

Some General Guidelines for Grant Applications

Organizations protecting animals in the community require financial support, whether they are running an animal shelter, offering low-cost spay/neuter and other veterinary services, dealing with orphaned or injured wildlife, or providing humane education programs. In addition to raising funds through memberships and special events, animal protection organizations are increasingly looking to local businesses and national and international corporations for support. The first step in seeking such assistance is to develop a project proposal or grant application. There are countless books on the market that discuss proposal writing. Information is also available on the Internet. You may wish to avail yourself of these resources.

The following general guidelines were developed in response to a request from one of HSI's Shelter Partner societies in Latin America. We hope that you will find them helpful.

In seeking corporate sponsorship for your animal protection efforts you will need to draft a basic funding proposal. Be aware that businesses and corporations generally do not fund operating expenses, but may be interested in underwriting a specific project. Tailor your proposal to your target audience by showing that it in some way relates to their business and that it is in their best interest to provide support. Be sure the amount of support you request is appropriate to the size of the company involved. Try asking a small company to support just one aspect or unit of a larger project rather than requesting funding for the entire project.

For example, the project might be to run a sterilization clinic the first week of every month for an entire year. You might ask a small hotel to provide support for the month of May only. Another hotel may support the month of June. This gives them ownership of their contribution -- that month is their month. They can either provide funding for the entire cost of running the project that month or for a smaller unit such as the cost of the medicine for the month. The amount requested should be reasonable and well-defined.

Show clearly what the project means to them (the area around the hotel becomes more attractive to tourists because there are fewer stray dogs on the street). You can also provide them with a certificate or plaque which states that they are a partner in your project. You can create a catchy name for the project and the partners that support the project. Both you and the funding entity can use this for publicity to show that they care about the community and about animals. You can send out a press release to inform the public that this hotel is taking action to help their community.

The proposal should be simple and focused. It is easier to read if it is divided into sections that are clearly marked, as in the following outline.

Outline for a Proposal:

- I Cover Page — The cover page should be on your organization's letterhead and should include the following information:

A Proposal From: Your organization's name

To: Name of business or corporation

For: Name of project

Date: Date of submission

Contacts: Person they should contact regarding the proposal

- II Project Summary — One or two short paragraphs describing the project. State what you are proposing to do, where and when it will take place, what the anticipated outcome or achievement will be, what the expected overall cost will be, and what you are specifically requesting from them.
- III Background and Statement of Need — One or two paragraphs providing an expanded statement of the problem and what needs to be accomplished to resolve this problem. (You could provide statistics on the numbers of stray dogs in the city and quotes from tourists who were upset by the prevalence of stray dogs. The solution might be to contain breeding through sterilization and public education.)
- IV Objectives — A paragraph on the objectives or general goals of your program. Describe the specific actions you plan to take and how these will meet the needs stated in the previous paragraph. (For example, you may plan to sterilize a certain number of dogs each month, which you project will cause the stray population to decrease by certain percentage over a certain period of time.)

This may also be the place to include a brief description of your organization and proof that you are capable of accomplishing this task. Include information such as how long you have been operating, number of staff, facilities and programs. You may wish to attach a newspaper clipping, one or two photos, or a letter of commendation that show your organization in the best possible light. Be sure to chose clear copies and organize them so they look attractive and do not fall out.

- V Project Plan or Strategy — A list in outline form of the specific steps you plan to take, showing the time frame. If you are asking for funding for only one portion of the project, highlight that section by making it bold or putting a star next to it.
- VI Evaluation Plan — A statement of how you will judge whether or not the project was a success (for example, the number of sterilizations performed and number of stray dogs on the streets before and after the project).

- VII Additional Resources — If relevant, you may wish to list anything else needed to support the project in the future (you may say that you are seeking 11 other partners in order to run the project for a full year, or that you already have support for the first three months.)
- VIII Budget — Prepare a general budget. Break down the total into a list of specific cost areas such as medication, veterinarian's salary, advertising materials, etc. Highlight the portion that you are asking them to fund, but show costs for the entire project. They just might volunteer to fund some portion other than or in addition to what you are requesting!
- IX Attachments — If your organization has a statement of incorporation, tax exemption, or other relevant legal document, attach this to the proposal. You can include a list of your Board of Directors, your annual report, or any other business documents which show your organization as trustworthy and deserving.

Above all, make certain that your proposal is succinct, easy to read, and attractively and conveniently presented in a binder or folder. Do not overload it with extraneous information. A short, neat proposal is more likely to be read. If you get the attention and interest of the company you approach, they will certainly contact you for any additional information they may require.

Once you have completed this draft proposal, you can adapt it for a variety of purposes - to target multiple potential donors, as an outline for other projects, or as a basis for a project report.

Many shelters receive support from big pet food companies such as Purina or IAMS. Companies in the tourism industry, such as hotels, resorts, and popular upscale restaurants, may be interested due to the direct and negative effects on their business caused by stray, injured, and sick animals in the community. Other big corporations operating in your area are also worth approaching, especially if you can convince them that it is in their interest to be seen as community-oriented.

We wish you much success in your fund-raising efforts!

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