



Oregon State University  
Foundation

# OFFICE OF FOUNDATION RELATIONS



# FOUNDATION RELATIONS TEAM

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# COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS

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<https://liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/cla-research/cla-proposal-development>



**Oregon State University**  
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# Writing a Letter of Intent in Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences

**Faculty Grant Training**

January 14, 2022



## Agenda

### Introduction

Five Major Components

Need or Problem  
Statement

Project Goals/Objectives

Project Activities

Evaluation and Impact

Sustainability

Other Elements

Example LOI Processes

Writing Exercise/Templates

Conclusion

# Introduction

The Letter of Intent or Letter of Inquiry (LOI) is an initial phase of many grant application processes.

LOIs are a common approach to reducing applicants' initial effort and narrowing the applicant field.

**The purpose of the LOI is to frame an argument for your project.**

**ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS:**

**Why is your project needed?**

**Why should the sponsor fund you?**



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# Five Major Components

- Statement of Need (Why)
- Project Goals/Objectives (What)
- Project Activities (How, When, Where, Who)
- Evaluation and Impact (What Happened and So What?)
- Sustainability (What's Next?)



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Five Major Components

### **Need or Problem Statement**

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# Need or Problem Statement

- Section where the *problem* is framed.
- Section educates the reviewer as to the importance of the problem.

**KEY TAKEAWAY: Successful proposals meet needs the sponsor cares about.**





# Example #1

## RFP

Sally Foundation is seeking proposals for research into the feeding habits of endangered nocturnal butterflies. The foundation hopes to support work that *sheds light on* food supply needs of the butterflies to better inform protected habitat regulations.

## Need Statement

The ground beetle is one of the more beautiful nocturnal beetles in the world. In order to conduct research on the beetle species, the research team requires funding to conduct its work. Following peers like Carey and Lowe (NSF, 2017), the team will travel to beetle habitats to observe and document their activity.



# Example #1 – what not to do

- The need matches the sponsor's stated priority.
- The need is *not your need* for funding, it is a community or societal need.
- The need is *well defined*, and is distinguished from the work of others.

## Need Statement

The ground beetle is one of the more beautiful nocturnal beetles in the world. In order to conduct research on the beetle species, the research team requires funding to conduct its work. Following peers like Carey and Lowe (NSF, 2017), the team will travel to beetle habitats to observe and document activity.



# Example #2

## Need Statement

The population of the nocturnal butterfly, *noctis volantim*, has been steadily declining with the loss of habitat, reaching an 8-year low in 2020 [*expert source*]. Alarming, population declines were found to occur within sanctuary areas at nearly the rate of populations outside protected habitats. Without significant intervention, this endangered species will likely be extinct in ten years. The proposed research will investigate the factors associated with butterfly mortality within sanctuary areas in the Pacific Northwest, including access to food supply and predation. Results of this empirical study will be shared with policy makers slated to make changes to protected butterfly habitat regulations in August 2022.



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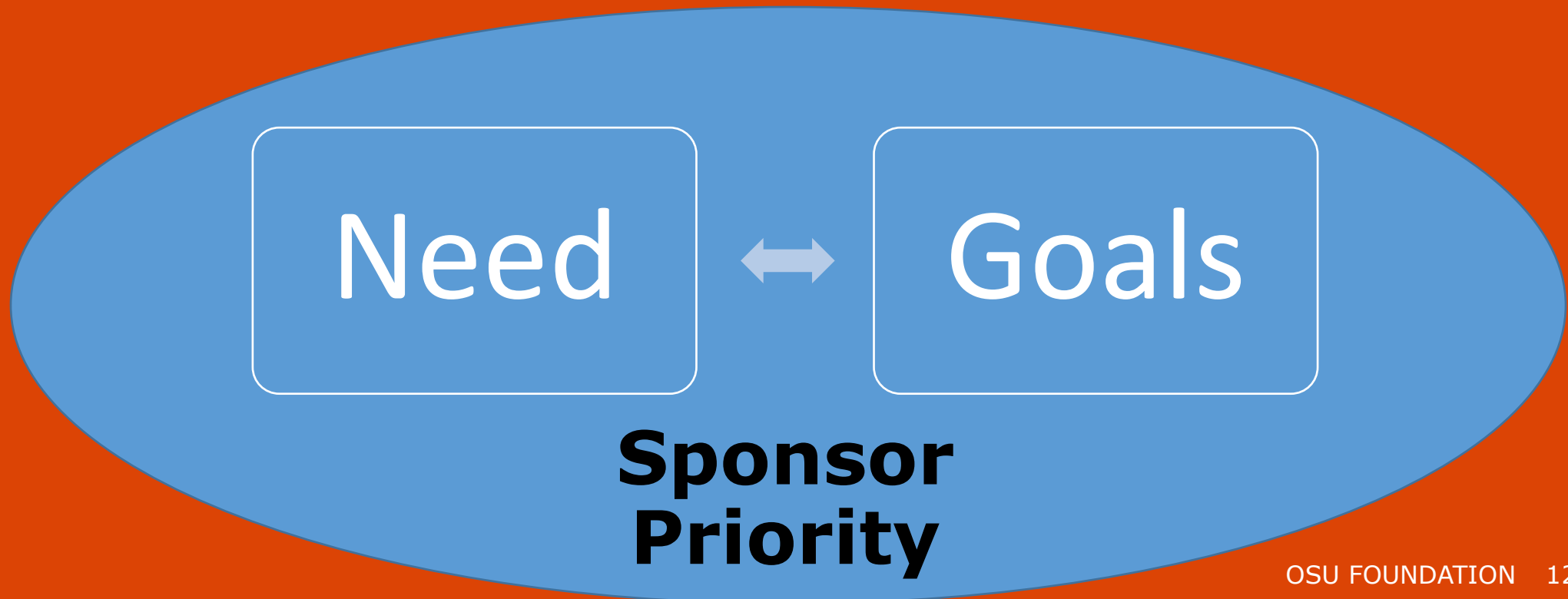
# Project Goals/Objectives

