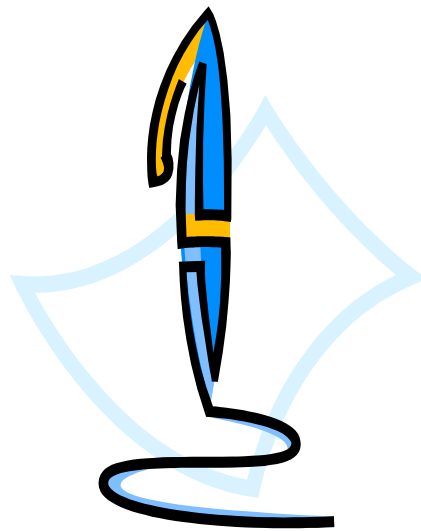


GRANT WRITING



Prepared by Mimi Lufkin, Executive Director, NAPE

GENERAL GRANT INFORMATION

Most grants are to institutions and are intended to help the institution develop a new program or to enhance an existing program. Funding agencies generally are interested in innovative projects, as opposed to assisting in funding ongoing programs. Most donors want projects that will have an impact on other institutions or on education in general. Therefore, they are interested in model projects and plans for dissemination.

Grants are made available to help meet various goals of the donor agencies (e.g., state, federal, private). All have fairly rigorous criteria for the kinds of projects that will be funded. Most programs today focus on reaching underserved segments of the population (e.g., women, minorities, economically disadvantaged, handicapped) and with improving teaching and learning. Cooperative arrangements with other educational institutions and agencies are often encouraged. Many funding sources target specific geographic locations or focus on funding in rural or urban areas.

Many funding agencies expect the institution to continue (i.e., provide funding for) a program when the grant funds cease. Your proposal should speak to this. Funding programs usually have annual funding deadlines for proposals; if you miss one deadline you often cannot submit for another year. It normally takes at least six months for a project to be approved and funds made available.

Private Sources

A “grantmaking” foundation is defined as a nonprofit, non-governmental institution, managed by its own board of directors or trustees, whose purpose is to support educational, artistic, religious, health, social service, or other charitable activities primarily through the making of grants. There are two types of grantmaking foundations: private and community.

Private foundations

Private foundations typically receive their funds from a single donor, corporation, or family. They are governed by a self-perpetuating board of directors that makes grant decisions and set policy. All private foundations are required to distribute 5% of their assets for charitable purposes each year. They also must file a public annual information form (Form 990 PF) with the IRS. This form lists all grants that were awarded the previous year, application deadlines and procedures, and names of foundation board members. The “990” form is available for free public use.

Although private foundations must make charitable contributions every year, they generally do not “announce” the availability of these funds in some kind of request for proposals. Instead, interested individuals or organizations must do research and follow the established guidelines for requesting funds.

Community foundations

Community foundations are established under a separate classification of the tax code and typically focus their grantmaking on a specific city, county, or other geographical region. Their endowments are made up of contributions, bequests, or trusts from a number of individuals or

corporations. Board members of community foundations are typically appointed through outside agencies or institutions.

Because community foundations are independent of donor control they enjoy some special privileges under tax laws. In particular, they are exempt from the payout requirement and do not have to file the tax form 990 PF. Like private foundations, community foundations generally do not “announce” the availability of their funds in some kind of request for proposals. Instead, interested individuals or organizations must do research and follow the established guidelines for requesting funds.

Corporations

Many corporations that are involved in grantmaking do not have associated foundations and give directly to nonprofit organizations. Corporations are allowed to give up to 10% of their pre-tax profits to charity tax-free. This can be a great incentive for many profitable corporations. In general, this type of giving is organized through the corporations public relations division. Corporations also tend to be very generous with in-kind donations of staff expertise or their product.

Public Sources

Within their myriad of guises and functions, various levels of government exist also as funding sources. Government-generated revenues, including those derived from taxes, are subject to and the result of the political process. Which is to say that government funding and programs reflect the push and pull of special interest groups and the jockeying of elected politicians around the legislative process.

Legislation spawns dollars in the public sector, and takes place at every level, from city hall to the state capitol to Capitol Hill. It is the responsibility of various to departments or offices of government to administer and implement passed legislation, resulting in programs and their funding

Government agency funds are usually made available in the form of grants or contracts.

