



Writing Successful Industry Proposals ...

You may have seen an industry Request for Proposal (RFP) that matches your interest and expertise. Or, you've had some discussions with an industry collaborator, and the company is interested in funding the project. Now it is time to write the proposal. Writing a successful proposal for industry is different from writing a proposal to a federal agency. The following tips will enable you to customize your proposal for an industry sponsor, increasing your probability of being funded.

Industry Proposal	Federal Proposal
Executive Summary	Abstract
Introduction	Background
Focus on Application	Focus on Science
Less Technical / Tactical	Technical
Short	Long
Realistic Timeline & Deliverables	Optimistic Timeline & Deliverables



Differences in Industry and Federal Proposals

Speak the language industry is accustomed to.

- Use **Executive Summary** instead of Abstract.
- Include an **Introduction** that speaks to the benefits of the proposed research – how is it going to give the company a competitive advantage – instead of a Background telling the history of the science.
- Focus on the **Application** of the science in the proposal – how is the company going to use this – instead of how this will advance the science.
- Emphasize a **Tactical** explanation aimed at a layman over a technical description. Remember the proposal is not reviewed by a panel of scientific experts. Company personnel that review and approve the proposal have diverse expertise.
- Keep the proposal **Short** - typically **3-5** pages long, including any attachments.
- Set **Realistic Timelines and Deliverables**. Industry expects you to deliver what is in the proposal, including required reports, within the time-frame. The industry partner is often being held to this by their management.



TIPS

PROPOSAL

- Avoid putting confidential information/ideas in the proposal. If included, mark the proposal “Confidential”.
- Respond to the issues the sponsor has identified. Read the RFP and ensure the proposal specifically addresses the issues.
- Ensure the proposal is clear and well defined.
- Build identifiable, realistic, achievable milestones into the proposal and tie payments to tasks or specific timeframes.
- Under promise and over deliver.
- Industry projects are unlikely to be extended, so plan your timeline accordingly and include time for unforeseen circumstances (e.g. late start of project, difficulty recruiting post-doc, etc.).
- Allow time to write and deliver the final report during the performance period.

COMMUNICATE

- Frequently with the sponsor’s researcher while developing the proposal.
- Early and often with your departmental grant coordinator who can help you understand the internal processes at Iowa State.
- Upfront with the sponsor that you expect to publish the results of the study, and ISU expects to own the intellectual property created by it during the project.
- Early with the sponsor about ISU’s Flexible Solutions for intellectual property - <http://www.industry.iastate.edu/flexiblesolutions/index.html>.

Contact Information

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