

Tips on Writing the Proposal

1. The proposal should look professional without being overly elaborate. Have it done on a good word processing program by a competent typist (even if that is yourself). The appearance of the proposal is the evaluator's first impression of your firm, and you can never take back a first impression.
2. Use headers and footers to clearly identify every page, so if your proposal is disassembled, it will be clear whose proposal each piece belongs to. Number every page. Use at least one-inch margins all around. Put your logo on the cover or title page if appropriate. Put your company name and solicitation number on the headers of every page.
3. When a proposal requires you to write a narrative description of how you would go about the work, have it written by a person with strong English skills and have it reviewed by a qualified editor upon completion. A misplaced comma or misspelled word can cost you money if it results in misunderstanding about what your price is intended to include and exclude. If more than one person will contribute sections to the proposal, an editor can help remove distracting distinctions between writing styles, and compare the sections to be sure there are no conflicting statements.
4. Your writing style should be simple, straightforward and direct. Use active rather than passive voice. Use declarative sentences no more than two or three clauses. Use common language when technical or legal terminology is not really necessary. Pursue each point in a logical, step-by-step, manner and complete each idea before proceeding to the next.
5. Spell-check, spell-check, spell-check. Also, check your grammar and syntax; be sure subject and predicate are either both singular or plural, and that modifiers match the words they modify ("A person knows their own mind" is wrong because "person" is singular and "their" is plural). If the reader is fluent in English, and has to struggle with to figure out what you mean or is distracted by bad grammar, your offer will suffer; if the reader is not fluent in English, good grammar may help, but bad grammar will not.
6. If you provide proprietary or confidential data in your proposal, clearly mark it so. When you bid to a public agency, everything you submit is public information, unless you clearly mark it and protect your rights. One statement on the cover page will not adequately protect all contents and you must clearly mark every page that contains confidential information. Remember that proprietary data is any information that you have legitimate reason to keep secret, if it has been patented, it is no longer secret.