

Proposal Writing Tips

Before starting your proposal...

- 1. Develop a relationship with the funder.** Call the foundation and pitch your idea before preparing a proposal. You may get important feedback about their priorities and clarify any misunderstandings.
- 2. Read the guidelines very carefully.** Follow the format they request. If they have an application form, get a copy well ahead of time. Make sure you have time to prepare and deliver your proposal before the deadline.
- 3. Make sure your project fits the grantmaker's goals.** Research the grants that have been distributed in the past and compare those projects to yours.
- 4. Determine the proper amount to request.** Match grant funds with other sources of income and make sure your asking amount is within the foundation's normal range.
- 5. Make sure you are not 'reinventing the wheel'.** Investigate other programs in your community and be prepared to differentiate your program's methodology, geographical area served, and/or population served.
- 6. Demonstrate collaboration and/or efficiency.** Be prepared to discuss ways that your organization has partnered with other community organizations through joint efforts or by sharing information/replicating programs. Show that your organization has taken steps to reduce costs and streamline activities.
- 7. Have a backup plan if the grant money is not received.** This is one reason why it's important to diversify your income. Don't depend on one grant to support a program. Determine alternative ways to implement the program either with limited funds or through identifying and pursuing additional sources of revenue.

After completing your grant proposal, make sure...

- 1. The spelling and grammar are correct.** Have a second person proofread the proposal.
- 2. The envelope and cover letter are addressed to a particular person.**
- 3. The proposal is interesting to read and full of information, yet concise.** Use simple language to tell a compelling story about your organization and programs.
- 4. All attachments are included and in order.** Refer to the foundation's guidelines for a list of required attachments. Don't send extra materials that aren't specifically requested.
- 5. The appropriate number of copies are enclosed.**

After getting funded...

- 1. Thank the grantor.** Immediately send an acknowledgement in writing.
- 2. Spend funds according to your agreement.** You are ethically obligated to do what you spelled out in your grant proposal. If something major changes, call the foundation and discuss the situation.
- 3. Report the actual outcomes of the grant.** This helps foundations learn more about the needs of nonprofit organizations and the communities they serve.