

10 Grant Writing Tips

Never write a grant proposal solely for funding purposes.

You should always seek grant opportunities that match your program's goals and objectives rather than the other way around. If you change your program based on a funder's giving guidelines, you will soon end up with a project that is a mere shell of the original plan. The goal of grant writing is not more money for your agency; the goal is to fund programs that will meet the needs of your constituency.

Know your prospective grantor! Research, research, and research some more!

Obtain as much information as possible about a prospective grantor! Understand the mission of the grantor, look at past-funded programs, and determine the range of grant awards typically given by the agency. Be sure you make a note of any geographical preferences and/or limitations. Save yourself some time and look at "funding exclusions" and/or "eligible applicants" first—make sure your institution and/or project fits within the guidelines of the funding agency.

Read and understand the funder guidelines and requirements.

Most funding agencies publish grant guidelines or requirements. Be certain you understand them and follow them to the letter. Note the deadline and whether the proposal must be received or postmarked by the deadline. Don't have your proposal thrown away because you didn't follow the guidelines to the letter. Exceptions are rarely made; regardless of the circumstances. Some funders have special requirements; follow them!

A well-documented needs statement is critical to your proposal.

Your "needs statement" drives your entire grant proposal. The proposed program should revolve around the problems faced by your clients. The purpose of the grant is to meet the specific needs you have identified. If you have not adequately described the reason you need the program, including the use of statistics and other research data when possible, the funder will see no reason to invest in your project.

Most proposals require a short project abstract.

Most proposals, particularly foundation and corporation proposals, should include a short project abstract. The abstract defines your entire project—needs, goals, objectives, and budget—on a single page. As always, follow the guidelines of the grantor with regard to the program summary/abstract requirements. Remember that it is this summary that is usually read first. If you haven't adequately described your project, it may be the only part of the entire proposal that ever gets read. Even though the abstract is required at the beginning of the proposal, consider writing it last.

Use the project narrative to more fully describe your program—goals, objectives, strategies, budget, and evaluation strategies.

Every proposal will require a section(s) that describes the broad goals and measurable objectives of your project. You should detail the activities that will be implemented to accomplish the program's goals and objectives. Your budget and budget narrative must closely match the described activities. Your evaluation should carefully measure whether the stated project objectives are being met on a timely basis.

Foundation and corporate funders generally expect this section to be no longer than five to ten pages. Federal grants may allow up to 50 pages or more for a thorough discussion of your project. Again, follow the guidelines of the prospective funder.

Top off your proposal with a concise cover letter.

Include a one-page cover letter if not specifically prohibited by the funding agency. The cover letter

should briefly introduce your organization and describe your project, including the funding request. The cover letter should be signed by your school's or district's executive officer and should be written on school/district letterhead.

The appearance of your proposal matters!

Use a reasonable font type and size (no smaller than 10-point; preferably 12-point). Leave plenty of white space—use margins of at least 1"; double-space if space limitations allow it. If possible, include graphs, photographs, or sidebars occasionally. Bold headings and subheadings help break up the proposal and also make it easy for the reviewer to find sections within your proposal. Grammar and spelling errors show a lack of concern on the part of the applicant. Do not submit a proposal if you are not proud of its appearance.

Always thank the funder for the opportunity to apply.

Even if your proposal is not funded, always send a thank-you note to the grantor for the opportunity to submit your proposal. Ask if it is possible to receive reviewer comments so that you can see why your proposal was not funded. Use the reviewer comments to improve upon your proposal-writing techniques.

And remember, even the most well-written proposals for the most super projects are not always funded. Do not get discouraged because your proposal was not selected for funding by a particular agency at this time.

Turn your investors into partners in your programs by keeping them informed of its progress.

If you are fortunate enough to have your proposal funded, send a thank-you note for the grant. Next, keep the funding agency informed about your activities, progress, and accomplishments. Invite them to come see your program in operation. Send photographs of the program in action. Send quarterly or semi-annual reports that tell how you've used the funds. In short, make the grantor your partner.

Source: http://www.schoolgrants.org/grant_tips2.htm