Grant Writing 101

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Basics of Grant Writing

What do you need?

- This is **not** what you want to buy. The need might be low reading level, high level of violence, or high drop-out rate.

Basics of Grant Writing

What is available?

- What resources and programs are already in place to assist with meeting the need?
- Why aren't they working?
- Do they need more resources or do you need a new program?

Basics of Grant Writing

What do you want?

- What do you want to accomplish – your goals and objectives?
  - Do you want a 10% reduction in the incidence of violence per the annual violence and vandalism report?
  - Do you want 10% less students to drop out?

Basics of Grant Writing

How will you do this?

- What do you want to add - services, supplies, programs?
- What is the evidence of whether what you want to add will work?

Basics of Grant Writing

How much will it cost?

- How much money do you need?
- Research the cost of the items. What does a computer cost? What is the hourly rate and benefits for an instructor? How much does transportation cost?

Best Advice You Will Ever Receive

- General Information for all grants
  - Mission and vision
  - Half page description of your agency
  - Document existing partners
  - Document successes
  - Promote your story

Two Biggest Mistakes Applicants Make

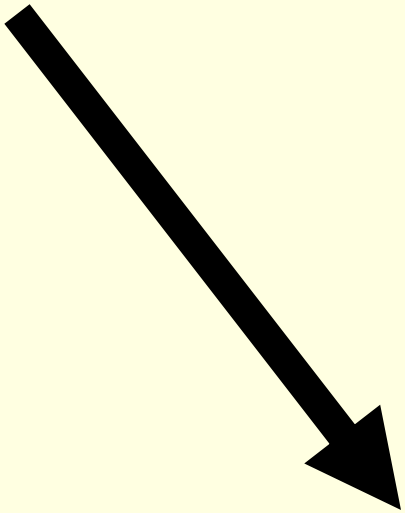
- 1. **CHASING FUNDING:**

- e.g. “How can we spend the $200,000 that is available?

- 2. **IGNORING THE PURPOSE OF THE GRANT:**

- e.g. “We want a school nurse.”

Basics of Grant Writing



Now for the details of Grant Writing

Planning and Project Development Tip

- Schedule an inclusive "brainstorming" meeting at least six weeks before the proposal is due and develop a comprehensive "to do" list.
- Your proposal should be so well planned that an individual who knows nothing about your community and this type of program can use it as a "blue print" for implementing operating and evaluating the program.

Planning and Project Development Tips

- Read the RFP several times while writing the grant.
- Follow the RFP directions in detail.
- Attend TA sessions if offered.

Finding Funders

- Federal Government
- State/Local Government
- Foundations/Corporations
- Private Donors

Government Grants

- Funding is set by a public agenda.
- Clear RFP, usually with points assigned.
- Requires more reporting and evaluation.
- Learn the “lingo”.

Federal Government

- Federal Register
- Grants.Gov
- U.S.Department Of Education
- E-Grants.gov
- Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- U.S. Department of Justice

Foundation Grants

- Fewer guidelines, usually want short narratives.
- Set their own priorities.
- Built on relationships

Foundations/Search Engines

- Foundation Center
- Fundsnet
- School Grants
- The Grantsmanship Center
- Edutopia
- Public Education Network
- Grants Alert

Corporate Giving

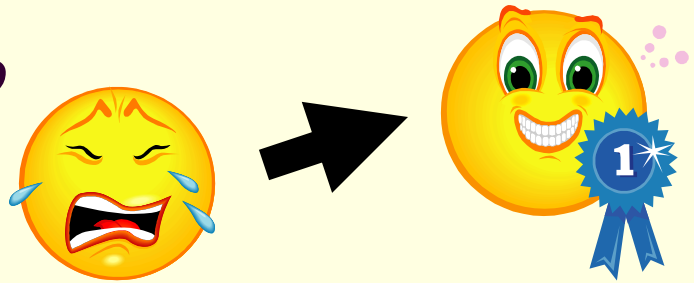
- Usually targeted to where the employees are located.
- Funding can be tied to marketing.
- Priorities are set internally and can change when management changes.

Alternative Funding

- Establish a non-profit if you are not already.
- Fundraising or marketing ideas

Grant Writing

Needs, Goals, Objectives



Needs Assessment Mistakes

- Assuming the funder is familiar with your area.
- Relying on previous community assessments.
- Using old data.
- Ignoring your “target population”
- Ignoring the existing services in the community.

