INTERNATIONAL ELEPHANT FOUNDATION.ORG

Virtual Workshop Series

Writing Grants for Elephant Conservation



Purpose of this workshop

- Our goal is to equip you with **knowledge** and **practical skills** needed to develop **compelling and competitive grant proposals** for elephant conservation.

1	2	3	4
Conceptualizing your project	Setting goals and objectives	Monitoring and evaluating outcomes	Planning a budget

- Before writing a grant, it's important to **identify appropriate funding sources**.
- Lessons here are applicable beyond funding from International Elephant Foundation.

Conceptualizing your project

- It's most important to start with a **solid, well-designed project strategy**.
- **People fund people**, so it's important to know your audience:
  - Each donor/funding body is unique.
  - Don't assume the reader knows what you're talking about: think about what gives context and what tells the story.
  - Don't overload the reader with more detail/information than is needed.



Conceptualizing your project

Project background and introduction

- Use **descriptive language** to transport the reader.
- Provide an overview of the project: what is the **essential background information** that the donor needs to know?
- Move from the **broad** to the **specific**.
- When possible, use **thoughtful photos and maps** to help paint a picture and add visual appeal.

Conceptualizing your project

Project background and introduction

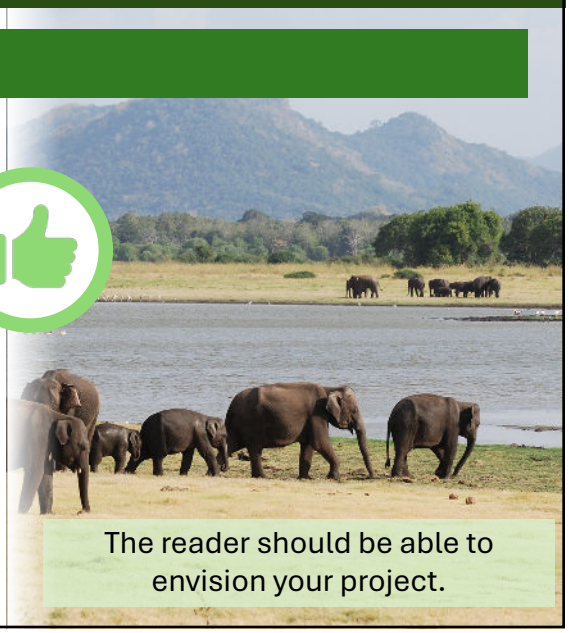
Minneriya National Park covers almost 9000 hectares in Sri Lanka. In its boundaries, Minneriya possesses 75 butterfly species, 9 amphibian species, 160 bird species, 25 reptile species, and 24 mammal species. The main habitats of Minneriya include low-canopy montane forests, high-canopy secondary forests, scrublands, chena lands, grasslands, rocky outcrops, and wetlands. The park was declared protected first in 1938 to protect the catchment of the Minneriya tank and the wildlife of the surrounding area. Along with Kaudulla and Girithale, Minneriya forms one of the 70 Important Bird Areas of Sri Lanka. Minneriya is thought to host one of the largest annual gatherings of elephants in Asia.

Full of unnecessary information
Hard to envision reality of project area

Conceptualizing your project

Project background and introduction

Minneriya National Park, encompassing nearly 9,000 hectares in Sri Lanka's dry zone, stands as a key protected area. The park's diverse habitats, ranging from montane forests to grasslands to wetlands, support a significant number of species, several of which are endemic to Sri Lanka. Furthermore, Minneriya, along with two adjacent protected areas, forms part of one of Sri Lanka's 70 Important Bird Areas. Notably, the park is renowned for hosting one of the largest annual gatherings of elephants in Asia, a phenomenon of significant conservation concern and opportunity.



The reader should be able to envision your project.

Conceptualizing your project

Project need or opportunity

- What is the **fundamental justification** for your project?
- **Broadly** describe why this project is so important for the species or area in which you are working.
- Move from **broad needs to specific threats, questions, or problems**:
  - How widespread is the problem?
  - What are the underlying driving forces?
  - How is it impacting the species/ecosystem?
  - How is it impacting local communities and other stakeholders?
- Convey urgency, but **do not exaggerate**. Ensure project builds upon **existing, strong base of evidence** .

