



Waste Authority

Helpful Hints - Grants 2009



SECRETS TO SUCCESSFUL GRANT APPLICATIONS

Following are some tips to keep in mind during the grant-writing process:

Research before beginning. Do not submit a proposal to any funding body without first verifying that your project fits within the funder's guidelines.

Read the grant guidelines and application form. Many funders have detailed guidelines available to grant-writers. These guidelines are made available so that proposals submitted to them will meet their funding initiatives. Applications that carefully follow the published guidelines and are on the correct form allow them to easily determine if your project is one that matches their interests.

Be concise. Put yourself in the place of the funder's grant assessment panel. They receive and review lots of applications. The more easily and quickly they can determine if your project meets their objectives, the happier they are going to be.

Clarity is important. Keep in mind that acronyms and terms specific to your profession may mean nothing - or may mean something different - to the funder. Write your proposal as if you are communicating with someone who knows nothing about your organisation or project.

Proofreading is imperative. Have someone who was not involved in the writing process proofread your proposal before it is submitted. Typos, poor grammar, and other errors that are easy for a separate set of eyes to recognise are easy to overlook in your own work. Submitting a proposal with such errors, however, gives the impression that you either don't know better or are willing to submit shoddy work.

Collaboration is vital. Funders often prefer to fund projects that have the greatest impact for the community and that are non-duplicative in nature.

Realistic budgets are a must. Research your budget needs carefully before submitting your proposal. Do not ask for more - or less - than you feasibly need to ensure your project's success.

Don't forget the evaluation component. Your proposal should include methods for evaluating the effectiveness of your project. Evaluation is a necessary component of all projects - without it you will not know if your project is progressing as it should.

Address project sustainability. Funders want to know that, if your project is successful, it will be continued even after their financial support has ended.



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COMMON PITFALLS IN SEEKING FUNDING AND WRITING GRANT APPLICATIONS

Failing to understand it's a competitive process. Unless funding is a sure bet (e.g., based on formula/entitlement), always assume demand is higher than supply.

Downloading the wrong grant application. Similar-sounding grant applications could be issued simultaneously by the same funder. Or an out-of-date application might also still be on the Web site.

Not reading the grant application thoroughly. Highlight the most important parts (like due dates and required documents). Mark anything you don't understand or where you need to find answers.

Not reading the grant application early enough. Don't delay—leaving yourself too little time to make important contacts, gather important data, calculate costs accurately, find a grant writer...can be disastrous!

Assuming the funder knows you/your organisation. Even if you are the grant-award poster child, don't assume application readers will mentally fill in the missing information. Don't depend on prior knowledge or past relationships.

Disregarding the funder's questions. If it's important to the funder, it's important to you.

Reorganising the proposal. Follow the format instructions and place items where the funder has requested them—this is not the time to get creative with your presentation.

Being incomplete (including signatures). This could cost you points in scoring, or it could mean being considered nonresponsive and therefore disqualified.

Using a former proposal without updating it. If you're going to use it, at least shake off all the dust. Use current dates, current numbers, current staff.

Using a proposal previously submitted to another funder. This is fair game, just be sure to change the names to protect the innocent!

Not doing the math correctly. Use a calculator or use Excel but make sure the numbers add up! Funders lose confidence when budgets or estimates aren't accurate.

Poorly estimating real costs. Although budget line item transfers may be possible after the grant award, think through ahead of time what labor, materials, and overhead costs are expected to be. Be realistic about what you need. Don't create a budget that reflects the maximum allowed just because the money's there.

Starting your project before getting the grant. If the ink isn't dry on the contract, don't assume it's a done deal.





PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Most funders require you to provide a detailed project description.

This should include:

- **Purpose of the project.** What will the project accomplish?
- **Why you are doing this project.** Why is the project needed? How does it fit in with your organisation's mission?
- **How will you make it happen.** What resources are needed to carry out the project? What steps will you take to prepare for and execute the project?
- **Who will do what.** Who will run the project?
- **How will you know you've done well.** What results are expected from the project? What are its goals and objectives? How will the project be evaluated?
- **Summing it all up.** Can you sum up the proposal in two to three sentences to leave them with a simple picture they can really remember?



