than the table. Year 2 shows the contract rising because the enrollment base rises. It shows foundation revenue falling because a second site that has completed a full year is no longer a startup and should not be funded as one. And it shows earned revenue rising because the two employer contracts renew annually and a third employer has asked for a quote.

What continues, what shrinks, and what stops

Program element	Status after year 1	Why
Three of the four new sections	Continue	Covered by the increased contract allocation the verified enrollment produces
Fourth new section	At risk	Depends on the contract allocation landing at or above the projection

Program element	Status after year 1	Why
Library site occupancy	Continues at no cost	Memorandum of understanding runs three years
Childcare	Reduced to one evening	Not reimbursable under the state contract; would run on unrestricted revenue only
Intake and data assistant	Continues at 0.25 FTE	Absorbed into the contract-funded administrative allocation
Learner materials	Continue	Reimbursable under the contract at the enrolled-seat rate
Instructor professional development	Continues	Small line, funded from unrestricted revenue

Naming the at-risk pieces is not a weakness in a proposal. It is the difference between a plan and a wish, and a reviewer who has funded programs that quietly folded in year two reads it as the applicant having thought past the grant period.

What we would ask of the Foundation after this grant

Nothing automatic. If the contract allocation lands as projected, the second site stands on its own and we would not return with a renewal request for it. If it lands short, we would approach the Foundation once, with the actual allocation figure in hand, for a declining second-year request rather than a repeat of this one. Saying that in writing at the application stage is worth more than saying it after a renewal is declined.

10. Attachments

Assemble attachments before the narrative is finished, not the night before the deadline. The determination letter takes an afternoon to locate the first time, audited statements take longer if the audit is in progress, and partner letters take as long as your slowest partner. Every item below is standard for a foundation request. The funder's own list overrides it.

Attachment	Status	Notes
IRS determination letter	Attached	The letter recognizing 501(c)(3) status. If you cannot find yours, verify your listing through the IRS Tax Exempt Organization Search and request a copy of the affirmation letter
Board of directors roster	Attached	Names, affiliations, terms, officer roles, and meeting frequency. Note which members are program graduates or service-area residents
Most recent audited financial statements	Attached	Fiscal year ended [date], [Audit firm name]. If your organization has a review or compilation rather than an audit, attach that and say which it is
Most recent Form 990	Attached	The full return as filed, including schedules
Current-year organizational budget	Attached	Board-approved, with year-to-date actuals if the fiscal year is underway
Project budget	In narrative	The three-column table in section 7, with the narrative in section 8
Staffing chart for the project	Attached	Roles, percent effort, reporting lines, and which positions this grant funds
Position description, Program Coordinator	Attached	Because the request funds a share of this role
Memorandum of understanding, Willow Branch Library	Attached	Signed, three-year term, space at no cost

Attachment	Status	Notes
Partner letter, Latham County Workforce Center	Attached	States referral volume and the monthly roster exchange
Partner letter, Delta Park Community Health Center	Attached	States the referral pathway and the screening it comes from
Letters from the two other county literacy providers	Attached	Describe the geographic and schedule gap between their services and this program
Childcare provider license and certificate of insurance	Attached	License number, expiration, coverage limits
Sample assessment report, learner name redacted	Attached	Shows the reviewer what the evaluation actually produces
State charitable solicitation registration	Attached	[State] registration number and expiration
List of current institutional funders	Attached	Funder, amount, purpose, and period, with pending requests marked

Two practical notes. Name each file the way a reviewer would sort it, for example RiversideLiteracy_02_Board_Roster.pdf, because a reviewer opening sixteen files named Document1 through Document16 will not enjoy your application. And check whether the funder wants the attachments combined into a single PDF or uploaded separately, because portals differ and the wrong choice sometimes truncates the submission without warning.

Adapting This Proposal to Your Organization

Adapt in a fixed order, starting with the evidence and ending with the prose. Working from polished sentences backward toward the data produces a document that reads smoothly and says nothing specific about your organization.