- Section where the *solution to the problem* is framed.
- Section usually includes the following:
  - Project description
  - Goals and objectives

**KEY TAKEAWAY: Successful proposals design solutions that meet the needs they outline.**

# IMPORTANT: Connect the pieces

Do the goals/objectives answer the need? Do they match the purpose the sponsor intends to support?





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# Project Activities

- An overview of project activities (what, how, who)
- Describes what about your project is novel and worth the sponsor's investment

**KEY TAKEAWAY: Successful proposals differentiate their approach from their peers**

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# Project Activities Exercise

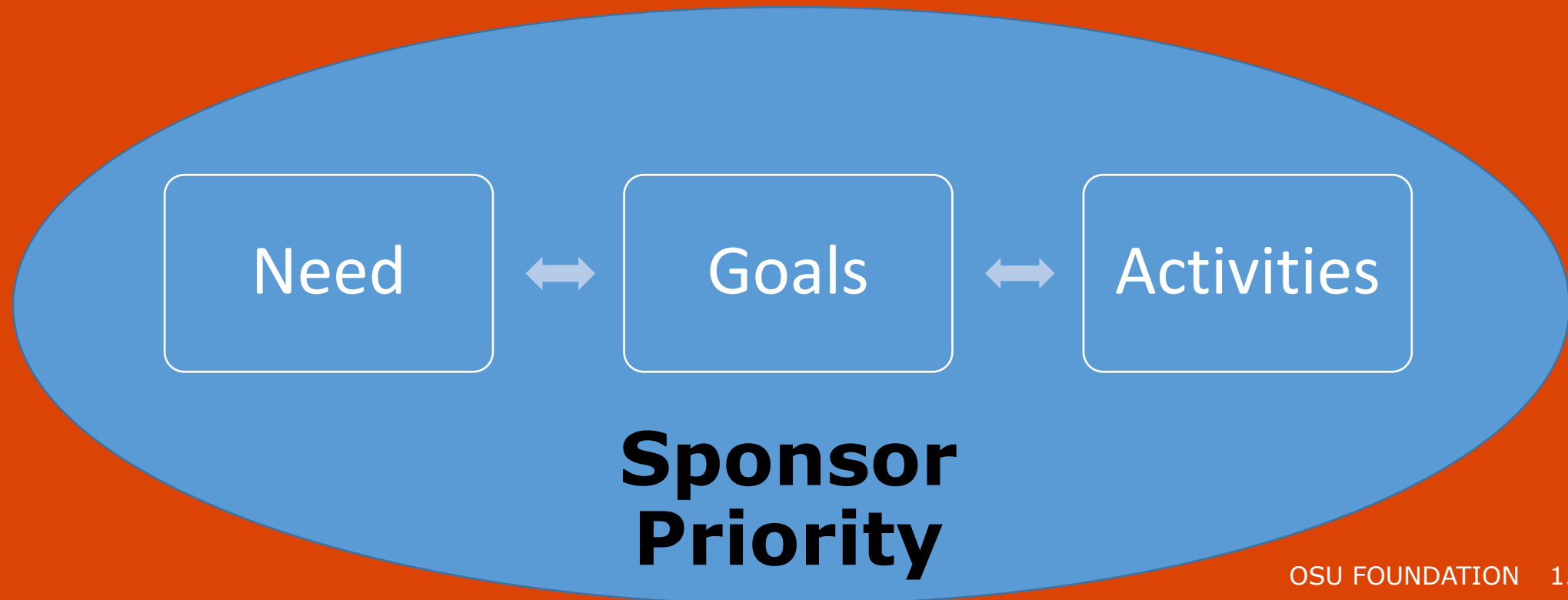
There are four project activity descriptions (PDF). Match the description with its best describer:

1. The purpose of this project does not meet the sponsor's intent.
2. The example's stated outcome is not consistent with the stated need.
3. The objectives are not **s**pecific, **m**easurable, **a**chievable, **r**elevant, or **t**ime-bound (SMART).
4. Good example.



# IMPORTANT: Connect the pieces

Tie the activities to goals/objectives. Do the activities described meet the sponsor's stated goals and your stated need?







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# Evaluation and Impact

- Section that describes how the *solution to the problem* will be assessed, monitored, and/or measured.
- Section may include the following:
  - Outcomes
  - **Impacts**
  - Formative and/or summative evaluation
  - Reporting
  - Analysis



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# Evaluation

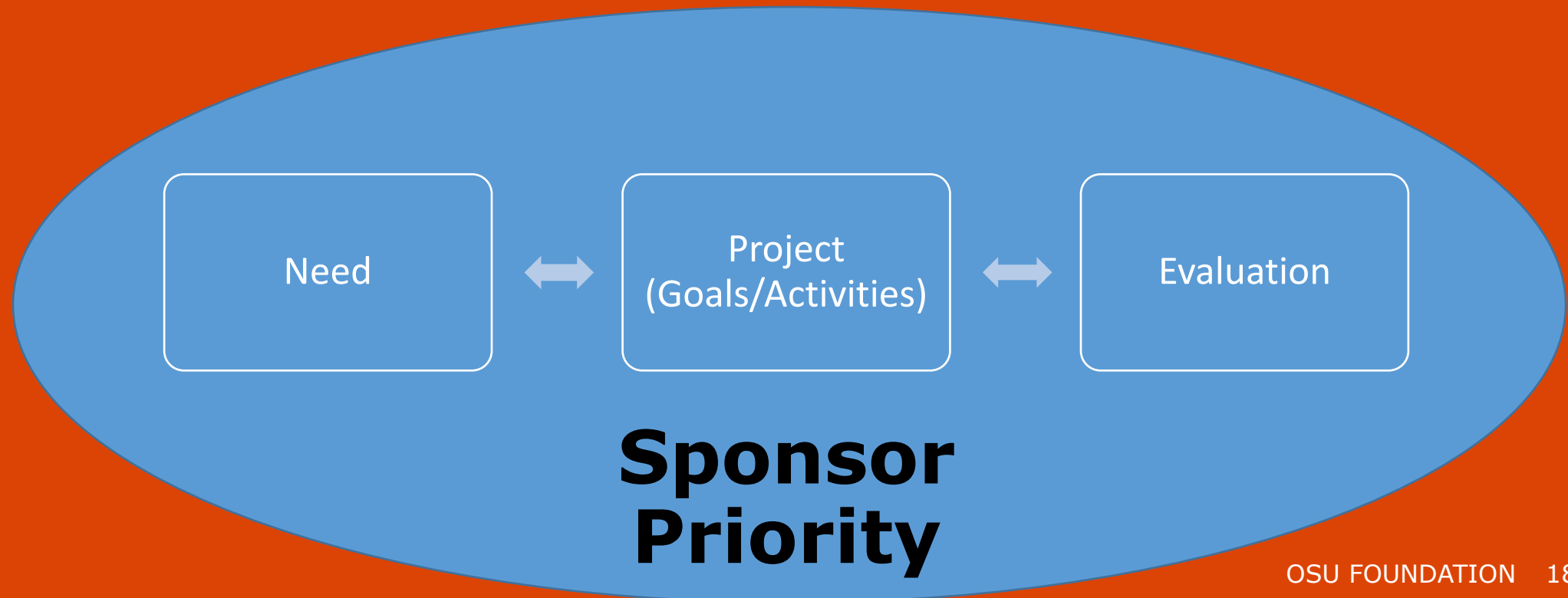
**Impact** = the substantial way your findings or innovation will produce positive change. Includes quantification and context.