Government grants

There are two basic types of government grants—formula grants and project grants.

Named as they are because some type of formula is used for distributing the funds, formula grants are non-competitive and generally broad in program coverage or focus. Also known as block grants, they are often made from one unit of government to another, particularly from federal departments or agencies to what are known as state planning agencies. These funds tend to flow regularly as long as the legislation that created them is intact. Because of this, it is not unusual for units of government receiving formula grants to redistribute or “pass through” funds to nonprofit organizations.

This is typically done in the form of making project grants available for competition. In addition to being competitive, these grants tend to be much narrower in program focus than block grants. They are also typically limited in duration, meaning that competition for refunding can take

place annually. Project grants may be available directly from government funding sources at the federal, state, and local levels.

Government contracts

Contracts — also available at every level of government—are competitive, but differ from grants because they represent the purchase of services, goods, or expertise from competing organizations. This allows the government agency awarding contracts to have much more say-so in directing the activities of successful contractors. If yours is an organization emphasizing research in particular, government contracting might be well worth carefully considering.

STEPS IN THE GRANT DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Develop Project Idea

It is important to have a project idea developed prior to seeking funding for that idea. Involve as many individuals in the planning of the concept, particularly those that will be expected to support the project or be directly involved. Be sure to get approval from anyone in your organization in a decisionmaking position so your idea can move forward without any obstacles. Get them involved in the development process so they have some ownership of the idea. This will help you garner greater support when the time comes. If someone in your organization is responsible for fundraising (e.g., Director of Development, Grants Manager), be sure to meet with them, enlist their involvement, and keep them informed of your activities.

Refer to Appendix A, “Suggestions For Developing Grant Proposals.”

Identify Funding Source

This is where the grant development process pathway begins to divide depending on whether you choose to seek funding for a project from a public or private source. Many of the activities are the same but have a little different twist due to the source of the funds. Here are a few pros and cons to public versus private funding sources:

- Private sources tend to be more flexible.
- Public sources can be for larger amounts of money and for multiple years.
- Private foundations tend to fund for only one year, are interested in “seed” projects, and are of smaller amounts.
- Public funding reporting can be overwhelming. The paperwork is detailed and lengthy.
- Private funding reporting is generally simple. Foundations want to know what you did and whether you were successful.
- Public funding is generally determined using a “closed” competitive process. The merit of your project is determined solely on a reader’s evaluation of your written proposal.
- Private funding is a very relationship-dependent process. Foundations want to get to know the organization and its staff and feel confident in your ability to do what you propose before granting funds.
- Over-reliance on government funding has caused organizations considerable difficulty when money has dried up or been reduced through changes in legislation. It is not easy to replenish relinquished government money with that from the private sector.

It is not uncommon to seek funding for a project from both private and public sources. A mix of funds can often compliment a project and allow it to accomplish more than only one funding source can provide. Be aware of funding source restrictions when using multiple funding sources and be sure to keep extremely accurate fund accounting records.

Request Funds From Grantmaking Foundations

Research the foundations

Make a prospect list

Review *The Foundation Directory* located at many public libraries. This book describes the largest foundations by states and indexes them by subjects where they have offered grants. For example, the subject index includes listings such as vocational education, women, disadvantaged, etc. Other general information such as application information and financial data is also included.

Review the *COMSEARCH Printouts*. These computer printouts highlight selected grants in a particular subject area. The printouts are taken from The Foundation Grants Index. This very detailed subject index lists actual grants of \$5000 or over that were awarded by about 500 of the largest U.S. foundations.

Narrow the list

Read the information from the various directories and develop a list of those foundations whose areas of interest reflect the needs of the “prospecting organization,” (the organization that is looking for funds).

Eliminate foundations that identify limitations such as geographic areas or types of ineligible organizations that should restrict the “prospecting organization” from applying. Pay attention to information such as size of the average grant so that the amount requested reflects the amount likely to be awarded.

Review the annual reports and other available information

If possible, review the annual reports for those foundations that appear to have the greatest potential for funding the area of need at the “prospecting organization.” About 600 foundations publish their annual reports. These reports are available in many foundation libraries. Review the summaries of the grants the foundation awarded. Look for a more detailed description of the foundation’s philosophy.