Ten Methods of Assessing Need

1. Examine statistics from different sources
2. Solicit input from target population (primary and secondary) through interviews, focus groups, and surveys
3. Review existing studies and community needs assessments
4. Conduct surveys
5. Hold community meetings
6. Interview the business and faith community
7. Meet with experts
8. Review the literature and the Internet
9. Interview professionals who work with the target population
10. Contact professional associations, attend conferences, brainstorm with colleagues, and examine grants

Existing Needs Assessment

- Census
- County Planning Board
- NJDOE School Report Cards
- ACNJ- Kids Count
- Newspapers – Asbury Park Press Datauniverse

Causes

- What caused the need?
- How will you address the need?
- The goal is to assess the need and problem from different perspectives in order to understand the problem. Everyone has been reared and educated differently and comes from differing backgrounds.

Now let’s develop your goal to address the identified need

Developing Goals

It is easy to confuse goals and objectives. To make the task simple, ask yourself the following questions:

- Is the statement broad?
- Is the statement clear, succinct and in the future tense?
- Does the statement guide to a destination?

If the answers to the above are yes, then you have developed a GOAL.

Developing Objectives

- Is the statement a means to an end?
- Does the statement describe a process?
- Is the statement measurable by quantitative means?
- Is the statement narrowly defined?

*If the answers to above are yes, then you have developed an **OBJECTIVE.** There are usually three or more objectives for each goal.*

Need/Goal/Objective

Example

Need: ABC School District is ranked number one in school violence in New Jersey and is in the top 5% nationally.

Goal 1: To decrease school violence

Objective 1.1 - To provide at least 4 training sessions to a minimum of 80% of the 750 ABC School District Teachers on conflict resolution between October 2002 and September 2003.

Objective 1.2 - To decrease the incidence of school violence incidents at the ABC School by 25% when comparing the two school years (2001-2002) to (2002-2003)

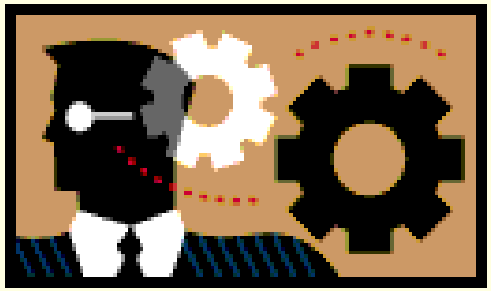
Goals and Objectives Mistakes

- The goals do not relate to the needs identified in the community assessment.
- The objectives do not provide a clear means of measuring whether or not the goals have been achieved.
- The objectives are not stated in precise quantified terms.
- The goals and objectives do not relate to the RFP.

Goals and Objectives Mistakes (continued)

- The objectives are not time sensitive.
- The objectives can not possibly be obtained by the end of the project.
- Process and outcome measures are not included.
- Objectives and outcomes are not measurable.

Grant Writing



Logic Model/ Action Steps

Logic Model

- A Logic Model is a systematic and visual way to present and share information.
- A Logic Model is a picture of your plan, design, implementation and analysis
- The purpose of a Logic Model is to provide stakeholders with a road map connecting the needs with the results

Logic Model may include

1. Needs/Environment
2. Assumptions/Existing Conditions
3. Inputs/What is needed to achieve goals
4. Outputs/Activities and Participants
5. Outcomes/Immediate, Intermediate, Long Term- make sure this includes targets identified in the grant

Sample Logic Model: http://pde-cms.ag.ohio-state.edu/extension-program-logic-model

Logic Model training on line: http://www.uwex.edu/ces/lmcourse/

Research

- Do an Internet search for potential solutions to your statement of need that matches your goals and objectives
- Just as there is more then one cause of your need, there also may be more then one solution
- Find model programs that address your need, goals and objectives

Model Programs

- OJJDP
- SAMSHA
- What Works Clearinghouse
- Best Evidence Encyclopedia
- US Department of Education

Developing Indicators (Action Steps)

Indicators are the steps to meeting your objectives.

Objective 1.1 - To provide at least 4 training sessions to a minimum of 80% of the 750 ABC School District Teachers on conflict resolution between October 2002 and September 2003.

