

Tips on Preparing a Proposal for the Education Development Fund (EDF)

As you prepare your proposal, keep in mind that reviewers evaluate the potential worth of your project to improve education or contribute to research, and whether your project fits the EDF program purposes. They also judge feasibility—whether it appears you will be able to accomplish what you propose. Both of these qualities are important.

EDF proposals are intentionally brief (7 pages) so it is important to be clear and organized. Do not be eloquent unless you can do so concisely. Focus on the project at hand for which you desire funding and do not elaborate on related activities except as needed to place this project in context. Follow the proposal narrative outline found in the guidelines and read the proposal guidelines, particularly relating to the budget and what will or will not be funded.

We receive proposals for a wide variety of projects, so providing specific advice on proposal preparation is difficult. In all cases, it helps if you clearly link project objectives to activities, and in turn to outcomes. This exercise will also help you determine whether there are any gaps in your plans. OCRME consultants are always available to assist you in preparing a proposal and can expand on the advice given here. Contact the main office at 335-8901 and you will be connected with a consultant.

Rationale:

Your rationale should describe the need for the project and relate the need to one or more of the purposes of the EDF program as described in the guidelines. Although extensive needs assessment is usually unnecessary for an EDF proposal, you should describe any evidence available that justifies the need, whether course or clerkship evaluation data or evidence from the research literature. Space does not allow the amount of detail one might expect in a literature review for a manuscript—so include the most pertinent citations only.

General note: Avoid technical terminology, but if unavoidable, define terms that are not common knowledge. Avoid acronyms if possible but if you are using a series of them, group them in a footnote or paragraph so reviewers can easily find them.

Objectives:

State succinctly the outcomes or results you intend and that logically follow from the rationale. You will elaborate on these in the section on outcomes.

Student population:

State simply and directly the type and number of learners that will be served by your project during the grant period. If you are uncertain of exact numbers, provide a reasonable estimate. If you are conducting a pilot study with a smaller number of learners, you may state future numbers who will benefit but be clear about numbers for the pilot project. If your project will immediately benefit one group of learners but later will benefit others, list primary and secondary target groups.

Activities:

List and describe what you are actually going to do to achieve the objectives. Describe activities in a logical manner such as by objective or chronologically. If other people are collaborating or supporting you, describe their various roles and responsibilities.

See note under Evaluation concerning projects that are primarily research.

Time Schedule:

It is important to provide a clear timeline because reviewers seek this information to gauge the feasibility of accomplishing your activities. Provide dates when you expect to accomplish the activities. The more complex your project, the greater the importance of clearly stating your timeline. A list of dates, a table or a Gantt-type chart is often helpful in this regard.

Outcomes:

In this section, you will elaborate on the objectives. EDF reviewers are interested in outcome objectives, which are statements describing what will result from your project activities. Without this, reviewers can't assess the merit of your activities and the quality of your evaluation plans. Indeed, clear objectives are critical to developing your evaluation plan because they identify the targets you will measure to gauge project success.

Outcomes may be short-term, intermediate or long-term. Short-term outcomes for an educational project usually describe the products that will be produced and what students will learn as the result of your activities. Intermediate and long-term objectives typically describe the impact of student learning on their performance later on, and the impact on the educational mission of the college. For example, in a pilot project to develop training in chronic disease management the short-term outcomes could include learners' reaction to the training and new knowledge in communication skills. An intermediate outcome could be that students are able to use these new skills in their interactions with real patients. A longer-term outcome could be that students feel more confident and perform more effectively in their clinical rotations.

Since EDF grants are short-term, the primary focus is on your short-term goals, but reviewers will be favorably inclined towards projects that will impact education beyond the grant period. Likewise, you may not be able to measure the full impact of your project during the grant period, but if you intend to do so you should state these plans. If yours is a research project, you may prefer to state outcomes as hypotheses or questions and the impact that your research study could have in addressing educational questions and contributing to medical education.

It may be helpful to include a matrix, diagram, flow chart, logic model or other graphic to illustrate your project aims and activities.¹

Evaluation:

Please note that preparing an evaluation plan will be challenging for those who have never done this for an educational project. OCRME consultants are available to assist you at no charge and can provide additional resources to help you develop and conduct your evaluation. Contact Susan Lenocho (susan-lenocho@uiowa.edu; phone 5-8907) for assistance.

The quality of the evaluation plan is as important as the project plans. Reviewers will not be satisfied with vague descriptions or indications that you have not considered evaluation. Space limitations will not allow you to describe your evaluation in detail but you can provide concise information in the proposal for reviewers to judge the quality of your evaluation plans.

The purpose of the EDF program is improvement and innovation in medical education, so evaluation plans typically should include both process (whether the project was implemented as intended and if not, what happened) and outcomes assessment regarding the effectiveness and efficiency of your program. Reviewers are most interested in hearing how you will assess and evaluate outcomes. *If the main purpose of your project is to conduct a needs assessment, evaluation study or to conduct research, then your evaluation is essentially your project*

¹ See a the brief description of a logic model at the end of this guide.

activities. If that is the case, you may describe your study plans within the activities section and refer the reader to that section.

