

Proposal Letters

Components of a good letter proposal:

Ask for the gift:

The letter should begin with a reference to your prior contact with the funder, if any. State why you are writing and how much funding is required from the particular foundation.

Describe the need:

In a much abbreviated manner, tell the funder why there is a need for this project, piece of equipment, etc.

Explain what you will do:

Just as you would in a fuller proposal, provide enough detail to pique the funder's interest. Describe precisely what will take place as a result of the grant.

Provide agency data:

Help the funder know a bit more about your organization by including your mission statement, brief description of programs offered, number of people served, and staff, volunteer and board data, if appropriate.

Include appropriate budget data:

Even a letter request may have a budget that is a half page long. Decide if this information should be incorporated into the letter or in a separate attachment. Whichever course you choose, be sure to indicate the total cost of the project. Discuss future funding only if the absence of this information will raise questions.

Close:

As with the longer proposal, a letter proposal needs a strong concluding statement.

Attach any additional information required:

The funder may need much of the same information to back up a small request as a large one: board list, a copy of your IRS determination letter, financial documentation, and brief resumes of key staff.

It may take as much thought and data gathering to write a good letter request as it does to prepare a full proposal. Don't assume that because it is only a letter, it isn't a time-consuming and challenging task. Every document you put in front of a funder says something about your agency. Each step you take with a funder should build a relationship for the future.

Sample Letter of Inquiry to a Foundation

Example (Medical Research Related)

December 9, 2009

Mr. James M. Alfred
Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation
345 Park Avenue
New York, NY 10154

Dear Mr. Alfred:

I am writing to inquire if the Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation would consider a proposal from the Department of Cardiothoracic Surgery at New York University requesting a research grant of \$150,000 per year for two years, to support our research project entitled "Calcific Aortic Stenosis: Mechanisms of Calcification and Development of Biological Markers." The ultimate purpose of our research is to improve the clinical outcomes and quality of lives of patients suffering from cardiovascular diseases; this parallels the mission of Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation to extend and enhance human life.

After hypertension and coronary artery disease, calcific aortic stenosis (AS) is third most common cardiovascular disease in the Western world. With a prevalence of 3-9%, calcific AS is also the most frequent valvular disease and the main cause for valve replacements in patients over the age of 60. Despite the high prevalence and mortality associated with calcific AS, there is no effective medical therapy for the disease and little is known about the molecular mechanisms driving its pathogenesis. The aim of our research is therefore two fold: (1) to identify proteins in patients with calcific AS that can be used to diagnose and monitor the progression of AS, and (2) to investigate the biological mechanism by which such proteins promote calcific AS so that we can identify possible therapeutic targets.

This research is a collaborative effort between clinicians within the Department of Cardiology and basic science researchers and surgeons with the Department of Cardiothoracic Surgery at New York University. This collaboration gives us the ability to comprehensively study the disease process of AS, from its initial diagnosis by Cardiologists to its ultimate treatment by Surgeons. The union of the clinical expertise

from both Cardiologists and Surgeons with the analytical proficiency of Basic Scientists makes this an exciting and innovative project that will certainly increase our understanding of the pathogenesis of AS and hopefully serve to impact its future treatment.

The Department of Cardiothoracic Surgery at New York University Medical Center is an internationally recognized program performing over 1,200 open-heart operations per year. Through the partnership between our research and clinical divisions, our Department is uniquely poised at the forefront of cardiothoracic surgery as we have the capability to both, study the molecular basis of diseases and to apply the knowledge gained through research in the development of novel clinical therapies.

Thank you for your kind consideration of our project. I will be contacting you within the next three weeks for any feedback you may have. In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact me if you desire additional information or if you have any questions. I look forward to talking with you soon.

Sincerely,

Lawrence B. Green, M.D., FACS, FACC
Professor of Cardiothoracic Surgery