



# From Project Design to Project Proposal to Funding Proposal

## 1. The Core Purpose: Logic vs. Logistics

The PDD is designed to ensure the program is **theoretically sound**. It uses tools like a **Theory of Change** or a **Logical Framework (Log Frame)** to prove that if you do "Activity A," it will actually lead to "Result B."

- **Design Document:** Focuses on the *causal link* (e.g., "Why does restorative justice lead to lower dropout rates?").
- **Project Proposal:** Focuses on the *operational plan* (e.g., "We will hold restorative justice circles every Tuesday at 3 PM").

## 2. Key Differences at a Glance

Feature	Design Document (The Blueprint)	Project Proposal (The Manual)	Funding Proposal (The Pitch)
<b>Primary Goal</b>	To establish the program's "Internal Logic."	To plan the day-to-day execution.	To secure financial resources.
<b>Main Content</b>	Theory of Change, Problem Trees, and Impact Pathways.	Timelines, Staffing, Work Plans, and Budgets.	Case for Support, Success Stories, and Compliance.
<b>Stability</b>	Static; the design rarely changes once finalized.	Dynamic; updated based on field conditions.	Tailored; changed for every different donor.
<b>Key Question</b>	"Does this model actually solve the problem?"	"How do we run this on the ground?"	"Why should we fund this specific NGO?"

## 3. Why the Design Document is the most important

Without a solid PDD, your project is a "one-hit wonder." A Design Document allows for Institutional Memory. If a project manager leaves, the new one can look at the PDD to



understand the *philosophy* and *evidence-based research* behind why the program was built that way (for example, why you prioritize student-led baseline studies over staff-led ones).

## 3. The "DNA" of a Design Document

A strong PDD for an organization working with youth usually includes three technical components that the other documents simply "copy and paste" from:

- **The Theory of Change (ToC):** A visual or narrative map showing the long-term impact you want (e.g., *Empowered Youth*) and working backward to the preconditions needed to get there.
- **The Problem Tree:** A deep-dive analysis that separates the **symptoms** (e.g., youth unemployment) from the **root causes** (e.g., lack of agency or soft skills).
- **The M&E Framework:** While a proposal lists *what* you will track, the Design Document defines *how* those indicators were chosen and why they are the correct measures of success (e.g., choosing "recidivism rates" as the primary indicator for a restorative justice program).

## 4. How they work together (The Workflow)

In a professional NGO environment, the documents follow a specific sequence:

1. **Design Document:** You spend a month researching and designing a 10-step methodology for youth leadership. This becomes your "Product."
2. **Project Proposal:** You take that design and adapt it into a plan for a specific school in the Eastern Cape, adding a calendar and a list of local facilitators.
3. **Funding Proposal:** You take the best parts of the design and the project plan and write a 5-page letter to a donor like the George Müller Charitable Trust, explaining why their mission aligns with your design.

To truly differentiate these three documents, it helps to see them as a nested hierarchy. The Design Document is the "DNA," the Project Proposal is the "Body," and the Funding Proposal is the "Voice."



## 4. Practical Application

If you are scaling a youth program—moving it from one school to 90 schools—the **Program Design Document (PDD)** becomes your most critical asset because it ensures that the "soul" of the intervention isn't lost during expansion.

### 1. The Logical Framework (LogFrame): The Heart of Design

The PDD is where you build the **LogFrame**. This is a technical matrix that funders (especially large international bodies) look for to see if your project is "rigorous." It forces you to define:

- **Impact:** The long-term change in society (e.g., "Youth become active, employed citizens").
- **Outcomes:** The specific changes in your target group (e.g., "70% increase in project management competency among Grade 11s").
- **Outputs:** The direct products of your activities (e.g., "10 leadership workshops delivered").
- **Assumptions:** The external factors you *cannot* control but need for success (e.g., "Schools remain open and accessible during the project cycle").

### 2. Evidence-Based Foundations

A Design Document explains **why** a specific methodology was chosen over another. For a youth program, this might involve:

- **Theoretical Alignment:** Citing why you use a "10-step methodology" versus a "curriculum-based" approach.
- **Literature Review:** Brief references to why restorative justice is more effective at reducing recidivism in South African schools than traditional punitive measures.
- **Baseline Methodology:** Defining the standard "Before" and "After" survey tools that every project under this design must use.

### 3. Scalability and "The Franchise Model"

Think of the PDD as the "Franchise Manual."



- **The Design Document** says: "Every youth hub must have a vegetable garden and a digital literacy lab."
- **The Project Proposal** says: "The xxx hub will plant spinach and use refurbished laptops."
- **The Funding Proposal** says: "Your R100k donation will seed 5 new vegetable gardens and provide 20 laptops for rural youth."

**Without the PDD, you are constantly "reinventing the wheel" every time you write a new proposal. With it, you simply pull the pre-approved logic into your new documents.**