

Grant Writing 101

Step 1: Define the project aka identifying your need.

What do you want the money for?

- ❖ Support for entire program
- ❖ Purchase books and curriculum
- ❖ Purchase basic hand and power tools
- ❖ Purchase new technology
- ❖ Field trips
- ❖ Help you start new projects.
- ❖ Help you replicate a model program.
- ❖ Fund time-limited projects.
- ❖ Help you gain credibility with other funders.

How much do you need?

- ☐ \$1,000 - \$5,000
- ☐ \$5,000 - \$10,000
- ☐ \$10,000- \$30,000
- ☐ \$30,000-\$100,000
- ☐ More than \$100,000

Some things they usually will not fund

- ❖ Fund on-going projects
- ❖ Support an effort that is running out of money - "We'll have to close our doors, if you don't fund us."
- ❖ Administration and overhead
- ❖ Internal operations, such as staff training and office equipment

Ask yourself:

- What need or problem are you trying to address?
- What is the background of the problem (how did it come about)?
- What is the project that will solve the problem?
- What is the project timetable?
- How much will it cost?
- How will you determine if the project is successful?
- How will it be funded in the future?

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Step 2: Identify the right funding source(s)

Where to begin: feds, state, or private.

Federal Funding

Need = \$100,000+ for a one-to-three year program

Most appropriate to educators: Department of Education, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Justice, or the Department of Labor.

Requests for Proposals (RFP's) and published in the Federal Register at www.gpo.gov/fdsys and at www.grants.gov.

Applications for specific programs are usually accepted on an annual basis and it may take six months or longer before you are notified of funding awards. If awarded funding, **reporting and record keeping requirements will come with the money**. Can be somewhat complicated and time consuming.

State Funding

Need = \$100,000 +. Lots of paperwork but **odds of winning an award are better** because fewer grant applications are competing. Applications are typically accepted once a year with notification taking six months or longer. Most states do not have a central location where you can find funding programs available through various departments. Therefore, the best place to start to look for state funders is your particular state government's general web site.

Foundation or Corporate Funding

Needs under \$100,000. These applications require less writing time and are typically much simpler to prepare.

Often the applications can be completed and submitted online. Many have multiple due dates or accept applications on a continuous basis. Notification of grant awards is often made within four to eight weeks.

*The Foundation Center's On-line Funding Database and hard copy Funding Directory are good places to look for foundation and corporate funding. To access the web site information you must be a paid subscriber. **Most public libraries pay for this service and have it available for you to use.** Most also have copies of the Funding Directory. For additional information on the Foundation Center and the resources they offer, see www.foundationcenter.org.*

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Step 3: Gain specific funding information and interpret the guidelines

The key element in obtaining funding is to find a funder whose desires and requirements match your own. "Every funder has very specific interests and goals. The funder wants certain particulars, and if your project does not address those particulars, no matter how unique, wonderful, or worthy it is, it will not be funded." (grantwriting101)

Are these funders a good match?

- ☐ Does your project fit their funding priorities? See their mission statement or organizational purpose statement.
- ☐ Do they fund your type of organization? Look for lists of past recipients who have received funding see website or annual report
- ☐ Do they fund in your geographic area?
- ☐ Do they accept unsolicited proposals?
- ☐ What size grants do they typically give for your type project?
- ☐ Do you meet all of their eligibility criteria?
- ☐ Are they interested in the same problems that you are?

Research each foundation

- ☐ Start with the foundation's website.
- ☐ If the foundation doesn't have a website, check its 990s.

990s- What they can tell you

990s are forms nonprofits have to submit annually to the IRS.

1. Assets
2. Total contributions
3. How to apply
4. Board of Trustees
5. Grants awarded

You have a match if the funder... (Check those that match)

- ☐ Has the same priority area you do.
 - ☐ Gives to your type of organization.
 - ☐ Funds your type of project.
 - ☐ Gives in your geographic area.
 - ☐ Awards grants in the range you are seeking.
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- ❖ Don't call if funder's website says "Do not call." or "Send letter of inquiry (LOI) first."
 - ❖ Otherwise, if prospect is a yes or maybe ...call the program officer to find out if your project is, in fact, a good match.
 - Prepare for your call have ready a brief description of your organization and your project.
 - Ask if your project fits the funder's guidelines. Ask questions to clarify proposal guidelines.
 - ❖ Make sure that you are thoroughly familiar with your project and you are able to discuss it with clarity, conviction, and strength.
 - ❖ Be prepared to respond to any questions or concerns of the program officer and take notes so that you can later incorporate any relevant suggestions into your application.

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Step 4: Prepare the application

A successful grant application is one that is thoughtfully planned, well prepared, concisely packaged, and persuasive.

Federal, state, and foundation/corporate programs will all require the same basic information, although it may be requested in different formats. Nonetheless, there are generally six components that need to be presented.

