

Student Guide to a Successful Proposal

Thank you for being a part of the Caring for our Watersheds contest! The first step to getting implementation funding and potentially making it to the top ten is to submit your action plan for review by a panel of volunteer judges - local leaders - in your area. The compelling question you will investigate and answer through a grant-style application is: **What can we do to improve our watershed?** Working individually or in a team of up to four students.

Participating schools will be eligible for over **\$11,000 in rewards.**

Students who implement their ideas are eligible for \$10,000 in funding.

This document is a guide to help students prepare proposal responses. Students must submit their answers online to enter the contest.

The Proposal

1. Choose a creative name for your project
2. Define your watershed (50-75 words)
3. Identify the issue (75-150 words)
4. Describe your solution (525-750 words)
 - a. What is your solution?
 - b. Where will the solution take place?
 - c. Who will your solution involve?
 - d. How will your solution be implemented?
 - e. When will the project take place?
 - f. Lasting impact and scalability
5. Determine your budget (50-75 words)
6. Sustainable Development Goals (50-75 words)
7. Reflection (50-75 words)
8. Visuals and References



The **Student Workbook** is a great resource to help develop your proposal!

Turn your ideas
into solutions.



SMART Proposal Writing

When you are writing your proposal, ask yourself “is it **S.M.A.R.T.**?”

- S – Specific** Is your plan detailed? Try to keep it from being too broad or general. Talk about what ONE SOLUTION and the actions you are going to take to make it happen.
- M – Measurable** Set clear goals for yourself. What do you want your project to do? Make your goals specific so you can evaluate whether you are successful.
- A – Achievable** Make your project achievable. If you need help making your idea happen, make sure you identify who needs to be involved (government, industry organizations, conservation groups etc).
- R – Realistic** Is it possible to complete this project? This project could really happen and the more reasonable it is, the more likely it is to succeed.
- T – Timely** How long would it take? When would you complete your project by?

The Proposal

- 1. Choose a name for your project and provide a description:** Choose a project name that reflects your solution. Have fun and get creative! Provide a brief project description.
- 2. Define your watershed:** Tell us which watershed you live in and provide relevant background about your watershed. Keep this section brief.
- 3. Identify the issue:** Pick one specific issue that you see in your watershed. Then, tell us about that issue: what is causing it, what impact do you see in the watershed (for example: water quality is decreasing) and why you think your project is necessary. Provide evidence to show that your concern is impacting your watershed.
- 4. Your solution**
 - a. What is your solution?** What can you do to address this issue or concern in your watershed? You could educate people, monitor water quality, or create a piece of art; anything that you think could have a positive impact on your watershed. Be specific about what you will do. Be realistic and innovative!
 - b. Where will the project take place?** Explain how big the project is and how far the effects will go. Is this a local project that will affect your home, your school, your county, or even your state or province? Think about the number of people it affects, and the amount of area it will cover.
 - c. Who will your solution involve?** Determine who will help you to make this change. Who are the decision-makers you will in to engage, project partners, and the people who will be impacted?
 - d. How will your project be implemented?** Share the strategies and the tasks that need to be completed to make your project happen, every detail matters!
 - e. When will your project take place?** Create a timeline for your project and provide all the dates of implementation.
 - f. Scalability and lasting impact:** How will you ensure your project is sustainable? What are your plans for upkeep and/or the future of your project?
- 5. Budget:** Describe what resources you will need to implement this project. What will it cost and where will you get funding to pay for it? Think about the materials needed and the costs involved to make this project happen.
- 6. Explain how your project contributes to the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):** Research and identify the Sustainable Development Goals that your project will help move the dial on. Be specific! Include the specific targets related to each goal that your project will be contributing to.
- 7. Reflection:** Why is this issue important to you? Any last comments about why you should be moved forward in the contest?
- 8. Include visuals:** Show us what your idea would look like and the impact it will have in a model, drawing, cartoon, video, or graph – whatever creative way you want to express your solution. For example, if you want to make a watershed awareness brochure – write and illustrate a brochure! If you want to plant a native garden – draw us a picture or make a collage of the plants you would include, the size it would be, where it would be located etc. **Please submit any visuals with your proposal. Include descriptions with the attachments.**
- 9. Cite References:** Community judges will be reading your proposal and they are often conservation experts so it is important that you cite your references. Who knows... you might be citing some of their research! Include any references from your research (in citations) within your answers and include your full list of references.

Review the Judges Scoring Guide [online](#).

Contact your local coordinator for assistance.

www.CaringForOurWatersheds.com