

How to Write a Letter of Interest

Purpose of Letters of Interest (LOIs):

A letter of interest or inquiry (commonly called an LOI) is designed to give a funder preliminary information about a project/program to determine alignment with the funder's mission. This can save you (the potential applicant) and the funder time, as funders use this information to gauge if a project/program is a good fit *before* asking you to submit a lengthy application/proposal. A well-written letter of inquiry can be an important component to securing funding for your project.

Guidance for Composing a LOI

The length of a letter of inquiry varies depending on what the funder prefers/requires. Typically, the LOI is brief—no more than three pages—and must identify the problem or need, and the proposed solution. However, the LOI format for some funders is comparable to completing a grant application and can include items such as a project budget, evaluation plan, and other administrative items (IRS non-profit determination letter, list of Board members, etc.) Since LOI requirements vary greatly—just like full application requirements—it is important to read a funder's LOI guidelines to ensure all the required information is included.

LOI components include:

- organizational information
- problem or need
- program, project or event description
- population served
- the amount you are requesting

If you have more than one funding source for your project/program, it is good to mention, as funders look favorably on programs and projects that have more than one funding source. This ensures when their funding runs out, programming will continue.

Additional tips:

- **Tailor your LOI** to emphasize the aspects of your program that reflect the funder's interest.
- **Track correspondence.** Know who you have spoken to, and when.
- **Send a thank you letter.** Even if rejected, this gesture lets them know you appreciate their consideration and can strengthen future relationships with that funder.
- **Research.** Some funders have guidelines for what should be included in a letter of inquiry (see the funder's website); some funders require that you submit the letter of inquiry online.

You can contact the funder if you have any questions during the process. Some funders have limited staff, so you may not be able to speak to them directly, but an email will usually get you the information you need.

Rarely, but sometimes, a funder will not specify what is required in an LOI. This gives the applicant liberty to express to the funder what they believe are the highlights or successes of their project or program. Below are some resources that highlight fundamental categories that should be covered in an LOI.

LOI Resources (A Selection from Internet-Based Research)

1. <https://grantspace.org/resources/knowledge-base/letters-of-inquiry/>

An effective letter of inquiry is often more difficult to write than a full proposal. The letter of inquiry should be brief—no more than three pages—and clearly state the need or problem you have identified, the proposed solution, and your organization's qualifications for implementing that solution. The letter of inquiry should be addressed to the appropriate contact person at a foundation or to its CEO. Please follow submission guidelines regarding how and where to submit the LOI.

- a. The **introduction** serves as the executive summary for the letter of inquiry and includes the name of your organization, the amount needed or requested, and a description of the project. The qualifications of project staff, a brief description of evaluative methodology, and a timetable are also included here.

- b. The **organization description** should be short and focus on the ability of your organization to meet the stated need. Provide a very brief history and description of your current programs while demonstrating a direct connection between what you do now and what you want to do with the requested funding. You will expand on this in greater detail if you are invited to submit a full proposal.
- c. The **statement of need** must convince the reader that there is an important need that can be met by your project. The statement of need includes: a description of the target population and geographical area, appropriate statistical data in abbreviated form, and several concrete examples.
- d. The **methodology** should be appropriate to your statement of need and present a clear, logical, and achievable solution to the stated need. Describe the project briefly, including major activities, names and titles of key project staff, and your desired objectives. As with the organization description, this will be presented in far greater detail in a full proposal.
- e. **Other funding sources** being approached for support of this project should be listed in a brief sentence or paragraph.
- f. The **final summary** restates the intent of the project, offers to answer further questions, and thanks the potential funder for its consideration. Note: Only include attachments if the funder asks for them and be sure to follow any guidelines for attachments.

2. <https://www.umass.edu/cfr/grant-writing/guidelines-letter-intent>

This source notes using a two to three-page format. The LOI must be concise yet engaging. Use your words smartly. Avoid jargon, adjectives, flowery subjective statements that are not supported by facts. Write a logical, persuasive argument emphasizing how this project can help solve a significant problem or void in the knowledge base.

