

Organizing Your Grant Approach

IS THIS GRANT OPPORTUNITY RIGHT FOR US?

1. **Avoid “chasing the grant dollars”** – Find your project goals and mission for your project. Developing the plans, relationships and proposals necessary for success in grant seeking takes significant time.
 - Grant Funding opportunities are equal in terms of their potential payback for the time invested.
 - Make sure that the grant fits your overall mission before starting the proposal.
 - It is ok to “just say no” and decide to not pursue the grant. Time spent developing the grant is time not used for other activities.

2. **Determine if your proposal** is what the funder actually funds.
 - Don't assume that just because there is a significant amount of money available, that they will fund just anything.
 - Funders are often very specific in what they are looking for and will rarely deviate.

If you decide to pursue the grant and think you may have a legitimate chance to be successful then get started with your plan

1. **Read the funding announcement** (RFP/ NOSA) look for details. If the grant is not yet announced look at previous years announcements. Most grants do not change much from year to year.

2. **Re-read the funding announcement** write down required activities. Start with an outline that clearly follows each step of your plan, then expand each point as needed to fully explain your plan.

3. **Follow the instructions carefully.** Do not leave out any required forms, follow the format and do not exceed page limits. Remember to include all attachments that will help illustrate your proposal. Meet all deadlines. Make a checklist to help ensure that you include all information.

4. **State your goals and objectives** clearly and with specifics.
 - For example "I want this grant so that I can help the community" would not get nearly the credibility as by saying "This grant will permit us to hire 4 new part-time employees, to buy 2 new printers, in a county where jobs for high school educated employees are very difficult to find."

5. **Be concise and clear in your writing.** Do not waste words. Be factual, supportable, and professional. You want the reader to get the sense that you are competent. The funder must understand what you are saying in the application. If the reviewer does not clearly and easily understand what you



are planning to accomplish with the grant, this will probably decrease your chances of funding.

6. **Demonstrate logic.** In your proposal be specific about your goals, project process, measurable objectives, evaluation methods, and quantified outcomes. Sharpen the focus of the application. Novice applicants often overshoot their mark, proposing too much. Make sure the scale of aims fits the request of time and resources.
7. **Be Persuasive, but Be Careful of Being too Innovative.** Capture the reviewers' attention by making an argument for why the proposal should be funded. Tell the reviewers why testing the hypothesis is worth funding, why you are the person, and how your institution can give you the support you will need to get it done. Another approach is to write the application as if you were teaching the audience about your application.
8. **Borrow** someone else's reputation with partners. Find partners that fit with your approach to strengthen your application. These may be new staff, other organizations such as universities, volunteers, or consultants.
9. **Have at least two other people** *outside* of your organization read the proposal and then ask them questions about your concept. If they cannot explain what you are trying to do, chances are the grants committee won't either. And they won't fund what they can't comprehend.
10. Make it easy for the reviewers - they will appreciate it!



Grant Proposal Time Management

The grant time management starts with the question *“Is the deadline a realistic one for us, given the resources and time available?”* If the answer is no then stop and don't waste your time. If yes then:

Give yourself enough time. Don't throw the proposal together in order to meet the deadline because it will show and reduce your chance for funding. A good proposal package takes time to assemble and research properly. If you really want the money, then spend the time to put it together correctly, without shortcuts.

Productive grant-writing consists of advance planning and structured preparation. It takes time to organize the planning and the research, the writing and proof reading, and finally getting the proposal together for submission to the grantor.