As a general guide, consider providing this information about your evaluation design:

1. State the purpose of your evaluation study and your research or evaluation questions.
2. Describe how you will assess the outcomes you have identified, as well as significant intervening mechanisms by which your activities will result in the outcomes. Another way to think about this is to identify your independent and dependent variables.
3. Describe the measurement tools you will use and indicate their state of development: are you using existing tools or will you develop new tools? How will you ensure they are reliable and valid for your study? You may append the instrument, or portions of it, bearing in mind that this is optional material for reviewers if over the 7-page maximum.
4. Describe the main features of your study design, including if relevant, sampling methods, time-course of assessments and interventions, etc. Feel free to include a simple diagram or flowchart to illustrate.
5. Describe how you will analyze the data. What are the major comparisons of interest and how will they be performed?

Budget Justification:

Provide adequate justification and accurate estimates for the all the categories you request. You may round up to the nearest dollar but do not over-estimate in order to bring the total to the maximum allowed. Be sure to read the guidelines concerning requests that will not be granted (e.g., faculty salaries, secretarial support, travel, space renovation, replacing regular departmental funding). The review committee does reduce or remove budget items deemed excessive or unjustified.

Personnel: Provide percent salary or hourly wage along with benefits and expected time on the project. In the justification or activities section, describe what each person's tasks and responsibilities will be.

Equipment: Provide real estimates and the source for the estimate. Computer hardware and audiovisual equipment requests are generally limited to \$5,000 and all requests are carefully examined. It is expected that departments will be willing to share use of expensive equipment primarily purchased with EDF funds once the project is completed.

Consultations: Clearly indicate that the estimate for the service has been made in consultation with the service. You may attach a letter from the service provider. Provide justification if you are using consulting services outside the College when such services are available within.

Other notes about the budget justification:

This is a good place to note significant resources you will have for which you are not requesting funds. This information may help reviewers determine whether you have considered, and provided for, all the resources you will need.

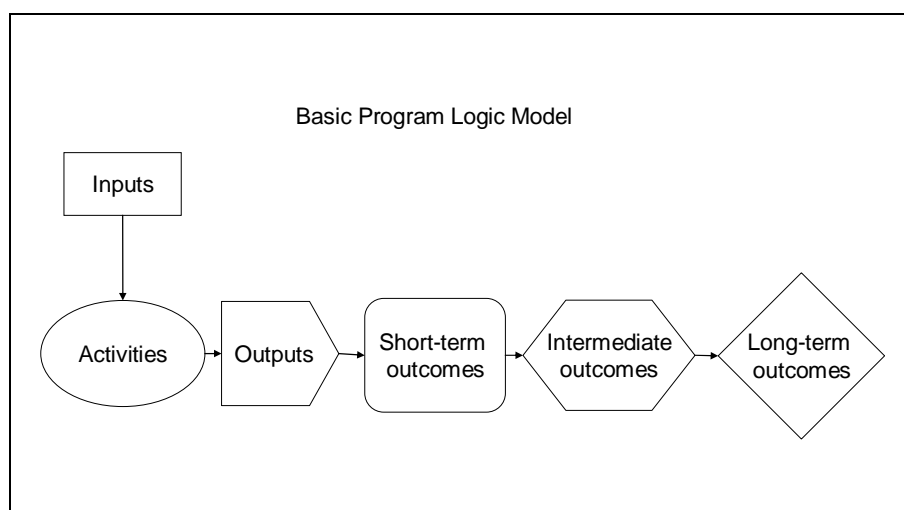
These are one-time grants so if your project will be ongoing and require continuing support, it is to your advantage to be able to state that you will have this. You may attach a letter of support from the appropriate source to indicate future support will be available to continue the educational program if it proves to be successful through this project.

General note: Letters of support, samples of instruments, and other such material may be appended if not too lengthy. Bear in mind that it is up to reviewers whether they choose to look at appendices and if you are excessive you risk having the proposal returned to you.

Logic Models

To help you think about your project plans, consider developing a logic model. A logic model is a map or diagram showing your program components and your underlying rationale about how and why you think the program will work. It helps you focus on these important questions:

- Are the goals of your project realistic?
- Are your assumptions and expectations valid?
- Are the activities of your program logical in relation to the goals?
- Have you identified sufficient resources?
- Have you identified measures of project success that are relevant to project objectives?



Inputs are the resources that go into your program, including the target learners.

Activities are the events or actions that will take place as part of your project.

Outcomes are the expected results of your project activities (see discussion of outcomes).

- Short-term outcomes are the immediate effects of your program, usually focused on knowledge, attitudes and skills gained by your targeted learners. They may also be the products (outputs) of your activities.
- Intermediate outcomes include behavior change or changes in practice.
- Long-term outcomes may take longer to achieve, perhaps after your grant has ended. They include longer-term consequences on target learners, or on the larger educational program or organization.