



Funding Considerations¹

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Road Map to an Effective Proposal

Of the many tasks involved in designing a basis for decisions about an intended human endeavor, the preparation of the proposal is first and most critical. If carefully undertaken, the proposal will embody the project or intended activity so thoroughly and intimately that nothing will provide a better basis for conceptualizing its shape and form and thus anticipating its worth.

Foundations differ in terms of the types of projects they prefer to support. It is important that you study the literature provided by a foundation to determine what projects they prefer to support, and the procedures they affirm and recommend. One foundation might be willing to move forward because of a program's soundness of theory, philosophy, and theology. Another might be more disposed toward "practical" or outcomes-oriented activities that represent clearly defined operations and products. Some foundations recommend, or even prefer, a personal contact (by appointment or invitation) to discuss the feasibility of support.

The degree of emphasis on evaluation also varies from one foundation to another. Although evaluation is commonly a condition of a grant, foundations differ widely in terms of what sort of evaluation is expected. While one foundation will be satisfied with a survey representing a handful of subjective judgments, another foundation may expect a carefully crafted summative report based on procedures and data that are scientifically acceptable.

Until recent years, foundations focused on Christian ministries tended to fund highly practical and concrete proposals. Many of these proposals are classified as "bricks-and-mortar" because of their assumption that "building the church" or "educating leaders" requires, above all else, a place to meet, preach, teach, and establish visibility for the cause of Christ. Today, the interests of foundations range across a wide spectrum of projects. Some will support entrepreneurial initiatives where procedures are as yet undefined; others are focused on the compassionate relating to those in physical and social need, evangelizing or educating in the contexts of relationship, and demonstrating Christian ministry as life-changing transformation.

It is important to seek out a foundation that knows and relates well to the sector of Christian ministry that your proposed project represents. **Note:** In order to be able to attend to the large number of proposals fairly, many foundations have mandated a short proposal. It should be understood that brevity is a virtue if what is left out is matters of less importance. But most *excellent* proposals are thorough. What to do? Plan your proposal in terms of three versions:

- a) Thorough and detailed. Do this version first. It will assure that the planning is thoroughly done.

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- b) A synopsis, putting more emphasis on *what* than *how*, and highlighting the unique special features and evidences of creativity and excellence in this program if it were to be compared with other programs in this field.
- c) Now for the fun: count the pages in your *second* version, be very clear on what the application form says about page limit, and see if you can submit this *second* version after deleting as necessary or adding some gems from the *first* version as space allows. Then add this line at the bottom: *If the proposal seems promising, call . . . to request a copy of our comprehensive version.*

Categories of Issues and Proposed Questions

The suggestions offered here can assist in the writing of proposals for foundation grants and thus may increase the likelihood of funding. These suggestions can be useful for self-critique and guidance of project planners and writers of proposals, and for after-the-fact understanding of reasons why foundations find it necessary to reject a proposal or to request a refinement. Categories of issues most commonly noted in proposals and project plans include the following:

1. Increasing the clarity of the proposal.
2. Making a convincing argument that the planned intervention will actually reduce, correct, or “provide the answer” for the problem(s) specified.
3. Committing appropriate resources to the planned intervention.
4. Determining that the project is concerned with important matters and suggests valuable results which can be anticipated from the procedures and resources described.

Each of the four categories of suggestions deals with important concerns. The following questions may help you communicate these concerns clearly in your proposal:

1. Increasing the clarity of the proposal.
 - a) Does the text unfold clearly and logically?
 - b) Are side issues and “rabbit trails” kept to a minimum?
 - c) Has anything vital been left out or mentioned without adequate explanation?
2. Making a convincing argument that the planned intervention will actually reduce, correct, or provide solutions for the problem or problems described.
 - a) Can the reader follow the logic of the steps in the proposal?
 - b) Does the plan show clearly what the core problem is and what you are assuming is creating it or contributing to its difficulty?
 - c) Do you show that others have been able to use effectively a strategy similar to yours?
 - d) Do you show how the expertise of your personnel will be valuable to the efforts you intend to commit to this project?
3. Committing appropriate resources to the planned intervention.
 - a) Do you show careful reasoning about how many and what sorts of staff people will be needed to fulfill your intentions?
 - b) Do you explain why *these* are the right people? What makes them important to your effort? What do you know about them now? What else will you need to know? What will you learn about them, or from them, while the project is moving forward?
 - c) What are your plans for providing for any needed equipping of your team of leader-facilitators? Additional skills? Additional knowledge? Deepened understanding and wisdom?

- d) What learning materials and training procedures will your teams be employing? From what sources? Are the technical matters all in place—or planned? Language level? Appropriate translations? Field-tested?
4. Determining that the project deals with important matters and that it suggests valuable results that are reasonable to anticipate from the procedures and resources described. **Important:** At an early point in the proposal, it is important to make a convincing logical argument that the planned interventions will actually reduce, correct, or “provide the answer” for the problem or problems that motivate the proposal. Although you can’t be expected to become a foreteller of the future, you are responsible for the vision that underlies the proposed work. At least, you should make it clear why the proposed activity makes sense to you.
 - a) Is the proposed project feasible and responsive to the socio-political situation within which Christian leadership must function in the nation, region, or communities where the proposal’s operations are to be located?
 - b) Does the proposed project provide a platform for constructive and positive Christian presence in the society? Are the national leaders of the project experienced and mature Christians?
 - c) Do the plans reflect a Biblically grounded quality and style of leadership? Is the proposed relationship between your organization and national churches or other organizations conducive to an appropriate level of collaboration?