Private philanthropy right now is very concerned about the impact of charitable contributions.

*Now, more than ever, the impact you describe will be a **significant determinant** of your proposal success.*

# IMPORTANT: Connect the pieces

Tie the evaluation to goals/objectives. Does the impact described match the sponsor's stated priorities and your stated need?





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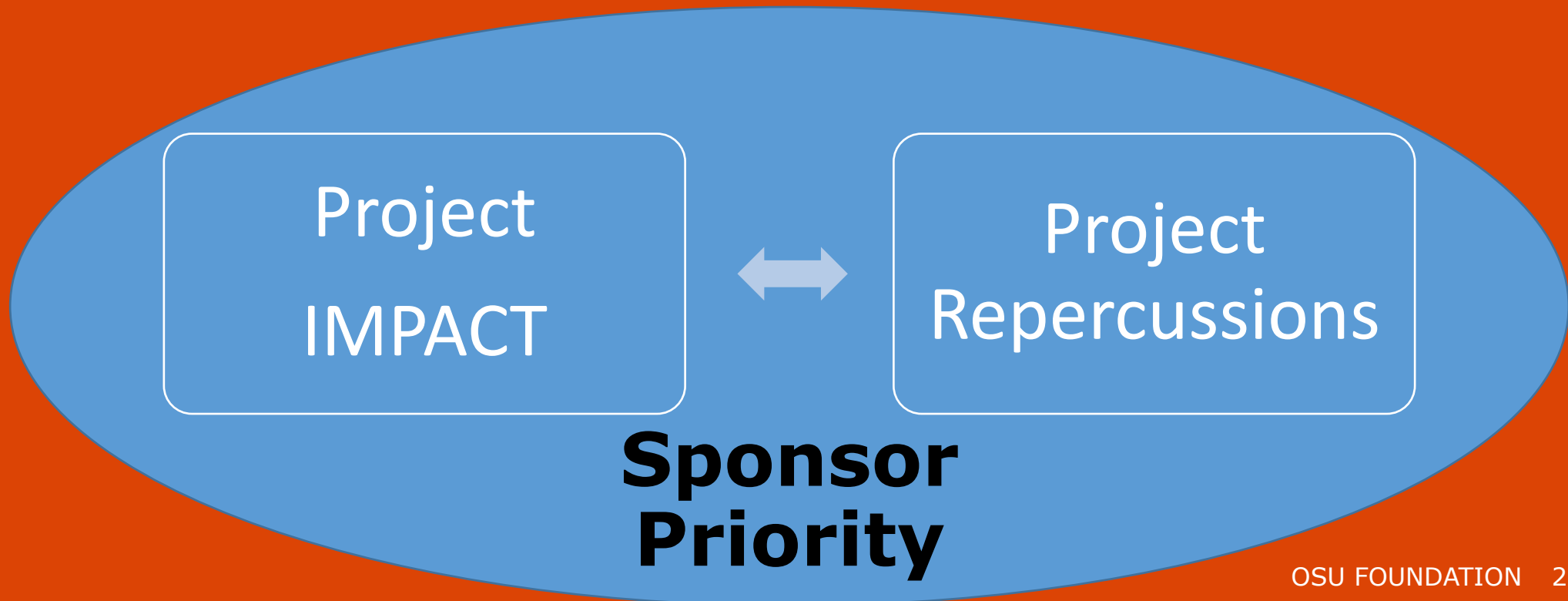
# Sustainability

- Section that describes what happens after the grant is over.
- Demonstrates the impact of a sponsor's investment doesn't die once the project ends.

**KEY TAKEAWAY: Successful proposals demonstrate that they have lasting meaning**

# IMPORTANT: Connect the pieces

Tie the impact of your project to the potential repercussions of your project after the grant period. Do the repercussions also fall within the sponsor's stated priorities?



# Opening and Closing Statements

## Opening Paragraph

- **Short** summary statement – your LOI distilled
- Might be the only thing a reviewer reads, so it has to stand alone
- If possible, use a hook

## Closing Statement

- Varies widely
- Offer a conclusion to your persuasive argument
- Reiterate the need and impact



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# Budget

- At the LOI stage, budgets can be general descriptions of the project's funding needs.
- Always include a summary of the proposed budget categories, even when not specifically requested. Insert budget summary as narrative in the project activity section if not specifically requested elsewhere.



