

Grant Proposal Writing 2.0: Proposals, Process, and Do's and Don'ts

"What Grantmakers Want"

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2017 Leadership Seminar

Acknowledgements

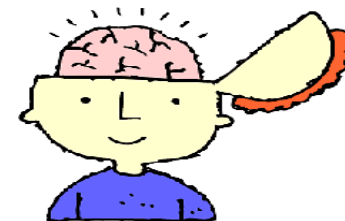
Special Thanks to:

- The International Leadership Training Committee, especially Soror Kiahna Davis and Soror Debra Davis, for selecting me to present;
- The Alumnae Sorors of Alpha Lambda Chapter (University of Toledo) for their love and support;
- The Sorors of Kappa Delta Omega Chapter (Martinsville, VA) for their love and guidance;
- My family, by birth and by choice, especially my SororSistaFriends across the nation, for loving me unconditionally and keeping me grounded.

Topics to be Addressed

- Common Terminology
- Grantmaking Basics
- Tips to Writing a Great Proposal
- Questions Funders Ask When Reviewing Proposals
- Proposal Evaluation Criteria

Getting Inside the Head of a Grantmaker



Common Terminology



“Singing From the Same Hymnal”

- Foundation
 - Private/Independent
 - Community
 - Family
 - Corporate
- Types of Support
- Types of Grantmaking
- Proposal vs. Grant

Foundation, Defined

- “A **non-governmental entity** that is established as a nonprofit corporation or a charitable trust, with a principal **purpose of making grants** to unrelated **organizations, institutions, or individuals** for **scientific, educational, cultural, religious, or other charitable purposes**. This broad definition encompasses two foundation types: private foundations and grantmaking public charities.” –The Foundation Center’s Grantspace

A Foundation’s Motivations for Giving

- Community support
- Sociopolitical concerns/philanthropic interests
- Provide seed money for new projects
- Tax advantages
- Innovation of a nonprofit
- Professionalism of nonprofit
- Geographic location
- Reputation of nonprofit
- Expertise of nonprofit
- Demonstrated ability to garner matching funds

Types of Foundations

- Private/Independent



- Family



- Community



- Corporate



Types of Support

- Annual Campaign
- Capital-Construction
- Capital-Equipment
- Capital-Improvements
- Debt Reduction
- Emergency Funds
- Endowment Funds
- Exhibitions/Sponsorships
- General/Operating Support
- Land Acquisition
- Program Support
- Publication
- Research
- Seed Money
- Training and Development

Types of Grantmaking

- Responsive
 - Proposal developed by grant-seeker; foundation reacts
- Initiative
 - Funder stipulates project's design and grant-seeker proposes how it will execute; foundation is proactive
- Donor-Advised
 - Person/group contributes to a community foundation and directs grantmaking
- Discretionary
 - Grantmaking done by one person; doesn't require board vote
- Matching
 - Grants that correspond to other's gifts in a pre-determined ratio
- Renewable
 - Grants made on a recurring basis
- Program-Related Investments
 - Recoverable grants; loans to support revenue-generation; social purpose projects

Proposal vs. Grant

- Proposal
 - “A formal request for funding based upon criteria set by the funding organization”
 - **YOU SUBMIT A PROPOSAL**
- Grant
 - “A commitment by a foundation to make one or more payments to an organization to carry out agreed-upon purposes”
 - Repayment is not required as long as terms are met
 - **YOU GET A GRANT**

Grantmaking Basics



Grantmaking Basics

- Step 1: Foundation Planning
- Step 2: Application
- Step 3: Proposal Analysis
- Step 4: Funding Decisions
- Step 5: Notification
- Step 6: Award/Letter of Agreement
- Step 7: Monitoring
- Step 8: Close-Out

Grantmaking Basics Step 1: What Plans Does the Foundation Make?

- Foundations must decide in advance:
 - **Who is eligible** to receive grant funding?
 - **What type of requests** will be considered?
 - What are the funding **priorities**?
 - Will specific **forms** be required in applying?
 - Will the entire grant process be done **electronically**?
 - When and how will applicants be **notified** of decisions?
 - Will a **legal contract** with grantees be required?
 - What type of **monitoring and reporting** should be undertaken?
 - How will foundations **get the word out** about their work?
 - Will they take **risks**? How will they handle fall out?