Indicator 1.1.1 – Write curriculum for teacher training (curriculum completed by when and by whom)

Indicator 1.1.2 – Schedule four training sessions (Dates and sign in sheets)

Indicator 1.1.3 – Training workshop evaluated (evaluation completed and compiled)

Grant Writing

Project Description

Program Description

The actual program description includes everything you intend to undertake that will cause you to meet your goals, objectives and needs.

Think of it as filling in the Logic Model or putting the meat on the bones of what you have outlined.

Usually the heaviest weighted section for the application

Follow the Grant Requirements

- Use their verbage – Approach, Strategy, Project Design, Project Narrative
- Use their outline for headings, sections and sub-sections
- The description should be logical to the reader. Know who is reading your application.

HINTS for Program Description

- Introduce the reader to the program activities with a summary of what you are doing
- Ensure that each program activity is referenced in the "problem" section
- Obtain copies of funded grants
- Address sustainability where applicable

Writing Styles

- *Use Active Voice*

passive (indirect)

active (direct)

- *Future Tense* (The students will…)
- *"We" not "I"*
- *Personalize* (The ABC School District…)
- *Keep it Positive*

Writing Styles

- *Avoid vague references*
- *Explain or avoid Acronyms and Abbreviations*
- *Avoid injecting personal opinions*
- *Write on a 9th -10th grade level.*

Visual Impact – **Reader Friendly**

- | *Charts* | *Graphs* | *Tables* |
- *Boxes*
- *Pictures*
- *Headings and*
  - *Subheadings*
- *Variety of* ***Font Sizes*** *and* Types

Write Correctly!

- *Spelling*

- *Grammar*

Proof Read

Proof Read

Proof Read

Again and Again and Again

Bee Where!

Eye Halve a spelling checker,
it came with my pea sea.
It plainly marques four my revue
Miss steaks eye kin knot sea!

Now eye have run this grant threw it
(I’m shore your pleased too no);
Its letter perfect aul the weigh –
My checker tolled me sew!

Keep it Coherent

- *FOLLOW THE RFP rules*
- *Link sections together*
- *Beware of BIASED/SEXIST language*
- *Keep it concise*

Grant Writing

Organizational Capacity

Organizational Capacity Includes

1. *Activities*
2. *Time Line*
3. *Management Plan*

Organizational Capability and Project Management Mistakes

- Does not justify why the applicant is qualified to receive funding.
- Does not adequately describe the day to day program management.
- Does not explain how the partners will work together (responsibilities and lines of authority)
- Very general regarding coordination and communication

Activities

- Activities always include an action verb
- Activities describe use of funds
- Include time frame
- Include person/s responsible for carrying out the activity
- Include outcome as it relates to the goal

Timelines

- Inform the reviewer when activities should take place (according to project planning)
- Include both administrative and program activities, although they primarily focus on program areas
- Are listed in detail and chronologically by month. They usually cover twelve-month periods.
- Target tasks or accomplishments by month (and/or quarter periods) rather than exact days.
- Time lines are connected to the RFP's fiscal year.

Management Plans

- May be expressed as an extension of a Time Line.
- May also include performance indicator(s) and person responsible for each task.
- May be best expressed in table format.
- Include job descriptions and organizational chart

Community Partners Responsibility and Commitment

- The roles and responsibilities for each partner must be evident and in line with the information contained in the letters of commitment.

- **RELYING ON GENERAL LETTERS OF SUPPORT IS INADEQUATE !!!!**

Grant Writing

Budget Construction

So what do you want to buy?

The purpose of the Budget is to support the program activities and serve as a plan for spending.

The program needs must drive the budget, although some flexibility is needed.

Budget Construction

- Now, align it with the goals, objectives and activities

Item	Goal	Objective	Activity

- Based on this overview, an actual budget form requires more detail and often requires GAAP (Generally Accepted Accounting Principals).

Budget Hints

- Are closely aligned with program narrative (no surprises)
- Are flexible plans for spending; most are amended about mid-way through the project because of unexpected financial needs and changes in programming activities
- Include local support called In-Kind Contributions, if required
- Document why each item is needed programmatically (how it is tied into the program's needs)
- Derived from close collaboration between the program planners and the financial officer

Budget Tip

- Provide a narrative of the budget by category, be as specific as possible.
- Include a matching funds summary table that documents partner's commitment.
- Delineate funding sources- in-kind, fees, other funding.
- Show the cost per person and compare to costs of more serious interventions.