Look for other background information such as a newspaper article or brochures that might be in the library files.

Make an initial inquiry

Contact “potential” foundations

After acquiring as much accurate information as possible on the foundation, call to confirm the information and inquire about submitting a proposal. Ask to speak with a “program officer,” and do not expect to speak with the foundation director.

Be prepared to concisely state why money is needed and specifics about the proposed project. It is not good to ask for more money than what is typically awarded. Likewise, don't be too timid and request an amount that is simply too little for the project.

Request a copy of the guidelines

Request a written copy of the guidelines (if such a handout is available) and confirm the following information:

1. Priorities and focus of the foundation's funding
2. Details about the application procedure
3. Who and where the proposal/letter of intent should be addressed to
4. Suggested length of a proposal/letter of intent
5. Size of an average grant
6. Funding cycle/year

Write letter of intent and/or proposal

Follow instructions/guidelines

Some foundations will request a "letter of intent" before they accept a proposal. Follow guidelines carefully and write a clear, concise, and appealing letter of intent. The letter of intent should read like a concise proposal (typically 1-2 pages). Other foundations will simply request a proposal. If no recommendations are provided regarding suggested length, consider a maximum of 10 pages (plus attachments).

A "1-2 page" letter of intent should include:

- A brief description of the organization, its goals or purpose, the community it serves, key projects or significant achievements, and past and current sources of financial support.
- A sentence or two about the governing board or structure.
- A brief description of skills and qualifications of people involved (particularly important if the organization is new.)
- A brief description of the project and how funding from the foundation can help.
- A brief reference to other funding sources for the organization.
- An offer to develop a full proposal or supply additional information upon request from the foundation.
- A contact person from the organization who has full knowledge of the project and can answer specific questions upon request from the foundation. (The contact person is often not the executive director or superintendent, but rather is a program implementer who knows the details of the project.)
- An invitation for the foundation staff to visit the project and talk with the likely people who would be served by the foundation funds. (Some of the larger foundations have a staff and may request a site visit.)
- A reference to an "Advisory Committee" that includes representatives from other community agencies as well as potential participants who would benefit from the proposed project.

- A full proposal should address the same information that is in the letter of intent; however, it must be more complete and detailed. Consult a guide such as “Program Planning and Proposal Writing,” available from The Grantsmanship Center, Los Angeles, CA. Its 12-page guide can be purchased for \$3/copy (plus tax and shipping) and a more detailed 48-page version for \$4. Copies are available for use at many foundation libraries, or can be ordered through the Grantsmanship Center’s magazine. Call (213) 689-9222 for a free copy of the magazine.

If an example of an actual funded proposal would be helpful, consider looking at the book by Susan Ezell, et al., called *The Proposal Writer’s Swipe File III: 15 Professionally Written Grant Proposals...Prototypes of Approaches, Styles and Structures*. Do not try to replicate some proposal. Expect that the foundation staff have also read the “Swipe File” and would recognize the borrowed idea.

Refer to Appendix B, “53 Tips on Writing Grant-Winning Proposals.”

Review and submit the proposal

Proposals or letters of intent are not ready for foundation review until they have had several edits. Check carefully for unclear statements, incomplete sentences, misspelled words, and information that is not easily accessible. Imagine that the likely readers have to review a large stack of similar proposals and their job is to select only the “best” of those proposals for consideration.

When preparing a letter of intent or proposal, seek to present a quality image of the organization that looks professional but not glitzy. Send written information on quality white paper with one staple in the top left corner. Imagine that the reader will likely make additional copies and will not want to bother with a binder or cover.

Follow-up and respond to foundation requests

Make a follow-up call

After ten days, call to inquire about the proposal’s status. Do not ask to speak with the director—speak with whomever answers the phone. There may be a different approval process based on the amount of the grant. For example, smaller dollar decisions might be made immediately and larger grant applications may need board approval. Also, confirm how you will be notified of the foundation’s decision.

Submit revisions if requested

Be prepared to hear that the foundation would like a rewrite or some additional information. Consider this as an invitation, and submit a second proposal. Get as much specific information as possible from the foundation representatives. Follow the instructions carefully and submit the revisions in a timely manner.

Submit a new proposal

Also be prepared to hear that the proposal has been rejected. Consider a rejection as simply a step in the process of building a relationship with the foundation. Do further research on what

the foundation funded and try again.