Three Things the Proposal Should Do

The purpose of this next section is to guide the proposal-writer into sound procedures that can result in worthy outcomes. The outline following describes the communication tasks that confront the writer of any proposal for philanthropic funding:

1. Describing your vision.
2. Explaining the procedures you will use to achieve your purposes.
3. Describing your intentions to evaluate the proposed effort.

Each of these communication tasks is represented by five key emphases. You may want to organize your proposal to attend to each of these fifteen sections. It is a good way to begin the working draft of your long-version proposal.

I. Your Proposal: Five Promises of Your Vision

Your Proposal Promises *Truth*.

Important features of a truthful proposal:

- Credibility—communicating the integrity of those involved with the proposal.
- Evidence of thorough and logical grasp of the problem and the prospects for success from the proposed venture.
- Illustrations of accomplishments from similar projects.

Your Proposal Outlines Your Promises of *Purpose*

Showing your vision as motivated and purposeful:

- Clear and vigorous descriptions of the consequences intended.

Specific relationships shown between intended purposes and planned procedures.

Your Proposal Promises *Commitment*

Illustrating your commitment to a proposal:

Describe steps taken to assure follow-through from idea to action.

Describe your plan for *enlisting and encouraging commitment of your co-workers*.

Show how the experiences of your projects already illustrates commitment.

Your Proposal Promises a *Contractual Relationship*

Anticipating that the proposal will lead to a sound contractual relationship:

Describe your accounting practices and evaluative procedures.

Include your schedule of periodic assessment and interactions with groups you intend to serve.

Make clear your intentions to cooperate in fulfilling the business terms and conditions expected by the sponsors of the project.

Your Proposal Promises a *Plan* to be Fulfilled

Demonstrating your ability to pursue and fulfill the plan:

Build your proposal on a clear and detailed plan. Design the proposal as a series of related steps.

Make each part of your project relate to the “big picture.” Don’t leave too much to the reader’s imagination.

Describe your plans to deal with these critical questions:

What will be done in fulfilling this project?

Who will do it?

What is their competency?

What records will you be keeping of the actions that are being carried out?

What records will you be keeping of the consequences of the actions?

II. Your Proposal: Five Promises of Your Operation

(Descriptive Promises about Function and Procedure)

Your Goals Should Show a *Realistic Picture* of Your Situation and Your Planned Procedures

Suggestion: Start with an honest appraisal of the strengths and the weaknesses of the situation as it stands now, and indicate clearly what needs to be done. (Simply growing bigger is rarely a worthy plan!)

Warning: Assure that the proposal describes a realistic picture. It is a big mistake to promise pie-in-the-sky!

Your Objectives Should Describe a *Plan for Change*

Suggestion: Your proposal is expected to communicate a clear and workable *plan for change*. Sometimes this can mean taking an already proven plan and putting it to work in a different place or situation. It can also mean taking the best of what has already been done and improving it by changing certain characteristics.

Warning: Avoid describing the changes you propose in terms of “more of the same,” or “we need to make it bigger.”

Your Proposal Should Reflect Your Faith as an *Image of the Future*

Suggestion: Show how you expect to discern God's intentions for moving the church forward as your program unfolds. A winning proposal will reflect a hopeful faith in *God's* purposes.

Warning: Your image of the future should have its feet on the ground and yet display your faith. Sometimes a proposal is written to show that a proposed project will be an improvement on what is being done by others. Beware. The time may come when you will find that it is harder to fulfill your hopes than you had assumed. It is important to acknowledge your role as a servant, not a commander!

Your Proposal Should Invite the Reader into a *Foretaste* of What is to be Accomplished Through Your Project or Program

Suggestion: Think of your proposal as the appetizer. It should focus on what is to follow, but it needs to be a delicious experience that will prime the reader for the main course!

Warning: Avoid writing your proposal in a highly formal and dry style. Somewhere in your proposal find space to tell your story in a scenario or two that will show what your project will look like in action and how you will expect your participants to take part.

Your Proposal Should Reflect an *Encounter with Reality*

Suggestion: Keep a hopeful and optimistic outlook as you describe your project. Demonstrate that your vision is realistic and your perspective is grounded in the realities of the context in which it is intended to function. In sum, be sure you know what you are talking about!

Warning: Avoid a preoccupation with knowledge as information storage. Bear in mind that *the reality that counts is experience*. Talk about the people you intend to work with as live, warm, humans with interests, needs, tastes, and uniqueness. *No effective program for leadership development has ever emerged from a cookie-cutter!*

III. Your Proposal: Five Promises of Your Intention to Evaluate

Your Proposal Identifies Responsible Criteria for *Assessing Progress*

What does this mean? Note: You could call in a competent specialist or sub-contract with an organization that specializes in evaluation planning and management. But if one of your own staff will have time to do some reading and preparing for the task, you may not need the outside help.

Consider a simple example: Assume that your concern is low interest in church attendance. Assume that a major purpose of your project is to change that. To determine that the project is having the intended effect, you will need to count participants and keep records. In this matter *progress* would mean increase. *Assessing* progress would be a matter of determining (in advance) what number or proportion of increased participation you will accept as your *criterion* of significant progress (e.g., 10% per month). Projects are often assessed in terms of stages of growth and the time and resources required to reach each stage. So you might determine your criterion in terms of an increasing schedule of change that would reflect the church doubling in participation each year for the next three.

