



GRANT-WRITING TIPS

Submitting a grant means competing with other worthy organizations for funding. Whether a new or novice applicant, consider the following basic grant-writing strategies that will help strengthen your application.

1. **Review the guidelines and instructions carefully.** There are guidelines and instructions attached to each grant application. Make sure your project fits the funder's priorities. Also, look at previously funded projects to see what the funder has supported in the past – many funders post lists on their websites.

2. **Consult with the program staff** on any questions, interpretations, etc. The funder's program officer can advise on the appropriate grant program, answer questions related to the guidelines and sometimes even review draft applications.

3. **Plan ahead.** Before developing the first draft of the application, ask yourself the following questions:

Does your project fit into the program's guidelines?

How does this project reflect your organization's mission?

What do you want to accomplish through this project?

Who will benefit from the project and how will they be served? Can you give statistics (not opinion) about this community?

What is the project timeline?

What are the estimated project expenses?

How will the grant funds be used?

If payment distribution occurs after the project is completed, are there funds available to cover expenses?

How will the matching funds be secured, if required?

Will the organization continue with the project if it is not fully funded? If so, how? What resources do you have and what resources will be needed?

Who from your organization will be involved in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the project?

Can the results of your project be measured?

How will you evaluate the project's strengths and weakness?

4. **Create an application timeline.** Allow yourself enough time to write, edit, and assemble your grant application. Plan for first, second and third reviews of the application. Give time to get support letters. Always plan for unexpected problems (computer meltdowns, loss of internet connection, etc.).

5. **Be concise and follow instructions.** Use only the space provided; longer does not necessarily mean stronger. Concentrate on the basics – who, what, when, where, why and how – of the project. Consider using subheads for each section. **DO NOT** include additional pages or reduce type size. Do not put information in a fancy binder – a paperclip is fine.

6. Be positive. Compose in an active voice.

7. Avoid jargon. Know your audience and let your audience know you. Remember that the information contained in your grant application may be the first, and only, contact a panelist has with you or your project.

8. Develop Outcomes/Impact of Activities. Use **SMART** goals: **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**ealistic, **T**ime-Bound.

9. Keep your budget realistic. Use the budget template provided by the funder. Think through all the expenses. Be sure to address expenses in the narrative and make sure the numbers are the same as listed in the budget. **DO NOT** inflate or under-estimate budget figures. Do your homework on the estimated expenses related to the project. Don't forget to include in-kind contributions (good or services that you're getting at no cost – i.e. donated supplies or volunteer time).

10. Have someone unfamiliar with your organization review your application. Multiple eyes can help catch jargon, unclear descriptions, and confusing statements. Have them give you a summary of the project.

11. Double check for spelling, math, and typographical errors. These small details may negatively impact the panelists' perception of your application.

12. Submit your application on time. Many organizations do not accept applications received after the deadline.

13. Follow-up. After submission, contact the funder to make sure they have all the information they need. Whether you are funded or not, thank the funder. If funded, make sure you adhere to all contractual requirements. If not funded, request an opportunity to review panel comments and suggestions and try again next year. **ALWAYS PROTECT YOUR REPUTATION.**

General Tips on Writing Grant Proposals

A number of agencies and organizations have compiled useful advice and helpful hints for writing effective grant proposals. Some of the most useful:

Foundation Center Cooperating Collection - located at the Public Library of Charlotte/Mecklenburg County -310 North Tryon Street, Charlotte, NC. The collection is a body of resources for grant-seekers, including individual researchers and non-profit organizations, that can be used to research funding opportunities from foundations and corporations. The collection is available during all open library hours.

Center for Nonprofit Management, www.cnm.org. Nonprofit organization committed to helping nonprofits enhance their results by providing education, consulting, research, performance evaluation, and recognition.

The Foundation Center, www.fdncenter.org. Good overall site for locating information about funders, proposal writing, books and CDs to assist nonprofit organizations.

N.C. Center for Nonprofits, www.ncnonprofits.org. This membership organization provides professional assistance, consulting, and statewide conferences. Useful information specific to writing proposals can be found here.

Nonprofit Guides, www.npguides.org. Provides sample proposals, proposal cover letter, letter of inquiry, and budget format.