
Value Propositions: How to Pitch Your Program

Health Systems Transformation Research

Coordinating Center

Avalere Health | August 2022



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Background

- **Purpose:** To sustain the innovative models developed under the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Health Systems Transformation Research Coordinating Center grants, leaders of the grant-funded projects must develop long-term plans to fund and operate their programs, which may require new partnerships or funding. This tool describes best practices for leaders to develop a value proposition to secure the right partners and/or investment in their program. This tool will guide staff through gathering the right information, assessing the audience, preparing a concise message, and narrowing in on the 'ask' of potential partners.
- **Note:** This toolkit compiles best practices from various sources and is not intended to be exhaustive. The development and implementation of best practices listed in this document should be adapted to the individual context of your program.

What is a Value Proposition?

A value proposition is a statement that demonstrates what an organization offers, why that offering is needed, and how it differs from existing solutions¹. It should be bolstered with evidence to showcase how your organization's approach can lead to positive outcomes. Showcasing your value proposition clearly and concisely demonstrates to potential partners the value of working with your organization and the potential for growth given the right investment.

What is the significance of a Value Proposition?

Developing a compelling value proposition is instrumental in engaging potential partners. Having a value proposition is important because it articulates to external organizations what they can gain from partnering on your organization's program.

The statement can be used to pitch your company to funders focused on the same mission of health system transformation. Or it can be used to pitch to potential partners who will work alongside you in sustaining and growing your program. A brief, clear, and compelling value proposition will stick in the minds of potential funders and partners, increasing the likelihood that they will select your organization for investment.

Case Study: Building a Partnership

An example of a partnership to promote housing for individuals with complex care needs through an enhanced care coordination model will be used throughout this tool to highlight how these steps can be accomplished. Refer to the call-out boxes to follow along with their story.



Steps to Developing Your Value Proposition

Identifying Your Target Audience

The first step in developing a value proposition is to understand your target audience. It is crucial to understand your potential partner's mission and vision, their motivating factors for considering your organization, and specific environmental or organizational factors influencing their decisions. Conducting research will help you identify all potential partners, overarching contextual trends (e.g., demographic, economic, and political trends), discern which organizations best match as targets for potential partnerships, and develop an understanding of your organization's competitive advantages and unique value. This research can begin with an external assessment and competitor analysis to gain a better sense for how your organization fits into the broader environment. Research should focus on:

- Characteristics of the health and social services market that your potential partners works in (e.g., local population demographics, payer mix, economic and political issues or trends, existing partnerships, etc.) and how that aligns with your program's target audience
- Existing stakeholders and solutions within that market
- Existing partnerships that may interact or be leveraged

When building their program, Organization A knew they wanted to bring in partners from the local housing authority. They took their time to investigate the local organization to understand their current work and their priorities as an organization. They conducted an environmental scan to better understand the housing authority's needs and pain points. They reviewed publicly available reports, with an eye for how Organization A's team could support the housing authority with any concerns or limitations highlighted in the reports.

With this information, you should then perform an opportunity assessment. An opportunity assessment allows you to synthesize your market research with that of potential partner organizations for a specific area of growth. It will support the development of an actionable strategy to realize that growth through partnership.ⁱⁱ This assessment will provide an overall picture of the potential for your program and focus both on external factors, such as market conditions, as well as internal factors, such as the resources required to operate your program services. Opportunity assessments should be aligned on four domains:

- Organizational strengths
- Areas for improvement
- Market needs
- Market trends and environmental changes

Organization A then looked internally to understand what their own strengths are and what they could offer to the housing authority as a partner. This reflection included looking outside of their organization at their competitors and what they offer to persons experiencing homelessness.

At this stage, you can look at the organizations you have identified as targets and consider what the value a potential partnership could bring them. You have previously identified organizations and determined their value as a partner. But now you need to think through how they would evaluate your organization and how you would persuade them to invest or partner with you. You must think through:

- What do they prioritize?
- What outcomes are they looking for and how will they be measured?
- What are their strengths and areas for improvement?
- How can your organization meet their needs?
- How can your value be best communicated to this potential partner?
- What resources would you each bring to the table? How do those resources complement or overlap one another?
- What are the potential risks and how would you be able to mitigate those?