Suggestions: Include any authoritative recommendations, guidelines, or standards that you have found. Identify from the publications of experts in the field the important matters that will need to be assessed. Suggest promising ways that data about these matters could be collected.

Warning! Do not assume that everything worth evaluating will be measurable in numbers. Many realities of great worth cannot be easily measured—*love*, or *commitment*, for example. When measurement (counting and scoring) is appropriate, it can be more reliable and more objective than estimates, guesswork, and personal judgments.

Your Proposal Should *Tell of the Past*.

What would this include? Responsible use of quality published literature strengthens a proposal. Acknowledging the worth of “those who have gone before, led the way, opened the territory, and blazed the trail” is a sure clue that the one who is writing the proposal is knowledgeable and respectful of history, tradition, and authority. Demonstrate your awareness that there are precedents for the plans you are making.

Suggestions: Use explicit references to reputable sources that are available to guide your work. Cite the names and publication data of your more valuable sources.

Warning! Not everything old is true. Not everyone who writes books is truly scholarly. Not everything that will be discovered has yet been discovered. There is a continuing necessity for careful study, reflection, and astute judgment.

Your Proposal Should Identify the Steps Toward *Progress*

How can this be done? Identify the measurable evidences that will represent steps or stages of growth, development, or improvement in the criteria that you deem important.

Suggestions: Suggest a sequence of steps to be noted in your project assessments. Set your goals as evidences of fulfillment of stages of your project.

Warning! Be sure to assign responsibilities to the teams and their leaders. Identify the functions and responsibilities that each of your teams (team leaders) will carry for each of the steps in the project.

Your Proposal Should Emphasize the *Worth* of the Program or Project

What would this include? Since the importance of a project will be its major source of motivation, develop a short list of the most important reasons why this project is needed and should be fulfilled. For each of the project’s objectives, spell out your basis for believing that it is worthwhile—important to achieve and to assess.

Suggestions: Describe the worth of two or three of the intended outcomes in terms of godly values.

Warning! *Worth*, like the idea of values, is a very large and abstract idea. Don’t feel obligated to specify the value of your program in great detail. Likely you can identify one or two major categories of outcomes in which the project will demonstrate its worth, for example, bringing leaders and church-members into a more active working relationship.

Your Proposal Should Reveal Your *Anticipation of Change*

How can you show this? Describe a scenario of what you are anticipating as adventures and as outcomes of your proposed activities. Indicate the categories of people you expect to be most affected (helped, encouraged, inspired) by the changes you intend to facilitate.

Suggestions: Emphasize the personal and organizational changes that you hope will result from the ways your project will affect the people it touches. Describe the steps you will take to determine the nature of these results.

Warning! Keep things in focus. Keep the attention of your reader on the most important and worthwhile outcomes your project is intending to achieve. Don’t promise changes that are too remote from your stated purposes.

Writing the Proposal

The two questions, *What?* and *Why?* are the most important matters you can describe in your proposal. Everything else will simply amplify and put substance on these basic bones. Purposes and goals seem to be interchangeable terms. They refer to the major intention of the task or procedure. Naming this intention is the matter of *what?* Explaining its worth or value is the *why?*

Understanding Terminology

The difference between purposes, goals, intentions, and similar terms is always arguable. For the sake of a simple-to-understand basic agreement, consider how the words are used in reference to a game—for example, football.

The **intention** is to have fun, to establish a record, or to determine a team's position in some sort of ranking. The **means** for doing this is to play the game. The **purpose** of playing the game is to win—ordinarily by accumulating the largest score by the time the game is over. For each of plays within the game, the effort is to get the ball closer and closer to the **goal**. Although the **intention** is continuous and the **purpose** guides each action, the **goal** is attained on some occasions and not on others. Thus we can see that even in such a game as football we need several different words to talk about what will be happening. This requires an agreed upon vocabulary.

In a typical leadership development project the **intention** is to produce competent leaders. The **purpose** is to bring to the trainees a series of learning experiences and to urge them to read, to practice certain skills, to interact with fellow-learners, and to adopt for themselves a worthy set of leadership competencies. These planned materials and experiences are the **means**. The **goal** is to make them ready for assignments in the field in which their competencies will enable them to carry out ministry tasks in an effective manner.

Evaluation is needed in order to monitor and ultimately to improve upon all of these fulfillments of purpose-related matters. Consider these illustrations of the need for evaluation:

- a) Evaluating *intentions*—To what extent do the intentions represent the scope and varieties of experiences of the leadership tasks? Are they clear? Well illustrated? Understandable?
- b) Evaluating *purposes*—Are the purposes capable of being fulfilled? Can their fulfillment be measured or documented in a reliable way? Are the purposes worth the effort? Related to the main intentions? Within the interests of the learners? Capable of challenging without overwhelming the learners?
- c) Evaluating *means or activities*—In what ways, and to what extent, do the activities and learning exercises represent real problems and tasks? Are they distributed across the spectrum of learning needs? Effectively attuned to the understandings of the learners?
- d) Evaluating *goals*—Are the goals well established as steps along a clear path toward the purposes? Can the learners relate to the goals as worthwhile accomplishments? Are the goals clearly stated so that they are not ambiguous or confusing?

