

Writing an Effective OFS Budget Justification

To write an effective OFS budget justification, follow the 5-bullet format. If you write one sentence that addresses each of the 5 bullets you will have an OFS request that provides all the essential information.

1. State the operational need:

Generally speaking, OFS requests should talk in terms of the operations in the park, not in terms of staffing. So instead of a first sentence stating "Increased LE Staff needed to meet increasing pressures as a result of changing conditions and outside influences." You should explain what the staff would be doing. For example: "Funding is requested to expand law enforcement patrols."

2. Indicate why the operational need exists

In this sentence you should provide the justification for the budget request. Think about what's forcing the budgetary squeeze. In the example, the operational need is an increased law enforcement presence. Why? Has illegal activity increased? Does the park require more frequent patrols to protect the resource? Sometimes OFS justifications contain the phrase "as a result of changing conditions and outside influences." A good second bullet explains what that means.

3. Explain how funding will be used

In this bullet list the functions you would put into the Position Description of the law enforcement rangers you would hire. Will they have visitor contact? Will they do remote patrols? Do they coordinate activities with other agencies like the Coast Guard?

4. Quantify outputs allowed by funding

This is the GPRA bullet (without ever mentioning GPRA!) In this sentence explain the incremental services that will be allowed from this additional funding. Look for anything that might quantify the increased function. Will you increase patrols to 24 hours a day? How many miles of border and highway will be patrolled? How many visitors will be served?

5. Project resulting outcomes

What will be better at the park if you are able do what you want? Will visitors or rangers be safer? Will illegal activity be forestalled? Will the resource be better conserved?

General Tip #1: There are many different types of OFS requests in the database. You really don't have to generate a request from scratch since there are similarities between different requests. You can search the OFS database on any field including the narrative fields and see if any of them are saying what you want to say.

General Tip #2: Don't forget to give us a visit to your park when you write you request. Don't make the request so generic that a congressional reader won't know what precious national treasure is at stake.

Sample request for \$250,000 and 3 FTEs to Enhance Law Enforcement to Protect Resources, Visitors and Employees: Funding is requested to enhance protection of resources, visitors, and employees. A daily protection presence during daylight hours is essential on each of the park's three remote barrier islands in order to respond to visitor and after-hour emergencies in a timely manner, provide reliable backup assistance to law enforcement personnel, monitor visitor use and condition of historic structures and archeological sites, and enforce regulations and closures. Funding would be used to expand protection operations at Shackelford and South Core Banks. This request would increase law enforcement patrols from 7 hours to 14 hours/day, from 3.5 days to 7 days per week, and from 6 to 9 months per year, ensuring the protection of fragile barrier island resources, visitors, and employees.

Skeleton for Writing an Effective OFS Budget Justification

CONCISE DESCRIPTION AND JUSTIFICATION: This field in OFS is an abstract for the funding request and is limited to 1,250 characters. This VERY important field will most likely be the narrative that is forwarded in the NPS annual budget request to Congress (the Green Book.) Please provide as much information as possible within the space allotted but avoid abbreviations or unexplained acronyms. Use this skeleton as a tool for writing your budget justifications.

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2. Indicate why operational need exists

3. Explain how funding will be used

4. Quantify outputs allowed by funding

5. Project resulting outcomes

SUPPORTING INFORMATION: This field in OFS can be used to continue and/or expand the Concise Description and Justification. If you have additional background material, supporting statistics, or other information that was not included in the Concise Description and Justification, it should be included in the Supporting Information field. This field should NOT contain material duplicative of the Concise Description and Justification.