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Grant Writing Guide

If your organization needs extra funding to support college and career initiatives, grants can be a great solution! Whether you're looking to fund specific programs or enhance opportunities for students, this guide will help you navigate the grant writing process.

Why Apply for Grants?

Grant funding can support initiatives such as:

- Stipends for students participating in unpaid internships
- Transportation for college visits and job site excursions
- Tuition assistance and textbook stipends for dual enrollment
- Materials for STEM and Career Tech coursework
- Professional development for educators
- After-school program staffing and resources
- Arts and cultural experiences for students

If your project needs a few thousand dollars to get started, this guide will provide practical steps to help you apply for funding. If you're seeking large-scale grants in the hundreds of thousands, this resource will introduce key concepts, but we recommend consulting a professional grant writer or agency such as the **Grant Professional Association** for expert guidance.

Step 1: Define Your Project

Ask yourself:

- What problem am I trying to solve?
- How will I measure success?
- What resources do I need?
- Why are these resources necessary? Is there research supporting this solution?

Step 2: Prepare to Receive a Grant

Create a folder with essential documents:
- Your organization mission, vision, and values
- Strategic plan
- Organizational chart
- Fact sheets (who you serve, what you offer)
- Memorandums of understanding with partner organizations
- Budgets related to the proposed work
- Volunteer data
- Evidence supporting the problem (data, reports, etc.)

Step 3: Understand Your Organization's Financial Process

Before applying, clarify:
- How funds will be received and managed
- Whether a separate account is required
- Approval processes needed before applying for or spending grant money

Step 4: Find a Partner (If Needed)

If you work in a K-12 setting, partnering with a nonprofit can simplify grant management. Nonprofits often:
- Have streamlined procurement processes
- Are familiar with grant applications and reporting
- Demonstrate a commitment to collaboration and resource-sharing

Step 5: Identify Funding Sources

Start Local
- Governor's office, state agencies, and local foundations
- Your state's Department of Education
- Public libraries with access to the Candid grant search database (**find locations**)

Free Resources
- **DonorsChoose**
- **Grants 4 Teachers**
- **Grants.gov**

Paid Grant Search Services
- **Guidestar**
- **GrantStation**
- **BIG Online**

Helpful Keywords for Searching Grants
- Career development
- College access
- Capacity building
- After-school programs

Step 6: Know the Application Process

Many funders require an initial contact before applying. If unclear, send an email with:
- Your introduction
- Why you're reaching out (connection to their mission, past funded projects)
- The problem and proposed solution
- Funding amount requested
- Request for permission to submit a full application
- Expression of gratitude

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Step 7: Writing Your Proposal

Ensure a Strong Fit
- Research the funder's mission and past grant recipients
- Align your request with their funding priorities
- Ensure your funding amount matches their typical award size

Follow Grant Guidelines Carefully
- Read the directions multiple times
- Follow all formatting and submission instructions
- Meet all deadlines

Common Grant Application Components
1. **Executive Summary (5%**)
   a. What are your goals?
   b. Who will benefit?
   c. How does your project align with the grant's purpose?
2. **Statement of Need (20%)**
   a. Who is your target population?
   b. What challenges are they facing?
   c. How will your project address these challenges?
3. **Program Methodology (45%)**
   a. Goals and measurable objectives
   b. Scope, duration, and timeline
   c. Key staff and stakeholders
   d. Evaluation plan
4. **Organization Background (20%)**
   a. Experience working with the target population
   b. Prior grant management experience
   c. Who will oversee the grant implementation?
5. **Sustainability & Budget (10%)**
   a. How will the project continue after the grant ends?
   b. Justification for requested funds
   c. Itemized budget aligning with project goals

Step 8: Writing Tips for Success

Use clear, persuasive language
- Plain writing ensures clarity
- Persuasive writing appeals to emotions and values

Craft compelling sentences
- Start with the subject and verb
- Avoid redundancy
- Vary sentence length for readability

Structure paragraphs effectively
- Transition sentence (connect to former paragraph)
- Topic sentence (main claim)
- Supporting details (data, examples, anecdotes)
- Concluding sentence (why it matters)

Step 9: Final Checks & Accountability

- Review directions (submission format, deadlines, required documents)
- Save a copy of your application
- Prepare for post-award requirements (progress reports, financial audits, acknowledgments)
- Seek reviewer feedback if your proposal is denied
- Celebrate successes & share learnings

Key Takeaways

- Start small: demonstrate success with smaller grants before scaling up
- Build relationships: funders prefer working with applicants they know
- Follow instructions: many grants are scored using a rubric, so make sure you meet every requirement

Grant writing is a skill that improves with practice. By starting with small grants, leveraging partnerships, and following structured steps, you can successfully secure funding for impactful student initiatives.

Resources Used:
- Browning, B.A. (2002). Grant Writing for Dummies (7th ed.). John Wiley & Sons.
- Grant Writing: QuickStudy Reference Guide (2012). BarCharts Publishing, Inc.
- Johnson-Sheehan, R., & Hunter, P. T. (2024). Writing Proposals and Grants. Parlor Press.