

COMMON PROPOSAL MISTAKES

Sponsors want to know the money they invest will be spent effectively, appropriately, and have significant impact. Listed below are the most common proposal mistakes, according to sponsors. These mistakes can negatively affect, or even prevent, the review of a proposal.

❖ **Not following the requirements in the guidelines.**

Margins and font size are non-compliant
Page limit(s) exceeded
Unallowable expenses included in budget
Requested order not followed in biographical sketch

❖ **Proposal attempts to do too much.**

Reviewers are aware of what is possible within the proposed budget.
Provide evidence that what is being proposed can be delivered. Include preliminary data to establish credibility and gain the confidence of reviewers.

❖ **Proposal written by only one person**

Colleague/advisor/mentor feedback is essential
Ideas and contributions can come from many people – ask for help.
Ask someone else to proofread the proposal.

❖ **Proposal does not show clear understanding of methods, equipment needed for project.**

Demonstrate familiarity with pertinent literature, equipment needed and proper methodology
Show that the problem is not more complex than realized. Discuss potential problems that may occur and plans to overcome these obstacles.

❖ **Proposal does not clearly convey the purpose, plan, significance of the research**

Circulate proposal to colleagues and mentors for constructive criticism to strengthen the proposal.
Describe how the research will address a problem or gap in scientific knowledge.
Convince the reviewers of the significance and need of the project.

❖ **Proposal does not address outcome**

Explain the broader impact of the project

❖ **Proposal has incomplete biographical sketches of key collaborators/specialists on the project**

Clearly show the qualifications of the research team
Clear up any conflicts of interest