The statements of intentions, purposes, and goals are like provide the road map. You should not expect to drive down the tangle of highways without them. Much of the planning will be dedicated to thinking through the choices and determining the best way(s) to move toward fulfillment.

Getting Started on the Proposal-Writing

Although the use of “grant writers” is becoming more common, especially among larger organizations, by no means is the practice an assurance of a better proposal. Quite often the specialist is less aware of the content, craft, and competency of the area for which the proposal is being prepared. The program director or the organization’s founder and coordinator often does a better job on the proposal—with one notable exception: this person tends to omit important descriptive material on how the program actually operates. Consulting with a grant writer, or hiring a grant writer to prepare particular sections of the proposal can correct this problem.

Many of the specialists who write proposals for grants begin with a careful study of the sponsor’s documents; then they engage in a series of planning sessions with colleagues who are most able to help visualize, conceptualize, and manage the proposed project. In addition to a thorough understanding of the concepts inherent in the intended project, the grant-writer will need many hours of discussion and planning with the project people, at least with the major decision-makers, to allow for a sensitive and insightful representation of their intentions and ideas in the proposal.

In many cases, the organization is small and the resources are severely limited. Thus there may be no specialist to write the proposal. This may put a heavy load on the executive director or the person appointed to direct the new project, but if certain precautions are observed, a competent proposal can result nonetheless.

Making the Purposes and the Promises Clear

Of the many steps between an idea and its fulfillment, *planning* is the most important. Designing and developing a basis for decisions about a human endeavor require imagination and the capability to visualize the purposes that drive the motivations, the procedures that need to be established, and the wisdom that will unite the procedures into a significant whole.

Writing a proposal for support of a project or plan is one way to assure that planning is thorough and explicit. The quality of the proposal will reflect or summarize the level of quality invested in the plan. Even more important, excellence in the performance usually reflects excellence in the plan. Gaps in a careless plan may lie unrecognized until they emerge as sources of one catastrophe after another in the field.

Showing the Importance of Your Procedures

Among the tasks involved in designing and developing the basis for decisions about a complex human endeavor, the conception, planning, and design of the proposal is first and most critical. If carefully undertaken, the proposal will embody the project or intended activity so thoroughly and intimately that nothing will provide a better basis for judgment of its worth. Thus the proposal’s major burden is to convince a prospective donor or contributor that a decision about appropriateness and worth of the undertaking is *justified*.

1. What teaching materials (or information pieces) will be used? In what language were they originally written? Who translated them for use in the proposed procedures? What level of education do they assume the users/readers will have?
2. What use of media is intended? To what extent will this be *audio-only*? What advanced technologies will be used? Have you ascertained the availability of technical support and maintenance?
3. What library resources will be needed? Have you determined availability?

4. What range of reading-levels will you need to accommodate? Is illiteracy apt to present problems?
5. To what extent will you need lecturers, resource people, or project staff from some outside source?
6. Are you dealing with people who are familiar with the methods and procedures that you intend to use?
7. What provisions are you making for developing your human resources? Staff training? Team leadership?
8. When and how will you determine the matters of scheduling of your training events?
9. What national (local) persons will be incorporated in the project teams to provide you the necessary advice and assistance with “cultural translation?”
10. What are your plans for continuity? Especially needed is a description of the ways the start-up funds from a foundation can be phased down and ultimately replaced. To assure minimal dependency, the ideal is to develop means for making a project self-supporting.

Setting the Scene for Evaluation

Evaluation is concerned with determining the worth of what your project will bring about. Evaluation is the process whereby you can be sure, and ensure your supporters, that something important and valuable is happening.

Every evaluation plan begins by identifying the important variables. The next job is to plan ways to assess these variables in a reliable and valid way. All of this leads to developing instrumentation that will enable the collecting of data for the measures and posting the data as charts or graphs.

At some point, a criterion must be specified (based on a judgment) as to what is good, better, best—or which scores on the chart can be interpreted in terms of satisfactory/unsatisfactory change. In conjunction with this process of measuring (counting) and comparing scores or rates of scores with the criteria, we make judgments and classify the differences as “good news” or “bad news.” In a nutshell, this is what evaluation is all about.

Anyone who can observe reliably, specify clearly, report truthfully, and judge wisely can engage in the evaluative process. Following are some of the evaluation-planning tasks that will concern the project planner and the writer of the detailed proposal:

1. Deciding what is worthwhile to measure and maintain as project records.
2. Anticipating the changes that should be observed and documented for the project records.
3. Determining what tests should be used if any. From what sources? Or who will develop these instruments? How will they be pre-tested for language understanding and reading level?
4. Determining what subjective data about occupational and other personal life-career characteristics will be important to collect.
5. Deciding the scheduling of pretest and posttest data collection to allow for appropriate points of comparison before and after each of the phases of the “treatment” or “intervention.”
6. Training observers and documenters of the subjective data.

Innovators and entrepreneurs are vulnerable to a self-satisfaction that puts personal experience ahead of sound judgment. By contrast, the planner and operator of an effective program will be an eager and continuous learner. This spirit of openness to new insights will be evident from the proposal onward. Consider the following clues that show whether or not a proposal has been written or compiled by a person who is inclined to be too self-sufficient:

- Does the author acknowledge the sources of ideas featured in the proposed work?
- Does the author give credit to people who are already pioneering the ideas and implementing them?
- Does the proposal suggest where to go for background and examples of the thinking represented in the planning of this project?
- Does the proposal reveal a reasonably wide awareness of the authoritative writings on the matters central to the proposal?
- Does the proposal show interest and care in the selection and training of appropriate staff for this project or program?