Grant Writing

Evaluation and Sustainability

Evaluation Team

There should be close communication between the evaluation team and program planners. The evaluation team should work with key planners early in the process to establish what is achievable, even if it means amending their original grant proposal and management plan.

Evaluation Purpose

- Provide both the grantee and funding source with a measure of success (and failure).

- Independently assess and provide information to planners of how the project is performing, when it is deviating from the management plan and when/how to guide the project towards its goal.

Hints for writing the Evaluation plan:

- Work from a list of the activities and develop clearly related documentation
- Develop a time line to assess the progress of the grant
- Determine baseline data where ever possible
- List validated assessment tools
- Include persons responsible for formative (ongoing) and summative (at the conclusion) evaluations

Evaluation Tip

- Describe a comprehensive evaluation process that provides periodic feedback (at least quarterly). This feedback will be used to:
  - Modify the program during the current year.
  - Generate additional funding.
  - Plan program modifications for future years.

Sustainability Tips

- Do not simply state that “you will continue to apply for all available grants”. You must also include other options such as: billing for some services rendered and/or local organizations providing funding for part of a position.
- This is where agency experience and commitment of community partners is particularly important.

Grant Writing

Abstract, Appendices and Peer Review

Almost Done!

Abstract

- May be asked for first in the proposal, but should be written last
- Begin with the overall purpose or goal of the proposal
- Briefly describe the project setting and the target populations
- Concisely states the problem
- Outlines the Proposed program strategies
- Briefly describes exportable product(s) and evaluation
- Leaves the reader with a good feeling!

Writing the Abstract

- Think of the abstract as a complete overview of your project as it might appear in a grantor's spending report.
- The abstract must say enough about the need, the project, the budget and the evaluation to justify the grant allocation and support the grantor's mission.

Appendices

Expands the Narrative beyond your limitations

- Resumes
- Job Descriptions
- Other Support or Resources
- Letters of Support
- Charts of Organizational Structure

Appendices

- Certification
- Data Collection Instruments
- Bibliography
- Evaluation Schedule
- Contractual Agreements
- Federally Required Forms

Submitting Application

- The final product, the application for funding, should look as good as it reads.
- It needs to be organized and complete.
- Ask someone you trust to review the application for appearance as well as content.

Submitting Application

- Review the application mandates often.
- If there are guidelines for submission, refer to them often.
- When ever possible get the application in before the deadline.
- **DO ! Send all applications by ‘return receipt’**
- **DON’T ! Ever send in an incomplete application.**

Peer Review

Someone has to review your grant. Many times it is a team of “peer reviewers” for federal and state grants.

If you have the opportunity to be a “peer reviewer”, take it!

How do they *Grade* your grant?

In Conclusion

- Start early !
- Involve “everyone”
- Clearly outline partner responsibilities.
- Follow the directions!
- Make sure your budget is realistic and accurate.
- Include a believable sustainability plan.

GRANT WRITING TIPS

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1. **Read the directions** – There is no substitute. You must address the points requested and abide by the particulars of the RFP (request for proposal). If the directions say every 3rd page must be pink, then use pink paper for every 3rd page. Write to the criteria outlined in the Request for Proposal (RFP).

2. **Follow directions** - Answer the questions in the order asked. Follow the outline provided. Start each section of your narrative with the title of the section in the RFP (Overview, Goals, Evaluation, etc). DO NOT GO OVER THE RECOMMENDED NUMBER OF PAGES. If points are indicated for each section, use the percentage to determine how much space to use for the section. (A section worth 25% should be roughly 25% of the total pages).

3. **Attend the TA sessions** - Technical assistance sessions provide information about the RFP and give you a chance to ask questions of the funders. Frequently information is provided that is not on paper. This is the best time to decide if this RFP matches your project and is worth your time.

4. **Make it readable** – Funders see scores to hundreds of proposals each year. Arrange the information to flow logically. Like a resume, make sure the written word looks good on paper. Be sure to leave adequate margins and white space for visual breaks. Don't tire the reader because the page is too busy or full. Minimum type size should be 12 point. Roman style tends to be easier to read. Make sure the message is coherent and appears as if written by one author, not a committee.