Take the idea to other foundations

A good idea is often worth pursuing with several funding sources. Look for a variety of foundations that might be interested. Do not submit a “generic” proposal to several foundations. Make sure the proposal fits the specific foundation guidelines. Let a foundation know when several funding sources are being approached with a similar idea or project. This shows a commitment to the proposed idea or project.

Requesting Funds From Government Sources

Research Government Sources

Federal funding

For the very serious federal fund seeker, a necessary evil, the *Federal Register* is published every day of the year except weekends and holidays. You’ll find more information than you ever wanted to know about the workings of our government within. Of particular interest, though, to the fund seeker are Proposed and Final Regulations, as published, and a section titled Notices. Regulations represent the translation of federal legislation into program terms and concepts by the administering departments. The Notices section includes data about funds available, often described as discretionary or for research and demonstration programs. Information on how to obtain application forms and who to contact for technical assistance is included. It can be found in many public, legal, or college/university libraries.

The best bet for getting your hands on the register, as well as other government funding resources, is to locate a Federal Depository Library, in which you will find federal government reference sections and librarians. These libraries will make the *Federal Register* available on a reference basis and will carry a lot of other federal government periodicals and publications that might interest you as a grant seeker. Ask somebody at your local public library where the closest depository library is.

The *Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance* has been referred to as the Sears and Roebuck Catalog of federal funding and the federal funding Wish Book. It is the single most complete listing of federal programs for organizations and individuals in the United States. Up to a thousand grants, loans, contracts, technical assistance programs, scholarships, and fellowships are described within. Information is also given about eligibility requirements, application procedures, and deadlines. The introduction to the catalog makes for very good reading.

There are also a variety of commercial newsletters that are published weekly, such as the *Federal Grants And Contracts Weekly* that summarizes information about program announcements for federal funding from the *Federal Register*.

The *Commerce Business Daily* appears as frequently as the *Federal Register*. In the form of Requests for Proposals, it contains information about contracts the federal government intends to award through competition. Contracts to be funded cover a range of services from provision of goods and supplies (to almost any branch of government) to research and training (from higher education to the defense industry). Check your Federal Depository Library. If you know anyone working in a college or university Office of Grants and Contracts, the chances are good they can

get you access, since higher education often competes for government research contracts.

State funding

Most states have a state government publication that is published weekly and contains all grant award announcements for any State agency in that state. You may also want to directly contact those state agencies that may have grant programs to fund your project idea and get on their mailing lists. Often the deadlines for these applications are short and receiving the information directly will save you time.

Local government funding

Things get a bit tougher here. County government often acts as a local provider of services, utilizing federal and state monies along with funds appropriated locally. You might consider the value of finding out which County Supervisor governs the district where your nonprofit organization provides services. Thereafter check with that supervisor's staff about funding opportunities and/or the existence of a county government directory of some sort describing local programs or departments of county government. The same applies to city and township government as well.

Contact legislators and staff

It makes good sense for organizations seeking dollars in the public sector to learn about legislators and their staff members—with particular emphasis on staff. Remember, whether it's a state senator or the U.S. variety in the District of Columbia, each offers constituent services to the citizenry through staffed offices. Resource development and grant seeking qualify as such services. A note of caution: don't expect politicians' staffers to work for you if you won't cultivate a relationship with them. Take the time to find them, meet them, and let them know about you and your organization. Offer to help them with their community-based efforts, as well. Consult the *Congressional Yellow Book* for information about federal legislators and their staffs, committee, and subcommittees.

Since public sector funding currently favors the states as prime program operators, you should make it your business to go to your state's capitol periodically as part of your research to meet with government representatives. It's true that there are project grants from the federal government for which you can compete, but sometimes it's a unit of a state government against which you're competing. A lot of federal money comes to the state capitol and roosts there. Coupling those dollars with money that is authorized and appropriated by the state legislature makes it easy to see how important state agencies are in the intergovernmental scheme of things.

Make an initial inquiry

Get to know program officers

In most cases, government-funding sources have staff that is responsible for managing the competitive grant process. These program officers can be very helpful in determining if your agency and project idea have merit for this funding source. They generally are not as helpful as foundation staff and cannot influence funding decisions, but having an agency contact person can be very helpful if they do fund you. They can often give you helpful hints from previous competitions if you are willing to cultivate a friendly working relationship.

