

TUTORIAL 14

The Project Narrative: How Long Should Each Section Be?

PROPOSAL PACKAGE

When you respond to a DOE Phase I SBIR/STTR Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) you will be submitting a proposal package through grants.gov. It is important that you think about your proposal as a package, rather than as one document because there are various parts to your submission. The following table taken from the FOA shows the various elements of your proposal package.

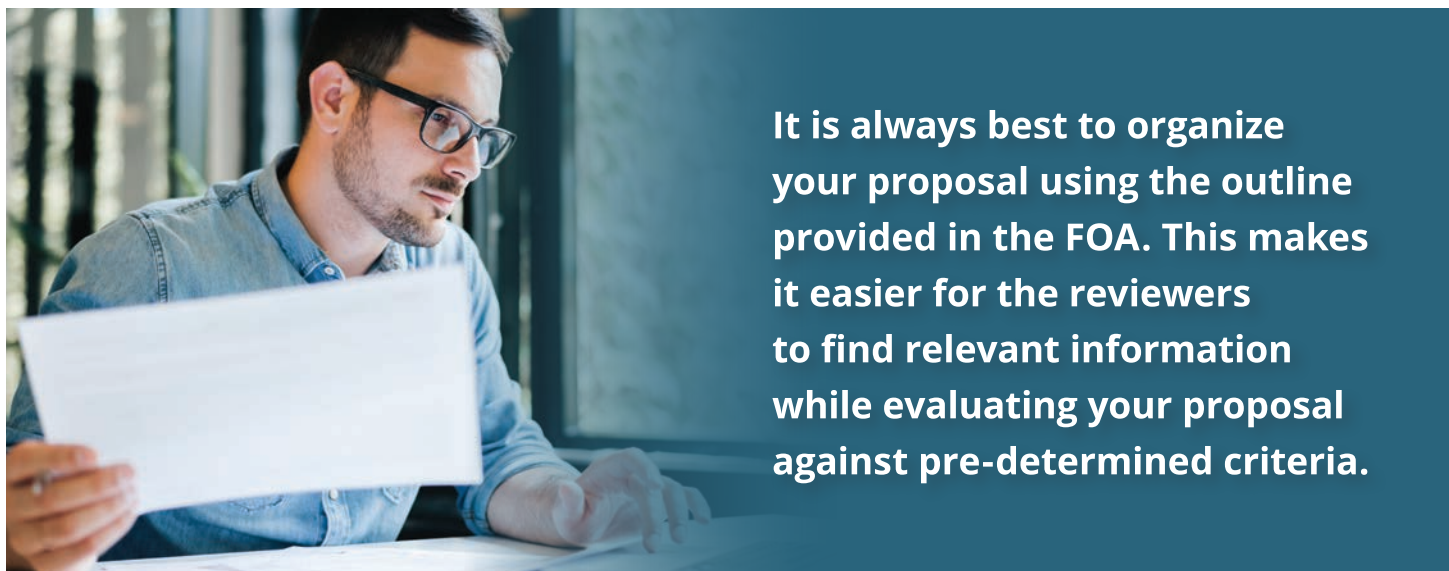
PROJECT NARRATIVE

In this tutorial we will focus only on the part of the package called the Project Narrative. This is the most important element of your proposal and is where you will spend most of your time. However, it is important that you do not forget that the project narrative is just one element of your proposal package. Be sure to allow sufficient time to complete the other sections of your SBIR/STTR submission and sufficient time to upload them into the appropriate locations within grants.gov. Please be sure to always consult the current FOA as the structure of an application does change from time to time and be sure to view the other related tutorials on our web site.

Guidelines

In the Funding Opportunity Announcement, search for the section called Project Narrative. Guidance will always be included regarding the content, the number of words and the number of pages. Please note that DOE does not specify type font or point size – but instead limits the scope of the project narrative by the number of pages and the number of words. Always be sure to use the word count tool in MicroSoft Word. Typically the Project Narrative includes the following sections – but ALWAYS check the FOA as periodically there may be changes in the suggested organization of the information:

- » **Cover page**
- » **Proprietary Data Legend**
- » **Anticipated Public Benefits**
- » **Identification and Significance of the Problem or Opportunity, and Technical Approach**
- » **Technical Objectives**
- » **Work Plan**
- » **Performance Schedule**
- » **Facilities/Equipment**
- » **Research Institution**
- » **Other Consultants and Subcontractors**



It is always best to organize your proposal using the outline provided in the FOA. This makes it easier for the reviewers to find relevant information while evaluating your proposal against pre-determined criteria.


Read the guidelines carefully and when in doubt, don't hesitate to call the help desk at (301) 903-5707.

The content for the project narrative is discussed elsewhere. Here, our intent is strictly to look at the form of the Project Narrative. Please note that it is always best to organize your proposal using the outline provided in the FOA. Using the outline in this fashion makes it much easier for the reviewers to find pertinent information while evaluating your proposal against pre-determined

criteria, which is also detailed for you in the FOA under the section entitled, MERIT REVIEW, Phase I – Merit Review Criteria.

How Long Should Each Section Be?

When preparing a Project Narrative for the first time, companies often ask how long each section should be. The following general guidelines come from a review of the format of a sample of winning proposals:

9 The average number of figures and tables.	3 or 4 The average page length of the Public Benefit section.	 Important! 4½ The first section of the Narrative Briefing entitled, "Identification and Significance of the Problem or Opportunity, and Technical Approach" was on average 4.5 pages in length. This is where companies make sure that they demonstrate that they understand the problem of interest to DOE, present their innovation, and make sure that is adequately discussed.
9 The average number of citations. Companies varied widely in the number of citations that they included – ranging from 0 to 35.	5 The average page length of work plan including the tasks.	
	6 The average number of tasks in a work plan.	

Remember, it is what you say in the project narrative that counts, as well as the ease with which reviewers can extract the information needed to determine if the proposal is responsive and innovative. The content for various sections of the project narrative is discussed in other tutorials.