Grantmaking Basics Step 2: Application

Commonly Requested Items

- | | |
|---|---|
| ● CEO/Board Chair Approval | ● 501(C) Letter or evidence of a Fiscal Agent |
| ● Project narrative | ● Form 990 |
| ● Statement of need | ● Audited financials |
| ● Solution statement | ● Sustainability plan |
| ● Organization's qualifications | ● Project timeline |
| ● Project and organizational budgets | ● List of board members |
| ● Memorandum of Understanding from collaborating partners | ● Evidence of compliance |
| | ● Objectives and measurable outcomes |

Grantmaking Basics Step 3: Proposal Analysis

Ten Criteria to Consider

1. Mission
2. Goals, Objectives, Strategies
3. Merit/Potential for Success
4. Need
5. Evaluation
6. Cost Effectiveness
7. Board
8. Financial Management
9. Long-Term Sustainability
10. Qualifications

Grantmaking Basics Step 3: Proposal Analysis Ten Criteria to Consider

1. Mission
 - To what extent does the proposal reflect the Foundation's mission?
 - Direct match
 - Indirectly addresses the mission
 - Is the applicant the appropriate organization to perform the proposed project? Does it fit with its mission and expertise?

Grantmaking Basics Step 3: Proposal Analysis Ten Criteria to Consider

2. Goals, Objectives, Strategies
 - Specific
 - Measureable
 - Attainable
 - Realistic
 - Time-Bound
 - Reflect organization's mission
 - What role did the target population play in the design of the program?

Grantmaking Basics Step 3: Proposal Analysis Ten Criteria to Consider

3. Merit/Potential for Success
 - What is the likelihood that the proposed program will be successful at addressing the stated need?
 - Is the solution based upon research?
 - Best practice model? Replication?
 - If a new program, what evidence demonstrates potential for success?

**Grantmaking Basics Step 3: Proposal Analysis
Ten Criteria to Consider**

4. Need
- Was quantitative data provided to describe the need?
 - Up-to-date statistics?
 - Data regarding target populations?
 - Do other resources exist to address the problem?

**Grantmaking Basics Step 3: Proposal
Analysis
Ten Criteria to Consider**

5. Evaluation
- Is evaluation based upon stated objectives?
 - Are measurable outputs and outcomes projected?
 - Over what period of time?
 - Is there a clear plan for collecting data?
 - How? Surveys, observations, community indicators
 - When?

**Grantmaking Basics Step 3: Proposal
Analysis
Ten Criteria to Consider**

6. Cost Effectiveness
- How many people will benefit?
 - To what extent will they benefit? IMPACT?
 - Greatest number of people with fewest dollars not always the most cost-effective
 - Health fair lollipops vs. 24-hour nursing care

**Grantmaking Basics Step 3: Proposal
Analysis
Ten Criteria to Consider**

7. Board
- How many board members?
 - Diversity? (considering clients served)
 - Gender, age, race, profession, education, religion, skills, geography, ethnicity, economic class, sexual orientation, physical ability
 - Strong leadership?
 - Active and engaged? How often do they meet? Quorum?
 - Terms?

“STP with PMS”



**Grantmaking Basics Step 3: Proposal
Analysis
Ten Criteria to Consider**

8. Financial Management
- Is the proposed budget reasonable? Balanced?
 - Expenses justified?
 - Projected income realistic? Diverse?
 - Cash flow?
 - Reserves? Operating at a loss?
 - Audit? Internal controls?
 - Submit 990s on time? Accurate?
 - Accounting system?
 - Will requested amount tip the organization?

**Grantmaking Basics Step 3: Proposal
Analysis
Ten Criteria to Consider**

9. Qualifications
- Of the people who will implement the program
 - Knowledge
 - Skills
 - Sensitivity
 - Of the organization overall
 - Capacity of staff to implement and manage program over time?
 - Stability, history, past success

**Grantmaking Basics Step 3: Proposal
Analysis
Ten Criteria to Consider**

10. Long-Term Sustainability
- Of proposed project?
 - Of applicant organization?
 - Public charity status in jeopardy?
 - Capacity to raise other funds?

**Grantmaking Basics Step 3: Proposal
Analysis
Ten Criteria to Consider**

- Political considerations
- Unintended consequences
- Precedent
 - Possibilities of replication (and additional requests to fund same project)
 - Making exceptions to guidelines
- Special circumstances

Grantmaking Basics Step 3: Proposal Analysis Ten Criteria to Consider

- Should look for:
 - Enthusiasm
 - Commitment
 - Collaboration
- Should not expect:
 - Perfection
 - Sophistication in grassroots
 - New

Grantmaking Basics Step 4: Funding Decisions

- Processes Vary
 - Staff
 - Committees
 - Board



Grantmaking Basics Step 4: Funding Decisions

Some factors grantmakers must consider:

- Money available to fund it
 - Is the 5% a ceiling or a floor?
- Foundation's funding trends and equity
- PR/political correctness
- ROI
- Exit strategies
- Risk (Front page test)

PROPOSAL WRITING IS FUN!!

- You get to write about something you love!
- You get to tell a story-share the good news about what you're doing!!
- You just might get money in return!!!