Conceptualizing your project

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Conservation and Research Funding Support Program

Applications due 1 August 2025

Background and context that justifies the need for your project. (max 1500 words)

Describe what you believe is most important about the project and how your work will benefit the specific elephants, habitat, other wildlife and human communities. (max 200 words)

Explain if this is a new approach being proposed and why you think it will be successful. If not, explain how it has been used elsewhere and list similar projects and locations used as models, cite the pertinent literature or include documentation. (max 500 words)

How does your proposal fit into your future elephant conservation plans? (max 150 words)

Setting goals and objectives

- The goals and objectives are the **backbone of your project**: they provide the structure for everything else in your proposal.
- The following terms are **not interchangeable**, and go from **broad** to **specific**:



Setting goals and objectives

Goals | Objectives | Activities

- Goals are **major target accomplishments**.
- Goal statements should be **short and strong**, and communicate what you plan to achieve in **one sentence**.
- These goals should be a **logical extension of the introduction** section and relate to audience interests.
- **DO NOT** state how you will accomplish goal.

Setting goals and objectives

Goals | Objectives | Activities

The goal of this project is to implement anti-poaching patrols, conduct community education programs, and restore key elephant habitats in order to achieve a long-term increase in the elephant population of Safari National Park through collaborative conservation efforts.



Overly long and rambling;
States how goal will be accomplished;
Not a single target accomplishment



Setting goals and objectives

Goals | Objectives | Activities



The goal of this project is to stabilize the population of elephants in Safari National Park.



Setting goals and objectives

Goals | **Objectives** | Activities

- Questions to guide your objectives:
  - What are the **measurable objectives** you will accomplish within the project to meet the goal(s)?
  - What **impact** are you trying to have?
  - What are the **key changes or conditions** that you will achieve?
- Objectives are **NOT "how" you are going to do it**—that information encompasses activities.
- Must be **necessary and sufficient** to achieve the goal.

Setting goals and objectives

Goals | **Objectives** | Activities

Focuses on activities, not impact

The three objectives of this project are to:

1. conduct ten anti-poaching patrols per month across the park;
2. hold four community meetings in villages surrounding the park each year; and
3. write and disseminate a proposal to potential ecotourism investors.



Setting goals and objectives

Goals | **Objectives** | Activities

Not necessary and sufficient to achieve the goal

The three objectives of this project are to:

1. survey the local bird population within the park;
2. train park rangers in first aid techniques; and
3. upgrade the park's visitor center.



Setting goals and objectives

Goals | **Objectives** | Activities

Restates the goal and are too broad

The three objectives of this project are to:

1. ensure elephants in Safari National Park are protected;
2. work towards a healthy elephant population; and
3. support the long-term survival of elephants in the region.



Setting goals and objectives

Goals | **Objectives** | Activities

The three objectives of this project are to:

1. increase local engagement in anti-poaching efforts;
2. develop political consensus for ecotourism; and
3. secure the financial investment needed to develop an ecotourism site.



Setting goals and objectives

Goals | Objectives | **Activities**

- Activities flow from actions to objectives to goal: how you will get from the problem to the solution.
- Focus on activities that are **feasible** in 1 to 2 years.
- Be **specific**: include who, what, where, when, and how.
- Be clear about which **organization and staff** are implementing each activity.
- Activities should be **necessary and sufficient** to accomplish your objectives.

Setting goals and objectives

Goals | Objectives | **Activities**

Objective: Increase local community engagement in anti-poaching efforts



Activities:

1. Conduct community meetings.
2. Talk to people about poaching.
3. Train some community members.
4. Develop a program to involve local communities.



Setting goals and objectives

Goals | Objectives | **Activities**



Objective: Increase local community engagement in anti-poaching efforts

Activities:

1. Community outreach officer will hold 3 participatory workshops per month in 5 key communities bordering the park using visuals and storytelling to discuss anti-poaching and gather local input.

2. Head of security will train 10 community members to form community ranger units with equipment to conduct regular patrols in buffer zones of park.

3. Community outreach officer to hold monthly follow-up meetings in the villages for ranger unit reports, challenge discussions, park staff mentorship, and community education.

Monitoring and evaluating outcomes

Outputs

- Summarize all expected products and **outputs** that will result from the project.
- Outputs are **direct and tangible products/services** that you will deliver:
  - management plans, brochures, posters, training manuals produced
  - people trained or workshops held
  - patrols conducted

Outcomes

- It is important to move beyond outputs and provide **measurable outcomes**.
- Outcomes are **consequences of your activities** that indicate whether your project is making a real difference, and can be more challenging to measure:
  - increase in species population, tolerance for wildlife, etc.
  - decrease in prevalence of HEC, illegal activities, etc.

Monitoring and evaluating outcomes

Goal: Stabilize the population of elephants in Safari National Park

Outcomes:

1. Conducting anti-poaching patrols.
2. Holding community meetings.
3. Increased awareness of elephant conservation.
4. Implement an ecotourism site.
5. Secure more funding for conservation.



