

ResourceAssociates

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# Advanced Grant Proposal Writing

*The Proposal Needs Section*

*Exemplary Tips, Techniques and Examples*

*Today's Presenter ...*



# Marissa Burger

- 10 Years with Resource Associates
- Bachelor of Science Degree in Journalism from California Polytechnic State University San Luis Obispo
- Reviews over 200 applications a year
- Federal Reviewer
- Contributor to some of the highest scoring federal proposals in the Country
- Background in Technical Writing and Journalism

The background features abstract, overlapping geometric shapes in various shades of blue, ranging from light sky blue to deep navy blue. The shapes are primarily triangles and polygons, creating a dynamic, layered effect. The text is centered on a white background that is partially framed by these blue shapes.

# Why is the Needs Section of a Grant so Critical?

- ▶ The Needs Section of a grant is critical because this is where you snag the reviewers' attention and prove why your organization is a worthy recipient of their funds.

*Reviewers read hundreds of proposals which start blending together pretty fast. Give them an undeniable reason to remember you - to put your project at the top of their list.*

A good Needs Section is truly the difference between getting funded or having your proposal tossed in the slush pile.  
*Competition is fierce. There's no room for error.*

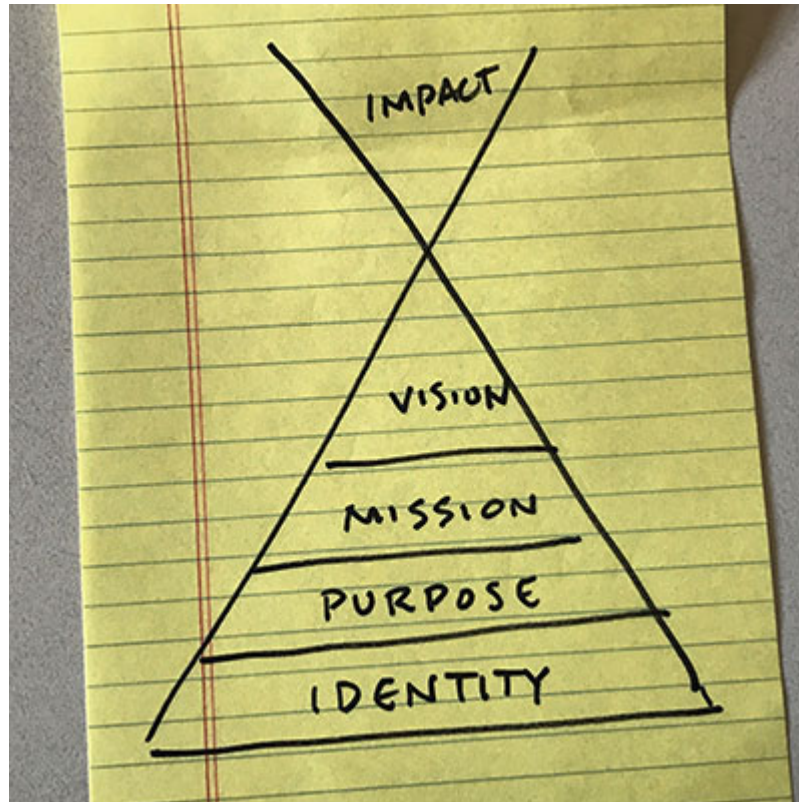
Your organization should have a clear, strong mission and purpose that is reflected in the opening paragraphs of your Needs Section. They should focus on the demographic you serve, as opposed to the needs of your organization. Tie them into the current situation.

# What is my Organization's Mission?

## **American Diabetes Association:**

To prevent and cure diabetes and to improve the lives of all people affected by diabetes.

# What is my Organization's Purpose?





# Who do we/I Serve? (and why?)

# What is the Current Situation (problem)?

# What is our Proposed Solution?

Now tie them all together into one paragraph and you will have your Needs Statement, which is the blueprint for your entire Needs Section.