5 Steps BEFORE You Apply



Step #1: RESEARCH Your Program and Your Service Area

- To get evidence that your proposed project/program will work
- To find out if anyone else is already doing what you're proposing
 - Don't duplicate
 - Do collaborate
 - Do educate: LEARN FROM OTHER'S MISTAKES
- To find out about funding prospects...FOR AS LONG AS YOU WILL NEED FUNDING!

Step #2: RESEARCH Your Prospects

- Prerequisites for funding (e.g., must be asked to apply)
- Funding priorities (e.g., homeless pets)
- Guidelines (e.g., only online proposals & once/year)
- In some instances, it is appropriate and even required to meet with the program officer
- KNOW BEFORE YOU APPLY! At least check them out on the web!
- Please don't waste your time (or theirs) by sending blanket proposals!

Step #3: CHECK ELIGIBILITY

- Tax-exempt status
- Public Charity status
- Geographical restrictions
- Numerous other restrictions (e.g. no unsolicited proposals)
- HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOU'RE ELIGIBLE?
 - Read their guidelines (website, annual report, etc.)
 - www.guidestar.org (what else have they funded?)
 - Ask them (good excuse to get your foot in the door!)

Step #4: DEVELOP A RELATIONSHIP (OR AT LEAST MAKE CONTACT)

- Schedule an appointment with a program officer, if allowed
- Put them on your newsletter or annual report mailing list
- Call them to introduce yourself; ask for URL, copy of guidelines, annual report, name of contact, eligibility requirements, verify deadlines, etc.
- Attend their trainings/forums/workshops – usually FREE (or a reduced cost)
- Take advantage of the resources they provide to nonprofits (e.g., library)
- Go where they go and make contact (e.g., nonprofit conferences)
- If your PR is good, they will already know you (e.g., newspaper, membership associations, other funders, word of mouth)
- If your PR is bad, they will already know: FIX IT!

Step #5: ASK BEFORE YOU SUBMIT A PROPOSAL

- The foundation should be expecting your proposal when it is received (required by some foundations)
- Foundation personnel may give you important guidance about your submission (e.g., which cycle is the best cycle for your application)

10 TIPS FOR WRITING A GREAT PROPOSAL



Tip #1: TAKE THE TIME TO WRITE AN AWESOME ABSTRACT

- The abstract (or summary) may determine whether your proposal even gets read!
 - Be specific
 - Use numbers
 - Make it real



EXAMPLE:

You'd like to launch a new community garden project. Which is the better intro?

- Policymakers and citizens around the globe are debating the best response to the challenge of combating greenhouse gas emissions and protecting the environment.
- A child living in the Monroe Circle housing community must travel 2 miles outside the boundary of her neighborhood before she will see a park or green space.

Tip #2: DEMONSTRATE ABILITY

- HOW DO YOU DEMONSTRATE YOUR ABILITY...
 - To fulfill your stated objectives?
 - To manage funds well?
 - To sustain the project long-term?
 - To build partnerships in the community?

Tip #3: SHOW EVIDENCE OF A STRONG BOARD

- Demonstrate before the proposal is submitted, if possible
- Number of board members (usually between 6 and 16)
- Diversity (race, gender, age, profession, etc.)
- Leadership campaign
- Board is interested and involved

Tip #4: REFLECT MISSION OF YOUR ORGANIZATION AND OF THE FUNDER

- Tell how your proposed program will help the funding entity fulfill its mission (e.g., how will your program improve the health of people in Elkhart?)
- Don't force a fit just to get a grant (i.e., chasing the dollar)

Tip #5: WRITE OBJECTIVES CAREFULLY

- Be specific
- Be measurable
- Be realistic

Goals: broad-based statements of anticipated results
Objectives: measurable components of the program
OUTPUTS
OUTCOMES

Examples of Objectives: What's Right and What's Wrong with These?

- To eliminate substance abuse among Kosciusko residents
- To increase self-esteem among youth ages 13-17
- To decrease the high school dropout rate among African Americans at John Adams High School from 16.3% to 12% by 2020

Tip #6: DEMONSTRATE NEED

- Use quantitative data (will serve as baseline data-you will measure progress by comparing changes before and after your program is implemented)
- Use data relevant to the population you wish to serve (e.g., worldwide stats are rarely useful for local programs)
- Show that there is a problem your organization can realistically address

Two Aspects of Need

1. A measurable problem exists (e.g., number of victims of hate crimes)
2. There is a lack of resources in your area to address this problem
If resources do exist:
 - Show a gap
 - Explain how you are collaborating
 - Show what will you do differently or better

Sources of Quantitative Data

- Centers for Disease Control-BRFSS
- DHHS-Quick Health Data Online
- Dept. of Education
- Dept. of Labor/Bureau of Labor Statistics
- Dept. of Social Services
- Chambers of Commerce
- Census Bureau
- Annie E. Casey Foundation
- Employment Security Commission
- United Way
- Dept. of Justice



