



SOROPTIMIST
Best for Women®

*Improving the lives of women and girls
through programs leading to social
and economic empowerment.*

SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL OF THE AMERICAS

Soroptimist Club Grants: Tips for Applying

General Tips

- ❖ **Choose a project that addresses women and/or girls, meets local need, and responds to club member interest and expertise.**

Clubs should choose a project that aligns with the Soroptimist mission to improve the lives of women and girls. It is also important that mission-based projects meet an identified local community need. Finally, members should be actively engaged for a project to be successful.

- ❖ **Describe the project in an effective way.**

Ensure the proposal is written meticulously, includes all requested information, and is detailed enough for reviewers to understand the full project. A well written and thorough proposal is as important as the project itself. Each proposal requires a cover sheet, a budget, and an eight-part narrative that includes:

- Proposal Summary
- Needs Assessment
- Outcomes
- Methods
- Responsibilities
- Evaluation
- Public Relations Strategy
- Funding Needs

A project that is not clear and fully described to the application reviewers will not receive funding.

Part I. Proposal Summary

- ❖ **Write the 'Proposal Summary' last.**

The 'Proposal Summary' should summarize the entire proposal. It is easier to do this section last, after all other sections are written. The 'Proposal Summary' should name the target group and provide an overview of the objectives, methods and responsibilities of the project. It should be limited to one or two paragraphs and give the reviewer a clear understanding of your entire project.

Part II. Needs Assessment

❖ Document the problem your project aims to address.

Within the 'Needs Assessment' section, fully document the problem your project aims to address. The person reviewing your grant proposal needs to be convinced that there is a need for the project. Use statistics (local, national, or international – local statistics are most compelling), stories, information from experts, or anecdotal evidence to make a connection between your project and how it will address the specific need. A combination of these methods is recommended for a stronger needs assessment.

❖ Provide a Needs Assessment that matches your proposed project.

Many grant proposals discuss only a general social problem that the project will address. This is a good starting point for a needs assessment, but it is not complete. A complete needs assessment also addresses a local need that will be addressed by the project. For example:

- If a proposed project is to assist a local shelter in expanding, it is not sufficient to write a needs assessment that only details the problem of domestic violence; what also needs to be included is *why* the shelter needs to be expanded. Answer questions such as: How many women and children can the shelter now accommodate? Does the shelter have to turn women away?
- If a proposed project is to provide mammograms to uninsured women, it is not sufficient to write a needs assessment that only details the importance of getting mammograms; what also needs to be included is *why* this issue is a local need. Answer questions such as: How many local women have access to mammograms? How many local women need mammograms who aren't getting them?

Part III. Outcomes

❖ Describe specific, measurable project objectives using words like “improve,” “increase” or “decrease.”

Specific, measurable objectives answer the question: what changes will occur for the target group as a result of the project? A good objective will use action words to describe a direction of change that will occur as a result of the project. For example:

- Increase access to housing for survivors of domestic violence
- Decrease the number of women each month the shelter needs to turn away
- Increase resources available to women living without health insurance
- Decrease anxiety felt by women who do not have access to mammograms

Then, expand by explaining how the objectives will be measured and how long the grant will sustain the project. For example: how will your club know that you have successfully increased access to housing for survivors of domestic violence?

❖ Describe the impact on women and/or girls.

Within the 'Outcomes' section, describe how women and/or girls will benefit from the project. Include how many women and/or girls are expected to be affected, and what skills, knowledge, attitudes or beliefs will change as a result of your project. Do not include the impact on the club or partner organization.

Part IV. Methods

❖ Include a detailed plan about how to achieve your objectives.

In the 'Methods' section, include a detailed plan about how you intend to achieve your objectives. For example, a mentoring project should describe:

- How girls will be selected for the project
- How girls will be matched with Soroptimist mentors
- How often the Soroptimist mentors and girl mentees will meet
- What the Soroptimist mentors and girl mentees will do together
- What will be accomplished within the mentor/mentee relationships

❖ Discuss your budget items.

In the 'Methods' section, include a discussion of your budget items. If a reviewer has a question about a budget item, she should be able to go to the 'Methods' section and find a detailed description of the budget. You are applying for a grant because your club needs financial assistance, so explain how *all* the funding you are requesting would be used.

Part V. Responsibilities

❖ Describe how Soroptimist members will be involved in the project.

SIA aims to fund hands-on projects that thoroughly engage Soroptimists. The 'Responsibilities' section should describe how members and community partners (if any) will participate in the project and the amount of time contributed to participation. The 'Responsibilities' section should also highlight how members and partners will execute and evaluate the project.

A strong proposal will also directly connect the hands-on activity of the club to the requested funding. Explain how club members will be involved in the activities that require funds. For example, your club is facilitating a conference for women and is requesting funding for materials. The proposal should describe how members will purchase folders and stuff them with relevant community resources. This tactic is especially important if the proposed budget is for a staff salary or a piece of equipment. For example, your club wants to fund a computer lab for girls, but the lab cannot function without a paid staff member so your club is requesting funding for a staff member salary. The proposal should describe how club members will serve as tutors during operating hours, and how the club will provide necessary oversight during the entire project.