- ▶ Mission
- ▶ Purpose
- ▶ Those you Serve
- ▶ Situation / Problem
- ▶ Proposed Solution

# What are the Elements of a Successful **Needs Section**?

# Elements of a Successful Needs Section

- (1) Definition of the Problem
- (2) Facts and Statistics
- (3) Cause, Symptoms and Effect
- (4) Urgency and Proposed Solution

# (1) Define the Problem

You identified the problem in your Needs Statement. Now it's time to get into the nitty-gritty. Be direct and specific in your identification of the problem(s) as they currently exist in your geographic area and clarify whether the issue(s) are local, regional, statewide and/or on a national level. The most important thing here - what reviewers want to know - is how the issues affect your *local* population. State and Federal stats are relatively easy to come by, but *you* have intimate knowledge of your community that reviewers are not likely privy to.

# Get Personal

The #1 goal when writing your Needs Section is to illicit “The Goose Bump Factor” in reviewers, which means you have struck both a nerve, and their attention.

- ▶ *What local anecdotes, facts, stats, articles, stories, testimonies or letters of support can I gather for this project that will backup my community’s Need?*



# Don't Assume

In order to solve a problem, you have to identify it first - and once you do, you shouldn't assume the reader(s) of your proposal know anything about your community or the issues. Be specific and brief as possible, and realistically portray the issues.

# Let Go of Fear and Ego

Some applicants don't want to focus on the difficult aspects of their project because they feel it may reflect negatively upon them, their organization, or community. It's important to put your ego and fears aside and lay out the problem as it exists. If things look too rosy, reviewers will wonder why you're applying! However, at the same time, don't dwell on the negative and portray the need as too overwhelming to solve.

# Ask Yourself these Questions

- ▶ How are the identified problems manifesting themselves in my community?
- ▶ How can I tie them into similar regional and/or statewide problems?
- ▶ How can I compare them to similar issues on the national level?  
(Don't spend a lot of time here - reviewers already know! You just want to let them know that you do, as well.)

## (2) Facts & Stats

It's absolutely *critical* to have relevant, current information for every proposal you write, every time. Before you get started, do your research and gather everything you'll need to begin an informed writing process. This information may include studies, statistics, program evaluations, copies of prior grant applications, reviewers' notes, annual reports, meeting minutes and more.

- ▶ *Stats should always be current, relevant and local, while also being tied into the bigger picture. This information will include (but is not limited to): number of people who will participate / benefit from the program; ethnicity, gender and education level; stats on factors leading to the problem (ie: poverty, drugs, gang activity, etc.), success rate and probability of sustainability.*

## Bottom Line

Reviewers can smell “sloppy copy” a mile away. Ensure all statements are well-researched and based on fact, with citations and appendix documents included where necessary and allowed.

# Stats - Resources

In addition to your state and local government resources, be sure to visit the following sites.

- ▶ United States Census Bureau: American Factfinder

<https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>

- ▶ Center for Disease Control

<https://www.cdc.gov/datastatistics/>

## (3) Cause, Symptoms and Effect

To make your Needs Section strong, describe another community that faced issues similar to yours, with a successful outcome. Outline the origins of the problem (Cause), what it looked / felt like (Symptoms), and the state of affairs at the time of the grant application (Effect). Describe that community's proposed solution and the subsequent outcomes. Doing this will provide credibility and validation to the project you're proposing.

Reviewers will likely have more confidence in your application if there has been success in similar projects. Also, be sure to quote experts and compelling studies, when relevant.



## (4) Urgency and Solution

Another great tactic is to immediately weave your community supporters and coalitions into the Needs narrative. Reference them by name, include them when you speak of community meetings, assessments, planning and participation. They should come from a varied community demographic – from agencies/organizations helping to execute the program, to individuals and groups that will benefit. A vested, community team effort shows urgency, strength, purpose and momentum. A successful solution is achieved through passionate collaboration.

## Final Thoughts: Questions to ask yourself before you declare your Needs Section complete

- ▶ Does the need coincide with my organization's purpose and goals?
- ▶ Do I have documented evidence to include?
- ▶ Does my proposal have solid “goose bump” appeal?
- ▶ Is my Needs Section a stand-alone document?
- ▶ Have I followed the RFP's requirements?
- ▶ Have I included headers and sub-headers, where appropriate, to make it an easier read?
- ▶ Have I done at least three edits on my Needs Section?
- ▶ Have I given it to someone else to read and critique?

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# Resource Associates

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