

## Rosin Fund Environment—Additional Guidelines

### Basic Guidance

The Scherman Foundation’s Katharine S. and Axel G. Rosin Fund provides support for innovative, focused, high-impact projects that address critical environmental issues within one of two broad areas: Urban Sustainability and Sustainable Drinking Water. Programmatic details of the two areas can be found in the Rosin Fund Environment Guidelines section of the website.

Key to the development of a successful Rosin Fund proposal is the recognition that the Fund aims to support *projects*, rather than organizations. A project is focused and well defined, with a concrete goal, a clear beginning, and a clear end. If it is successful, it will have a specific, demonstrable result: something important and concrete will be different.

This project orientation stands in contrast to the Foundation’s Core Fund, which is focused more toward ongoing organizational strength and accomplishment as its guiding selection criteria, and frequently provides long-term general operating support for its funded grantees. Grantees familiar with the Foundation’s Core Fund should particularly take note of this distinction.

The Rosin Fund seeks projects that stand out within their area as innovative, thought-provoking, and challenging to the status quo. The Foundation anticipates that any project meeting these criteria will likely involve a significant element of risk. A strong proposal to the Rosin Fund will accept noticeable risks in return for potential reward and impact, but will also monitor, manage and mitigate these risks effectively as the project proceeds.

A full proposal to the Rosin Fund should answer all of the following questions:

- What are you trying to do? Articulate your objectives with a minimum of jargon.
- How is this done today (or not), and what are the limits of current practice?
- What is new in your approach and why do you think it will be successful?
- Who will care if you succeed? If you are successful, what difference will it make?
- What are the major risks to your success? How will you mitigate them?
- What is your plan for accomplishing this thing? How long will it take? How much will it cost?
- Why are you the organization or group to do it?
- What mid-term and final “exams” will you use to evaluate your success?

These points should be addressed clearly and crisply, targeting a reviewing audience that will range from “familiar with the general subject area and related efforts” to “significant expertise within the specific topic area of the proposal”. Potential proposers may find the proposal outline and discussion presented in the next section helpful in meeting this objective.

### Suggested Proposal Outline

To assist you in preparing a Rosin Fund Environment full proposal that presents your work in the strongest and most positive light, this section provides a suggested outline for these proposals.

Please note that with the singular exception that all Rosin Fund full proposals must include an Executive Summary in the form described below, following this outline is not mandatory. If you feel that a different format would most effectively present your work in light of our basic guidance (Section 1 above) you are free to do so. We encourage you to review the suggested outline carefully in any case, however, as it directly reflects the questions and project characteristics that the Foundation’s proposal reviewers will consider in their evaluations.

## Outline

**1: Executive Summary:** Provide a focused synopsis of your proposed project in 1 to 1.5 pages, including answers to the questions outlined in Section 1 above and summarized below:

- What are you trying to do? Please be as clear, precise, and specific as possible.
- How is this done today (or not), and what are the limits of current practice? What’s new in your approach, how will it overcome these limits, and why do you think it will be successful?
- Who will benefit if you succeed? Beyond immediate beneficiaries, what other audiences will care? If you’re successful, what difference will it make?
- How much will it cost, and how long will it take?

The executive summary should include a description of the key challenges you face, a concise description of the approach you’re proposing to overcome these challenges and achieve the project’s goals, and a clear statement of the novelty, benefit and uniqueness of the proposed work.

**2: Innovative Claims:** Describe the innovative and differentiating aspects of your project in the context of existing capabilities and approaches. Clearly delineate the uniqueness and benefits of your proposed project by contrasting it with current best practices, alternative approaches, and other projects from the past and present. Describe specific ways in which you see your proposed project as rising significantly above or beyond the current state of the art.

**3: Deliverable Results and Ongoing Impact:** Describe the results and deliverables associated with your proposed project and discuss the audience to whom they will be delivered. Discuss your basis of confidence that your target audience is interested in and receptive to the results you plan to deliver.

Discuss the ability of your project and its deliverables to create benefit and influence beyond your immediate results. Describe paths by which your results could be adopted by others or built on in a broader setting. Discuss your approach to mitigating internal considerations or external constraints on your project that might limit this broader impact, assuming your overall project is successful.

**4: Project Activities Plan:** Present a substantive plan for accomplishing the work you propose to undertake. Where previous sections of a proposal following this outline have focused on “why” your project is compelling, this section shifts the focus towards the “what” and “how”. Overall, your objective in this section is to present a credible (even if risky) plan to achieve your project’s goal.

The section should address a number of related topics:

- a) Describe in concrete terms the work you propose to undertake. Frame the description as a sequenced collection of related activities, that if completed successfully will lead to the results you wish to achieve.
- b) Outline and explain what you see as the principal challenges and critical risks inherent to your approach and possible solutions for overcoming potential problems. Demonstrate a strong and informed understanding of these challenges and risks. Discuss your approach to monitoring, tracking, mitigating, and managing risks.
- c) Develop and describe a schedule for the project's work and activities. Identify and describe appropriate measurable or monitorable milestones at intermediate stages of the project to assist you in evaluating your progress. If possible, include a chart or table summarizing project schedule, principal activities, and key milestones in an easily understandable form.
- d) Present a plan for evaluating your project's progress and effectiveness at key milestone points, as a tool for you to use in guiding and managing the project as it proceeds. Discuss your evaluation strategy in terms of your definition of project success. Note that, while a wide range of evaluation strategies may be useful in different circumstances, any effective strategy will focus on whether the project is achieving its goals, as opposed to merely tracking the amount of work being completed.

**5: Project Management Plan and Budget:** Describe your approach to managing the project, including such considerations as allocating and managing resources (human and otherwise), tracking activities and progress, and responding to changing circumstances as the project proceeds. Identify key individuals who will participate in the project, the roles they will play, and the level of their effort available to the project, particularly in the case that the qualifications, experience, or reputation of these individuals are unique and/or central to the project's success. If more than one organization is participating in the project, discuss your approach to managing collaboration across the different organizations to achieve a common goal. If applicable, describe briefly any formal project management methodologies, approaches, or tools to be used in carrying out the management activity.

Present an outline total budget for the proposed project, showing how project funds will be allocated across activities, time periods, and/or personnel as appropriate. If the funding requested in this proposal does not constitute the total project budget, briefly outline your other intended sources of support and the status of that funding.

**6: Organizational Background and Qualifications:** In a nutshell, explain why your organization is the group to carry out the proposed project. As appropriate, you may wish in this section to:

- Describe your organization's background, previous work, and past accomplishments in this or closely related project areas.
- Discuss any unique organizational capabilities, specialized facilities, key staff or organizational expertise, or other distinguishing factors that you feel set your organization apart in carrying out your proposal.
- Describe existing relationships and collaborations with other organizations, individuals, government entities, etc. that may be relevant to the project.
- Discuss how this specific project fits into your organization's larger and longer-term goals, objectives, and plans.

- Discuss specific ways in which you believe successful execution of the proposed project will strengthen your organization's ability to advance its longer-term strategic goals in the future.