It is also pertinent to understand the role of the person that you will be meeting. For instance, are you speaking with the leader of the entire organization, middle-management, or staff? This will affect how your message could be received or transmitted to others within the company, so it is good to consider their role, decision-making authority, scope of influence, and the implications before connecting. A few factors to consider include:

- What is their role at the organization?
- What initiatives or projects do they work on at the organization?
- Are they a manager or do they report to managers?
- How are you connected to this individual?
- How is this individual connected to the work you are involved in?
- What is their motivation to speak to you?
- What type of meeting or conversation will we have – more formal or more informal?
- What is the best format to share my information with them during this meeting?

Every person within an organization plays a key role. When preparing for their meeting with the representative of the housing authority, Organization A made sure to research their role and previous work, to understand their values and motivations to partner.

Thinking through these questions can help you tailor your approach to your audience, creating a pitch that resonates with them and their needs. This will lead to a greater likelihood of success and a mutually beneficial partnership.

If you are conducting your search for funders or partners over a longer period of time, it is important that you iterate on your opportunity assessment regularly as market conditions, partner organizations, and your own circumstances change over time.

Outlining the Problem Statement

Prior to building out the message of how your organization could bring value to a partner, you must define the problem clearly and objectively. The problem statement should be short – roughly one to two sentencesⁱⁱⁱ, and explain the issue that your intervention or program addresses. You must outline the negative reality of the current situation and explain why it matters. This is frequently tied to quality, cost, clinical outcomes, unmet healthcare needs, health equity and disparities, access to healthcare, or community concerns.

The goal of a problem statement is not to suggest the solution, but rather to set the stage for why a solution is needed. Different stakeholders have different perspectives on the problem, so your problem statement can be refined based on your target audience's perspective as defined in the previous step.

With this information gathered – details about the housing authority, the person they were going to be talking directly to, and what their potential competitors could offer – Organization A then outlined their individual and unique value that they could bring to the housing authority in partnership. The value highlighted how their priorities aligned, at the mission of improving housing opportunities for individuals with complex care needs, the data they could offer and the benefit it could lend the housing authority, and how they can meet the needs and challenges identified in previous steps.

Defining Program Value

Once you have considered the audience you are pitching to and the problem in front of your organizations, it is time to present how your solution will add 'value'. You need to explicitly state how your solution generates positive outcomes that are important to that target audience and how partnership can alleviate their specific pain point. This step outlines the 'value' in your value proposition.

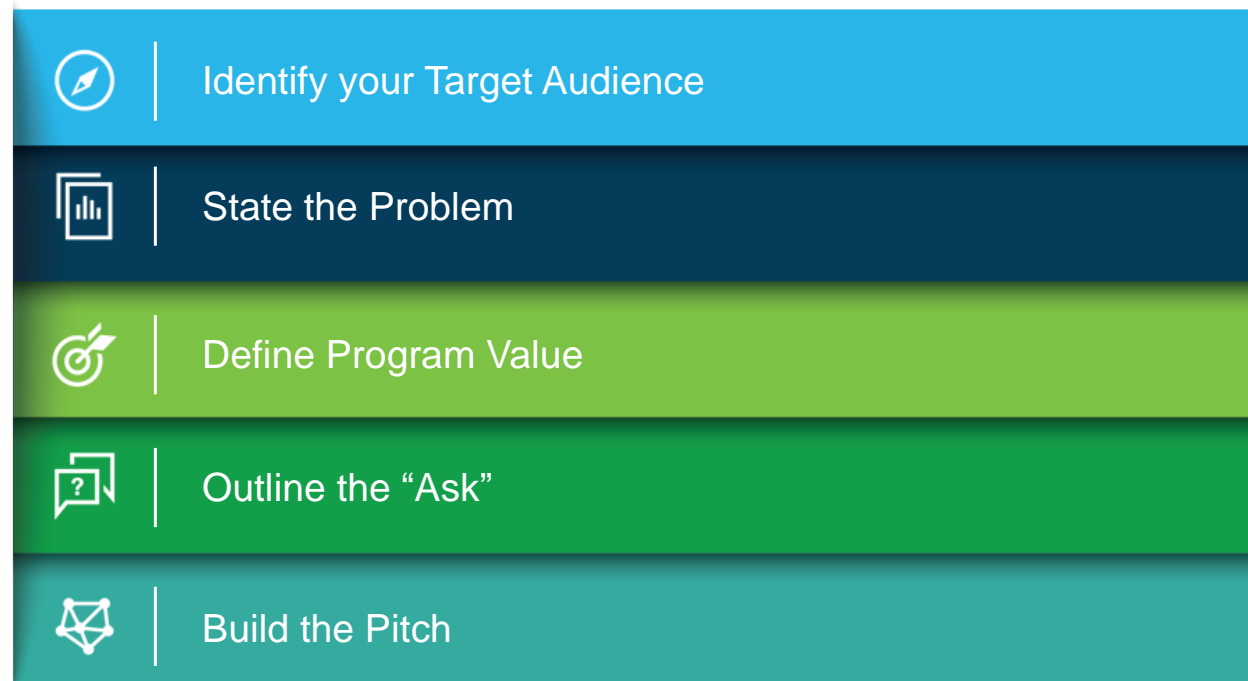
Your value may vary based on which potential partner you are focusing on. Even if two organizations are the same type of entity what resonates with them will depend on their own unique circumstances and needs. When defining your value, a few questions to consider are:

- What are your potential partner’s challenges and how are they currently addressing them?
- How will your offering positively impact their needs?
- How is your offering different from competitors and why should they choose you?
- What are their goals and how do you align?
- What information / data would support the premise that both entities can benefit? How would you ensure that information is available?

Using these answers, you can outline what your value proposition should focus on and how to tailor it to their needs. Once you have defined your value in the context of their priorities and needs, you can strengthen your value proposition by adding data. The data you choose can highlight the problem as well as your proposed intervention’s potential impact. Ideally, this data can be pulled from prior results from your program. If you do not have programmatic data, you can also lean on data from a similar program with a similar partnership or population. Data can come from multiple sources and can be presented in different ways to support your proposition. Potential sources include internal program data, personal stories of those you have served, publicly available data, organizational documents or past projects, and population health metrics.

Outlining the ‘Ask’

The next step, after thinking through the problem statement, your potential partner’s needs, the value you could bring them, is to clearly and concisely state the ‘ask’. Presentations with impressive data and graphic displays of programmatic success can be impactful, but you want to be sure to avoid leaving your audience unsure of the next steps or how to get involved. The ‘ask’ should highlight how partnership or funding would be mutually beneficial and exactly what is needed from them.



The 'ask' should be informed by data and showcase what benefits could accrue to both parties. If possible, it is best to make the 'ask' quantifiable. This should frame to potential partners the resources they would need to invest and how they can move forward with you in a way that points them towards thinking about the positive returns on investment and growth they could achieve by working with you.

Pulling Together the Pitch

Finally, it is at this point where it all gets put together into a value proposition pitch. It can take many forms, such as a quick elevator pitch, an informational flier, a PowerPoint presentation, or other messaging tools. But starting with a clear value proposition or message will allow you to fine tune tools for specific audiences or opportunities that may present themselves in the future. You can start with outreach and building partnerships in whatever way works best for your organization but ensure that your pitch concisely presents the problem, defines the value partnership can bring to all stakeholders, and a clear 'ask' for how to move forward and work together.

In final preparation for the meeting with the housing authority representative, Organization A built out a concise and direct pitch deck that highlighted their awareness of current challenges, proposed solutions and the value of a partnership that could bring those solutions to fruition, how both could benefit from working together, and what their specific ask was of the housing authority to move forward together.

References

ⁱ Cote C. How to create an effective value proposition. Harvard Business School Online Business Insights Blog (July 2020) Available <https://online.hbs.edu/blog/post/creating-a-value-proposition>

ⁱⁱ Hales, J. What is a market opportunity assessment. Sapio Research (September 2020). Available <https://sapioresearch.com/tutorials/what-is-market-opportunity-assessment>.

ⁱⁱⁱ The University of Sheffield. How to: Write a problem statement. Available https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/polopoly_fs/1.440722!/file/HowtoWriteaProblemStatement.pdf

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