Planning for the Long Run—Steering Around Dependency

Receiving a grant brings new responsibilities and a series of dilemmas. Just when it seemed that the burdens of inadequate funding would be over, you now find that an adequate bank balance brings its own headaches. One problem is easy to understand: you must make wise choices about how to use money, even if you are working under a wisely constructed budget.

The other problem is more difficult to grasp: a flow of money tends to create dependency. Somewhat like the old problem of feeding birds in the winter, resources that are unexpectedly available can set up patterns that must be perpetuated. If your generosity is accompanied by just a touch of human carelessness, or even a necessary distraction, it can result in the starvation of many birds. This problem is common in misguided welfare situations and in many sorts of intercultural “assistance” projects.

Those who manage Christian missions commonly learn to emphasize prayer, presence, and counsel as the safest forms of aid. When the missionary goes beyond these into financial partnerships and contributions of properties and funds without careful planning, the easy slide into dependency soon begins. The contrast between the relative “wealth of the west” and the “perilous poverty” of those we wish to help seems to justify and even demand assistance in financial matters. It can seem cruel to keep resources for oneself.

But always try to think in the perspective of the kingdom of God. God is sovereign. Everything belongs to God. What has been trusted to me or to my organization, as the steward, must be put to wise uses. Godly wisdom does not allow it to be used either to buy good will or to encourage dependency. (Be careful! This principle does not justify insensitivity to human needs.) The practical implication can be translated into several guidelines. Consider these suggestions:

1. Plan your interventions in the field with a careful eye on the local economy. Find ways to help that do not create disruptions.
2. Keep your strategies and procedures simple. Remember that the worth of your ideas should reflect imagination and appropriate technology.
3. Remember the importance of large-scale applications of small-unit transformations, such as the increasing use of small-capital loans to women in underdeveloped communities. Such loans, pioneered by World Vision and other Christian organizations, as well as the World Bank, USAID, and similar large partners in community development, are now recognized as providing large-scale leverage and

effectiveness. Without the vision and plan for the larger scale effect, a proposed project is likely to be seen as inconsequential.

4. Don't waste resources: people's time, books, paper, food, or media devices. Remember that when the project is over people often must find ways to keep the best ideas going without needing to support an abundance of gadgets and gimmicks.
5. Don't show your frustration about not having everything just the way you would prefer. People will be watching to see how well you adapt yourself to the situation.
6. A newcomer to a project in the field must be especially careful not to call attention to one's newness, and especially to one's foreignness. Making frequent references to some other place where your ideas have worked well is very dangerous. Even such a simple thing as a critical remark about a community's condition and situation can set back weeks of efforts toward establishing good relationships.

Find something to rejoice in every day with every group of learners. Nothing encourages more than a warm spirit and a positive outlook. Select people as leaders in your project teams who will show the grace of God in their behavior and especially through their relationships to others.

Interview Guide: Data Gathering Upon First Contact

The following questions are to assist discussions between project stakeholders and Foundation officers, especially about a project with international involvement.

1. What is the project called? At home: _____ Abroad: _____
2. In what ways does this program or project draw upon previous efforts and examples that provide guidance and inspiration?
3. What do you hope will be accomplished through this project or program?
What are your quantitative goals? (Across what time periods?)
What sorts of decisions are you sharing with people from the "other" nation?
4. When do you expect to be ready to put this program into the field? What preparations remain to be completed?
5. What will be the tasks of the expatriates? Of the "other-national" persons?
6. How many people, here and there, will be working together?
During the introductory period?
When the project gets up to fulfillment?
7. Describe their qualifications and ministry experiences.
Expatriates:
"Other-nationals":
8. What organizations are you including as partners in your home country?

9. What organizations are you planning to include as partners in the “other” nation?
10. What is your best guess about how this activity will be funded after the introductory stages?
11. In what year of the project will the “other” nation begin to carry a part of the costs?
12. In what year of the project will the outside (expatriate) persons employed (including “missionaries”) be outnumbered by those employed from within the “other” nation?
13. What staff development and training will be necessary?
 - To prepare the expatriates:
 - To help the “*other-nationals*” learn their skills:
 - To help in the development of bi-national or multi-national teams:
14. What plans do you have for helping the churches (in the nation) seek out indigenous sources for this training?
15. What do you expect to be the three largest categories of costs?
16. What are the essential staff persons during the introductory stages? How many? What roles?
17. In what ways might the church be stronger after five years of this activity?
18. What learning materials do you expect to use? To adapt? To create?
19. Who will be making the decisions about materials to use? What standards will be established (e.g., literacy level, translation quality, editorial review)?
20. What sources are available to help you select and enlist appropriate professional help on these matters of media and literature?
21. What new media or new methodologies do you expect to introduce into the churches or agencies that you are hoping to help?

Considerations Before Funding

Planners of programs and projects in leadership development should be particularly careful to learn from previous experiences, especially when taking methods and materials into another nation or region. Where backgrounds and cultural experiences are different, perspectives and values of the participants will be different. References to the ways things are done “back home” will provide unreliable examples and strategies for what should be done in another culture.

