Writing your submission

Writing a proposal is just like having a conversation with a buyer.
The only difference is that it's done in writing, rather than face to face.
(Haydon, R. 2007, 'The Shredder Test', p. 12)

1. **ALWAYS use the guidelines and application forms provided by the funder** – some funding bodies will not accept applications if they are not completed within their own templates. If it is not clear whether they have application forms, contact the funder directly to make sure – this could save you a lot of disappointment down the track.

2. **Follow the guidelines**: Do not think that your project and/or organisation are so unique that it doesn't matter if you fall outside the guidelines. It does, so if you cannot meet the criteria outlined by the funder, look for another funder who is a better match. Only provide what you are asked to provide. Funders have spent time thinking about their guidelines and what they require from applicants (hence you'll find that many funders update this information regularly). What you think is important may not be what the funder thinks is important to them at this point in time. Applicants need to respect and acknowledge this fact by only providing the information the funder seeks.

3. **Again, organisation is key** – map out the various sections of your proposal before you start and make sure you stick to the plan. Here is a guide to some of the important elements you may be asked to include:

   - ***Proposal statement (a brief summary)*** – be as clear and concise as possible about what you are proposing from the outset (say who the project will benefit and how much it will cost; why is your proposal 'special/distinct'?) – you can provide more detail in the body of your proposal.

   - ***Why is the funding needed?*** - what 'gap' will it fill or problem will it solve? Include any relevant data, and any alternate ways considered to fill this need (why are they not appropriate).

   - ***Aim*** - What do you hope to achieve? Who will benefit and why (can you support that statement with clear evidence)? Are there wider implications for other schools/areas?

   - ***Implementation plan and budget***– explain how funding will be effectively allocated and against what specific timeframe (include specific start and end dates). Identify who will be the key contact person for the project and how will they keep the funder up-to-date with developments or changes. This might be done in an action table that is clear and easy to read. If necessary, identify whether this project will require ongoing support once funding runs out and how you propose to seek that support.

   - ***Supporting organisations*** – identify any other schools/agencies/businesses who are supporting or auspicing or collaborating in this proposal. What is their interest and how will they support (e.g. in-kind, additional funds etc.)

- ***The project 'team'*** – who will be directly involved in the project and why? (list names and positions and identify a 'project manager'; nominate who will be accountable for expenditure/reporting etc.).

- ***Evaluating success*** – identify how you will determine whether your project has been successful.

If there is no application template, then you may want to also keep these strategies in mind;

a) *Summary boxes*: Depending on the length of the proposal, at the end of each section of your proposal in a small shaded box succinctly reiterate the key points (remember the advisor to Blair's strategy)

b) *Breakout boxes*: Similar to a summary box, but these boxes containing 'killer points' from your proposal sit next to the text throughout the proposal.

4. **Address the funders evaluation criteria** – it is very important to make sure you address any evaluation criteria in the various sections of your proposal – make it easy for the funder to 'tick' these off as they go through your proposal.

5. **Use sequenced and clear headings** – funding committees are often constrained by time and will be required to 'wade' through a pile of applications; it is important that they are able to 'grasp' the major elements of your proposal and how it links with their funding philosophy easily.

6. **Appendices** – Remember to keep the body of your proposal as concise as possible and consider adding more detailed evidence/supporting material in an appendices/attachment. However, **MAKE SURE APPENDICES/ATTACHMENTS ARE ALLOWED** – some funding bodies will not permit additional material beyond the application form.

7. **Style and language** – keep the language simple and sentences short; don't over-complicate the proposal with sophisticated terminology and jargon. You want to be sure the funder, who may know nothing about your school, understands what you are telling them. There should be no room for misinterpretation. If you need to use acronyms, make sure you write the full name/title in full from the outset.**.**

8. **Answer ALL questions** – never leave areas blank, the questions are there for a specific reason. Again, if you are unclear, contact the funder.

9. **Proof-read** – allow time for someone else (preferably someone not involved in the project you are proposing) to proof-read your proposal. This will help identify any errors as well as assist in determining whether what you propose is clear.

10. **Submit applications according to guidelines (pay attention to the details)** – many funding bodies are very clear about how they want to receive your submission (e.g. mail, email, fax etc.); how many copies they want (some funders even specify the number plus whether they should be bound, or stapled and so on); and the deadlines. Make sure you allow plenty of time for delivery as most funding bodies are very clear that they will not accept late applications.