

Statement of Need

Most funding sources ask for a Statement of Need or a Problem Statement. This section is the most critical part of the proposal as it will establish the lens through which readers view your project. In a research project, for example, how you define “the problem” you’ve discovered will determine your plan for generating the data needed to solve or mitigate the problem. In proposals for service, training, or some educational innovations, a Needs Statement is more commonly required. This approach asks the question, “What need is not being met?”

The Statement of Need or the Problem Statement establishes the value that your idea has to the resource provider. Proposal writers should take special care in this section of the proposal to clearly connect the need or problem to the funding source’s values. These values are usually stated in the introductory section of the invitation to submit. If the funding source cannot immediately connect to the value your project has, then it is unlikely to be funded. Careful articulation of the essential value statement is, therefore, critical to the alignment of all else in the proposal. In fact, all other sections of the proposal must align with the need or problem statement and should refer back to this section throughout. [\[See an alignment schematic.\]](#)

This section allows the grant writer to demonstrate a thorough knowledge of the field generally and the specific area in particular. Data should be carefully selected and sources cited to provide evidence of the problem or to validate the need. Your project should contain a needs analysis based on the most current information available. It is often necessary to gather data to provide evidence. This section should also demonstrate your knowledge of what others have done to address the need or problem. How have those efforts worked or failed to produce the desired results from your perspective? If some approaches have been successful, what else needs to be done? It is important to remember that all grant proposals must be situated in some context that makes sense to organizations with resources to support your idea.

Most grant announcements will require specific points to be discussed in this section. For example, the following [link](#) provides the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Nurse Education, Practice and Retention (NEPR) Program needs statement requirements.

Common pitfalls in writing the Needs Statement

1. The need is applicant-based rather than beneficiary-based.
2. The problem or need is articulated as “a lack of.” A common problem of circular reasoning.
3. The beneficiaries of the project are not clearly described.
4. The proposed project cannot make a significant impact on the problem or need as described. (Example: world hunger relative to feeding the homeless in city)
5. The expertise to address the problem/need is not apparent.
6. The evidence or data to support the argument is missing or not current.

Needs/Problem Statement answers these questions

1. What do we know about the need we plan to meet or the problem that we propose to solve?
2. How will this project fill the gap between what we now know and what we should know?
3. Why is this need/problem important to address?

4. Who should be concerned about this problem?
5. Why should this project be funded now?
6. How will the methods proposed lead to the aim or goal?
7. How can others benefit from this project's success?
8. What will the overall impact of this project be?