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APPLYING FOR GRANT FUNDS

Grants are a great source of funding, but applying for a grant can be a daunting task for even the most seasoned professional. The information that follows is designed to help you through the grant process.

Writing a grant is a multi-step process with many of the steps taking place long before you start the grant application.

The initial planning phase is one of the most important, yet often overlooked steps.

Planning Phase

The Planning Phase is an opportunity to think through the project and to create a road map for getting it funded. In this phase you will:

1. Define Your Project
Start by answering some basic questions:

- What are you trying to accomplish?
- Why do you need the project/program?
- What are your project goals?
- Identify the specific objectives that define how you will focus the work to accomplish those goals.
- Who will benefit from your project?
- Where will the project/program be located?
- What jurisdiction will it serve?

2. Draft a Timeline

Include the planning phase, the period of searching for funds, proposal writing, and the intended project start date. Periodically update the timeline as you learn more about submission deadlines, award timetables, etc.

3. Identify the Right Funding Sources

After you have defined your project and created a basic timeline you are ready to research funding sources.

Define a scope of work to focus your funding search. This should include how much money you need, what you are looking to fund (i.e. equipment, training,

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educational programs, etc.), the geographic area where you will work, who is the primary beneficiary of the project/program, who is the applicant.

Start researching by your criteria, look at who has funded this type of program in the past (FEMA, Homeland Security, a foundation, etc.)

Look for a match between your project and the grants you seek by looking for consistency between your goals and the funders priority areas.

Make direct contact with funders who support projects like yours. Request the following information:

- Proposal guidelines and applications.
- How proposals are reviewed and how decisions are made.
- Budgetary requirements and preferences. Are matching funds required? Is in-kind support acceptable as a portion of applicants' share? What may be counted as in-kind support, and how might it be applied? Learn about payment processes, including cash flow.

Tips:
Do not limit your funding search to one source.
For public funding sources – gather as much information as you can prior to the funding announcement because most funders cannot provide specific info once the RFP is out.
Read the guidelines carefully**.**

4. Gather Supporting Documents:
- Document conversations with funders
- Save newspaper clippings/ PR documents
- Letters of support
- Bios and resumes of key staff

Tips: All funders have their own requirements.
The majority of grant applications get rejected because the applicant did not follow the funders directions/requirements/guidelines.

THE WRITING PHASE:

Once you have identified the funding source, you can start your proposal.

Read the application requirements carefully.

Identify the project lead. – the person responsible for the project; should be the person who can answer questions related to the application.

Determine who the applicant will be – organization/municipality/ a coalition, etc.?
This will often need to be an entity with an Employee ID Number (EIN), Taxpayer ID Number (TIN), Dun and Bradstreet (DUNS) number.

Know the submission deadline. Plan to submit your proposal before the deadline.
Be realistic about whether you have time to prepare a competitive proposal that meets
the deadline.

Do you have resources in-house or do you need to obtain consultants to help with your
application? Are they available?

Revise your timeline with the submission deadline. Factor into your schedule time to
write multiple drafts, gather relevant and permissible materials (letters of support, etc.),
and allow enough time for copying, packaging and delivery.

Now it's time to start writing. Generally, all grants require the following information:
- Project Summary
- Statement of Introduction
- Needs Assessment/Problem Statement
- Goals and Objectives
- Methods
- Evaluation
- Budget

Project Summary

The project summary appears at the beginning of the proposal and outlines the whole
project.

The summary should be a maximum of one page and communicate:

- Who you are.
- What you are concerned about.
- What you propose to do.
- How you plan to do it.
- Your timeline for completing your project
- Where you will conduct activities.
- The total cost of the program and the amount you are requesting
- How much you have invested and/or intend to invest.

Make sure that you demonstrate that your project is consistent with the funders priority
areas

Tip:
Write this section last.

Statement of Introduction

This is the section where you brag about your agency and convince the funder that you
have the experience and infrastructure in place to implement the program.

Introduce your agency or organization:

- Describe the agency and programs – if multiple agencies are involved make sure you clearly identify the lead applicant.
- Where you serve
- Constituents/Who you serve
- Talk about past accomplishments (past performance)
- Use statistics to support your case.

Tips:
Keep it brief and to the point
Define any acronyms that you use/be careful with jargon
Lead logically to a problem statement

Needs Assessment/Problem Statement

In this section you convince the funder that you have a problem that needs to be solved.

- Identify the problem.
- Describe the problem or issue to be addressed
- Who will the project help?
- How do you plan to effect change?

Make sure the problem is "solvable" over the grant period.

Tips:
Focus on a specific problem
Use statistics to support the problem

Goals & Objectives

Now that you have defined the problem, tell the funder what you plan to do to about it.

Goals are broad statements of what you want to accomplish. Objectives describe the goals.
Who will change? Explain the expected results and benefits of each objective.

In this section you should be able to answer the following questions:
- What will change as a result of the project?
- When will the changes occur?
- How much change will occur?
- How will you measure the change?

This is the section where you look at the grant criteria and demonstrate how each of your objectives meets those criteria.

Tips:
Goals are general, objectives are specific and measureable
If you use numbers in your objectives you must deliver.

Methods

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In this section outline your approach to solving the problem and identify the tasks that need to be completed for the project. In the methods section you communicate what you will do with the resources you are requesting to solve the problem.

Outline for Methods Section:
- Tell them what you will do
- Tell them why this approach is valid/justify the approach
- Define who will perform the tasks
- Include resumes and credentials of people who will be involved
- Discuss when the program be implemented.

This is your "to do list" for getting the project done. Think of this in terms of a time line. For example, if your goal is to increase public safety on the water front and you want to put another patrol on the water during boating season than your tasks may look like this:

- Acquire a new boat to accommodate an additional marine patrol – write specs, bid the project, award a contract, work with the successful boat manufacturer.
- Hire and train 3 new officers
- Conduct public education classes
- Add a new marine patrol to the fleet providing additional coverage.

Evaluation

In this section you tell the funding agency how you will determine if the project was a success.

How will you measure progress toward your goals? What criteria will you use?
How will you measure success? How often will you report results?
What will be changed or improved because of the project?

Think about ways in which you can evaluate the effectiveness of the whole program and the success of each individual objective.

Some evaluation tools to consider:

Qualitative/Subjective:

- * Testimonials
- * Anecdotes
- * Success stories
- * Observations

Quantitative/Objective:

- * Public perception surveys
- * Interviews
- * Activity Logs
- * Case Reports
- * Performance Reports

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Tips:
If you have problems developing your evaluation, go back and look at your objectives – they should be measureable.
Create systems to document everything from the beginning of the project (i.e. sign in sheets for meetings, evaluation forms for training programs, etc.)

Budget

The budget details the costs for the entire project and how the grant funds will be used.

Many funders will require a detailed line item budget showing what the funds will be used for and who is spending them.

Be consistent with your project activities and expenses. For example, if you plan to purchase a boat and keep it at a municipal dock, but you never mention that repairs are needed; do not put money in the budget for dock repairs, the funder will question this.

The budget should separate administrative from operational costs. Grant making agencies have specific formats for the budget. Make sure to follow the funder's requirements. In the budget proposal, you must include all projected expenses for the proposed project.

Tips:
Develop your budget in terms of these major budget categories:
- Personnel (hiring 3 new patrol officers)
- Non-personnel/equipment
- Overhead/indirect
Justify salary requests and include position descriptions
Demonstrate matching funds (in-kind and cash)