Request program announcement and/or RFPs (Request for Proposals)

You will be sent the notification of funding availability published in the *Federal Register* when seeking federal funds. Other governmental agencies publish their own application guidelines that are very similar. In some cases other materials may be available. These can include descriptions of previously funded projects, final evaluation summaries of previous projects, and general public relations information about the department. All these materials can be helpful in gathering a clearer understanding of the interests of the agency. Gather and review as much of this material as possible.

Write a proposal

Follow the program announcement guidelines

Don't be surprised if the program announcement publication date in the *Federal Register* and the closing date for submission of an application are not much more than thirty days apart. This is not unusual. Therefore, it is very important that you be prepared to do nothing but write your proposal. Be sure you have completed all your planning before you start seeking government funds. The timeline is always tight.

A request for applications has very specific and clear information about how to prepare a proposal. These must be followed absolutely as there is no way to revise your proposal once it is submitted. If any part of the proposal—and form, any signature—is missing, the proposal will be returned and not considered. Be sure you read the guidelines very carefully.

Included in the program announcement guidelines is the contents of application section that informs you of how many copies to send, what forms to include, and the proposal table of contents. You must do exactly as it says. Use the exact same table of contents for your proposal and organize it as listed in the announcement. Follow the guidelines for the maximum number of pages and what type of paper to prepare it on. The size and type of font may also be a requirement. Remember this is the government. Don't give them some simple oversight on your part as a reason for rendering your proposal ineligible.

Review the proposal evaluation criteria published in the program announcement and be sure you have addressed all the criteria somewhere in the proposal within the table of contents format given. Make it very easy for the reader to find what he/she is looking for.

Submit the proposal

The closing date for submission of an application is absolute. Check to see if the deadline is a postmark or delivery deadline. Always send your proposal return receipt, include a self-addressed stamped postcard indicating receipt as well. Keep these on file for verification.

Wait!

There is nothing you can do now but wait. While you may have to wait for six months to a year for a response to a government funding application, it's likely that your funder, should a grant or contract come through, will expect your program to begin rapidly.

Be sure to obtain copies of the reader's comments for your proposal. These can be very helpful in preparing other grant applications or for editing and resubmitting if you weren't successful this round.

APPENDIX A

Suggestions for Developing Grant Proposals

- DO follow the proposal format exactly. Usually points are given for each section requested. If you omit the section, you lose the points and probably lose the grant.
- DO work closely with other staff affected by your project. This avoids last-minute surprises and problems that could jeopardize your project.
- DO plan carefully to meet deadlines. Deadlines are hard and fast—and if you miss one, usually it is a full year until you can submit again.
- DO think through your project and include a step-by-step description of what you will do.
- DO think through your budget. Once you are funded, you are committed to do what you said you would do with the funds requested.
- DO develop exhibits and letters of support (if allowed). This will enhance the success of your proposal.
- DO work closely with the Development Office. They can provide you with assistance that may save you some time.
- DON'T expect to develop a proposal overnight. It takes a lot of thought, time, and work.
- DON'T try to go it alone. Get help and input from others.
- DON'T pad your budget. Agencies reject proposals with unrealistic budgets.
- DON'T write in jargon or try to educate. Write for a well-educated layperson who may not be a specialist in your discipline.
- DON'T get discouraged if your proposal is not accepted by the funding agency the first time. Reviewers' comments are available for your proposal and often you can make some minor revisions and resubmit the next time

