

Guidelines for Writing a Letter of Intent (LOI)

The first step in considering a foundation should be to study the foundation's website, review its missions and goals, funding priorities, current grant funding, and grants list.

An LOI is not a vague exploration of an idea. It is assumed that the proposed project has already been thought through (including a budget); therefore, the LOI presents as an abbreviated description of the proposed project.

The LOI must be concise yet engaging. Avoid jargon, adjectives, flowery and subjective statements that are not supported by facts. Write a logical, persuasive argument emphasizing how this project can help solve a significant problem.

Components of an LOI:

1. Opening Paragraph: The summary statement

It should be able to stand alone. If the reviewer reads nothing else, they should know the goals of the project just from reading this paragraph. The summary statement should also include the purpose for writing the LOI, e.g., consider this funding request.

Always answer the following questions in the summary statement: Who wants to do what? How much is being requested? Is this a portion of a larger project cost? Over what time period is money being requested?

Example:

"The American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) seeks funding for a program to support and encourage third and fourth year post-secondary students to pursue a career in biomedical research. We are requesting \$587,000 over a two-year period."

Mention if this LOI is a response to an RFP (Request for Proposals) or make the connection between the foundation's interest and the project.

Keep this paragraph short! This seems like a lot to address, but additional content in the LOI provides the opportunity to establish credibility, explain the rationale behind the project, and the project's methodology.

2. Statement of Need: The "why" of the project (1-2 paragraphs)

- Explain what issue is being addressed
- Explain the reasoning behind responding to this set of issues
- State briefly why this response is appropriate
- Note who benefits. Make sure to indicate the project's impact

3. Project Activity: The "what" and "how" of the project (The bulk of the letter)

- Provide an overview of the activities involved. Give details to the degree that space allows
- Highlight why the approach is novel and deserving of the special attention that funding provides
- Indicate if there will be collaboration with other organizations and what their roles will be. Be specific about who does what

4. Outcomes (1–2 paragraphs; before or after the Project Activity)

- State the specific outcomes the project aims to achieve
- Indicate how outcomes will be measured

5. Credentials (1–2 paragraphs)

- Demonstrate why AIHEC or its staff is best equipped to carry out this activity
- Put any historic background about AIHEC here
- Brag with substance. Indicate awards, rankings, and tangible measures that set AIHEC apart

6. Budget (1–2 paragraphs)

- General description of the project's funding needs and total amount of request

7. Closing (1 paragraph)

- Offer to give any additional information the foundation might need. Include a contact name and contact information
- Express appreciation for the reader's attention, or for the opportunity to submit if it is in response to a RFP
- Specifically indicate an interest in discussing the project

8. Signature