



THE WORK/SHOP

PATH TO PROPOSALS 101

Prepared For :

The Community

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Most proposals fall apart before they are ever shared. Not because the idea lacks value. Not because the person proposing lacks skill. But because the work beneath the idea has not yet been fully shaped.

Any proposal, whether for funding, partnership, contracts, or collaboration, has a way of revealing what is still undefined. It shows when roles are unclear, when expectations have not been named, and when success exists as a feeling instead of a plan. Even the strongest language cannot hide that.

This workbook exists to help you slow the moment before the ask. Before the pitch. Before the timeline. Before the pressure to prove worth.

Ask.Beans approaches proposal development as an act of alignment. If the opportunity moved forward tomorrow, would the structure support it? Would responsibilities be clear? Would outcomes be understood by everyone involved? Would the work be sustainable beyond the initial yes?

The SOIL framework is how we build that alignment. It helps you clarify the systems that hold the work, the opportunities it belongs in, the intention guiding each decision, and the leverage that keeps the load shared. This is not about sounding impressive. It is about being prepared.

Use this workbook to strengthen the foundation beneath your proposal, so what you put forward reflects what you are ready to carry. Proposals are not just requests. They are commitments.

And strong commitments start with clarity.



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about
Ask.Beans



Goals & Objective



THIS GUIDE IS DESIGNED TO HELP YOU:

- Explain your idea in a clear and simple way
- Know if your idea is ready to be proposed or needs more work
- Use the SOIL framework to strengthen your idea
- Spot gaps that could cause a proposal to fail later
- Prepare ideas that others can understand and support



This guide will help turn ideas into clear proposals by making sure the idea is ready, supported, and realistic before asking for funding, partnerships, or collaboration.



Use our SOIL Framework
E-Work/Book to learn
more about prepping
your idea's SOIL properly



The "You" Factor

UNDERSTANDING CONFIDENCE

Before writing any proposal, ask yourself these questions:

"Do I believe in this project?", "How confident am I in myself?", "How confident am I in my work?".

Confidence is important because it will set the tone and nature of your work, appearance, efforts, and mindset. Some people believe that confidence is a genetic or personality trait. **IT IS NOT!**

Confidence can be learned, gained, and grown through trial and error, risk taking, self-talk, meditation, and practice.

Recommendation: Try some affirmations daily or before any pitch or proposal. Not all proposals get accepted and you will need to keep that confidence up to continue pitching and proposing your way to your dream success.

LET'S CREATE!

What are some affirmations you can use to inspire yourself before writing your proposal?

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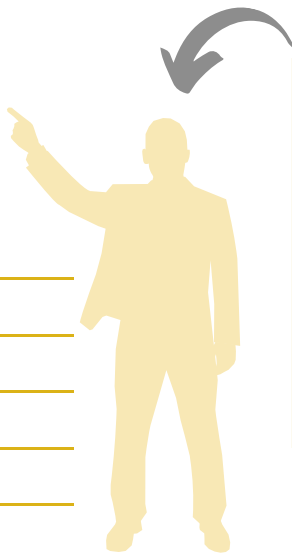
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IF YOU NEED TO PITCH IN-PERSON:

Stances like this exude confidence. They are open, take up space, and show that the person has sense of direction or a point to be made.

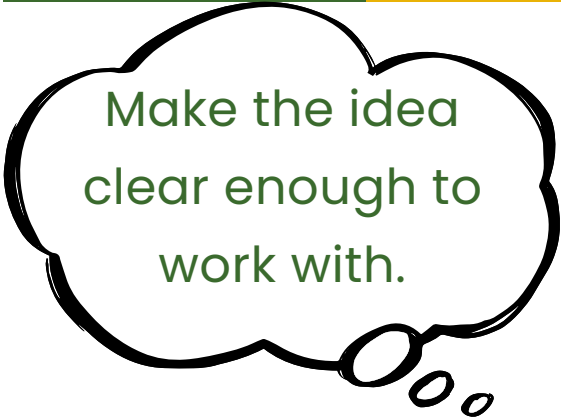
How can you transfer some of these traits of physical confidence over into your writing?

EX: Be open , concise, and clear about your points



“Self-confidence can be learned, practiced, and mastered—just like any other skill. Once you master it, everything in your life will change for the better.”
— Barrie Davenport

Reflection



Make the idea
clear enough to
work with.

Do you believe in this project?

How confident are you in
yourself?

How confident are you in
your work?