5. **Know your audience** – Whom are you writing to? What is of greatest importance to your reader (s) personally and as a representative (s) of an organization? Find out what the mission of the organization is from which you plan to request funds. Get to know individuals in the organization from which you plan to request funds. If at all possible, try to have a meeting with decision-makers in the donor organization.

6. **Be Positive** – XY Agency works to improve the lives of low-income families through various economic development techniques. One needs to know balance depicting a grave situation (this develops sympathy) versus a hopeless one (no one wants to throw good money after bad).

7. **Write deductively** - Present your hypothesis and the big picture first. Then get into the details that support the need for the project. Use a logical sequence of ideas to present your case.

8. **Support your writing** – Use statistics and supply the citation. It's good to use statistics generated by or for the organization from which you are seeking funding. For example, the USDA establishes various low income and poverty thresholds to determine reduced school lunch eligibility. If you are applying to an USDA program for project funding that will improve the lives of low-income families, you might choose to use the school lunch program thresholds to determine the number of persons eligible for the project. It's hard for funders to refute their own data.

9. **Be succinct** – Brevity is beautiful. Use the weight of words rather than the weight of paper to make your point. Be merciful to your audience. Don't expect readers to wade through reams of paper.

10. **Executive Summary** – Be sure to include one. A carefully written Executive Summary encapsulates the 5 W's, How and intended result (s) of the project. If you can't sum up in one short paragraph what it is you want to do and how the funding source is going to help you do it, then you probably don't know yourself why you need the money.

11. **Choose words carefully** – Use a dictionary and thesaurus. Remember, words still have meaning and shades of meaning. Be aware of the subtle differences.

12. **Write simply** – Don't use two words when one will do. Grant applications are not dissertations. Use active voice to give writing more punch and reduce the number of words used. Present your case, support with examples and facts then leave well enough alone …except to make a phone call to make sure the funder got your application, and can answer any questions.

13. **Write a proposal that has measurable results** – Remember, whether a foundation, corporation or government agency, each funding source has to defend its expenditures and satisfy a Board of Directors or other governing body. If interim or post-project evaluation criteria are not provided, suggest your own in the grant proposal so you can declare with certainty the project's success when it is closed out.

14. **Make sure your budget numbers add up-** Don't request funding for costs which are not allowed in the RFP. Write a detailed budget narrative. Round your numbers to an even amount.

15. **Organize information** – A Table of Contents outlining major application sections is a must. Also, include a quick reference page that lists selection criteria and where the application addresses each.

16. **Practice, Practice, Practice** – Nothing can substitute for practice. The more you write and develop a feel for the nuances of grant writing, the better grant writer you will become.

17. **Edit yourself -** Write down everything that you want to say about your program. Then revisit the RFP to see which information belongs in each section. Make sure that you answer every question asked. When it all makes sense to you, ask someone who doesn't know your program to read the proposal to see if it makes sense to them.

18. **Get experience** – Work for someone or some organization seasoned in the art of grant writing. Their connection can introduce you to a network of funding source decision-makers and other grant writers. Take advantage of the Halo Effect. And volunteer to be a grant reviewer for organizations that fund similar projects. You will learn a lot about what a good grant does and does not look like.

19. **Follow Up -** Send a thank you. If you were not funded ask for scores or letter of critique. Ask to see copies of the winning proposals. Continue to send newsletters, brochures and/or annual reports to foundations and corporations to build a connection to your agency.

PRACTICE WRITING A SITUATION STATEMENT

1. What is the problem/issue?
2. Why is this a problem? (What causes the problem?)
3. For whom (individual, household, group, community, society in general) does this problem exist?
4. Who has a stake in the problem? (Who cares whether it is resolved or not?)
5. What do we know about the problem/issue/people that are involved? What research, experience do we have? What do existing research and experience say?

- Try keeping your situation statement to 500 words or less.
- Avoid jargon and acronyms.
- Avoid stating "the need."
- Avoid including what you/your agency does or will provide.
- Ask others to review for clarity. See if they can restate the problem/issue to be addressed.

Enter Situation Statement Here -
You may print your statement or save this file to your computer to revise/print later

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