

Letter of Intent Guidelines

What is a letter of intent?

A letter of intent (LOI), expresses the University's intention to submit a proposal in response to a particular program announcement or request for proposal (RFP). They can either be required as a pre-condition for invitation to submit a full proposal, or not required but encouraged. Often, sponsors may wish to gauge how much interest there may be in a particular RFP for planning purposes. If a letter of intent includes a budget, or "binds" the University financially, they are in most cases required to be routed through ORSP for prior approval. Where the sponsor does not provide specific guidelines for the letter of intent, to follow are some general suggestions in crafting an effective LOI.

Format

A typical LOI ranges from 1-3 pages. It is a clearly written, concise, engaging, jargon-free and persuasive statement on the importance of the project you are proposing in addressing a specific need or problem. Address the recipient directly, when known. When the format is not specified for the LOI, assume 11-12 point font (Times New Roman) and 1" margins, single spaced. The LOI is, in many ways, a significantly "condensed" full proposal.

Opening Paragraph

Your LOI's opening paragraph might be the most important part of your letter because it is at this point that readers decide if your proposal is to be further considered. Your opening statement should be a concise summary of your proposal with enough interesting and persuasive information to entice the reader to keep going. State up front the name of your organization, the grant you are applying for and, if required by the funder, the amount of money you are requesting. Next, provide a short (one to three sentences) description of the project involved. You should also demonstrate how your project fits the funder's guidelines and funding interests.

Statement of Need

In this section of your letter, you must convince the reader that a need can be met by your proposed project. Identify the problem and demonstrate how your project offers a solution. In describing the need, briefly provide any relevant data that demonstrates the need. You can also offer concrete examples, if possible, to bring the problem to life. Be sure also to describe the target population and, if appropriate, the geographical area. Connect the need directly to this population and clearly state how your proposed activity would affect this population and geographical area (i.e., Will it have a local, state, national or international impact?).

Project Description/Activity

Your project description/methodology should be a direct and logical response to your statement of need. Briefly describe the major activities you propose to undertake the names and titles of key staff on the project. You should also state your goals and objectives in this section. A goal is a broad, overarching statement of what you wish to accomplish in the long term. A goal can be general and even visionary. It is a statement of your ultimate outcome (e.g., The goal of this project is to develop a model for eradicating food insecurity

in the U.S.) Your goal does not need to be measurable but it should directly connect back to your statement of need.

In contrast, your objectives should be clear, tangible steps that will advance you towards your goal and which you will undertake as part of the project (e.g., The objective of this project is to establish a program equipped to provide fresh fruits and vegetables to 200 families in a public housing complex). Your objectives should result in precise outcomes that can be described in quantifiable terms (See “Outcomes” below) since you should also demonstrate an ability to measure any results or changes that occur from your work (i.e. your goals should be measurable). Finally, your objectives should be realistic and achievable in the time allotted.

Outcomes

What do you expect to achieve as a result of your project activities? The outcomes are the direct changes or results that you expect to be achieved after the successful completion of your project objectives (e.g. As a result of this project, we expect that 80 percent of families in the 200 family complex will receive fresh fruits and vegetables at least three times per week). Funders like to see clear, measurable outcomes, not simply vague descriptions. Consequently it is important to specify the steps you will take to measure the outcomes (i.e. how are you collecting your measurement data?) Although quantitative outcomes are the most tangible (and generally viewed more favorably by funders), when qualitative outcomes are also important, you should identify how these will be assessed/reported.

Credentials

This can be a combination of both your personal credentials and a description of MSU and your department. The organization/department description should be concise and focus on your ability to meet the stated need. Be sure to state any pertinent materials/equipment/supplies available to you for the proposed project. In addition, provide a very brief history and description of your current programs while demonstrating a direct connection between what is currently being done and what you wish to accomplish with the requested funding.

Budget

The budget section should state the amount of funding you are requesting from your funder for the project, and a general list of the project expenses. Also state whether the funding request will cover the total cost of the project or only a portion of the total and if appropriate, list any sources of additional funding, either secured or planned, including in-kind contributions.

Sample LOI's: <https://www.grantwatch.com/blog/news-blog/how-to-write-a-loiletter-of-intent-letter-of-interest-letter-of-inquiry/>