Respect and Caution: Keys to Intercultural Effectiveness

People with experience in international relations and intercultural ministry show their competency through attitudes and behaviors that demonstrate respect and caution. People with experience are aware of the hazards of the road. Narrow paths with slippery edges, deep chasms hidden in

darkness—these dangers often exist with no intentional malice. But there is more: booby traps and deliberately planted landmines are dangerous, whether recently added to the environment or leftover from some previous experience. Although survival may not be the highest motive for a dedicated disciple, it is essential for one's continuing ministry. Caution is the requisite of survival. Caution is made wise with the wisdom that comes from experience.

The intentions of a foundation are best fulfilled through programs and projects that reflect wisdom and demonstrate awareness of situations, interventions, and relationships that require caution. This is not to say that foundations expect all their grantees to employ the safest paths and reflect the utmost in cautious activity. Indeed one of the purposes of philanthropy is to encourage exploration and discovery—which is inherently dangerous. But wisdom calls for assessing the risks, counting the costs, and avoiding the obvious pitfalls.

Partnership Can Move Us Toward Wise Choices

As foundations encourage an emphasis on helping emerging churches in difficult regions, more concern is warranted in choosing the objectives and efforts that *should* be encouraged. Evidence from the field is warning us that not all the well-intentioned efforts by western-world agencies result in actual benefits to the churches in recently evangelized fields. Every organization or agency seeking funding assistance is encouraged to participate in contributing to the database of “good news” and “bad news” about how outside resources are being used. Today's funding priorities are better served in partnership and the criteria for choices in ministry efforts can be a shared concern. Further, with advances in technology, all partners in the global work of the church can have access to reliable and valid information about *what helps* and *what hinders* emerging churches. Meanwhile, foundations have an obligation to share the judgments and insights drawn from the experiences they are examining.

Following is a list of some of the cautions urged upon funding partners. In one way or another, these statements will be reflected in the criteria by which proposals are evaluated and decisions made about funding—in terms of choices and amounts.

Concerns About Relationships

Caution #1: Placing too much confidence in a team of outsiders.

A long-standing tradition in the missions of the church, and in international commerce, as well, is to keep everything possible in the hands of the outsiders. (*Outsiders*: those who put themselves into a region or nation to bring, to show, to tell, to sell, or to control. *Insiders*: those who are already there.) Using the majority of new funds for the expansion of the expatriate workforce is a modern evidence of old-fashioned planning. In the vital matter of staffing a program or project and increasing the number of those who will be brought in from the outside (i.e., from a different neighborhood, nation, or cultural background) the watchword should be *less* not *more*.

The assumption that outsiders will be more responsible, more motivated, and more competent is a colonial hangover. Insiders, indeed, are not always virtuous and faithful—just as an *outsiders* can be dishonest and incompetent. But there must be a willingness to share supervisory and management tasks as early as possible in a project or there will be little opportunity for the emergence of indigenous accountability. Christians, especially, dare not ignore the familial nature of the church nor the evidences in the Acts of the Apostles that show church leadership to be most commonly an insiders' task. Holding the purse strings and other demonstrations of outsider superiority retard the development of the church. People who have never been allowed to share in these responsibilities

may make some mistakes while learning accountability and responsible management, but there must be freedom to make choices if there is to be freedom to learn.

Caution #2: Assuming that enthusiastic willingness is always a good sign.

Americans are especially vulnerable to the tendency to “read the polls.” The more people there are who like something, the better. The more people smile on our efforts, the better we feel. Most non-westerners, especially national leaders who deal with Americans often, have learned how to anticipate this tendency and manipulate it. The resultant lack of candor can get in the way of progress. When we really want to hear honest feedback it is hard to get. But what isn’t hard to get are the smiles, approvals, and encouragement that, in our vocabulary are read as approval and agreement.

Newcomers to the international project world are often misled—it may be more charitable to say either unintentionally or kindly misled—by those who see that they may somehow better off if our plan goes forward. Or, they may simply want to make us pleased and happy to see our ideas accepted in the local context. Enthusiastic willingness isn’t always a good sign. It may simply be a cultural ritual to make you feel good and willing to talk more. Where this can really hurt is when we are seeking cooperation. To say that one is willing to cooperate or that “others are sure to cooperate” is not at all the same thing as showing up to shoulder the work when the time comes. This problem is with us so commonly, and the only remedy is a long-term building of mutual confidence so that our counterparts will open up to sharing their true feelings, impressions, and informed advice. But that takes more time, effort, and a more thorough opening oneself to hear bad news as easily as we tease out the good news.

Whether we admit it or not, many projects buy their way into acceptance, giving hope of changes or improvements that are far from the intentions of the outsiders who are proposing or pushing ideas. When we assume that apparent agreement means much more than temporary acquiescence while waiting for “better bait,” we haven’t learned the rules of the game. Yes, Christians—even in our country—will seek out the best deal. And if the outsiders aren’t carefully listening to what insiders are saying about their real interests and needs, the insiders will keep nibbling at the bait until the game changes.

Caution #3. Interpreting stewardship as control and accounting.

Holding decision-making as the sole prerogative of the agency or the sponsoring organization is commonly expected. That doesn’t change the fact that resentment and a sense of distrust will result. When the project or program is treated as if it were property of the outsiders, local “ownership” and true contextualization become highly unlikely. Westerners in general and Americans in particular are biased toward high-control management. Collaboration is not easy, sharing as equals is often unthinkable.