1. Replace the need evidence first. Swap in your own service-area data, your own waitlist or intake numbers, and your own sourced statistics with the source named and dated in the text. This is the step that takes longest and the one most people skip.
2. Rewrite the objectives to your real capacity. If you can serve sixty people, the objective says sixty, and it says so before the budget and the evaluation plan are touched.
3. Rebuild the budget from your own costs. Start with real salaries and real percent effort from your payroll register. Scaling someone else's numbers up or down produces lines you cannot defend in a site visit.
4. Rewrite the program design to match the budget you just built. Dosage, section sizes, and staffing in the narrative have to agree with the hours and salaries in the budget.
5. Rebuild the evaluation table so that every measure ties to an objective and every row names an instrument and a person.
6. Match the funder's language. If the guidelines say priority populations, use that phrase where you would have used your internal term.
7. Cut to the page or character limit. Trim the program design section first, then the organization background. Never trim the need evidence or the budget narrative.
8. Write the executive summary, then the cover letter, last. The cover letter should name the exact amount and the exact program title that appear everywhere else in the document.
9. Run a numbers check as a separate pass. Read only the figures, in order, and confirm that the request amount, the participant counts, the percent effort, and the dates agree everywhere they appear.

Budget rebuilding takes longer than it looks like it will, because it surfaces a staffing question the narrative has been avoiding. Leave a day for it.

The numbers check, in detail

Figure	Everywhere it has to match in this document
\$48,000 request	Cover letter, summary sheet, executive summary, budget table total, budget narrative, revenue table
\$155,490 project total	Summary sheet, executive summary, budget table, logic model, revenue table, in-kind note
120 completers	Objective 1, objectives table, executive summary table, evaluation plan, materials line, assessment line, logic model
168 enrolled	Executive summary table, program design, materials line, assessment line, logic model
60 instructional hours	Executive summary, objective 1, objective 3, program design dosage, evaluation plan
0.6 FTE coordinator	Staffing table, budget line A1, budget narrative A1
96 to 144 seats	Cover letter, executive summary, objective 2, program design table, sustainability plan
June 30 deadline	All five objectives, work plan month 12, project period

What Changes When the Funder Changes

This document is written for a private or community foundation. Funder types run different processes, so a proposal built for one shape rarely survives being pasted into another.

Funder type	Typical entry point	Structure comes from	What this document transfers
Private foundation	Letter of inquiry, then an invited proposal	The foundation's guidelines or a regional common application	Nearly all of it, with length trimmed to the stated limit
Community foundation	Online application form	The form, usually with character limits per field	Compressed versions of each section, pasted field by field
Corporate giving program	Short online form	The form, often one page in total	Mostly the executive summary and the budget total
State agency	A state grant portal, which varies by state	The portal's form fields and the state's own application guide	Narrative text you paste into fields, plus the budget structure
Federal agency	A funding opportunity announcement posted on Grants.gov	The announcement, section by section, in its stated order	Content only. Rebuild the document against the announcement's headings

For a federal application, treat everything above as a content source rather than a template. Grants.gov describes a funding opportunity announcement as the public document by which a federal agency makes known its intention to award discretionary grants, and that document, not this one, dictates the section order, the page limits, the required forms, and the evaluation criteria the reviewers score against. Federal applications also carry registration steps that take weeks rather than days, so read the announcement's eligibility and registration sections before you write a word.

The three checks to run before adapting anything

A sample answers structural questions and nothing else. It cannot tell you whether this funder is a match for this program, and a mismatch is not something better writing repairs.

Subject fit. Does the funder give in your program area, judged by what it has actually paid out rather than by the language on its website? For a private foundation, the grants paid are listed in its Form 990-PF, which is public.

Geographic fit. Does it give in your county or metro area? Many foundations describe a broad interest and fund a narrow footprint.

Request-type fit. Does it fund program support, general operating support, capital, or capacity building? Asking for the wrong type is one of the most common reasons a strong application is declined without review.

The fourth check is timing. A foundation with a single annual deadline and a board that meets twice a year decides on a cycle you cannot shorten, so a program that needs money in eight weeks needs a different funder.

Reviewer Objections and Where This Document Answers Them

Read this table as a self-review checklist. Every row is an objection that gets raised in real review committees, and the right-hand column names the section that has to survive it. If your own draft has no answer in the named section, the objection stands.