Grant Talk

Goals and objectives

are often spoken about as if they are the same thing, but they actually are quite different. Goals represent what we want to have achieved at the end of a program. Objectives are the measurable steps we will need to take to get there. Goals are about the outcome; objectives are about the process.



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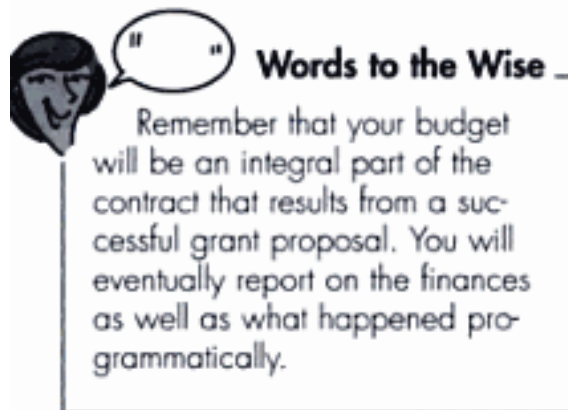
PROJECT BUDGET

A budget is an integral part of a grant application.

Many funders will look at the budget to see how it fits with your proposal. Grants officers and others working for funders can usually spot an inconsistency pretty quickly, so don't take your budget too casually.

Try to label expenses as clearly as possible. Large amounts listed as "miscellaneous" will send up red flags, so try to avoid these terms.

If an organisation is donating supplies, or labour, you should still include these items in your budget. You may want to separate out the in-kind expenses so the funder can easily see your non financial contributions to the project.



PROJECT FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

The final report to program funders will probably be the most comprehensive report you prepare. Often program funders will use your report to demonstrate the effectiveness of their grant initiatives and to provide useful information to external interested parties. A report that is useful for this purpose will need to include detailed information about the project, the project evaluation design and methods, and the types of data analyses conducted.

Funders generally require a report that includes:

- an executive summary (this is a summary of findings and recommendations, not a listing of what sections of information are in the report -- that's a table of contents);
- a description of the organisation and the project being evaluated
- an explanation of the overall project goals (what the project was trying to achieve), methods used to collect data and information, and project outcomes
- a listing of conclusions (findings) and recommendations;
- any relevant attachments, e.g. inclusion of any promotional materials, questionnaires, photos, guides, etc.



DISSEMINATING THE RESULTS OF YOUR PROJECT

In addition to producing your Final Project evaluation report for your Funder, you may want to take advantage of other opportunities to share what you have learned with others in your community or with the field in general. You might want to consider drafting letters to community agencies or other organisations that may be interested in the activities and results of your work.

Other ways to let people know what you have done include the following:

- Producing press releases and articles for local professional publications, such as newsletters and journals. Most funders have Communications staff available to help with such things.
- Making presentations on the results of your project at conferences, launches, or other settings
- Listing your evaluation report or other evaluation-related publications on relevant websites
- Getting in touch with organisations that have managed similar projects to share your experience and results



FEELING REJECTED?

The letter or email giving you “unhappy” news about your application will probably be a form letter. However, many funders try to provide at least some feedback for those who are unsuccessful.

If the feedback supplied isn't quite enough, you may choose to contact the funder and ask, "Can you tell me anything more that will help us another time?" You may learn something encouraging. Perhaps they liked your proposal but just ran out of money; perhaps there was some tiny point of confusion that could be resolved easily.

Please don't make such a call if you are feeling angry or confrontational. Remember, you are trying to get useful information, not argue a case in court!

If you are rejected, use the feedback to help improve your project application. Funders are usually happy to accept an amended application in another round, as long as their advice has been taken on board.



REMEMBER - If at first you don't succeed, try, try, again!