

Grant Writing (according to a non-professional grant writer)

Two Major Rules:

1. **You must MAKE A CASE** – just because you are a great organization & need money doesn't mean you will get it. **Craft a meaningful proposal that will stand out from the scores of other applicants.**

- Why should you get the money over another organization? - You must make a clear, compelling case as to WHY you need the money.
- Be specific – WHAT will you do with the money you are asking for.
- Imagine you are listening in on the committee meeting that decides who will be given money and how much. What will the person who read your request say to the rest of the committee when he is summarizing your request? What will be the soundbites that compel the committee to give YOU the money?

i.e. – Library is requesting a \$2,000 grant for children's books. Why should they give the money to you?

1) Local elementary school has no library – public library serves as school library, librarian serves as school library (immediately shows need).

2) School does not have gym or auditorium (not really relevant, but certainly paints a picture of need).

3) Will use books to set up “satellite libraries” in each classroom, books will be rotated each month (getting new books in front of children each month, keeping library actively involved in school, reminds children to visit the public library to see more new books.)

2. **Keep it SHORT / Keep it SIMPLE** – committees are made up of busy people with short attention spans. A well-researched, 10 page grant letter will bore the reader to death and they will not be able to find the really pertinent information that they need to make their decision.

- Tell them **who you are** in one short paragraph (small town of 1, 026 people, K-6 school with 58 students, no library/gym/auditorium, small library with ---- materials).
- Tell them **what you will do with the money, give them something easy to repeat in a few sentences around a conference table.**
- Let them know how much you appreciate their consideration and what a difference it will make to your library/children in your community/reading programs.
- Additional details & back-up information can be put in appendixes at the back of the grant. Keep appendixes simple and easy to read (charts, lists) so they don't have to wade through lots of writing to glean the necessary information.

Grant-writing for Non-Profits:

Successful grant-writing involves solid advance planning and preparation. Organize your proposal, pay attention to detail and specifications, use concise, persuasive writing, and request reasonable funding. Clearly understand the grantmaker's guidelines before you write your proposal. Make sure the grantmaker's goals and objectives match your purposes.

A well-written proposal follows the basic steps outlined below:

1. **Prove that you have a significant need** or problem in your proposal.
2. **Deliver an answer to the need**, or solution to the problem, based on experience, ability, logic, and imagination throughout your proposal. **Make sure your proposal describes a program/project for change.**
3. **Reflect planning, research and vision** throughout your proposal.
4. Research grantmakers, including funding purposes and priorities, and applicant eligibility.
5. Determine whether the grantmakers' goals and objectives match your purposes.
6. Target your proposal to grantmakers appropriate to your field and project, but do not limit your funding request to one source.
7. Contact the grantmaker, before you write your proposal, to be sure you clearly understand the grantmaker's guidelines.
8. Present your proposal in the appropriate and complete format, and include all required attachments.
9. **State your organization's needs and objectives clearly and concisely.** Write well. Do not waste words. Use active rather than passive verbs. Use proper grammar and correct spelling. Be clear, factual, supportable, and professional. A well-written proposal is a key factor in the grantmaker's decision-making process.
10. **Be clear about why you are seeking a grant, what you plan to do with the money**, and why you are a good fit with the grantmaker's priorities. Prepare an interesting, persuasive and unique proposal.
11. **Always cover the following important criteria: project purpose, feasibility, community need, funds needed, applicant accountability and competence.**
12. Answer these questions: Who are you? How do you qualify? What do you want? What problem will you address and how? Who will benefit and how? What specific objectives will you accomplish and how? How will you measure your results? How does your funding request comply with the grantmaker's purpose, goals and objectives?
13. **Demonstrate project logic and outcome, impact of funds, and community support.** Be specific about broad goals, measurable objectives, and quantified outcomes.
14. Always follow the exact specifications of the grantmakers in their applications, Requests for Proposals (RFPs) and guidelines.
15. Follow-up with the grantmaker about the status, evaluation, and outcome of your proposal, after it is submitted. Request feedback about your proposal's strengths and weaknesses.

Elements of a good proposal:

Executive Summary:

This is the introduction to the proposal, a place to state your case succinctly and strongly, and summarize the rest of the proposal. It should summarize the Statement of Need, Project description, Budget and Organizational Information. This is a key opportunity to sell the proposal, making sure it reflects excellence and a professional approach.

Statement of Need:

Explain why this project is necessary, this is the chance to place the project in context. It may be helpful to draw on third party research to help paint the picture of the particular need being addressed, but make sure that it does not become too wordy and that it only contextualizes the project without overwhelming it.

Project Description:

Describe your project in detail. If the Executive Summary & Statement of Need are convincing, the reader will now explore how the proposal comes into effect. Be clear & logical when you explain goals, objectives and performance indicators - 1) what you are going to achieve, 2) how you are going to do it, and 3) how you are going to evaluate it.

Budget:

Grant organizations are like any other successful business - they understand numbers and the value of money. They want their money to achieve the best results, so they are looking for evidence of good fiscal policy and practice. This is where you demonstrate that their money will be put to good use and will be in safe hands. Provide detailed information.

Organizational Information:

This section demonstrates your capacity to deliver on your promises. Include a brief history of the organization, the governance structures that oversee it, and list the main activities, audiences, and services. If there is a history of successful project delivery include it here.

Conclusion:

Summary of all of the above. Keep it succinct. Leave a final picture that demonstrates need, capability and worthiness. Do not add new information at this point.

Evaluation/Outcomes:

Describe how you are going to evaluate the success of your program and who is going to evaluate the program (board of directors, advisory board, special committee, outside evaluator). Set achievable and measurable goals and benchmarks to indicate your success.

(Examples of Indicators of Success: After-School Program Goal - 95% of 12th grade students in afterschool program will enroll in college after graduation. This is a 2.5 % increase from last year. Workforce Readiness Program Goal - a minimum of 85% of participants will go on job interviews within 3 months of completing workforce readiness courses.)