

GRANT WRITING TIPS & TRICKS

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Where to Start

- IRS Determination Letter for your library
- IRS Determination Letter for your FOL group
- A letter from the State Library about your non-profit status
- DUNS (Data Universal Number System) number
- You will always need some or all of these numbers to apply for a grant
- A good suggestion is to start by putting these numbers and other information on a Fact Sheet that you can refer to over and over again

Fact Sheet

- This is a document where you keep updated information on your library, from which you can copy for grant writing or to use in reports
- Include a short description of your library (history, circulation, holdings, board members, etc.)
- Basic information like latest annual operating costs, website address, telephone number and social media sites should be included as well
- Note some demographics from the most recent census for your township, town or county

Funding Your Project

- First you have to identify your need
- Often a library will see a grant that is available and try to find a project that will fit – this is ineffective
- Once you know what needs to be funded, then you can seek grant makers/funders
- Round peg, round hole – find the right funder for your project
- Most granting agencies have experienced people making the decisions and they can recognize this backward thinking

Round Peg, Round Hole

- Look at the funder's mission statement and make sure your proposal's objective meets their objective(s) for the grant fund
- Once you've identified a need, you can then seek out the funder (which may not be a grant funder)
- Get the biggest bang for your buck – your patrons deserve that their tax payer dollars are used wisely – don't waste time writing a proposal that has little chance of getting funded

Deadlines/ Granting Cycles

- Funding agencies do not make exceptions and will not accept late applications
- Plan ahead and be ready to submit early
- Often times there is a spring and fall granting cycle
- For open funding cycles, submit your proposals early in the agency's fiscal cycle (and know what these cycles are)
- Usually, if you have submitted and/or received a grant within a certain period of time, you are ineligible until the next cycle/year

Required Elements

- Getting a grant can be a very competitive process
- Review what the funder wants in the grant and get your information organized
- Do your research – back up your need with facts, statistics, and information that will help them understand WHY you are asking for this money

Research

- This is the homework that will explain why you are seeking money - find solid evidence
- This is usually collaborative and as the grant writer, know that you are not always the SME
- Use statistics wisely (some statistics sound better than others)
- Cite your sources

Writing the Proposal

- Most grant proposals have a few common elements:
 - Needs statement
 - Project description
 - Evaluation
 - Budget
 - Budget Narration

Common Elements

- The Needs Statement is simply what you are trying to fund, but it is a very important component
- In the Needs Statement, do not talk about your actual project – only
- The Project Statement includes your plans to fill the need (they should be inter-related)
- Often, the project statement is the “meat” of your grant proposal and will include your research on the topic

Evaluation

- How do you know your project is a success?
- Outcomes vs. Outputs
- Most granting agencies are looking for the OUTCOMES of the project
- Outcomes are not usually measurable in a statistical sense, but explain the impact that your project has on the public
<http://www.imls.gov/applicants/basics.aspx>
- Outcomes are usually more meaningful
- A typical way of gather outcomes is through surveys or focus groups – also anecdotally in your daily interactions with patrons

Evaluation

- Outputs are the statistics:
 - 20% patron participation
 - 7,500 unique titles read during the program
 - 25 attendees each month over 12 months
- You have to explain how you are going to measure both these outcomes and outputs
- You need to follow through on getting this information because you will almost always be required to report this back to the granting agency

Budget

- Again this is a place to show that you have done your research and the project is viable
- Do not guess about your budget figures... get real estimates
- Round numbers tend to show that you are just guessing
- Do not over-estimate to pad your budget “just in case” – many agencies will ask for you to return the overage

Budget

- Make sure you know what can be paid with grant funds – you will be required to show how the money was spent when submitting your report
- Some funders require that you match funds (in-kind fund can often be used for this)
- Usually day-to-day expenses such as operating costs and travel are not covered, but check! Some funds are specifically for these!
- If there are changes to how the money will be spent, make sure you contact the granting agency – you may need to submit additional paperwork

Budget Narration

- This is your chance explain how you calculated the costs of your project – a justification of the dollars you are requesting
- This is also an opportunity to include some information about the project and resources you are including in the budget
- This is a very important portion of the grant - do not think you can skip it, assuming your budget is self-explanatory

After Getting the Grant

- As with the grant application guidelines, follow the guidelines for reporting
- Report on time and be thorough
- Remember your evaluation parameters and work on gathering that information throughout the project (again, don't wait to do this)
- Thank your funder in any way you can and do so PUBLICLY - use their marketing material if provided (logos)
- Cultivate a good relationship throughout the grant process and they will be more likely to fund you in subsequent years

Thank You!

- Questions/
Discussion