



What to Say and Why: A Strategic Approach to Proposals

A practical guide for small nonprofit teams



Today's Goal



Simplify the grant writing process



Reduce time burden on small teams



Strengthen proposals with data



Align with funder expectations



What We Learned (2025 Cycle)



Many proposals lacked quantitative data



Strongest proposals included clear activities
+ measurable outcomes



Attachments were underutilized



Why Data Matters



Mission

Tells us why you do the work



Numbers

Show the real-world impact



Funders

Look for measurable results



Examples of Strong Data Use



Include in every proposal:

- Number of people served
- Percentage of outcomes achieved
- Time-specific results
- Clear benchmarks



Simplified Proposal Framework

1 Summary

2 Organization

3 Need

4 Project

5 Outcomes

6 Evaluation

7 Staff

8 Funding

9 Conclusion



Proposal Summary & Organization



Proposal Summary

- One concise paragraph
- Amount requested
- Clear purpose statement

**Consider writing this last*



Organization Description

- Mission statement
- Year founded
- Whom you serve
- Key statistics (reach, impact)



Need & Project



Need

- What problem are you addressing?
- Use local data if possible
- Keep it focused



Project

- Key details supported with data
- Tie directly to mission
- Answer the question: “Why this project for this funder?”



Outcomes & Evaluation



Outcomes

- What are your anticipated goals?
(Be specific)
- Use numbers + percentages
- Define success clearly



Evaluation

- How will you measure success?
- What metrics will you track?
- Keep it simple and realistic



Staff & Funding



Staff

- Who is leading the work?
- Cite relevant experience
- Keep it brief



Funding

- Committed funds
- Pending requests
- Revenue sources

Transparency builds trust



Conclusion



Reinforce impact



Restate need



Thank the funder



Efficiency Tips



Reuse strong language across proposals



Build and maintain a data bank



Keep templates updated



Use attachments strategically



Final Takeaways

1

Be clear

Every word should serve a purpose

2

Be concise

Respect the funder's time

3

Use data

Numbers tell a more compelling story

4

Make the case easy

Guide the funder to say yes



Before vs. After: Strengthening with Data

BEFORE

We provide meals to seniors in our community who are unable to cook for themselves. Our program improves quality of life and reduces isolation.

AFTER

Goal: In 2026, we will deliver 25,000 meals to 180 homebound seniors in El Paso County and Teller Counties.

Evaluation: 90% of clients surveyed will report improved food security, and 75% will report reduced feelings of isolation after six months of service.

One source for local data to use in grants: OurSpaciousSkies.org



PIKES PEAK
REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES

CAPSTONE SUMMARY

* REGIONAL VISIONING *

Scan for a deep dive into the data



DRIVING VALUES
of the Region

TRANQUILITY + PEACE

enjoyed from healthy living in the stunning scenic beauty and outdoor adventure and wonder of this place.

BENEFITS
People Seek

Natural environment that **alleviates stress, provides inspiration, health, and energy for mind, body, and soul.** Endless opportunities to experience, celebrate, and enjoy our beloved outdoors and vistas.

Human thriving from being **connected to things and people we love** and caring/supportive communities that make us feel accepted and make communities stronger.

PRIORITIES
People Treasure

NATURE + HEALTHY LIVING

GROWTH MANAGEMENT

HOUSING

MOBILITY / TRANSPORTATION

EDUCATION

SOLUTIONS
People Believe are Needed

GREATER ACCESS

- More neighborhood parks
- Ensure disabled and physically challenged can access/enjoy nature
- Public bathrooms in parks/trails
- Shuttle/public transportation options to get to outdoor spaces

PRESERVATION

- More sustainable use of water
- More proactive wildfire mitigation

BEAUTIFICATION

- Cleanup across the region
- Revitalize rundown areas

ACCESS TO GOOD HEALTHCARE

- Preserve farms/ag
- More walkable neighborhoods
- Revitalize rundown areas
- Preserve unique character of small towns, with all critical components they need to thrive, and buffer areas

- Increase number and availability of homes in targeted ways:

- Teller
- Central COS
- SE COS
- Northgate/AFA

- More community partnerships
- Convert underutilized spaces to housing

- Buyer/renter assistance
- More Transit-Oriented Development

- Better maintenance and improvement of existing roadways
- Invest in PT to better connect people to places/things they need and love

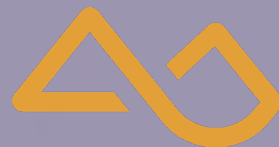
- Walkable, pedestrian friendly streets, sidewalks, greenways, and trails

- Focused education to generate the workforce and talented professionals needed for strong communities

- High quality work and job skill training in HS

- Improve teacher quality
- Provide counseling and mentoring in HS so students have a plan

HEART + MIND STRATEGIES UTILIZED ITS PROVEN AND INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO VALUES-BASED RESEARCH.



Discussion & Q&A

- What challenges do you face when applying for grants?
- Where do you struggle most with using data?
- What would make the process easier for your organization?

We welcome your questions and discussion.