



USDA Grant Writing Key Tips

VA FAIRS
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Keys to Success

- Determine if you want to apply
- Make sure your idea is eligible
- Know what you must do for funding
- Carefully follow instructions for proposals
- Keep it simple- Clear presentation



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Should You Apply ?

- Grant should fit your direction
- Grant cycle coincides project
- Grants are not free money
- Have at least 100 hours to craft a good application



Should You Apply ?

- Don't count on political clout
- Grants are reviewed for a technical merit
- Have time for payment process if rewarded

Before Starting

Be eligible

- In 2007 60% of eligible VAPG
- And more than 85% of 9006 (Now REAP) eligible applications were funded.
- Average VAPG \$104,000



Eligible Requirements

- *Make sure your idea is eligible for the grant*

i.e. Bio mass and renewable energy are for the REAP

Understand the Program

- Get a list of projects previously funded under the program.
- How does your idea compares to those projects.
- If not sure ask ahead of time for potential fit



Understand the Program

- **USDA wants to spend the money**
Program details available at USDA website.
-REAP-

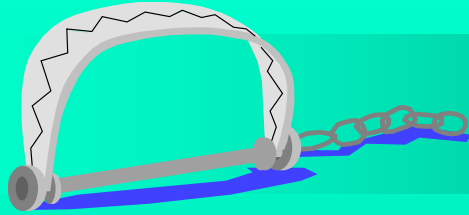
<http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/farbill/>

http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/ia/rbcs_RE-EE_Section_9006.html

– **VAPG-**<http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/coops/vadg.htm>

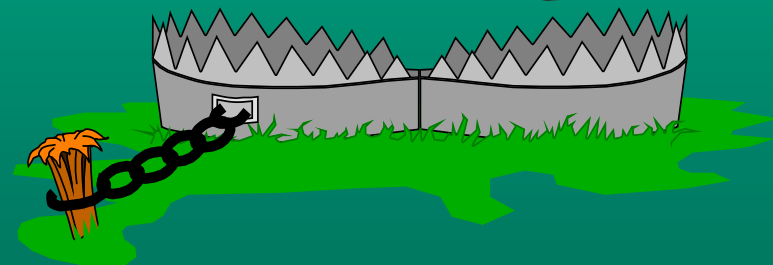
– http://www.aglink.org/industrynews/Plan_templateOR2008.doc





Avoid Mistakes

- Turn in the grant early
- Sign the forms
- Number all pages
- Make sure your budget adds up
- Keep an extra copy



Plan Your Attack

- Summarize your idea in one or two sentences
- Focus on the identified priorities of the program
- Emphasize partnerships with others like the VA TECH, Cooperative Extension, VAFAIRS, VA State and local groups
- Explain your project in logical steps
- Look for help with the application



Grant Writing Assistance

- A professional grant writer is not required, but may be helpful
- Extension agents, local development offices, and universities all have grant writing experience
- USDA staff can give great advice (if you ask in advance)
- Take time for another set of eyes to review the application before submitting

Proposal Outline

- Get the proposal template online
- Executive summary (most important page)
- Project narrative
- Project timeline (who's doing what, when)
- Detailed budget with notes
- Specific results

Avoid Mistakes



- **Follow all rules-even small ones**
 - Reviewers of grants have many proposals to score
 - Make yours clear and obvious
- **GET YOUR DUNS NUMBER AHEAD OF TIME**
 - [http://www.ccr.gov/pdfs/DUNS GuideGovVendors.pdf](http://www.ccr.gov/pdfs/DUNS%20GuideGovVendors.pdf)

Crystal Ball Rule

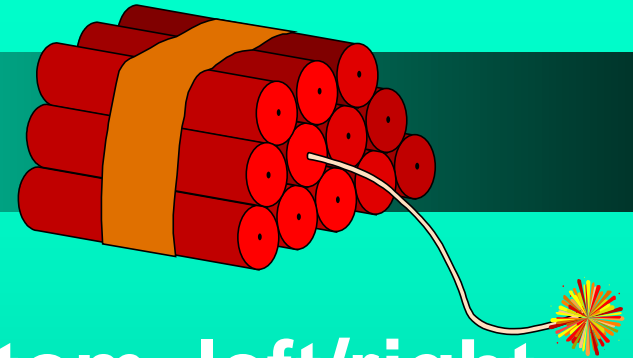


If reviewers cannot CLEARLY understand your business you will not score well

– Don't assume they know how your business works



Format Issues



- Margins – 1 inch top/bottom, left/right
- Line spacing – usually single spaced paragraphs with two spaces between paragraphs.
- Type style – reviewers want 12 pt. type—it's easy to read.
- Page limits – do not exceed.

The Money Question



*Why should I give you
my money?*

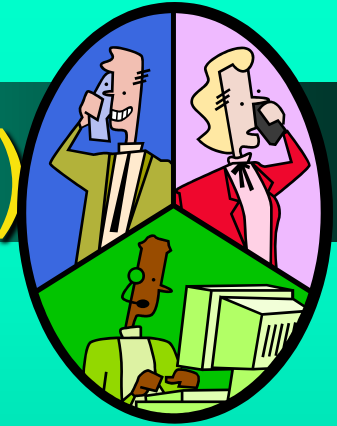
(and not these other 300 applications)

Proposal Outline

- **1 – page Executive Summary**
 - **The 4-Ws**
 - **Who you are (emphasis on partnerships)**
 - **What you are proposing**
 - **Why you should be funded (results)**
 - **When (project timeline)**



Proposal Outline (Cont'd.)



- **Background**

- More detail about your organization
- Why the program administrators should have confidence that you can do what you say
- Build partnerships (who are recognized, credible groups that are working with and/or supporting you)

- **Goals/Objectives**

- Have 3-4 key goals that relate to the program from which you are seeking funding.
- Be specific, clear, focused

Proposal Outline

- **Project narrative**
 - Money should match the project size.
 - Be specific about what you hope to accomplish and when.
 - Indicate a willingness to share your experiences with other producer groups.



Wrap-up

- Understand the grant program
- Say what you want to do
- Carefully follow instructions for submitting proposals
- Keep it simple



Conclusion

Be eligible

Avoid mistakes

Have good technical proposal

Get going



Questions



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