Format template for project proposals

This format template is a quick guide to writing successful proposals (in general, but focusing on earth observation). It contains the basic elements that all project proposals should have and describes the logical relations between these basic elements. For further details the reader is referred to the extensive literature that is available on this topic. It is good practice to use these basic elements in a proposal, regardless of the requirements of a funding provider. You can always find support for a good, well-formulated idea. To write a winning proposal for a particular contest you should, of course, stick to the format, regulations and guidelines provided by that funding provider. The basic elements are the following:

Introduction / relevance

Short description of the problem to solve, why it is important to solve and why earth observation can make a contribution, main actors involved, background information.

Example: we have a case study on use of satellite imagery for national park management, but it was a one-time achievement for this park only. We do not have a ready-made product to convince managers of other national parks and other potential clients. Identify the group of potential clients (in your country and abroad) and show that with some small additional investments you can accomplish the objective.

Objective

One or more objectives should be formulated. The objectives will be achieved at the end of the project. They should be clearly stated. As a help you can take the problem that you want to solve and rephrase it as a solution.

Example: elaboration of a ready-to-use, easy-to-understand package for the use of earth observation for better and more efficient management of national parks.

Note: be realistic in formulating your objective, promise much, but not too much. You have to make sure that you can achieve all this in time and with the means you have available (we'll leave 'world peace' to the beauty parlor contestants).

Activities

The activities include all the actions necessary to produce each output. The activities are also the tasks for which costs are incurred to produce these outputs.

Example: provide the missing links to the already existing package, instruction manual on how to use the free and low-cost satellite images for this purpose (and how to get them), test with already existing users in national parks and with new potential users.

Output

The outputs are stated as results and are necessary for accomplishing the objective. The outputs are results from the activities of the project (i.e. not based on activities or events outside the project's sphere of influence). Mention output indicators that are measurable in terms of quantity, quality and time. There should be logical links between activities, outputs and the objectives: activities can be linked to one or more outputs and vice versa, but no activities should be without a connection to the output and no output should appear without an activity that is linked to it. All outputs should contribute to the objective(s).

Example: improved and operational package of low-cost earth observations for national park management, developed instruction manual for national park managers, package and instruction manual tested with xxx new potential users.

Note: you can mention that package will be adopted and used by yyy new potential users, but this is a bit dangerous, because actual adoption for use of the product is outside the sphere of influence of your activities (and not needed for the objective we chose in the example). Do not confuse what you wish to happen in general with what you can actually achieve with the means and within the timeframe of the project.

Management & evaluation

Short description of how you will coordinate the activities and ensure the outputs (and thus the objectives). Also explain here how you will make adjustments, if deviations from the planning occur that are still inside your span of control.

Risk assessment

This section is optional and describes any unforeseen events outside the scope of the project that may influence the project output or time schedule.

Time schedule

The time schedule presents the project's beginning, end and consists of a logical sequence of activities. Here you can also indicate how the activities depend on each other (which one should finish before the

other can start). Making the time schedule also gives you feedback on whether your plans in the project can be finished in the time you have available.

Budget

The budget should be directly related to activities and outputs. The relationship (in terms of costs) between the activities should be realistic. Making the budget also gives you feedback to see how feasible your plans are and if you spend your resources effectively and efficiently.

Note: although a budget is usually made with items like staff input, travel, material, etc. or per activity, it is also good to indicate how much budget is needed to realize each output. This is a bit extra work, but it makes your budget more convincing and it also makes you reflect on spending effectiveness (if you spend 10,000 on completing the package of the example and 70,000 on reaching potential clients, maybe you should look at other ways to interact with the clients).

Annexes

Anything else, relevant to the project, that you want to share.

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Also have a look at the GEONetCab capacity building web: www.geonetcab.eu