Donor proposal writing template

A practical teaching guide for developing a clear, evidence-based funding proposal

How to use this template: Replace each bracketed prompt with project-specific information. Treat donor priorities, community evidence and assumptions separately. Delete the teaching prompts before submitting a proposal.

Proposal information

Field	Complete before drafting
Proposal title	[Name the project and location]
Donor	[Name the donor or funding programme]
Applicant organisation	[Legal name and country]
Implementing partner(s)	[Names and roles]
Project location	[Community, district, country]
Duration	[Start date, end date and total months]
Funding request	[Currency and amount]
Contact person	[Name, role, email and telephone]

Executive summary

Write this last. In about 120 to 180 words, state the problem, who is affected, the proposed response, the main result, the duration and amount requested, and what will continue after donor funding ends.

Summary draft: *[Write a short, donor-ready summary here.]*

_____

_____

_____

1. Problem and rationale

Purpose: Show that the project responds to a real, specific need. Describe the situation before proposing activities. Separate what is known from what is assumed.

Problem statement: *[What is happening, where, and to whom? Be specific.]*

_____

_____

People affected: *[Who is affected? About how many? What are their relevant differences or barriers?]*

_____

Evidence: *[What have people said? What have staff observed? What records or other reliable sources support this?]*

_____

_____

Statement or finding	Evidence/source	Known or still to verify
[Finding 1]	[Interview, observation, record, date]	[Known / verify]
[Finding 2]	[Evidence]	[Known / verify]
[Finding 3]	[Evidence]	[Known / verify]

Root causes: *[Why is the problem happening? Which causes can this project realistically address?]*

_____

_____

Donor fit: *[Which donor priorities does this address? Do not claim the donor has a problem or requirement it has not stated.]*

_____

Teaching check: Could a reader distinguish the observed problem from its causes and from KETSO's proposed solution?

2. Project design and expected change

Purpose: Explain what the project will do and why those activities should address the causes described in Chapter 1.

Project goal: *[What longer-term change will the project contribute to?]*

Intended outcome: *[What should be different for the people or environment by the end of the project?]*

Theory of change: *[If we do _____ for _____, then _____ will change because _____.]*

Result level	Draft statement	Example measure
Outcome	[Change for people, organisations or environment]	[Indicator]
Output 1	[Direct product or service delivered]	[Quantity / quality]
Output 2	[Direct product or service delivered]	[Quantity / quality]
Output 3	[Direct product or service delivered]	[Quantity / quality]

Main activities: *[List only the activities needed to produce these outputs.]*

Participants and inclusion: *[Who will participate? How will women, young people or other excluded groups take part and benefit?]*

Scope: *[What will this project include, and what will it not attempt to do?]*

Teaching check: Can every activity be linked to an output, and every output to the intended change?

3. Implementation and organisational capacity

Purpose: Show that the project is feasible, responsibilities are clear, and the organisations have the people and experience to deliver it safely.

Organisation/person	Main responsibility	Relevant capacity or experience
[Applicant]	[Coordination, finance, donor reporting]	[Evidence of relevant delivery]
[KETSO/team]	[Technical delivery and community engagement]	[Staff, skills, facilities]
[Local partner]	[Site care, participation, other]	[Commitment and local role]

Work plan

Phase and dates	Key activities	Responsible person	Deliverable
[Phase 1 / dates]	[Preparation and permissions]	[Name/role]	[Output]
[Phase 2 / dates]	[Training or procurement]	[Name/role]	[Output]
[Phase 3 / dates]	[Main implementation]	[Name/role]	[Output]
[Phase 4 / dates]	[Follow-up and handover]	[Name/role]	[Output]

Risks and safeguards

Risk	Likelihood / impact	Practical mitigation
[What might prevent delivery?]	[Low / medium / high]	[Action, owner and timing]
[Risk to people, land or assets]	[Rating]	[Prevention and response]
[Risk to continuation]	[Rating]	[Who will manage it after funding?]

Safeguarding and permissions: *[What consent, land agreements, safety measures or personal-data protections are needed?]*

Teaching check: Is any role left vague? Is the work plan realistic for KETSO's actual capacity?

4. Results, monitoring and sustainability

Purpose: Define how success will be measured and what value will remain after the grant ends.

