

*Hiring a grant writer can be expensive, and the task of completing grant proposals often falls on individuals or committees with little or no background in this specialized field. We advise avoiding the temptation to use a “cookie cutter grant” and instead tailoring the data and included information to the specific grant you’re interested in. To help, we’ve provided you with a list of tried-and-true grant-writing tips that can increase your chances of getting funding.*

### **Identify the right funding sources.**

Use the Internet to help you find a grant that matches your project’s objectives. (If there is a foundation grant center in your state, this can also be a valuable tool for accessing a grant that matches your needs.) Once you’ve found the grants you’re interested in, make direct contact with funders and request proposal guidelines, along with a list of projects previously funded, how many awards are given per year, maximum amount of the grant, and average size and funding range. If technical assistance is offered, utilize it. Once you have this information, make sure your project still matches up.

### **Review the proposal guidelines.**

Read the proposal guidelines carefully, then read them again. Sometimes reading them out loud helps you catch extra details. Be sure to ask the funder any questions you might have about the guidelines. Guidelines usually tell you about:

- Submission deadlines (Don’t cut yourself short on time. If the grant is available next year, aim for that deadline.)
- Letters of intent, if required
- Eligibility
- Proposal format (including forms, margins, spacing, evaluation process, and page number restrictions)
- Review timetable
- Budgets
- Funding goals and priorities
- Award levels
- Evaluation process and criteria
- Contact information
- Mandatory steps
- Other submission requirements

### **Write the proposal.**

Avoid flowery adjectives, acronyms, or excessive jargon in your proposal. Keep it concise and to the point, and make sure your proposal answers the following questions:

- What do we want to do? What results are we going for?
- What support data is available?
- What issue are we addressing? Why is it important?
- What audiences will benefit? How?
- What specific objectives can be accomplished? How?
- How will we measure results?
- How does this proposal relate to the funder’s specific mission and objectives?

Include the following in your proposal:

#### *1. A statement of need*

This includes your mission statement, goals, measurable objectives, intended audience, and a compelling, logical reason why the proposal deserves the backing of the funder. You might consider providing a brief background to provide useful perspective. Document all statistics to be used.

#### *2. Approach*

Describe the process by which you’ll be accomplishing the goals contained in your “Statement of Need.” Describe personnel responsibilities and include the names of key staff and consultants.

#### *3. Method of evaluation*

Depending on the technical requirements of the funding, you may need to provide specific details on measurements and evaluation. Use the program design to guide your evaluation.

#### 4. *Project timeline*

Include start and end dates, schedules, staff selection, and projected outcomes. If you get the grant, make sure to keep a journal of the project to guide your final report.

#### 5. *Credentials*

Provide information that certifies your capacity to undergo the proposed project. This portion may include track records or resumes. (Note: Resumes become a binding contract when you are awarded the grant, so make sure you have a job for the people whose resumes you submit.)

#### 6. *Budget*

Provide a cost projection of the project. Carefully think through every detail of the budget, and do the calculations multiple times to insure accuracy. You should also mention any in-kind support or matching revenue. Don't put anything in the budget that you haven't discussed in the application. Be realistic, using what you know from the funder about the award amount.

#### 7. *Appendix*

All supporting materials should go in the proposal appendix. Supporting materials might include certifications, tables and charts, resumes, or endorsements from partnering agencies. Make sure to reference these in the narrative so that the reader can find them.

#### 8. *Authorized signature*

Without these, the proposal might be rejected. Give yourself plenty of time before the proposal deadline to acquire necessary signatures.

#### **Proofread your proposal.**

Make sure every page of your proposal has a professional, clean-looking format that also matches the requirements listed in the proposal guidelines. You may want to have clear contact information in the letterhead of the proposal. Carefully comb your proposal for spelling and grammar errors – They say a lot about your professionalism. Once you've personally

proofread your proposal, get someone who is not familiar with the project to assess it for you. Have them tell you from memory what the goal of your project is, how you plan to bring it about, and what makes it significant or different. If any of this is unclear or doesn't make sense, you should consider rewording a few things. It might also be valuable to assemble an advisory committee to review and revise the grant.

#### **Check your submission checklist – twice!**

Plan well ahead to submit your proposal on or even before the deadline. Before submitting, review the guidelines one more time, making sure the format, number of copies, and number of pages is correct. Make sure you have all the required signatures and that you're including all required documentation. Finally, find out how and when you will be notified about the receipt and status of your proposal.

#### **Follow up.**

If it is allowed, contact the funder about the status, evaluation, and outcome of your proposal. If possible, request reviewer's notes providing you with the proposal's strengths and weaknesses. Consider writing a thank-you letter, regardless of whether your proposal is accepted. This could help you stand out should the funder offer other grants in the future.

#### **Be patient.**

Sometimes your proposal will be rejected, and sometimes you'll have to wait for a long period of time to know the funder's decision. Be patient and don't get discouraged. By persistently following the above format, most projects are successful at eventually getting the funding they need.

#### **For additional help with finding and writing grants, check out the following websites:**

[www.afpnet.org](http://www.afpnet.org)

The Association of Fundraising Professionals provides useful information on grant writing, though most of the site is devoted to members only. The site also includes a section devoted to ethics.

