

Helpful Grant Writing Tips

1. **Find out which agencies/foundations have given grants in your region** similar to your planned proposal! Talk to those who got funded and ask for advice and ideally copies of their successful grants.
2. **Read the current guidelines** for those agencies/foundations on what they will fund and when the grants are due. If a foundation says they won't fund equipment, don't ask them for equipment (unless it's a necessary component of the part of the grant they said they'd fund!) For example: A programmatic grant could ask for \$50,000 in support equipment, but would not be considered if they called themselves a technology project. Semantics do matter a great deal!

If they say they'll fund up to \$15,000, don't ask them for \$50,000. Foundations often shift their focus, and timing can be very important. Watch for timing-sensitive opportunities. Do your homework! Grant reviewers appreciate those who paid attention to their RFP's (Requests for Proposals.) Too few do!

3. **Collect sample successful grants to use as boilerplate models.** Many foundations will send you, on request, proposals from past funded projects, or at least will give you the addresses of past grant recipients, so you can ask them directly for copies of successful proposals. The more good proposals you read, the more you'll understand how clear writing and following guidelines leads to funding.
4. **Use the same terms in your proposal that the agency/foundation used** to describe what they want to fund. Buzz phrases push important buttons. If they tell you what to tell them: listen, and be convincing as to how your project relates to their posted guidelines. If an RFP says they don't fund technology grants, don't use the word technology. Find other words to express your project, ideally taken directly from the RFP guidelines.
5. **Less is More!** Reviewing stacks of proposals is a difficult job. Grant reviewers quickly learn to scan text, particularly proposal abstracts, in an attempt to get a quick overview of exactly what you expect to do, with whom, when, how, and toward what measurable outcome. If you are short and to the point, and you've answered the key questions, your grant will be viewed as comprehensible and fundable. If you bog down the reviewer with too much ambling detail they'll have a hard time understanding your proposal and it is likely to end up in the "NO" pile. Good proposals are easy to understand.
6. **A catchy name, like "Reach for the Sky"** which is also descriptive of the project, can make a big difference. First impressions and a memorable theme and name are important! Remember they will want to promote your project proudly as one of their great projects.
7. **Good writing should be easy to read, understand,** and should present your ideas in an exciting, yet specific manner. The abstract of your proposal is the single most important paragraph of your proposal. You should know exactly what you're planning to do with their money, and express it in elegant simplicity. If the grant reviewer has a good idea of the direction of your proposal from reading the abstract, it creates an important first impression

that you do indeed know what you want accomplish, with whom, at what cost, and specifically how.

In reading an exciting, well-written proposal, one idea follows naturally to the next. One disjointed or boring sentence can kill the mounting enthusiasm of a tired grant reader. Maintain a tempo of easy to understand sentences that build on one another in a crescendo fashion.

8. **Sustainability is a big issue.** Too many grant projects disappear after the funding is gone. *“How can you assure ongoing benefits once the funding runs out?”* is one of the biggest questions in the mind of the grant reviewer.
9. **Measurable outcomes.** Once the grant is over, exactly what was produced, how will it be disseminated and exactly how many people will have benefited? How do you intend to measure tangible outcomes to prove the projected benefit actually occurred?
10. In the passion of writing a grant **it is easy to get too ambitious.** A major red flag for grant reviewers is the indication you’ve planned to accomplish more than your budget makes realistically attainable. It is better to limit your proposal to less, more assuredly attainable goals, than to promise more than you can deliver. Most projects find they badly underestimated funding for staff and particularly technology support. Be realistic and conservative.
11. **Tie yourself to a major regional, or national, issue** and position your proposal as a model to be replicated once you’ve proved your idea works. Make it clear you’re not just benefiting ten people in Two-Dot, Montana, but that you’re solving a problem shared by all rural schools and are creating a replicable national model. A specific strategy for broadly sharing your solution should be specifically part of your proposal plan.
12. **Choose your partners wisely.** The more partners you have to deal with, the harder it is to keep everyone happy, particularly where control of large sums of money is the issue. If you plan to be working with your grant partners for years, you’d better be sure you know who you can trust and work with. Many projects end up with internal in-fighting that takes the fun out of getting funded. Money changes friendships. Tread cautiously.

Consider whom you may have to work with if you get funded and whether you should include them for a share of the funding to avoid future resistance to your project. Grant reviewers look closely to see who is flying solo, and who works well with the other girls and boys. The better partners you have, the safer their money is when invested in your project.

13. **Even if your first grant-writing effort doesn’t get funded,** the planning and writing process still allows you to resubmit your idea elsewhere. Often project partners get so committed to a good idea, even if funding isn’t won, that the means for moving forward on a project can still be a possibility. Boilerplate paragraphs from old grants are typically recycled. Seasoned grant writers are skilled recyclers, reusing paragraphs from successful grants.

14. **Make it fun!** If you get funded, you'd better enjoy working hard to make your dream happen. Be careful what you ask for, because you just might get it! Once a grant ends, what will you have built for the future? Will you be right back where you started having to write another grant? Plan accordingly.

15. **Evaluations are the means by which you prove your success** at the end of the grant period and are often the key to winning your next grant. Be tangible and realistic in what you set out to achieve, and in how you'll know whether you've achieved it after the money is spent.

Information Source:

Lone Eagles Website: <http://lone-eagles.com/granhelp.htm>