Our theology of stewardship tends to emphasize the “under-shepherd” image in which we see ourselves as stand-ins for God. “*We* are accountable to God. *They* need to accept that and give us an honest accounting.” Whatever happened to Jesus’ teaching? “I am the vine; you are the branches.” “One is your teacher and you are all brothers and sisters.” In the interests of integrity and honesty, accountability is essential among Christians, but we must find ways to encourage those we are serving to share with us the responsibilities and the initiatives of decision-making. To do less, is not Christian; it is colonial.

Caution #4. Assuming that indigenous leadership will emerge once you make clear what is needed.

Underestimating the task of preparing appropriate people on the field to provide the direction and leadership of the planned undertaking. Unlikely as it may seem, a key characteristic of any program or project that promises long-term effectiveness is early attention to equipping and encouraging *insiders* to assume leadership responsibilities. The longer it is that outsiders hold key leadership positions, the more difficult it will be to make the transformation to indigenous leadership.

Complicating this process further is the stages of attitude-change toward outsiders. One of the best illustrations of the early tolerance that ultimately becomes antagonism is the similar progression of attitudes toward an outsider's use of language. At first, all sort of errors—in grammar, in pronunciation, in vocabulary—are met by smiles, encouragement and willingness to overlook these “little things.” Over time the patience wears thin and if the outsider is not trying diligently to develop language competency, resentment grows. Even so, at first the insiders we work with are expecting not to carry much leadership responsibility—after all, this is the “outsider's thing.” But sooner or later the failure to equip and invite into shared responsibility will grow from resentment to hostility. The history of modern missions shows many such conflicts which resulted in the outcry, “Missionary, go home!”

Concerns About Methods and Procedures of Teaching

Caution #5: Relying on “information dumping” as a teaching technique.

A fatal flaw shows up now and then in programs and projects intending to *train* leaders. Exposing leaders and prospective leaders of the church to short-term bursts of “information-dumping” as if this sort of “training” will be of significant value to them or to the church is painfully ineffective. The root of this problem is in misunderstanding the ways in which learning occurs, and how content (information) plays its part. Reflecting on the masses of information that we are exposed to in just one week, it becomes obvious that there is more to learning than simply hearing information.

We can selectively reward or punish an animal to cause it to repeat a “learned” behavior on command. Far, far more is involved in human learning. The human learner cannot be “trained” except as the approach to teaching and learning is adapted from the realm of animal learning. The human learner is a volitional creation, capable of choosing to exercise values and deliberate thought. This means that the sort of teaching that honors God's crowning creation must respect the person and encourage understanding and judgment. Surely drill-and-practice routines are part of it, but far more important are the skills of inquiry, appraisal, and creative application. Human knowledge, in other words, is far more than hearing, sorting, classifying, and recalling.

Those engaged in “training” leaders of the church should guard against demeaning tactics and procedures, choosing instead models of teaching by example, challenging, encouraging, calling attention to similes and using metaphors to deepen perceptions, as did Jesus. Is information important? Indeed yes, but how the information is encountered and processed must be consistent with what God is intending as the outcome: loving people who choose to please God, to fulfill the gifts of God's Holy Spirit in their walk of life, and to live peaceably with one another. That sort of learning demands far more than simple “training.”

Caution #6. Believing that effective speakers and preachers in the western world will be similarly effective elsewhere.

A long-standing habit in the western world causes us to assume that what *we* like to hear or see, *others* will like to hear or see. Whether it is music, poetry, speeches, “teaching,” or a motion picture, what is good for *us* will be good for *them*.

One of the increasing trends is the assumption that pastors and institutional leaders from churches and organizations in the western world will be seen and heard as valid experts by the people who are coming to Christ in other nations and ethnic churches. While there are good examples of how this can work out in unusual situations, the gentle tolerance that is shown to American church leaders while they are visitors overseas should result in caution. What makes a leader, pastor, or teacher effective in *this* country is rarely transferable across cultural lines. In times past this fact gave rise to the belief that missionaries could be made interculturally effective by “understanding the other culture.” Now we know that this is only part of the problem; what still commonly is lacking is that people of our culture rarely are in touch with themselves. What makes for basic problems is Americans who don’t grasp how different they themselves are from the norms in almost any other cultural situation.

Caution #7. Putting all the eggs in a brick-and-mortar basket.

Schools, hospitals, and similar establishments with “solid” fixed place infrastructure are the American hallmark. When we arrive we seem to carry flashing neon signs that say, “We are ready to deliver *stuff*. Come and ask for yours.” Whether or not such “contributions” can be effectively related to the basic needs in the local situation, the assumption is often made that “things” are somewhere in the American possessions. The people who are most willing to accept us as benefactors learn quickly to reshape their needs in such a way as to encourage us to meet their needs with our stuff. For example, the twin emphasis on real estate properties and institutional forms has become the major image of American mission outreach. Establishing, reorganizing, or significantly altering an existing brick-and-mortar institutional facility without due consideration of how the facility will be maintained when western money and personnel leave. Sadly, the emerging church in many parts of the world will accept almost any number of outsiders if in doing so, the “stuff” will come along in the bargain. Thus it becomes very hard to deal with more serious and valid collaboration.

Caution #8. Assuming that schools, seminaries, and universities are what the world needs most.

