

20 Tips for Successful Grant Writing

1. **Read through the grant carefully:** Make sure that your project aligns with the purpose of the grant and/or the funding priorities. Determine what the funder is trying to accomplish. If in doubt, most funders are willing to answer questions, and reaching out to set up a meeting is always advisable.
2. **Attend information sessions or meet with the funder:** If the funder provides information sessions on a funding opportunity, be sure to attend or watch the recording. Some funders may offer to meet with you before you apply to discuss whether your organization's work is a good fit with their funding interests. Take advantage of these opportunities to connect with funders and learn about what they are looking to invest in and for them to hear about what you do.
3. **Be sure to answer the questions:** Your responses should directly answer the question being asked.
4. **Keep your narrative simple:** Avoid "word walls" by breaking up content into small paragraphs and avoiding long sentences. Choose short, simple words. Avoid jargon and spell out acronyms.
5. **Explain the "why" and not just focused on the "how" and "what":** Do a good job making your case for why you need this funding and what impact it will make. Why is the work you're doing critical to address the issues the community you serve faces? Use this opportunity to share about the needs, strengths, and resilience of communities and the unique role you play in providing supports, services, resources, etc.
6. **Be innovative and creative:** How can your proposed project stand out? What makes it different or unique? Tell your story through quotes, and data, painting a picture of what you do and why it matters.
7. **Focus on making your application clear, concise, and compelling:** More doesn't necessarily mean better. If you can describe your project in fewer words, that is often preferred by funders. Read your writing out loud to make sure it flows and makes sense.
8. **Read the application procedures very carefully and follow directions:** This includes attachments, copies, formatting, etc. Deductions are usually given when you do not follow directions. Deductions can cause proposals to lose many points. For example, only submit the number of pages allowed per the guidelines. Proposals exceeding the page limit are usually disqualified because you have provided more information than is allowable, and the proposal can no longer be compared with the others. Proposals that may otherwise be strong proposals can lose enough points from deductions that they are not funded.
9. **For online applications, write the narrative first in a Word document** so you can cut and paste and adjust as needed for word and character counts. Be sure to check those word and character counts regularly to fit the allowable amounts before you copy and paste them into the online form to save time and energy.
10. **Explain special curricula, projects, and programs without jargon or acronyms:** If the funder doesn't understand it, they may not fund it.

11. **Most funders are looking for projects that will have long-term effects:** Explain how your project will do that. Inviting the funder into the long-term solution is a way to make them feel like a part of the project instead of only the funding to support the work.
12. **Most funders like to see collaboration:** Involvement with other partners, schools, parents, and the community is key.
13. **Don't assume the reader knows your program well:** Give someone who may not know your program very well the grant application guidelines and your written proposal. Have them read your proposal and give you feedback on areas that they do not understand or where you didn't answer the question in a compelling way. Often when we are immersed in our program, we cannot have an objective lens to identify those areas that need further explanation.
14. **Make sure your demographic numbers and budget numbers add up.** Double-check and have someone else do a quick check to make sure that the numbers are totaling correctly.
15. **Look at the scoring rubric if available:** Some funders provide a guide to show applicants the weighting of different sections of a proposal. Spend more time on the heavily weighted areas and cross-check to see if your responses align with what the rubric is looking for.
16. **Be realistic, and don't overpromise:** Don't commit to tasks or outcomes that you cannot produce, do not have the staff or time to produce, or do not want to produce. Don't exaggerate the impact or the numbers you anticipate.
17. **Use the community as a resource.** Ask how others have written grants. Seek any grant writing associations or other community groups that may offer mentorship around the process.
18. **Draft and then go through the editing process:** Use spellcheck and grammar check. Tools like Grammarly can help too! Read your writing out loud to make sure it flows and makes sense.
19. **Submit proposals early to avoid technical issues or delays:** If sending a proposal by mail, send it early so it arrives before the deadline. Grants received after the deadline are usually disqualified. For online proposals, submit them at least a day before the deadline in case you experience any technical difficulties.
20. **Get feedback from funders:** If your proposal is not funded, you might want to call and ask the funder for feedback. Make sure you call a month or two after funding has been allocated when the funder has more time to discuss this with you. Many funders are willing to share areas of improvement with you and the feedback can make your next proposal stronger.