# Conclusion

The LOI persuades readers:

1. about the nature, scope, and severity of the problem, and why it needs to be addressed
2. why your project is the solution to that problem, is thoughtful and informed, and is likely to succeed
3. why you are the person/team to carry out the solution
4. your problem and its solution are *both* a match to the sponsor's priorities





# EXAMPLES

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# Oregon Community Foundation: **Creative Heights Grant Program**

The **purpose** is to increase Oregon's cultural visibility and vitality while supporting unique opportunities for Oregonians to experience innovative arts and culture.

Meeting a **need**: artists and culture bearers rarely have the capital to take creative risks, which limits them. Creative Heights funding supports experimentation and artistic or curatorial evolution that keep an artist's/organization's work vibrant or relevant and may provide an artist/organization with the potential for learning and/or meaningful growth.

- Annual program awards up to \$1 million in grants.
- Grants range from \$10K-\$100K per award.
- LOI open Jan 5 – Feb 15
- Limited to one OSU submission per year
- <https://oregoncf.org/grants-and-scholarships/grants/creative-heights/>



# Online portal with text box entries

- 1. Please provide a working title for your project** *(50 characters)*
- 2. Please provide a one-sentence summary of your project** *(300 characters)* Please be succinct, this is used by the review committee for quick reference.
- 3. Artistic Discipline** *(drop down menu)*
- 4. Is the vision for your project primarily driven by an arts and culture nonprofit; or an independent artist, culture bearer, curator, producer or collective?** *(multiple choice)*
- 5. Who are you?** *(600 characters)* Tell us about your background as an artist or organization and/or describe previous notable projects.
- 6. What is your idea for a Creative Heights project?** *(1500 characters)*
- 7. Who do you want to work with?** *(600 characters)* Tell us about any proposed collaborators and their artistic/creative background, or how they'll support the project.
- 8. How is the proposed project different or distinct from previous work?** *(900 characters)*
- 9. Select a preliminary grant range** *(multiple choice)*
- 10. Letters of Support** *(upload a file)*

# Russell Sage Foundation

**Purpose:** RSF makes external grants for social science research projects that address questions of interest under our [programs](#) -- [Behavioral Economics](#); [the Future of Work](#); [Race, Ethnicity, and Immigration](#); and [Social, Political, and Economic Inequality](#) and a number of [special initiatives](#).

**Need:** the improvement of social and living conditions in the United States

- Three deadlines a year with rotating priority areas
- Very competitive; 15% of LOIs are advanced and 4% are ultimately awarded.
- Award amounts are up to \$175K for Trustee grants or up to \$35K for Presidential grants.
- Significant limitations on allowable budget items.
- <https://www.russellsage.org/how-to-apply/project-presidential-awards>



# Mini Proposal

- LOI narratives are four pages long and are shorter versions of the full proposal you hope to submit.
  - No more than 1.5 pages = outlining the problem, stating the research question(s), and reviewing the literature
  - 50-75% = explaining how and why the data and methods will help you answer the research question(s)
  - One paragraph for explaining how the project relates to RSF's interests
  - Short paragraph on budget and qualifications of the investigators
- RSF uses external interdisciplinary reviewers, so be aware of what other disciplines may say about your discipline. Avoid jargon.
- Preliminary and pilot findings should be included, if available. Likewise, power calculations, if relevant.

# Education:

## Charles Stewart Mott Foundation

**Purpose:** to expand learning opportunities and supports for children, particularly those from low- and moderate-income communities

**Need:** education is the path out of poverty, but educational opportunities are not always available for those who need it most.

- Education is one of four program areas. Education program priorities include: Youth Engagement; Graduating High School College & Career Ready; Advancing Afterschool; and Special Initiatives
- Past grants in Oregon have ranged up to \$500,000, most between \$15K and \$200K.
- Priorities appear to programmatic support and not research-oriented; supports regrating organizations.
- <https://www.mott.org/work/grantseekers/>



# The One-Pager

- Project Description

Please describe your project, emphasizing why it's needed, whom it will serve, and what will be accomplished during a specific period of time. Be sure to tell us how your project fits with the Foundation's strategies and/or programs. Please limit your description to 6,500 characters (including spaces) or less (approximately 1.5 pages). If you find you are unexpectedly running over the character count when pasting text from Word, try first pasting the text into a plain text editor such as Notepad (Windows) or TextEdit (Mac) and then pasting it here. This will remove most, if not all, of Microsoft formatting and special characters.



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**QUESTIONS?**







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# 5-Key Statements Exercise



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# Expanding your Ideas – Templates

- General LOI (curriculum, public humanities, event series, creative arts)
- Research (formal research/scholarly activity)



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# PROTECTED WRITING TIME