- a. Opening Paragraph: Your summary statement
- b. Statement of Need: The "why" of the project. (1-2 paragraphs)
- c. Project Activity: The "what" and "how" of the project. (The bulk of your letter)
- d. Outcomes (1-2 paragraphs; before or after the Project Activity)
- e. Credentials (1-2 paragraphs)
- f. Budget (1-2 paragraphs)

- g. Closing (1 paragraph)
- h. Signature

Note: Also consider adding mission statement and/or vision statement, organizational history/description, other funding sources, and time period for when funds are needed.

3. <https://www.thebalancesmb.com/how-to-write-a-letter-of-inquiry-loi-to-a-foundation-2501958>

This source suggests a shorter LOI format, however, it supports the idea of an LOI being a mini-proposal—meaning a great deal of information is presented, so narrative must be concise and impactful.

- a. Introduction
- b. Organizational Description
- c. Statement of Need
- d. Methodology
- e. Other Funding Sources
- f. Summary

Mimi Carlson, author of *Winning Grants: Step by Step*, suggests that you review your LOI with these questions in mind:

1. Did I state the name of the project and the amount of money I'm seeking in the first paragraph?
2. Does my second paragraph elaborate adequately about the project and any related projects?
3. Did I include our mission statement?
4. Did I lay out the need for the project?
5. Have I been clear about the outcomes the project will achieve?
6. Is the implementation of the project clear?
7. Have I made a case for a good fit between this project and the foundation's priorities?
8. Did I include information about any funding already committed?
9. Have I included the contact details for a particular person who can answer questions?

4. <https://www.grantwriterteam.com/blog/grant-writing/how-to-write-a-winning-loi-letter-of-intent/>
 1. Your LOI should be a brief, yet effective one-page letter that summarizes your ultimate full proposal. Depending on the requirements of the funding source, though, your LOI may be as long as three pages.
 2. Your LOI should be structured like a business letter and submitted on professional letterhead.
 3. Use the specific name of the recipient on your LOI. Avoid using any general terminology such as "Dear Sir" or "To whom it may concern."
 4. The introduction provided in your LOI might be the most important part of your letter. Make sure you have provided a concise, attention-grabbing summary with enticing information to inspire the reader.
 5. Don't forget to include the name of your organization. Define the grant you are applying for and/or the amount of money you are requesting. LOI's should also include a short description of the project involved and how your project fits the funder's guidelines and funding interests.
 6. Your LOI is a chance to provide a brief outline of your nonprofit and its related programs and initiatives. Connect what you currently do to what you want to accomplish with the grantor's funding.
 7. Include a description of your population and geographic area. Incorporate statistical facts about what you are doing and hope to do, as well as specific examples of successes and needs.
 8. Briefly elaborate on objectives to stand out from the competition. Describe how you plan on using the funding in a way that best fits the goals of the funder's grant.
 9. Describe the project succinctly. Include major activities along with the names and titles of key project staff members to create a personal connection with the funding source; this will place you in a better position to be invited to submit a full grant application.
 10. Always review the LOI guidelines before submitting to ensure you have met all provided requirements of the grantor. Failing to include any of the requested fields of information could cause your LOI to be disregarded.
 11. In closing, thank the funding source for their time and consideration. Use proper business salutations, such as "Sincerely" or "Respectfully." Avoid any lengthy or overly friendly closing statements. Be brief, professional, and memorable.

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About Methodist Healthcare Ministries of South Texas, Inc.

At Methodist Healthcare Ministries we view capacity building as a process of organizational strengthening. We work alongside our funded partners and community organizations, building upon their assets to increase their impact in community and improve health equity. Capacity building is an investment in nonprofits' abilities to be more efficient, effective, and sustainable.