FREE GUIDE

Annotated Sample Grant Proposal (Free PDF)

One short, entirely fictional grant proposal with a reviewer-style comment beside every section, and a checklist for applying the same reading to your own draft.

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> This is a sample proposal for learning. It is entirely fictional: the organization, the place, the funder, the sources and every figure are invented. It shows how the sections of a short proposal fit together and how a reviewer might read them. It is not a model to copy, and your funder's own instructions and headings always come first.

About the sample

This example is fictional. Example Neighbors Meals, Tallowmere County and the Example Community Fund do not exist. Read the left column as the proposal and the right column as a reviewer's notes. Each note says what works and one thing that could be stronger.

1. Summary

Proposal text	Reviewer comment
Example Neighbors Meals asks the Example Community Fund for $24,000 over 12 months to extend home-delivered meals from three days a week to five for 60 homebound older adults in Tallowmere County. The grant will pay for a part-time kitchen assistant, food for the added meals, volunteer mileage and insulated carriers. By the end of the year, we expect fewer clients to report skipping meals.	Works: the amount, the period, who benefits and what the money buys are all in the first two sentences. Could be stronger: the expected result has no number here, although the objectives section gives one. Repeat it.

2. Organization background

Proposal text	Reviewer comment
Example Neighbors Meals has delivered hot lunches to homebound older adults in Tallowmere County since 2014. One full-time kitchen manager, one part-time coordinator and 45 volunteer drivers prepare and deliver about 9,000 meals a year from the kitchen of a local community hall. The county has renewed its service contract with us five times.	Works: capacity is shown with facts, not adjectives, and the contract renewals are evidence that another funder trusts the work. Could be stronger: nothing is said about financial management. One sentence on who keeps the books and reviews the accounts would help.

3. Statement of need

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This example is fictional. The survey, the waiting list and every figure below are invented.

Proposal text	Reviewer comment
Tallowmere County is rural, and many residents live more than 10 miles from a grocery store. In the county's 2025 survey of older residents (an invented source), 1 in 5 adults over 70 who live alone said they had skipped a meal in the past week because they could not shop or cook. Our own client survey in March found that 27 of 60 clients, or 45 percent, skipped at least one meal in the past week, most often on the two weekdays we do not deliver. Clients have asked for five-day service, and we do not have the kitchen hours to provide it.	Works: the need is about people in the community, it uses local figures with a source and date, and the organization's own data points straight at the gap the project fills. Could be stronger: it does not say what skipped meals lead to for this group. One sourced sentence on the consequence would raise the stakes without exaggeration.

4. Goal and objectives

Proposal text	Reviewer comment
Goal: homebound older adults in Tallowmere County eat a full meal every weekday. Objective 1: by the end of month 3, deliver meals five days a week to all 60 current clients. Objective 2: across months 4 to 12, deliver at least 95 percent of scheduled meals on the scheduled day. Objective 3: by month 12, reduce the share of clients who report skipping a meal in the past week from 45 percent to 20 percent or less, measured by our client survey.	Works: each objective has a number, a date and a measure, and Objective 3 is a change for clients, not only a count of activity. It starts from the baseline given in the need section. Could be stronger: the proposal does not explain why 20 percent is a realistic target. A sentence of reasoning would make it credible.

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5. Activities and timeline

Proposal text	Reviewer comment
Months 1 and 2: hire and train a kitchen assistant for 15 hours a week, recruit 10 more volunteer drivers, and buy 30 insulated carriers. Month 3: begin Tuesday and Thursday deliveries on the four existing routes. Months 4 to 12: full five-day service, with the coordinator checking delivery logs each week. Months 6 and 12: client survey by phone. The kitchen manager is responsible for meals and food safety, and the coordinator for routes, volunteers and records.	Works: activities are dated, each one leads to an objective, and named roles own the work. Could be stronger: the plan relies on recruiting 10 new drivers in two months and does not say what happens if that falls short. Add a fallback.

6. Evaluation

Proposal text	Reviewer comment
We will track three measures. Meals delivered and on-time rate come from the drivers' daily delivery logs, which the coordinator totals each week. Skipped meals are measured by a five-question phone survey of all clients at the start, at month 6 and at month 12, carried out by two trained volunteers who do not deliver to the clients they call. The kitchen manager and coordinator will review results every quarter and report to the board and the funder.	Works: every objective has a measure, a tool, a person and a schedule, and the survey uses the same question as the baseline. Having callers who are not the client's own driver reduces polite answers. Could be stronger: it does not say what the organization will do if results are poor at month 6.

7. Budget

Proposal text	Reviewer comment
Kitchen assistant: $18 an hour x 15 hours x 50 weeks = $13,500. Food for added meals: 60 clients x 2 meals x 50 weeks = 6,000 meals x $1.25 = $7,500. Volunteer mileage: 3,000 added miles x $0.50, our board-approved rate = $1,500. Insulated carriers: 30 x $50 = $1,500. Total request: $24,000. The existing three-day service, valued at $41,000 a year, continues to be paid for by the county contract and individual donations, and is not part of this request.	Works: every line shows its calculation, the lines add up to the request, and each cost matches an activity in the narrative. Other funding is stated honestly. Could be stronger: no payroll costs beyond wages are shown for the assistant. If there are none, say so. If there are, they belong in the budget.

8. Sustainability

Proposal text	Reviewer comment
We will ask the county to include five-day service when the contract is renewed in the month after this grant ends, using the delivery and survey results as evidence. The board has also agreed to direct the proceeds of the spring appeal to the added meals. If neither source covers the full cost, we will keep five-day service for the clients with the highest need and return the others to three days.	Works: it names specific sources, links them to the evaluation data and is honest about what happens if the money does not come. Could be stronger: there is no figure for what must be raised each year after the grant. State the annual cost to sustain.

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What a reviewer would say overall

The sections agree with each other: the 45 percent baseline in the need section returns in the objectives and the evaluation, and every budget line pays for a dated activity. The weak points are small gaps a reader has to fill in: a missing fallback, a target with no reasoning and a cost that may be left out. Closing those gaps is ordinary revision work.

Use it on your own draft

- [ ] The amount, period, people served and purpose appear in the first two sentences
- [ ] Capacity is shown with facts a reviewer could check
- [ ] The need uses local figures, each with a source and a year
- [ ] The need describes a gap in the community, not in our finances
- [ ] Each objective has a number, a date and a measure
- [ ] A baseline figure appears before any target for change
- [ ] Each activity is dated, owned by a role and tied to an objective
- [ ] Each objective has a measure, a tool, a person and a schedule
- [ ] Each budget line shows its calculation, and the lines add up
- [ ] Figures match everywhere they appear
- [ ] The plan says what happens if a key assumption fails
- [ ] Someone outside the team has written one "could be stronger" note for each section

> **Want help with this?** The Complete Grant Architect is a free 16-week grant writing course, and you can hire a grant writer for your next proposal. Both are at subthesis.com.

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