APPENDIX B

53 Tips On Writing Grant-Winning Proposals

1. Fill in all blanks on federal applications completely. Write N/A (Not Applicable) if appropriate.
2. Use bold headings to subdivide your proposal. Your headings should make sense when read by a reviewer skimming over your application.
3. When responding to a government request for a proposal, follow the suggested format as closely as possible.
4. Don't try for perfection on your first draft. Get down your ideas, then edit and rewrite.
5. Have a strong first sentence.
6. Have a strong ending.
7. Let a client or expert state your need through a quotation. This lends more credibility than if you state it yourself.
8. Make your proposal as short as possible.
9. Use a title that suggests the results you hope to achieve rather than what you plan to do. ("Improving Reading of 5th Graders in Trenton" is better than "A Proposal for Reading Machines for Trenton Schools.")
10. Write your budget first. Then make sure your proposal supports each item in that budget.
11. Write your summary last, after you have finished the major parts of your application.
12. In your summary, emphasize client benefits of your work, and why the project should be funded now.
13. Make sure you say why this funder is the best source of money for this project.
14. Emphasize opportunities rather than problems whenever possible.
15. Determine your project's features, and emphasize them in your proposal.
16. When possible, state the need in terms of one person.
17. Use one or two clear statistics rather than a number of ineffective ones.
18. Use graphs, charts, and maps to illustrate your points whenever possible.
19. Always include "donated" and "requested" columns in your budget.
20. Always include your plan for funding your project after the grant ends.

21. Don't finalize your budget until you discuss it with the funder. (Ask: "We are thinking of requesting \$____. Is that appropriate?")
22. Use shorter rather than longer words. (5–7- letter words are best.)
23. Use short sentences (no more than 2 commas per sentence).
24. Use short paragraphs (4–6 lines if possible).
25. Use contractions.
26. Use personal voice (I, you, he, rather than we).
27. Use active, not passive, voice. ("ACT will build the theater in 1979" is better than "The theater will be completed in 1979.")
28. Tell a story about people.
29. Use emotional words (love, friendship, grief).
30. Describe emotions or feeling you or your client have.
31. Don't be afraid to be humorous in a low-key way.
32. Personalize and tailor your proposals to individual funders.
33. Use metaphors, analogies, and parables.
34. Use models. (A model for a 3-step program could be a triangle, each corner representing a step, each side representing the relationship between the steps.)
35. Cite dialogue.
36. Move from a specific case to a general problem.
37. Double-space your proposals for easy reading whenever possible.
38. Use wide margins for reviewer's notes.
39. Use different typefaces to increase the visual interest of your proposal.
40. Use captioned photographs.
41. Include copies of endorsement letters and letters from satisfied clients in the appendices of your proposals.
42. Use indentations and bullets to break up your pages.
43. Include a cover letter addressed to a person by name (preferably someone you've spoken

with).

44. Make sure your proposal flows logically from section to section. Methods should be logical extensions of objectives. Your budget should flow naturally from your proposed methods.
45. Use a proposal review committee to give you input on strengths and weaknesses of your proposal.

46. Have an associate not directly involved in your project proofread your proposal, looking for:

- grammatical errors
- logical inconsistencies
- unjustified budget items
- undefined or confusing terms
- unsupported arguments, unfounded assumptions, weak documentation
- ways to improve overall proposal impact

47. Make sure your evaluation design—not some outside factor—proves your project.

48. Get your project idea critiqued by a number of associates before writing a full-scale proposal.

49. Know as much as you can about your funder before starting to write your proposal.

50. Talk to other grantees about their proposals to a funder before writing yours. Ask about the funder's preferences in:

- length
- complexity
- budget detail
- statistical support
- personal contact before proposal submission

Write your proposal accordingly.

51. Ask the funder for one or two copies of sample funded proposals. Use them as models for your own.

52. If appropriate, quote enabling legislation, or foundation funder's words, or a foundation's annual report, to show how your project fits the intent of the grantmaking organization.

53. Make sure your proposal is negotiable. It should include a non-negotiable "hub" surrounded by negotiable "spokes." (Like a bicycle wheel, your project should be able to spin even if it's missing a few spokes).

APPENDIX C

Ways to “Kill” a Proposal

- Collate the pages incorrectly.
- Leave off attachments.
- Use poor grammar.
- State conflicting information.
- Present a budget that doesn't reflect the proposal.
- Ask for more than the foundation has ever funded.
- Ask for less than the project requires and show no other funding sources.
- Address the letter to someone who no longer works there.
- Type works or titles incorrectly.
- Request something that the foundation states they do not fund.
- Resubmit a “rejected” proposal in a couple months without making changes.
- Submit a totally new project idea soon after a foundation rejected a proposal.
- Write a long letter of inquiry or proposal.
- Use technical jargon or acronyms that are not known to the general public.
- Use a 3-ring binder or colored paper that prohibit easy copying.
- Send videos or slides with the expectation they will be viewed.