LMU | Lincoln Memorial University
HARROGATE, TENNESSEE

S.E.R.V.E. Award Application Tips

How to Write a Strong Proposal

The S.E.R.V.E. Award is about more than funding — it's about learning how to create a strong, fundable project. Use these tips as your roadmap.

Team & Mentor

✅ **Do:** Form a team of 3+ students with clear roles (leader, researcher, organizer, etc.).

✅ **Do:** Choose a faculty/staff mentor who is engaged and can guide you.

❌ **Don't:** Submit without a mentor or leave team roles vague.

Community Need Statement

✅ **Do:** Clearly explain the problem you want to solve — who it affects, how big it is, and why it matters now.

✅ **Do:** Use **at least 3 credible sources** (government data, nonprofit reports, research articles, community surveys).

✅ **Do:** Show that you've done real homework on your community.

❌ **Don't:** Rely only on personal opinion or "common sense."

Project Description

✅ **Do:** State your goals in clear, measurable terms. (Example: *We will provide 100 hygiene kits to local shelters* instead of *We want to help people*.)

✅ **Do:** Provide a step-by-step plan with a timeline that fits in one semester.

✅ **Do:** Assign roles so every team member has ownership.

✅ **Do:** Connect your project to LMU's mission of service, education, and empowerment.

❌ **Don't:** Write vague or overly ambitious goals that you can't measure.

Budget & Justification

✅ **Do:** Create a complete budget that totals $1,000 or less.

✅ **Do:** Explain why each item is necessary and how it supports your project.

✅ **Do:** Keep costs reasonable — funders look for good stewardship of money.

❌ **Don't:** Just list items without explaining why you need them.

Sustainability & Growth (Optional but Recommended)

✅ **Do:** Think about how your project could live on after this semester — could it become a club, be repeated, or attract other funding?

❌ **Don't:** Skip this section — even a short idea shows you're thinking big.

Writing Quality & Professionalism

✅ **Do:** Write clearly, stay organized, and proofread before submitting.

✅ **Do:** Use professional language (avoid slang or overly casual writing).

✅ **Do:** Ask your mentor to review your application for clarity.

❌ **Don't:** Submit something messy, rushed, or full of errors — first impressions matter!

Final Checklist Before You Submit

____ Team roster complete with mentor info

____ Community need backed by at least 3 credible sources

____ Project description with goals, activities, timeline, roles, and evaluation

____ Budget table + justification (totals $1,000 or less)

____ Sustainability ideas (optional, but helps your score)

____ Proofread and polished writing

Remember: A strong application doesn't just win the award — it prepares you for future grants and opportunities to grow your impact.