START SMART: A worksheet to guide foundations and corporate proposals

No matter the funding organization, the style/length of proposal, the proposal prompts (including open calls for ideas), proposal authors should always be prepared to clearly articulate the problem, solution, the novelty and value proposition of your work, and the impacts/benefits (for whom and over what time frame).

Setting aside time before diving into the proposal writing to think through and articulate the answers to the prompts below may really help identify "win themes", draw out key points of differentiation, set-up a clear logic flow, and mobilize others to support your efforts, including the CFR team. We hope by "starting smart" we enable an efficient, satisfying, and ultimately successful proposal process. Together, better!

PROJECT/PROPOSAL PLANNING WORKSHEET	
Project Name:	
IN ONE SENTENCE, describe your project idea. What issue does it solve? What will you do?	
What *broad categories* of community needs or opportunities will your project address?	
Describe the *specific need, challenge, or issue* that your project will address and its significance.	In our community, the current situation is this:
What *specific changes or outcomes* do you intend to achieve as a result of your project?	We intend to achieve the following specific outcomes:
What are the *major steps* you will need to take to make these changes happen?	
Describe *why your proposed project* is important and appropriate to making these changes happen.	

How does your solution differ from others? How might it advance the state of education, research, science, technology?	
Does your solution offer transformational potential? How so?	
How might your solution be scaled or applied to other challenges?	
What *resources* will you need to accomplish these steps? (People, equipment, materials, training, etc.)	
What is the *expected duration* of the project?	
Approximate total cost:	
Who else has a vested interest in working with you as *partners* on this problem or opportunity?	
What information, tools, data, etc. will you use to decide whether your project succeeded?	
How will the *results* of the project be shared with the community?	
How will you sustain the project over the long term after grant funding ends?	
Submitted By (Name/Unit)	
Phone/Email:	
Date:	