



Essential Elements of a Nonfiction Book Proposal:

Cover Letter – This should include book title, author name, and your contact information.

Proposal Table of Contents – This is not a space for your book’s proposed table of contents, but a list of what is contained in your proposal and on what page each section can be found.

Overview (1-2 pages) - For those of you from the business world, think of this as the Executive Summary. This is your opening statement of not just what your book is about, but why your book is worth publishing: who will read it, why you are the best person to write it, and why it matters to the world.

Author Bio (1 page) - This section should answer the question of who you are (in greater detail than in the overview) and why you’re the best person to write this particular book. Include qualifications, educational history, depth of research completed, connection to other subject matter experts, past publications, etc. If you have a large platform or are well-known to a certain population, you can mention it here briefly. The most important part is to position yourself as an expert regarding the topic your book covers.

Author Platform (1-2 pages) - Publishers will want to know all about your online following such as how many followers you have on social media platforms, your blog or newsletter, or even how known you are on certain public forums. But they also want to know how you will interact with potential readership IRL (that’s “in real life” for us non-millennials, aka old folks). What community groups are you involved in? Are you known as a subject matter expert in this topic and have you done speaking events? Do you have connections to media or other published works you’ve successfully promoted. Get creative in thinking through and listing all the ways your voice and ideas are heard or will be heard in the future.

Market Overview (also called Target Market Description, 2-4 pages) - This should answer the question of who will read your book (in greater detail than in the Overview section). Who are the readers in age, gender, education, socioeconomic status, etc? Estimate how large this population is using available statistics. Research the number of people who are interested in or concerned with the topic you’re writing about.

Marketing Plan (2-6 pages) - In today’s publishing landscape, this may be the most important section of your proposal. Publishers want to know that they have found a partner who is willing

to work just as hard as they will to sell your book. There is a lot of noise and a ton of voices to sift through in our current world, and they need to know that you know how to be louder than the rest. Be sure to include how you will use your current platform to reach potential readers, and how you plan to grow your current platform; personal and professional connections you already have or are planning to pursue related to the topic of your book; how you will connect with other people (social media influencers, podcasters, bloggers) who have large platforms; and how you will reach readers offline at things like speaking engagements or other events. A word of caution: be realistic and reasonable. Only include things you really believe you have a good chance of being able to accomplish because a good editor will know if you're just blowing smoke.

Manuscript Details and Delivery (½ page) - include the proposed length of the manuscript in word count, how much is currently written, and your plan for delivery of the complete manuscript.

Competitive Title Analysis (10-15 titles, 100-200 words each) - You have to research the market to write this section. Try to find books that have been out for no more than 10 years, and books that have sold well. Then write a short summary of those books' strengths and how your book has the same strengths, but also does something new and different. Those skills you developed in high school when doing compare and contrast essays will finally come in handy!

Table of Contents for Book (1 page) - This is a proposed list of each chapter of your book.

Chapter Outline (100-200 word summaries for each chapter) - This can be combined with the section above if desired. This is where you will write a short summary of each chapter and give the editor a good idea of the flow of your book. If your book tends to have longer chapters, the summaries may be a bit longer, but try to be brief.

Sample Chapters (1-2 chapters or up to 25 pages) - Choose your best, most polished chapters that you have had other writers or subject matter experts read and provide feedback for. Let me repeat that – other people need to read your work before you send a proposal anywhere!

Appendix – Appendix – This can include many things, depending on what type of book you're writing. It may include longer versions of advance praise that didn't make it into the marketing plan, sample pictures or other media. If you include anything here, just make sure it's essential to the editor understanding your book and your vision for getting it out into the world.