Outputs (activities), not outcomes
Not measurable
Not a direct impact on goal



Monitoring and evaluating outcomes

Goal: Stabilize the population of elephants in Safari National Park

Outcomes:

1. 20% reduction in reported elephant poaching incidents over three-year period.
2. Increase of 30% of positive attitudes towards elephant conservation among residents in target communities, measured by pre- and post-surveys of knowledge, attitude, and practice.
3. Increase of 15% of secured elephant habitat within the park due to successful restoration of corridors.
4. Sustained annual increase of 5% in reported tourist revenue allocated to elephant conservation initiatives by partner lodges over two years.



Specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time bound

Monitoring and evaluating outcomes

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What will you measure to determine the effectiveness of your project activities and methods in addressing those needs? How will you measure it during operation of the project, and at the end of the project? (max 200 words)

Identify if and how project participants and beneficiaries will participate in monitoring and evaluation activities. (max 200 words)

Describe how findings will contribute to decision making and project activities during and after the project period. (max 200 words)

Identify how you will determine the degree of success of the project. (max 200 words)

Planning a budget

- **Direct vs. indirect costs**
  - Direct costs are **directly attributable to project activities**:
    Salaries for project staff, field equipment, travel expenses for data collection, workshop costs, community outreach materials, anti-poaching patrol expenses, habitat restoration supplies, research supplies
  - Indirect costs are **overhead**, and are incurred by your organization but are **not easily linked to the specific project**:
    Administrative salaries, rent, utilities, insurance, accounting, general office supplies

Be very careful to follow donor guidelines about allowable indirect (overhead) costs.

IEF does not fund overhead in annual call for proposals.

Planning a budget

- For each budget item, **clearly justify every cost** by providing a brief explanation of why the item is necessary for the project's success.
- Match each cost directly to **specific activities** already described in your proposal.
- Be **realistic** and **reasonable** to ensure that budget is both adequate and cost-effective.
- Explain how the requested funds will be used efficiently to **maximize impact**: strong return on investment.



Planning a budget

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- IEF seeks a detailed budget, with details of individual item costs:
  - ~~Flashlights = $100 total~~
  - Flashlights × 10 units × $10/unit = $100 total
- All requested funds should be actual figures, not batches that are non-specific
- IEF prefers to fund action items, and will not fund:
  - overhead, contingency, or indirect costs
  - armaments and ammunition
  - paid informants
  - tuition fees for advanced degrees
  - out of country travel to project site

Planning a budget

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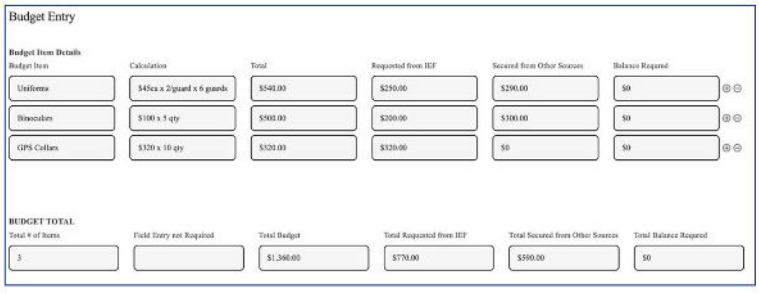
- Make sure that budget reflects the proposed activities, and the activities reflect the budget.



Justify each budget item. (max 500 words)

Grant-writing DOs and DON'Ts

Write in a way that is easily understood and relatable:

👎 "We aim to define and protect key biodiversity areas (KBAs)…"

👍 "We seek to protect areas that provide habitat for threatened and vulnerable species."

Use active voice instead of passive voice.

👎 "Training sessions will be held to inform potential grant recipients…"

👍 "We will hold training sessions to inform potential grant recipients…"

When you can, be brief!

👎 "At this point in time, our program in Safari National Park is making ready to extract itself from the unproductive and failed partnership with our partner."

👍 "Our Safari National Park program is preparing to end its unproductive partnership."

Other grant-writing tips

- Avoid excessive use of acronyms.
- Don't reinvent the wheel: recycle!
- Use "real" verbs and nouns:

  "Our organization must **sharpen identification of** impediments to the development of efficient financial intermediation, and **target actions** to eliminate these obstacles."

  "Our organization must **identify** impediments to the development of efficient financial intermediation and **act** to eliminate these obstacles."



Other grant-writing tips

- Answer the five questions:
  Who? What? Where? When? How?
- Minor writing conventions mean a lot!
  Spacing, punctuation, style, formatting
- Don't be afraid to brag, but be realistic.
- Even though it comes first in your application, write the project summary last.



IEF Elephant Conservation & Research Funding Support

- 2026 IEF Grant Application is due **1 August 2025** at **11:59pm PDT**
- Applications are to be completed online: **www.elephantconservation.org**
- Use draft application sample to prepare proposal

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