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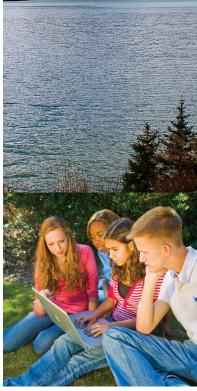
Student Guide to a Successful Proposal

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 in approximately 1,000 words 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. Create a name for your project
2. Define your "place"
3. Identify your concern
4. Explain your solution
5. Explain the scope of your project
6. How will your solution create a positive impact?
7. Include the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**
8. Describe the resources needed
9. Conclusion
10. Include visuals
11. Cite 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?

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Entries are judged on innovation, impact potential, comprehensive scope, communication, budget, realistic solution, visuals, and contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Proposal

1. **Create a name for your project.**

2. **Define your "place" in your Watershed:** Tell us which watershed you live in and provide relevant background about your watershed. Keep this section brief. Remember this is not an essay on the state of your watershed but a proposed SOLUTION to a concern in the watershed.

3. **Identify the issue or concern you want to look at:** 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: is water quality decreasing), and why you think this issue is important to do something about. Provide evidence to show that your concern is impacting your watershed.

4. **Explain your solution:** What can you do to address this issue or concern in your watershed? You can consider a solution within your school, your home, or your community. 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, how long it will take, how it will work, how you will engage your school or community partners, and what it will take to make it happen. Be realistic and innovative!

5. **Explain the scope of your project:** The scope means: how big of a project this 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? Is this project something that you can do alone, or will you need help? How many people will be affected by this? Think about scope in terms of the amount of work you need to put in, the number of people it affects, and the amount of area it will cover.

6. **How will your project create a positive impact?** Explain to us how your idea is going to make positive changes in your watershed and possibly other watersheds. Maybe you plan to educate people so they change how they do things. Maybe you'll bring awareness to an issue that people know nothing about. Maybe you will initiate an action that directly conserves water or saves energy. Tell us why your project is going to work, how your plan will showcase equity and inclusion, and how it will benefit the environment and/or your community. **Provide evidence to show that your solution will help address your concern.**

7. **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.

8. **Describe the resources needed to make this idea happen (budget):** You should be able to implement this project, so describe what you will need to make it happen. What will it cost and where will you get the funding to pay for it? Tell us where and how you will make this project happen. Think about materials needed, the costs involved, as well as the time required to make this project happen.

9. **Conclusion:** Why should we care about this issue? Any last comments about why you should be moved forward in the contest?

10. **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 where possible in the attachments.**

11. **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 here.

Review the Judges Scoring Guide online.

Contact your local coordinator for assistance.