Orienting the educational efforts of the program or project toward plans, procedures, and outcomes that are modeled on western education, e.g., grade levels, qualitative evaluation of individuals, textbooks, and syllabi is a persisting problem in development efforts.

Concerns for Outcomes

Caution #9. Believing that high-tech media will somehow be the answer.

Marshall McLuhan said it best: “The medium is the message.” In the current era of media technology, the temptation is to use the “latest.” Thus the medium becomes the main preoccupation—of the messenger and the hearer. While it may be true that better (newer? more innovative?) technology will enhance the message, it is far better to avoid the distractions of the cutting edge.

When it comes to teaching or any other communicating for rational impact, it is rarely effective to utilize an unfamiliar form of communication while trying to reach people’s understandings and beliefs. Some would argue instead that the best medium will be the one already most widely accepted within that community and culture. Sometimes our purposes become confused. We are not called to be the promoters of new media. We are called as messengers and servants.

Leadership development and evangelization are especially prone to the temptation to view technology as the way to accomplish outcomes more simply, clearly, and with less effort. Thus in so many of our plans, technology—especially communication technology—becomes a central feature.

What we really need is not more gadgets, more stuff to put on shelves, but more fundamental approaches to the God-given task of making disciples.

Caution #10: Drawing people into financial traps.

From the very start, a clear and credible plan for transferring the costs of operation and maintenance of the program or project to indigenous sources is essential. When the “start-up” budget reflects the wealth of the outsiders, a financial trap is set. Sooner or later, the “insiders” will want to see the work as *theirs*. At such a moment, conflicts of all sorts will erupt and discredit the purposes of discipleship.

Financial burdens beyond one’s capacity to honorably bear them is sure to undermine character. When our teaching uses methods and models that are feasible only so long as outsiders are willing to pay the bills, we are contributing to dependency. Similarly, if the cultural changes that our efforts cause have the effect of teasing people into more materialistic values, the resulting dependency is hostile to the nature of the church as an interdependent body under Christ. The modern missionary movement has compromised these principles by bringing western ways into situations where they simply are not appropriate. Once an appetite is created for status, properties, goods, technological entertainments, and the wealth that they demand, it is hard to turn back. Outsiders thus introduce innovations that have destructive potential—quite often with the best intentions of helping people “modernize” and “catch up with the rest of the world.” Indeed this can bring some good things into needy situations, but when it is accompanied by increased reliance on the “things” of materialistic lifestyles, the price is too high.

Caution #11: Importing curriculum (and its expected outcomes) from out-of-culture sources.

Basing the program or project on a curriculum adapted from traditional formal education is bad enough, but when the materials and techniques add up to importing a new schooling task, the results can be costly, culturally ineffective, and disappointing. Every curriculum is based on values. If the curriculum leads toward foreign outcomes and changes that cause a growing gap between believers and the people they want to live among and evangelize, the result is that what is taught in the church is neither faithful to the Gospel nor consistently fulfilling the purposes of salt and light, as Jesus taught. Rarely can a curriculum be simply translated into another language with fidelity to the Scripture. A theologically responsible assessment of the translation, carried out by those who are serving in Spirit-led ministry within the culture is a wise precaution.

Caution #12: Assuming that the really important people read rather well.

While no one would challenge the importance of being able to read the Bible for oneself and thus being able to share in the process of nurture and communication with God that is enabled by his Word, nowhere is the ability to read specified as a criterion for God’s grace or as a requisite to fellowship with God or with his people. Thus, especially in illiterate societies, evangelization is not unknown or impossible. The leadership of the church, even in literate societies, often draws from the strength of its less literate members; and the church wisely does not discriminate against the blind, the deaf, or the illiterate in matters of spiritual gifts. But since “training leaders” often is taken to mean equipping them with lists of verbal assertions, textual information, and propositions from over-emphasized and badly translated, books, manuals, and reading tasks, “leadership training” can seem to be much more attuned to those with abundant prior schooling. What results is a wasteful misuse of time and energy because of inappropriate educational procedures.

Caution #13. “Reaching all” by reaching the well-educated elite.

Western missions have tried it both ways—starting with the underclass so that missionaries can reach downward and pull upward, or starting with the already established bridgeheads among the better educated and the society’s authority figures. Neither of these “strategies” lacks for supporters. But the problems associated with each are significant. In either case, the cause of Christ ultimately develops an aura of social class and a narrowness of style that limits Christian outreach. In the heavily institutionalized forms of church development, the institutions become more important than the Gospel that inspires them. While in the highly individualized and “non-denominational” approaches, the sense of unity in the Body of Christ, the church, gets second-place to the self-serving ethics of competitive and segregated church-growth.

Emphasizing the benefits of the program or project in ways that will appeal primarily to those who are already more educated than the typical members of the church is tempting. It may allow for a *faster start* and a more assured *success* in the early stages. But we must remember that in any case, the well-educated elite are but a small portion of the whole of the society and thus they are, at best, only a portion of the evangelism and church development task.

If a program or project of leadership development limits itself by enlisting and encouraging any specific category of people, it will sooner or later find itself trapped on a plateau. Far better to relate the program *as a whole* to a broad representation of the whole society—while providing for differentiation of the segments of the program to the specific local needs and characteristics. The diversity of persons, occupations, and ethnicities represented in the early apostolic churches suggests that just such strategy was a key to the early and dramatic growth of the church.