Indicator	Baseline	Target	Evidence and timing	Responsible
[What will be measured?]	[Starting value]	[End target]	[Record / check / date]	[Role]
[Outcome indicator]	[Starting value]	[End target]	[Source / frequency]	[Role]
[Output indicator]	[Starting value]	[End target]	[Source / frequency]	[Role]
[Participation / inclusion]	[Starting value]	[End target]	[Source / frequency]	[Role]
[Continuation indicator]	[Starting value]	[End target]	[Follow-up date]	[Role]

Sustainability and handover

Question	Project-specific answer
What remains with the community?	[Assets, skills, services or income opportunities]
What remains with KETSO?	[Equipment, systems, trained staff, teaching materials or reusable capacity]
Who owns and maintains each asset?	[Name the owner and caretaker]
What will ongoing operation cost?	[Recurring costs and who will pay them]
How could this investment help KETSO grow?	[More training, stronger delivery, income, future contracts or reduced dependence]
What happens if expected income or participation does not materialise?	[Fallback plan]

Learning: *[What will KETSO and the donor learn, and how will that learning shape future work?]*

Teaching check: Sustainability is a funded and assigned plan, not a sentence saying that the project will continue.

5. Budget and value for money

Purpose: Show what the project costs, how each figure was calculated, who will fund it, and why the investment is proportionate to the expected results.

Budget item	Unit and quantity	Unit cost	Total	Donor request / other source
[Staff time]	[Days / months]	[Amount]	[Amount]	[Source]
[Training and materials]	[Units]	[Amount]	[Amount]	[Source]
[Seeds, seedlings or tools]	[Units]	[Amount]	[Amount]	[Source]
[Transport and field work]	[Trips / days]	[Amount]	[Amount]	[Source]
[Equipment or infrastructure]	[Specification]	[Amount]	[Amount]	[Source]
[Monitoring and reporting]	[Visits / reports]	[Amount]	[Amount]	[Source]
[Other direct costs]	[Basis]	[Amount]	[Amount]	[Source]
Total			[Total project cost]	[Total request]

Budget assumptions: *[State currency, exchange rate and date, price source, procurement assumptions, overhead or management rate, and contingency.]*

_____

_____

Other funding or contribution: *[List confirmed and pending contributions separately. Do not count pending funds as confirmed.]*

_____

Value for money: *[What useful result does the requested amount buy? Give a relevant cost per trainee, hectare, surviving tree or other outcome where possible.]*

_____

_____

Funding request

KETSO is requesting [amount and currency] from [donor] for [project period]. This contribution will fund [main cost areas] and help achieve [main measurable result].

Teaching check: Can another person reproduce the totals from the quantities and unit costs? Are assets and recurring costs clearly distinguished?

Final proposal review

Before submission, ask a colleague to review the proposal from the donor's point of view. Replace every prompt and confirm all figures and claims.

Review	Question	Ready?
Problem	The proposal identifies who is affected, what is happening, root causes and supporting evidence.	☐ Yes ☐ Revise
Evidence	Facts, community views, assumptions and information still to verify are distinguishable.	☐ Yes ☐ Revise
Fit	The project responds to the donor's stated priorities without inventing donor requirements.	☐ Yes ☐ Revise
Logic	Activities lead to outputs, outputs lead to outcomes, and the causal link is explained.	☐ Yes ☐ Revise
Feasibility	The site, permissions, partners, staff time and timeline are realistic.	☐ Yes ☐ Revise
Results	Indicators have baselines, targets, sources, timing and responsible people.	☐ Yes ☐ Revise
Sustainability	Community and KETSO legacy, ownership, maintenance and recurring costs are specified.	☐ Yes ☐ Revise
Budget	The request matches the budget; calculations, funding sources and assumptions are clear.	☐ Yes ☐ Revise
Risk	Important delivery, safeguarding and continuation risks have practical owners and actions.	☐ Yes ☐ Revise
Readability	The summary is concise, the ask is clear, and the proposal uses plain language.	☐ Yes ☐ Revise

Teaching reflection

Strongest part: *[What part of this proposal is most convincing, and why?]*

Biggest remaining gap: *[What evidence, decision or cost still needs work?]*

Next action and owner: *[What will happen next, who will do it, and by when?]*