The objection	Where the answer has to be
The need is described nationally, so I cannot tell whether this neighborhood has a problem	Statement of need: local intake data first, national or county data only as the frame
I cannot tell what my money buys as distinct from everything else they do	Budget table: a Requested column that sums to the request exactly, line by line
The objectives are not countable	Goals and objectives: a number, a population, a method, and a date in every objective
They will measure something they have no instrument for	Evaluation plan: an instrument named in every row, or an honest statement of how one will be chosen
The budget total in the narrative does not match the table	Budget narrative: every heading carries the same figure as its table line
Nothing here tells me what happens in month 13	Sustainability plan: a named mechanism, plus what stops if it fails
The completion rate they project is well above their own history	Program design: the specific operational change, in this case added intake capacity and structured six-week retention calls
Everyone claims a partnership. What does the partner actually do?	Program design and attachments: letters that name a volume, a commitment, and a term
The organization is too small to absorb this grant	Organization background: budget size, reserves, audit result, and a comparable program already run
The percent effort looks invented	Budget narrative: the base salary, the percentage, the arithmetic, and how effort is documented
They are asking us to fund overhead they will not disclose	Budget narrative: the administrative rate, how it was calculated, and that it is applied to all funders
The evaluation will be marked by the people being graded	Evaluation plan: independent spot-check of scoring, and a stated limitation about the design

Printing and Sharing This Proposal

This file is already a fixed-layout document, so a page break falls in the same place for everyone reading it, which makes a comment about the second paragraph on page nine mean something. If you are working from the web version of this example instead, every current browser prints a page to a PDF file: on Windows press Ctrl and P and choose Microsoft Print to PDF as the destination, and on macOS press Command and P and choose Save as PDF from the print dialog.

Two things to watch when you print your own adapted version. Wide tables split across pages in most browsers and in most word processors, so check that the budget table lands whole before you circulate the file and switch to landscape for that page if it does not. And number the pages before you send it, because a reviewer who wants to ask about one line needs a way to point at it.

Before a proposal leaves the building, print it once and read it on paper. Errors that are invisible on screen after the fourth revision are obvious in print: a heading orphaned at the bottom of a page, a table whose header row has drifted away from its numbers, a total that disagrees with the narrative above it, a bracketed field nobody filled in.

Sources and Where to Verify the Frame

This example contains no real statistics, because every figure in it belongs to a composite organization. When you replace them, cite the source and the retrieval date in the text, and use primary sources rather than a secondary article quoting them. The references below are the primary sources most often needed for a proposal of this kind. All sources retrieved September 2026.

Grant terminology, including the definition of a funding opportunity announcement: Grants.gov, Grant Terminology. <https://www.grants.gov/learn-grants/grant-terminology>

What private foundations report about their grantmaking, useful for checking subject and geographic fit before you write: Internal Revenue Service, About Form 990-PF. <https://www.irs.gov/forms-pubs/about-form-990-pf>

What public charities, including community foundations, report about grants they make: Internal Revenue Service, About Schedule I (Form 990). <https://www.irs.gov/forms-pubs/about-schedule-i-form-990>

Confirming an organization's tax-exempt status or requesting a copy of a determination letter: Internal Revenue Service, Tax Exempt Organization Search. <https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/tax-exempt-organization-search>

Indirect cost rates, including the de minimis rate available to entities without a negotiated rate, for organizations that also pursue federal awards: 2 CFR 200.414. <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/section-200.414>

Current mileage rate for any travel line in a budget: Internal Revenue Service, Standard Mileage Rates. <https://www.irs.gov/tax-professionals/standard-mileage-rates>

Tract-level and county-level data on educational attainment, income, language, and vehicle availability for a statement of need: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey. <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs>

National context on adult literacy and numeracy skills: National Center for Education Statistics, Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies. <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/piaac/>

Adult education programs and state-level participation data: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education. <https://www.ed.gov/about/ed-offices/ovae>

Two habits are worth adopting with any of these. Record the retrieval date beside the citation, because federal pages move and a reviewer who cannot find your source will assume you invented it. And check whether the figure you are citing is the most recent release, because a statistic that was current when you drafted may have been superseded by the time the committee reads it.

About This Sample Proposal

This sample proposal accompanies the article Sample Grant Proposal for Nonprofit Organization PDF: A Full Worked Example on the GrantCue blog. It is free to use, adapt, and share. There is no email gate, no watermark, and no section held back. Riverside Literacy Collaborative, Latham County, Willow Branch Library, and every partner and figure attached to them are composite examples created for this document and are not real organizations, places, or results.

GrantCue searches federal and state grant portals in one place and builds foundation profiles from IRS Form 990-PF filings, so you can see what a private foundation has actually paid out before you write anything, and track deadlines and your pipeline after you do.