**DEVELOPING A GRANT PROPOSAL**

***Preparation***

A successful grant proposal is one that is well prepared, thoughtfully planned, and concisely packaged. The potential applicant should become familiar with all of the pertinent programme criteria related to the programme from which assistance is sought. Refer to the information contact person listed in the programme description before developing a proposal to obtain information such as whether funding is available, when applicable deadlines occur, and the process used by the grantor agency for accepting applications. Applicants should remember that the basic requirements, application forms, information and procedures vary with the National agency making the grant award. Individuals without prior grant proposal writing experience may find it useful to attend a grant writing workshop. A workshop can amplify the basic information presented here. Applicants interested in additional readings on grants and proposal development should consult the references provided in this product.

***Developing Ideas for the Proposal***

When developing an idea for a proposal it is important to determine if the idea has been considered in the applicant's locality or State. A careful check should be made with legislators and area government agencies and related public and private agencies, which may currently have grant awards or contracts to do similar work. If a similar programme already exists, the applicant may need to reconsider submitting the proposed project, particularly if duplication of effort is perceived. If significant differences or improvements in the proposed project's goals can be clearly established, it may be worthwhile to pursue National assistance.

***Community Support***

While many entrepreneurs may find it difficult to deal with, community support for most proposals is essential. Once proposal summary is developed, look for individuals or groups representing academic, political, professional, and law organizations, which may be willing to support the proposal in writing. The type and calibre of community support is critical in the initial and subsequent review phases. Numerous letters of support can be persuasive to a grantor agency. Do not overlook support from local government agencies and public officials. Letters of endorsement detailing exact areas of project sanction and commitment are often requested as part of a proposal to a National agency. Several months may be required to develop letters of endorsement since something of value (e.g., buildings, staff, services) is sometimes negotiated between the parties involved.

Many agencies require, in writing, affiliation agreements (a mutual agreement to share services between agencies) and building space commitments prior to either grant approval or award. A useful method of generating community support may be to hold meetings with the top decision makers in the community who would be concerned with the subject matter of the proposal. The forum for discussion may include a query into the merits of the proposal, development of a contract of support for the proposal, to generate data in support of the proposal, or development of a strategy to create proposal support from a large number of community groups.

***Identification of a Funding Resource***

A review of the Objectives and Uses and Use Restrictions sections of the programme description can point out which programmes might provide funding for an idea. Do not overlook the related programmes as potential resources. Both the applicant and the grantor agency should have the same interests, intentions, and needs if a proposal is to be considered an acceptable candidate for funding.

Once a potential grantor agency is identified, call the contact telephone number identified in Information Contacts and ask for a grant application kit. Later, get to know some of the grantor agency personnel. Ask for suggestions, criticisms, and advice about the proposed project. In many cases, the more agency personnel know about the proposal, the better the chance of support and of an eventual favourable decision. Sometimes it is useful to send the proposal summary to a specific agency official in a separate cover letter, and ask for review and comment at the earliest possible convenience. Always check with the National agency to determine its preference if this approach is under consideration. If the review is unfavourable and differences cannot be resolved, ask the examining agency (official) to suggest another department or agency, which may be interested in the proposal. A personal visit to the agency's regional office or headquarters is also important. A visit not only establishes face-to-face contact, but also may

bring out some essential details about the proposal or help secure literature and references from the agency's library.

National agencies are required to report funding information as funds are approved, increased or decreased among projects within a given State depending on the type of required reporting. Also, consider reviewing the National Budget for the current and budget fiscal years to determine proposed dollar amounts for particular budget functions.

The applicant should carefully study the eligibility requirements for each National programme under consideration (see the Applicant Eligibility section of the programme description). The applicant may learn that he or she is required to provide services otherwise unintended such as a service to particular client groups, or involvement of specific institutions. It may necessitate the modification of the original concept in order for the project to be eligible for funding. Questions about eligibility should be discussed with the appropriate programme officer.

Deadlines for submitting applications are often not negotiable. They are usually associated with strict timetables for agency review. Some programmes have more than one application deadline during the fiscal year. Applicants should plan proposal development around the established deadlines.

***Getting organised to Write the Proposal***

Throughout the proposal writing stage keep a notebook handy to write down ideas. Periodically, try to connect ideas by reviewing the notebook. Never throw away written ideas during the grant writing stage. Maintain a file labelled "Ideas" or by some other convenient title and review the ideas from time to time. The file should be easily accessible. The gathering of documents such as articles of incorporation, tax exemption certificates, and bylaws should be completed, if possible, before the writing begins.

***Review & Criticism***

At some point, perhaps after the first or second draught is completed, seek out a neutral third party to review the proposal working draught for continuity, clarity and reasoning. Ask for constructive criticism at this point, rather than wait for the National grantor agency to volunteer this information during the review cycle. For example, has the writer made unsupported assumptions or used jargon or excessive language in the proposal?

***Signature***

Most proposals are made to institutions rather than individuals. Often signatures of chief administrative officials are required. Check to make sure they are included in the proposal where appropriate.

***Neatness***

Proposals should be typed, collated, copied, and packaged correctly and neatly (according to agency instructions, if any). Each package should be inspected to ensure uniformity from cover to cover. Binding may require either clamps or hardcovers. Check with the National agency to determine its preference. A neat, organized, and attractive proposal package can leave a positive impression with the reader about the proposal contents.

***Mailing***

A cover letter should always accompany a proposal. Standard U.S. Postal Service requirements apply unless otherwise indicated by the National agency. Make sure there is enough time for the proposals to reach their destinations. Otherwise, special arrangements may be necessary. Always coordinate such arrangements with the National grantor agency project office (the agency which will ultimately have the responsibility for the project), the grant office (the agency which will coordinate the grant review), and the contract office (the agency responsible for disbursement and grant award notices), if necessary.