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 developing and ultimately submitting a proposal package through Grants.gov. It is important that you think about your proposal as a package, as there are multiple documents and forms that you will need to prepare and submit.

PROJECT NARRATIVE

That said, in this tutorial we will focus only on one part of the package called the **Project Narrative**. This is often referred to as the "heart of the application package." This is also where your proposal preparation activities should begin. Plan on spending considerable time preparing this document so that you can clearly and thoroughly describe the approach you will take to address the Topic and Subtopic you have selected. However, don't forget that the Project Narrative is but one part of the application package. It is also important that you allow sufficient time to complete the other sections of your application, many of which will require gathering information and documents from other people.

GUIDELINES

The following table provides a list of the sections typically included in a Project Narrative. However, always confirm that there have not been any changes in this outline, by searching for the phrase "Project Narrative" in the current Funding Opportunity Announcement. Guidance can always be found there regarding the outline for the Project Narrative, as well as the number of words and the number of pages you must not exceed. Please note that historically DOE has not specified the type font you should use – but instead limits the scope of the project narrative to 15 pages and 7,500 words. The font size used can be 10 point minimum.

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

Table 1: Outline for the Project Narrative

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

It is always best to organize your Project Narrative using the outline provided in the FOA. This makes it easier for the reviewers to find relevant information when evaluating your proposal against pre-determined criteria. Be sure to read the guidelines that DOE provides under each item in the outline. What new proposal writers often ask is how long should each section of the Project Narrative be? Here are a few suggestions regarding some of the sections.

After the Cover page, which also contains the propietary legend, is the initial section of the Project Narrative called **"The Identification and Significance of the Problem or Opportunity and Technical Approach."** This section is typically four and a half pages (4½) in length. This is where companies demonstrate that they understand the problem of interest to DOE, present their innovation and assure that it is adequately addressed from a technical perspective.

The next section referred to as **Anticipated Public Benefits** is usually between a half a page and three quarters of a page in length.

This section is followed by the **Technical Objectives** section which usually includes five or six objectives.

4½ Pages	¾ Page	9 Figures & Tables
The length of the first section entitled **"Identification and Significance of the Problem or Opportunity and Technical Approach"**	The average length of the **Anticipated Public Benefits section**	The average number of figures and tables
	6 Objectives	**9 Citations**
	The average number of **Technical Objectives**	The average number of citations in the bibliography.
	5 Pages	
	The average length of the **Work Plan** section	

Important!

DOE calls out, that the next section called the **Work Plan** should be a substantial part of the Project Narrative. This section frequently averages five pages in length and links the objectives to the work plan.

Applicants also include **Figures and Tables** – usually an average of nine.

Although we have quickly reviewed the average length of key sections in the Project Narrative, it is important to Remember it is what you say in the Project Narrative that is the most important, as well as the ease with which reviewers can extract the information needed to evaluate your responsiveness and innovation relative to the Topic and Subtopic. The content for various sections of the project narrative is discussed in other tutorials.