

Writing the Organizational Background Section for a Grant Proposal

By [Joanne Fritz](#)

The Balance Small Business, September 29, 2018

Establishing Credibility



...

The organizational background section of your grant application may be called the “Introduction” or the “Applicant Description.” Whatever the title, this is where you explain what your organization is all about and convince the funder that you are capable of doing what your [proposal](#) says you will do. It is ok to brag a bit in this section, but don’t go overboard.

Experts recommend that this part of your grant application should be no more than about three pages long.

Stick to the information that best establishes your organization's credibility and ability to accomplish the goals of this project.

The Purpose of the Organizational Background

Keep in mind that the purpose of this section is to convince the funder that your nonprofit has these attributes:

- Financially stable
- Well managed
- Provides essential community services
- Understands community needs
- Board and staff members that reflect the diversity of the community
- Highly respected by the community

What You Should Include in This Section

This part of your proposal is all about credibility. Thus, the information you present here should be appropriate for the funder and the project. What is this funder looking for?

Ask yourself, “What essential information does the funder need about my organization and its qualifications to make the decision to fund this program?”

Include the following information in the organizational background section:

- The full, legal name of your nonprofit and its legal status, i.e., [501\(c\)\(3\)](#).
- Your location - the headquarters plus other operating sites.
- The history of your nonprofit. Your [mission statement](#), when the organization was founded, who founded it, for what purpose, and the community and/or clients it serves.
- A summary of your programs.
- Your organization’s position and role in the community. Mention any collaborating partners in your community.
- How your organization is unique. Explain why your services do not overlap with other similar services.
- Your organization's most notable achievements that relate to this proposal. Include any awards or special recognition your organization has received. Use a bullet format for these accomplishments.
- Very brief summary of the [need statement](#).
- Financial information such as overall budget and annual donations. Past and current [funding](#) from other sources.
- A brief statement about your [board](#), staff, and volunteers.

Reassure the reader that you are the organization best suited to carry out the proposed project. Don't include information presented elsewhere in the proposal unless it is in abbreviated form.

Tips for Getting Your Organizational Background Right

Start with your creation story. When and why was your charity organized? In the first or second paragraph, include the mission statement and show how all activities flow from it. Spell out the philosophy--the why of your organization.

Example:

“The Some City Service Center was established as a 501(c)(3) organization in 1994 when a group of six seniors ages 60 to 82 wanted to create a place with activities and support services that would cater to the specific needs of seniors. Today, we are the largest senior center in Any County, serving more than 450 older adults each

day with a variety of programs and services. Since our inception, we have proudly served over 5,000 seniors in Any County,

“The mission of our center is to help seniors improve and maintain a healthy and independent lifestyle and to improve their quality of life. Our four-pronged purpose is as follows.

- 1. Promote dignity and self-esteem.*
- 2. Foster Independence and self-determination.*
- 3. Facilitate social interaction and involvement in community life.*
- 4. Dispel stereotypes and myths about aging.”*

Once the why is explained, move into what your organization does.

Example:

“We operate a nonprofit multipurpose facility governed by an active 16-member volunteer board of directors (including three of the organization’s founders). We offer a variety of programs at our center to meet the needs of those we serve.

Programs include:

- Preventive health care and education*
- Nutritious in-center and home-delivered meals*
- Crisis intervention, support groups, and case management*
- Legal and insurance counseling*
- Housing assistance*
- Employment training and information*
- Transportation, leisure activities, recreation*
- Volunteerism/placement, social services and referral information*

“Our multi-use facility makes us unique from the other senior centers in Any County and allows us to play an even more vital role in our community.”

What You Do Not Need to Include in This Section

This section should be a concise narrative. Testimonials and statistics may be included but keep them minimal. You can include charts graphs and testimonials in an attachment.

Don’t waste space on organizational structure or specific details about board members and staff unless the funder has requested that. You can include that information in your supporting documents. Keep the informational section short (2-3

pages at most) and condense it into a simple story about your organization's history, current programs, the demographic you serve and where you provide services.