Planning the proposal

- ❖ *First - read the guidelines carefully.*
- ❖ If you have questions, contact the program officer.
- ❖ Figure out your timeline - start from when you need to submit and work backwards

Writing the proposal

- ❖ If the funder lists the information required, use the same words, in the same order.
- ❖ Answer all the questions completely in the space allowed.
- ❖ Assume the funder knows nothing about the problem or your project.

Executive Summary

The Executive Summary presents a snapshot of your application.

It should include:

- Problem statement
- Proposed solution – Goal and purpose
- Funding requirements - Budget
- Applicant and its expertise to carry out the project - Evaluation

A Compelling Need

- ❖ ... will drive the proposal.
- ❖ Need ⇒ Goal ⇒ Measurable objectives ⇒ Evaluation components.

Problem or Need Statement

The problem statement should be a clear, concise, well-supported statement of the problem to be overcome using the grant funding. The information provided should be both factual and directly related to the problem addressed by the proposal. Use statistics to support the existence of the problem or issue.

May also include

- ❖ Describe how you know there is a problem.
- ❖ Observation? Anecdotes?
- ❖ What are the statistics?
- ❖ Why hasn't this problem been resolved, yet?
- ❖ Make sure your problem/need statement makes the case for your program.

Project Description

The project description should describe the overall project you wish to implement and should include three sections:

Goal and purpose

Goal is to alleviate your compelling need. The end result that you hope to accomplish

- ❖ To prepare students for junior college
- ❖ To help students find a career that will provide a livable wage

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Objectives

- ❖ Are the measurable steps that move you towards your goal?
- ❖ Start with nouns.
- ❖ Are SMART can be one of three types: process, product, outcome,
 - Specific
 - Measurable – how many/how much
 - Achievable – what can you do
 - Realistic – cost effective
 - Time specific - over what time period

Types of Objectives

- ❖ Process – how many attended/enrolled
- ❖ Product - if something made/produced
- ❖ Outcome – what learned, achieved and/or changed

Project Design

The project design outlines the tasks that will be accomplished with the available resources. Describe in detail the activities that will take place in order to achieve desired results.

Evaluation

- ❖ How will you measure your measurable outcomes? Pre/post tests? Sign-in sheets?
- ❖ If you can't measure, revise objectives.
- ❖ Who will measure it?
- ❖ How will it be reported?
- ❖ How will it be used?
- ❖ Applicants should develop evaluation criteria to measure progress toward the project goal. It is important to define carefully and exactly how success will be determined.

Budgets

- ❖ Include all expenses
- ❖ Show revenue from other sources
- ❖ Bring your Finance Department in early.
 - Double check your numbers do they add up correctly?
 - Are they consistent?

Budget Description

- ❖ Describes how the line item numbers were determined.
- ❖ Can be on a separate narrative sheet or part of the line item budget - if simple.
- ❖ This is the budget section of your application.
- ❖ It should include project costs as well as information on how the project will be funded in the future.

Applicant and its Expertise

- ❖ This section should include an explanation of why your organization is trust worthy and capable of carrying out the project.
- ❖ Provide a history of your past successes, staff experience and expertise, and why your organization should receive the funds.

Attachments

- ❖ Particular attachments that need to be included in your application will be specified in the instructions.
- ❖ Review these items carefully and make sure to include everything that is requested.

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Step 5: Submit the application

- ❖ But first... Double Check Everything
- ❖ Were all application guidelines carefully followed?
- ❖ Does it pull at the funder's heartstrings while demonstrating that you will be able to implement an effective program?
- ❖ Is it clear, concise, and well organized?
- ❖ Check grammar, spelling, and typos.
- ❖ Have it checked by someone else not familiar with the project to your application;
- ❖ Include a one-page cover letter if not specifically prohibited by the funder. The cover letter should briefly introduce your organization and describe your project, including the funding request.
- ❖ Check to see how many copies of the application are requested.
- ❖ Make sure the application is delivered prior to the due date.
- ❖ Make a note on your calendar of when the funder anticipates making a decision. Follow up if you do not hear back by the specified date.

Top reasons proposals are denied

- ❖ Deadlines not met.
- ❖ Guidelines were not followed.
- ❖ Project was not a priority for the funder.
- ❖ Proposal was not clear in describing one or more sections.
- ❖ Proposal was beyond capacity of organization.
- ❖ Budget too high, too low or the benefit for the cost was out of line.

Step 6: After submission ideas

If funded:

- Send a thank-you note.
- Find out administrative requirements.
- Follow up with the funder as the project is implemented to let them know of your successes and the difference their funding has made in the lives of your students.

If not funded:

- Write the funder a thank-you note to let them know that you appreciate their considering your application.
- Ask the funder for reviewer comments (if available). The comments can offer invaluable tips for improving future grant applications.
- Check with organizations that did receive funding to see if you can view a copy of their winning application. This information will help you to learn more about the grant source and may make your next application a winner.
- Revise and then resubmit your application to the same funder if allowable and to new funding sources as well.
- Keep trying! Those who persevere will receive the funding.

Sources:

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