Organizing Grant Proposal Activity –

1. Create your grant plan and timeline
2. Start with an outline of the grant
3. Check with funder for priorities.
 - See if there are any grant reviews or funders conferences.
 - Check for grant priorities
4. Divide the grant into smaller sections
 - Determine your approach to each section then write it down
 - Estimate the number of pages for section
 - Determine what you have already and what you need to find out.
5. Make assignments for research needed to complete the grant.
 - Letters of support
 - Budget numbers
 - Consultants
6. Make writing assignments for sections of the grant
7. Set calendar dates for completing each section. (Overestimate the time needed)
8. Check progress against the timeline
 - Read drafts of sections.
 - Review grant to see who needs help. (Be nose - make sure your team is making progress needed. Don't wait to the deadline
 - Realign tasks as required.
9. Create the grant
10. Re check with the funder for priority and questions
11. Write the executive summary
12. Fill out all forms
13. Proof read the grant
14. Send grant to the funder



PRIORITY GRANT MANAGEMENT TIME ACTIVITIES

Set aside enough time to prepare for writing the grant and collecting the materials you need to provide to the grantee. There will be times you may need help from colleagues to complete parts of your application, so make sure you organize your time well. There will be delays and surprises. Plan extra time to accommodate them. Also leave time for proof reading.

Utilize resources available to you. Do not hesitate to ask questions. Ask the funder for priorities and other grants funded. Access the Internet for available publications and statistics to help support your project description and methods.

Research the actual expenses. Don't guess. In a grant proposal, guesses just won't make it. If a grant reviewer suspects that your financial sheet is not accurate, you just lost the grant. Find out exactly what kind of equipment, labor, and anything else you are going to need and exactly what the cost will be, then spell it out in the proposal.

Find partners in advance- partners are an important asset to your grant application. Don't wait to the announcement to approach potential partners for help. As soon as possible get the commitment from partners in writing.

Take the proposal seriously by carefully proofing it for spelling, typing, organizational, and grammatical errors. Make sure your budget is correct. Take time to have at least two people proofread your proposal before you submit it - and then read it again yourself to make sure.



Grant Writing Suggestions

Start with an outline. Each section should logically and smoothly flow from the previous section.

- **Write a topic sentence for each main topic.** Then write a topic sentence for each sub topic in the outline.
- **Make one point in each paragraph.** This is key to creating text that is easy to read. State the point in the topic sentence, usually the first sentence, and support it with additional information in the subsequent sentences. Paragraphs have two functions: they aggregate information point by point and they break up the page creating much-needed white space. Keep them short.
- **Divide the document into sections and subsections.** This organizes the text and helps to create white space. Reviewers are human; if your application looks too hard to read, they are much less likely to read it. For further instruction on text organization, go to http://www.niaid.nih.gov/ncn/grants/write/runon_text.htm.
- **Include bullets and lists.** They draw attention to key facts and create a visual break.
- **Use short sentences with a basic structure: subject, verb, object.** Breakup long, involved sentences and paragraphs. Keep sentence average to 20 words or less. Keep subject, verb, and object together at the beginning of the sentence.
- **Include transitions.** At the end of the paragraph or concept, make a transition to the next point. Use words such as: furthermore, additionally, in other words, in another area, in contrast, following the same path, moving to the next stage.
- **Keep related ideas and information together.** Put clauses and phrases as close as possible to, and preferably right after, the words they modify.
- **Use strong, active verbs** -- they are the work horses of effective sentences. For example, write, "We will develop a cell line," not a "A cell line will be developed."
- **Use verbs instead of abstract nouns.** Turn abstract nouns ending in "ion" and "ment" into verbs. For example, say "creating the assay leads to..." rather than "the creation of the assay leads to..."
- **If writing is not your forte, get help.**



Common Fixable Grant Problems

Problem: Poor writing.

Solution: Rewrite, get help.

Problem: Missing sections.

Solution: Rewrite, with all sections.

Problem: Insufficient information, experimental details, or preliminary data.

Solution: Assess what is missing; add it to the application plan.

Problem: Significance not convincingly stated.

Solution: Beef up that section; show importance to stated grant mission.

Problem: Research not shown to be feasible by the proposed staff.

Solution: Partner with others; get consultants with the required expertise.

Problem: Insufficient discussion of obstacles and alternatives approaches.

Solution: Write what you will do if an approach does not pan out; include decision trees.

Problem: Reviewers are not interested in the subject.

Solution: Show why your grant is relevant; Try submitting a different grant.

