



Business Writing Sample

Tips for writing proposals for projects or services

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Proposal- and tender-writing

Tailored guidance

After reviewing a proposal for providing recruitment services, I took the initiative to write up some tips so the client could improve their future proposals. Here I share some extracts of the more general content.

1. Introduction

Crafting project proposals takes a great deal of practice and time, but with each one completed and sent out, you learn something. Proposals can be painful, but they can also be energizing to produce and yield surprising results. A heartening fact is that like a good whisky, project proposals tend to mature and get better over time!

2. General Writing Tips

- **Focus content on the objectives of the proposal and the requirements for each section. Carefully look at the evaluation criteria and weighting to know where you've got to excel.**

In many requests for proposals, the highest weightings are given to the technical approach and methodology and to experience of the key personnel, sometimes up to 50%.

- **Keep sentences as short and simple as possible: one sentence = one idea.**

The reader can get lost if too much information is packed into a sentence. The result might be longer, but it's easier to read.

3. Organization Description (brief)

Average evaluation weighting: 0-10%

Content for this section may seem standard but it's still important to focus it on the project/assignment you are applying for. I have tried to write a brief that covers the content usually required in this section.

4. Firm's References / Organization Description (detailed)

Average evaluation weighting: 0-10%, but could be higher for more complicated or high-level contracts

Tips:

- Unless a page limit is given, try to keep the narrative to two pages.
- If going for a joint venture, describe the reason and benefits it will bring.
- Explain how you/your venture will meet or go beyond their needs. Keep language focused here—avoid sweeping statements.

5. Previous Assignments / Relevant Services Carried Out in the Last Five Years

Average evaluation weighting: 0-10%, but could be higher for more complicated or high-level contracts. For sub-criteria related to individual consultants/experts, this could go up to 40%.

Tips:

- Unless they ask for a specific order, e.g. chronological, think about what will most impress the client and put the most impressive first. Are they looking for size (e.g. number of staff or budget/value), are they interested in the calibre of your client, or are they looking at the technical ability and complexity?

6. Technical Approach and Methodology

Average evaluation weighting: 20-50%. It's vital to make a strong case, show how you understand the TOR/objectives, and be succinct.

This section will obviously be specific to each proposal and therefore content needs to be tailored. You may be able to adapt some content from other proposals you write.

Tips:

- Write your approach to the services and methodology in the context of the objectives. Try splitting the two:
- Think about the order of your approach/methodology. The most relevant and results-driven should appear first. E.g.

7. Work plan

This section may be evaluated along with technical approach and methodology or along with quality. Either way, it's important to make it clear and logical.

Tips

- Be consistent with your technical approach and methodology.
- Cover all planning points as per the TOR—this is to show understanding and ability to translate them into a doable work plan.

8. Organization and Staffing

Average evaluation weighting: 20-50%. It's crucial to provide detailed information and demonstrate how the team will meet the needs of the RFP/TOR.

This section is about the structure and composition of your team. It includes the key experts, non-key experts and any technical and administrative support staff. It's also where you explain the set-up of a joint venture or association.

Tips

- State exactly what role and responsibility each team member has, and how they will relate to each other.
- Using a table will cut down on some of the narrative and allow the reader to see how your staffing proposal will work.