

GRANTWRITING BASICS

BRAINSTORM IDEAS

What exactly do we need a grant for? Example: training for a series of relevant topics for your coordinator or Americorps*VISTA Workers conducted over a one year period.

RESEARCH

YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY FOUNDATION. This is the first place to start!

National Philanthropy Center Director

Grants Writing Sourcebook—TBUSA

Please Note: Many family foundations have a program officer. Talk to that person about your idea.

FIGURE OUT THE MONEY

How big is the project? Is this a proposal for a complete project—Example: Garden seeds and equipment, OR, for a *component* of a project such as seeds only. Funding for a staff position may be necessary from another grant.

WRITE THE DRAFT

Get the main ideas on paper, even in bullet form. What, where, when, why and how. Details will follow, but the concept has to:

- match your mission
- match a funder's "areas of interest/gift giving"
- have a reasonable budget that is NOT ALREADY supported by the annual budget, i.e. something extra
- be accomplished within a stated time frame by staff resources—show we have the capacity to do this
- conclude by describing your plan for funding the project after the grant ends (or not, if it's time sensitive)

WRITE THE BUDGET

- Insure the math is correct. NO KIDDING
- Include an Inkind Column
- Weave into the annual budget OR not, depending on funder directions, it may be on a separate page.
- If asking for capital funds, include accurate bid/cost for all items (new laptop computer at Best Buy on sale for X dollars.)

COMPLETE THE REQUIRED PACKET

- Write a *great* cover letter. Make sure to say why this funder is the best source of money for this project.
- Fill in ALL blanks on application forms completely. Write N/A (not applicable) if appropriate.

- When responding to a specific request for a proposal (RFP), follow the suggested format precisely. This means two pages for narrative; no staples; no smaller than size 11 font, etc.
- A complete packet includes the Board of Directors list, annual budget. 501©3 and brochure(s)
- NEVER include a video, photos, research papers or other materials *unless invited!*

MAIL OR DELIVER BEFORE THE DEADLINE

- Mail certified mail, return receipt.
- If hand delivered, get a receipt in person and use the opportunity to smooze the staff.
- If you know the funder, say hello and THANK HIM/HER for the opportunity to submit.

ESSENTIAL GUIDELINES, TIPS, APPROACHES, INCLUSIONS

1. Know as much as you can about your funder before starting to write your proposal.
 - Who are the Trustees? Do we have connections to any of them?
 - What is their range of giving? What do they actually award? Are they multi-year funders?
2. If you have trouble getting started, begin with the budget. *Money has a strange way of defining our methods and objectives.*
3. Don't make a mystery out of your proposal. **Start right in on the most important point.**
4. **KISS** - Keep It Short and Simple.
5. Write in the third person. It's easier to brag about "they" than "I".
6. Use a title that suggests the results you hope to achieve rather than what you plan to do. Example: *Warm and Healthy Homes Project*
7. If appropriate, quote enabling legislation, foundation founder's words, or foundation's or corporation's annual report to show how your project fits the intent of the grantmaking organization.
8. In your summary, emphasize client benefits of your work, and why the project should be funded. Use active, not passive voice. (Example: Your organization will recruit, provide marketing and showcase fifty artist members in Portland's 2010 First Friday Artwalk series.)
9. Use one or two clear statistics rather than a number of ineffective ones.

BUDGET SECTION

1. Write your budget first, then make sure your proposal supports each item in that budget.
2. Use graphs, charts, and maps to illustrate your points whenever possible.
3. Always include "donated" and "requested" columns in your budget. – "INKIND". This is best represented in a dedicated column. It expresses a "cash value" for Time Dollars.
4. If allowed, always include INDIRECT COST as a line item. This should fall between 10-15%.

OTHER TIPS

1. Don't use a committee voice---the fewer *writers* (does not mean editors or idea donors) involved, the better the writing.
2. If the proposal is ten pages or more, prepare a Table of Contents. *N/A for small family foundation grants.*
3. Use simple words, but don't insult the reader's intelligence.
4. Don't try for perfection on your first draft. Get down your ideas, then edit and rewrite.
5. Use contractions. That's the way you talk, isn't it? It's the key to more effective, personal writing.
6. Use quick openers (like newspaper openers).
7. Let a client or expert state your need through a quotation. This lends more credibility than if you state it yourself. Anecdotal information can be very helpful, if you have the room to include it.
8. Accentuate the positive.
 - Emphasize opportunities rather than needs.
 - Funders would rather know where it's at rather than where it isn't.
9. Write your summary last, after you have finished the major parts of your application.
10. Use emotional words describing love, friendship, grief, etc.) Describe emotions or feelings you or your client have, but don't overdo it! Sprinkle with integrity; don't drown with sappiness.
11. Don't be afraid to be humorous in a *low-key* way—NO sarcasm; not too flip.
12. Have an associate or friend (**or member**) not directly involved in your project proofread your proposal, looking for:
 - grammatical mistakes
 - logical inconsistencies
 - unjustified budget items
 - undefined or confusing terms
 - unsupported arguments, unfounded assumptions, weak documentation.
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GLOSSARY OF GRANT TERMS

RFP

Request for proposal. This is an invitation with directions for the grant.

Trustee

Legal agent who is mandated to review proposals to insure they meet the mission and guidelines of the funder and who is part of the scoring team for the awards.

Inkind

Non-cash donations within a budget.

Matching &

Leveraging

Cash amount required to qualify for a grant award. (\$3000 raised elsewhere can be matched by \$6000 as a grant.) Leveraging: Goes with matching. Your match *leverages* new monies, which is a good thing

- Program Officer Your new best friend. Foundation staffperson who represents the organization and in most cases is its best ambassador, screener, tip giver and answer person.
- Capital Funds For equipment or construction costs only. This cannot be used for personnel.

SECTIONS

- Cover Letter: Your first hello. Tone ought to be inviting, invoke curiosity, stimulate the reader and assure you have the professional capability and heart to save the world with this project.
- Introduction: Boiler Plate History of Organization, annual budget, 501©3, has a board of directors, is audited, complies with all federal, state and funder requirements and is mission based.

It is MOST IMPORTANT that you link the request to the funder's mission and values!

- Narrative: What is the social problem and how will you resolve it? Includes goals and objectives, qualifications of staff, key elements of organization, past and current accomplishments.
- Budget: How much does it cost to do the project? How much money do you already have and from what sources? Is the funding gap reasonable? Does your organization have other donors?
- Summary: Restatement of the goal, timeline, benefits to participants, return to the community- Love.
- Evaluation: How will the project be evaluated and by whom? What credentials (if outside evaluator)?
- Attachments: Whatever they require and nothing more.