A proposed project that has limited Soroptimist involvement, such as funding the salary of a staff person who would be responsible for everything or a piece of equipment that will be completely facilitated by an outside vendor, is unlikely to be funded.

Part VI. Evaluation

❖ Only includes objectives you can measure.

SIA requests evaluation plans to be able to understand the impact of your club project. SIA knows members are improving the lives of women and girls with your good work – and that you witness the positive changes in women and girls throughout your projects – but SIA wants to be able to talk about that life-changing work

through *specific measurements*. So your project evaluation must include what you are measuring and how you will measure it.

All included objectives (described in the ‘Outcomes’ section) must be measured by your project evaluation. For example, if your project is to redecorate a domestic violence shelter and install a security system, and your project objectives are 1) decrease feelings of stress felt by women living in the shelter, and 2) increase safety of women living in the shelter, then your evaluation must measure these two objectives. One way to measure these objectives is to offer a pre-test and post-test that includes the same questions. If the answers shift, you can attribute the change to your project and know it was successful. An example of questions to measure the previously mentioned objectives include:

Please rate your current level of stress.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(extremely low)

(extremely high)

I feel safe in my housing situation.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

If you can't measure an objective or don't plan to measure it, don't include it. An evaluation plan that *only* asks project participants what they liked/didn't like about the project and whether they liked the speakers, venue, food, etc. is not a sufficient evaluation plan. Feedback from these types of questions can be helpful for clubs' future planning, but it does not allow the club or SIA to understand the impact of your project on participants.

A strong evaluation plan will allow a club to measure and succinctly report their impact in the following ways:

- 90% of shelter residents had decreased feelings of stress
- 70% of shelter residents feel safe in their housing

Please refer to the [Outcomes-Based Project Evaluation for Soroptimist Clubs](#) resource for additional support. A project will not be funded without a clear and strong evaluation plan.

Part VII. Public Relations Strategy

❖ **Write about public relations activities that will take place in the future.**

The ‘Public Relations Strategy’ section must describe a future plan of action to gain publicity for your project. This section provides an opportunity to brainstorm with your club all the ways you can publicly congratulate yourselves throughout the project. Consider how you will let your community know your club:

- was awarded a grant;
- started the project;
- finished the project, and
- achieved significant impact.

The public relations strategy could include a social media campaign, sending news releases and pitch letters to local newspapers, announcing the project on local radio or television interviews, creating posters to hang in local

businesses or flyers handed out to the public. But, do not describe public relations activities that have already taken place.

Also, do not only describe articles that will be written for a club, region, or federation publication. The overall goal of a public relations strategy is to publicize your project to the external community, not to other Soroptimists.

Part VIII. Funding Needs

❖ Be as specific as possible with your budget items.

The budget sheet should list all of the expenditures that will be covered by the requested funding. List all items separately and be specific about what the items are. If the project is to provide a computer library to a local domestic violence shelter, the budget line items should include the cost and number of:

- Computers (5 at \$1,000 each)
- Printers (2 at \$250 each)
- Paper (20 packs at \$15 each)
- Ink cartridges (10 at \$30 each)
- Furniture (1 table at \$250 and 5 chairs at \$150 each)
- Books (20 books at \$20 each)

Do not simply list 'supplies' and a total cost. You may understand what 'supplies' includes, but the reviewers of your proposal will not, and they need to understand how all the funding will specifically be spent.

❖ Ask for an amount of funding that is a \$500 increment.

Funding is always provided in increments of \$500. Your club may request between \$500 and \$10,000. If you do not request funding in an increment of \$500, you will always be given less than what you have requested.

❖ Don't introduce "mystery" items in the budget.

All items in the budget should be discussed within the proposal. If you introduce "mystery" items that are not explained, those items will not be funded. Go through the budget and the proposal to make sure that every single item that is listed on the budget sheet is also thoroughly explained in the 'Methods' section of the proposal.

❖ Be aware Soroptimist Dream Programs are eligible for funding with the following guidelines:

Live Your Dream Award – grants cannot be used to fund the financial award. Proposals will be considered for club efforts to expand the impact of the award on award recipients. This could include efforts to support additional education or training, mentoring, job assistance, etc.

Dream It, Be It: Career Support for Girls – funds can be used to begin a Dream It, Be It project or to add a new dimension to an existing project. Dream It, Be It projects must use the Dream It, Be It curriculum as well as the Dream It, Be It Evaluation Form and submit evaluation results to SIA.

And finally...

❖ **Enlist the help of someone not involved in the project to read your proposal.**

It is helpful to have someone else read over your proposal to see if anything is unclear. A strong proposal will not leave the reviewer with any unanswered questions. It should thoroughly describe what the club is planning to accomplish with the funding, what the budget will be used for, and how the objectives will be met and measured. One of the best ways to ensure that your proposal is clear and complete is to have someone not involved in the project read it and identify information gaps. If your reader has questions or misperceives something, it is likely that the reviewer of your proposal will, too!

❖ **Ask for help!**

Your region's [Program Chair](#) is available to help you think through your project and develop your proposal. You may also contact SIA Headquarters to request assistance at siahq@soroptimist.org. Program staff will not review proposals before the deadline, but are happy to discuss any questions you might have about the project or the proposal.