W.A.F.T A PROPOSAL CLARITY FRAMEWORK

W.A.F.T is a simple set of questions to help you slow down and clearly understand your idea before you begin writing a proposal.

It helps you organize your thinking so your proposal is focused, aligned, and honest. This framework is meant to support the informative stage of planning before you shift into persuasion, pitching, or marketing language.

- **What is the goal?**

- What are you actually trying to do?
- What is the project or idea?
- What change are you trying to create?
- What does success look like when this work is complete?

If the goal is unclear, the proposal will be too.

- **Assess your needs**

- What is required for this to work?
- What resources are needed?
- What support, tools, or capacity gaps exist?
- What problems does this idea respond to?

This step helps you avoid proposing ideas without understanding what they truly need.

- **For who?**

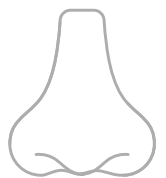
- Who is this really for?
- Who benefits from this project?
- Who is the intended audience or community?
- Who is affected by the outcomes?

Clear proposals center people, not just ideas.

- **Tactical alignment**

- How will this actually happen, and with whom?
- Do your strategies match the proposed partner, funder, or collaborator?
- Are values, expectations, and ways of working aligned?
- Can your approaches realistically work together?

Alignment here prevents frustration, miscommunication, and burnout later.



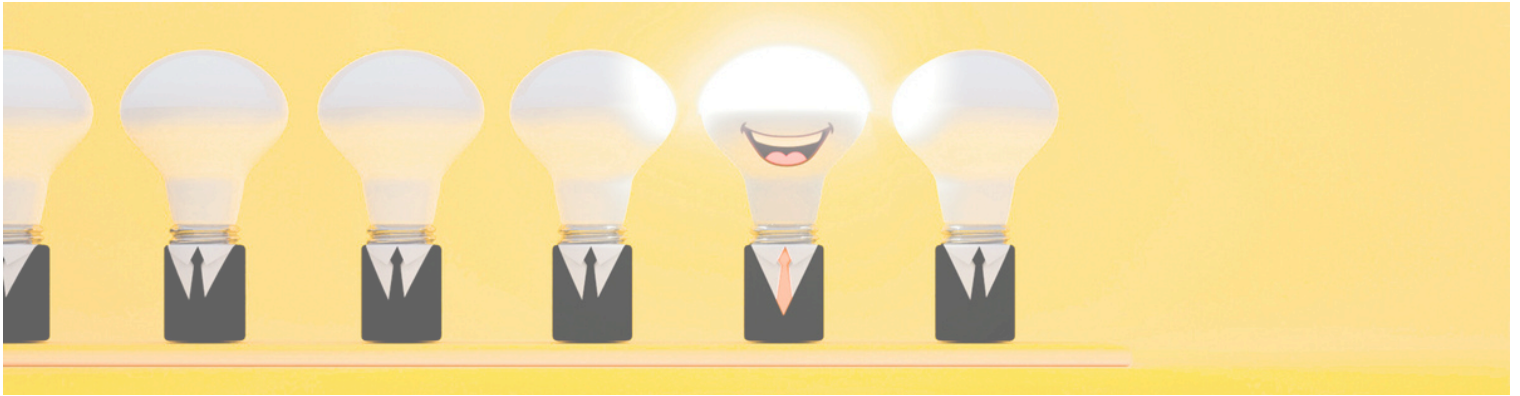
WAFT
(noun)
1 something
(such as an
odor) that is
wafted : WHIFF

2: a slight
breeze : PUFF



Why W.A.F.T Matters

W.A.F.T helps you think clearly before adding persuasive language, buzzwords, or pitch decks.



When you understand:

- what you are building
- what it needs
- who it serves
- and how it will work

you can communicate your idea with confidence and clarity.

If you do not know what your project needs in order to succeed, it becomes difficult to explain:

- why support is needed
- how resources will be used
- or what outcomes should be expected



W.A.F.T gives you space to think before asking others to commit.

W.A.F.T Activity

Name Your Idea : _____

W — What Is the Goal?

Describe the main goal of your project in clear, simple language.

What are you trying to do?

What change do you want to see as a result?

How will you know when this goal has been reached?



W.A.F.T Activity

A — Assess the Needs

Think about what this idea needs in order to work well.

Check all that apply:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Time | <input type="checkbox"/> Skills or expertise |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Funding | <input type="checkbox"/> Tools or technology |
| <input type="checkbox"/> People or staff | <input type="checkbox"/> Space or materials |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Partnerships or support | |

What feels missing or underdeveloped right now?