DEALING WITH “COMPETITORS” UPFRONT

- Give evidence of collaboration (e.g. MOU)
- Acknowledge what they do and explain how you’re different

Tip #7: DEVELOP A THOROUGH EVALUATION PLAN

- Describe valid and appropriate methods
 - What data will be collected?
 - How will data be collected?
 - When will data be collected?
 - How often and from whom?
 - E.G.: “We will administer a behavioral risk assessment survey to all students in the program at the end of each academic year!”
 - Plan should be based on your objectives
 - Your organization should be able to use this plan to track progress every year (compare to data shown in your needs assessment)

Tip #8: DEVELOP A SOUND SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

- Diverse funding base
- With multi-year grant, funding in decreasing increments indicates efforts to sustain the program
- “Apply for grants” is **NOT** a sustainability plan
- Board should have a development plan that encompasses proposed program (includes timeline, tasks, and responsible parties)

Tip #9: DEVELOP A REASONABLE AND COMPLETE BUDGET

- Show all projected income (NOTE: FUNDERS LIKE TO **HELP** FUND PROJECTS-not be the only prospect)
- Provide reasonable expense items and justify them (in a separate budget narrative, if allowed)
 - Travel expenses
- Don't pad your budget...but don't ask for too little
- Remember changes year-to-year (e.g., health insurance will increase) and seasonal (e.g., gas prices, home heating oil)

Tip #10: FOLLOW DIRECTIONS!

- Submit proposal by the deadline; try for 3 days before
- Read all instructions carefully before beginning and reread them after you finish to make sure you didn't forget anything
- When a foundation gives specific directions, FOLLOW THEM (e.g., page limits, font size, margins, attachments, binding, delivery method, etc.)

Grantmaking Basics Step 5: Notification

- IF THE ANSWER IS **NO**:
 - Foundations have policies about what they convey and when
 - They may not have resources for staff to answer questions from all organizations or provide details in notification letters
 - BUT IT DOESN'T HURT TO ASK FOR FEEDBACK!

Grantmaking Basics Step 5: Notification

- IF THE ANSWER IS **YES**:
 - Thank them!
 - Via email or phone call immediately
 - In an "old-fashioned," hand-written thank you note
 - Add them to your mailing list for everything EXCEPT fundraising appeals

Grantmaking Basics Step 6: Award/Letter of Agreement

- There are **two fundamental tasks** associated with every grant award:
 - Tracking project activities
 - Demonstrating compliance with funder's conditions
- Understand the compliance obligations of your grant award
- Understand the proper use of grant funds
- Provide updates and acknowledgements to the funder
- Be sure to have in place evaluation/performance measures

Grantmaking Basics Step 7: Monitoring

- Give them credit
 - Ask if they want it first!
 - Find out how they want it (review your LOA)
- Make sure the entire staff knows who they are
 - Incorporate foundation awareness in staff training
- Be responsive
 - Attend meetings
 - Respond to surveys
 - Always reply promptly in communications
- Let them hear from you and/or see you periodically
 - Send quarterly reports via email
 - 1-2 pages
 - Qualitative data
- Submit all interim reports in a timely manner

Grantmaking Basics Step 7: Monitoring

5 Tips for Effective Site Visits

1. When they call to schedule:
 - Ask them what you might expect during the visit (# of people)
 - Ask them what documents they will need
 - Be on time and don't cancel unless absolutely necessary
2. Schedule so they can see their \$\$ being used (program in action or building being used)
3. Allow them to meet other folks in addition to the ED
 - Someone on the front lines
 - At least one board member needs to be present-2 would be ideal!
4. Review the proposal: note stated goals, timeline, and budget and prepare to take stock of progress in all 3
5. Give them a tour

Grantmaking Basics Step 8: Close Out

- Your Final Progress Report should include:
 - A statement of progress towards the achievement of originally stated goals and objectives
 - A list of significant results
 - Final itemization on all program-related expenditures
- This report should be submitted in a timely manner
- Funders often use your final report to create a close-out report for their records, which may include recommendations for future funding

Supplemental Materials in Your Packets



Supplemental Materials in Your Packets

- What Makes a Grant Proposal Successful?
- Sample Proposal Criteria
- Insider's Guide to Grantmaking
- 53 Ways for Board Members to Raise \$1000

Resources

- Niggel, S. (2010). Grant proposals: Planning for positive results [PowerPoint slides]. Presentation presented by Duke University Nonprofit Management Intensive Track Program, Martinsville, VA.
- Peebles, R. (2012). Grant writing [PowerPoint slides]. Presentation presented by Duke University Nonprofit Management Intensive Track Program, Martinsville, VA.
- The Grantmaking School (2008). Advanced proposal analysis: A critical examination of complex issues. Presentation presented by The Grantmaking School, Hartford, CT.



Final Thoughts?



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