

General Grants Writing Tips and Techniques

Step 1: Know Thyself

- Know your organization's strengths, weaknesses, capabilities
- Know your environment, your community, your audience
 - Make sure your organization is credible
 - 501(c)(3) status, DUNS number, and registration with SAM.gov
 - Strong leadership, including a Board of Directors
 - Have a solid financial infrastructure (annual audit)

Step 2: Develop a Program or Project

- What do you want to accomplish?
- Why is it important?
- Is it also important to your audience? How do you know?
- What outcomes will it produce?
- What formats will you use and are they appropriate to your audience?

- Do you have the personnel or adequately trained volunteers?
- Are you an “expert” in the content or do you have access to someone who is?
- Do you have the time? The space?
- Can you sustain the project in coming years?
- How will you know if you are achieving the goals of your project? How will you understand what is happening?
- How will you learn from your mistakes?

Step 3: Finding Funding Sources

- A supported project is a partnership that works to accomplish the mutual goals of both the grantor and the grantee.
- Knowing the types of funding sources and their goals is essential
 - Public Agencies and Funds
 - Private Foundations and Funds
 - Corporate Foundations/ Business Community Funds
 - National Philanthropic, Family, or Community Foundations

- Important Points to Consider
 - Who funds in my area of interest?
 - Who funds in my geographic region?
 - Who will provide the type of support I need?
 - Has the grantmaker funded organizations like mine?
 - How much does the grantmaker give to organizations like mine?

Resources for Finding Grantmakers

- **Foundation Center Directory Online**

This is an expensive program, but the SC State Library is a subscriber to The Foundation Center Directory and you can use it there for free. It is also available at select libraries in Georgetown, Charleston, Florence, Anderson and Spartanburg and at all library branches in Greenville.

- **Government Grant Guides**

- **Newsletters and Nonprofit literature**

- **Training Programs**

- **Personal Contacts**

- **Guidestar**

If you are seeking funding from a family foundation or other type of foundation, go to Guidestar, which is a free service, and plug in the name of the foundation. It will enable you to see their 990s, showing to whom they have given grants and in what amounts.

Step 4: Organizing Your Proposal

- Follow the grantmaker's guidelines
- Proposal formats:
 - Forms (online or otherwise)
 - Structured Narratives
 - Open Narratives
 - Letters
- Pay attention to deadlines
- Follow up with the grantmaker, as needed

Putting it in Writing

- Work extra hard on the abstract section – it is what the rest is judged against.
- Organize goals in order of importance.
- Organize actions in chronological order.
- Use simple direct language, no “jargon” words.
- Avoid unsupported claims.
- Be positive and avoid tentative words.
- Don’t use multiple typefaces.
- Don’t use guesswork for the budget.

- Give your self plenty of time to write the first draft of the proposal.
- Let it sit for a few days and read it again.
- Have someone outside of your organization read it.
- If you are using technology, have someone with expertise in that area read it.

Ask Yourself These Questions:

- Have you presented a compelling case for your project?
- Are the goals clear?
- Is the project well designed and are the goals obtainable?
- Are the resources adequate and readily available?
- Evaluation: can you measure the results?
- Will the technology remain appropriate?
- How will this project sustain itself in the long run?

Final Reminders

- Begin your planning and writing early...it always takes longer than you think it will.
- Apply by the stated deadline.
- Read the guidelines several times and follow them.
- If one is asked for, write a strong cover letter...it is your first impression.
- Answer all of the questions or topics.
- Don't exaggerate the budget. (Worth saying twice.)

Step 5. And Keep the Relationship Alive...

- Develop an ongoing and cordial relationship with your funding source. Don't let them down.
- If your proposal is rejected, get feedback and think about improving it. It's not personal. Ask about the possibility of future funding.
- Develop partnerships that allow for creative solutions and institutional satisfaction.