What would make this idea easier to carry?



W.A.F.T Activity

F — For Whom Is This Work?

This step helps you center the people or groups this idea is meant to serve.

Who is this idea for?

What do they need most right now?

How will this idea support or improve their experience?

**W.A.F.T is not about rushing toward a yes.
It is about understanding what you are
asking others to support.
Clarity at this stage makes every next
step easier**



W.A.F.T Activity

T — Tactical Alignment

This step checks whether this idea fits the people or organizations you may work with.

Who might you propose this idea to?

Do your values and ways of working align? Why or why not?

What could become challenging if this moved forward as-is?

Pause and Reflect

Is this idea ready to be proposed right now, or does it need more grounding?



- ☐ Ready to propose
- ☐ Needs more development
- ☐ Unsure

S.N.I.F.F. FRAMING YOUR PROPOSAL

S.N.I.F.F. is a set of action steps to guide the creation of your proposal. While W.A.F.T focuses on preparation and clarity, S.N.I.F.F is about putting your proposal together in a way that is clear, aligned, and inviting to the other party.

S — State Your Intentions

Be clear about what you want to do and why.

- What is the main purpose of this proposal?
- What are you offering or planning to do?
- Why is this important right now?



N — Negotiate Inputs and Outcomes

Define what is required from both sides to make the project work.

- What resources, support, or actions do you need from the other party?
- What deliverables or outcomes will you provide?
- What parts of this project are negotiable, and what are non-negotiable?

I — Invite

Communicate in a way that is welcoming, informative, and persuasive, without seeming desperate.

- How will you invite the other party to participate or collaborate?
- What tone and language will make them feel included and aligned?
- Are you presenting this as an opportunity or a demand?

F — Format

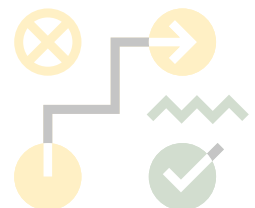
Decide how your proposal will look and feel.

- Should it be a formal document, visual presentation, or combination?
- What layout, headings, or visuals will make it clear and easy to understand?
- How will the format support the message you want to communicate?

F — Finalize and Review

Give yourself space to step back, edit, and improve.

- When will you review the proposal after completing it?
- What details, language, or visuals need a second look?
- Are there ways to make your proposal clearer or more inviting? communicate?



PROPOSAL FORMATS & WHEN TO USE THEM

PURPOSE: NOT EVERY IDEA NEEDS THE SAME TYPE OF PROPOSAL. THIS PAGE HELPS YOU CHOOSE THE BEST FORMAT TO COMMUNICATE YOUR IDEA CLEARLY AND PROFESSIONALLY.



From Idea to Plate:

W.A.F.T → S.N.I.F.F → EAT

IDEAS ARE LIKE A MEAL IN THE MAKING.

- **W.A.F.T** is the aroma in the air. You take a moment to breathe it in, understanding the goals, needs, and who will enjoy it. You identify your bean, prepare your soil, and sense the potential. Your idea is floating in the air, full of possibility.
- **S.N.I.F.F** is taking a deep sniff. Now you engage fully: you frame your proposal, clarify intentions, negotiate deliverables, invite collaboration, and format it with care. You get the full essence of your idea and how it will land for others. This is where alignment, clarity, and intention come together.
- **EAT** is enjoying the meal you ordered. The proposal has been served. Some outcomes may surprise you, some may challenge you, and some may exceed your expectations. Just like tasting a meal, you take it all in. Rejections teach you, edits strengthen you, and wins remind you why the preparation mattered.



IDEAS DON'T FAIL BECAUSE THEY AREN'T GOOD. THEY FAIL WHEN THE FOUNDATION ISN'T READY. FLOAT WITH THE AROMA, SNIFF WITH INTENTION, THEN EAT WITH GRACE. EVERY PROPOSAL IS PRACTICE FOR THE NEXT.



KEEP PREPARING, PROPOSING, AND GROWING.



TAKE YOUR IDEAS FROM BEAN TO GREEN

WITH ASK.BEANS

Book a Free 15-Minute Discovery Call

Talk through your idea, get feedback, and see how Ask.Beans can support your growth.

Read The AskBeans.Org Blog

Dive deeper into building systems, opportunities, intentionality, and leverage to strengthen your ideas.

Join or Book a Workshop or Coaching Session

Practice your proposal-building skills, get hands-on guidance, and connect with a community of creators.

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