

G RANT WRITING TIPS

Identifying & Applying for Funding in a Competitive Market

Acquiring grants can be critically important to the work we do as criminal justice professionals. The following tips describe the components of a grant and may provide a starting point in perfecting your grant-writing skills.

Proposal: The purpose of the proposal should be to meet a need or solve a problem. It should:

- ✓ Identify what need is going to be met or what problem is going to be solved;
- ✓ Explain the reasons why the problem is a concern, the causes of the problem, and make the case for why it is necessary to fund the proposal;
- ✓ Include the nature and extent of the problem or need. A clear and concise picture of the existing situation should be painted for the funding organization;
- ✓ Include local statistics to describe the problem;
- ✓ Include qualitative data like anecdotes that help put a human face on the problem.

Do not include a shortage of staff or equipment as part of the problem.

Objectives: Objectives are the measurable outcomes of the project. Objectives should:

- ✓ Be measurable and set within a time frame;
- ✓ Indicate a change in the problems;
- ✓ Be linked to the data provided in the problem statement.

Approach: The approach explains the specific activities that will be conducted to achieve the objectives. The approach should:

- ✓ Relate directly back to the reasons and causes of the problem or need;
- ✓ Justify the amount of funding requested;
- ✓ Clearly identify who will be served by the project and how they will be selected;
- ✓ Identify specific activities of the proposal, who will be conducting the activities, and when and where the activities will occur.

- Evaluation:* Evaluation is the key to future funding. Applications should contain some form of evaluation. The evaluation should:
- ✓ Provide a means for measuring the outcome of the project;
 - ✓ Provide a system for measuring how the project was implemented and feedback for improvement of operations;
 - ✓ Be related to the objectives and problem or need.

- Budget:* It is important to properly complete the budget section in order to obtain funding. The budget should:
- ✓ Explain all items that will be paid for by grant funds;
 - ✓ Be directly related to the approach.



General Tips

- **Check Eligibility for Funding:** One of the most common mistakes fund seekers make is applying for funds for which they are not eligible. Check the funding agency's eligibility requirements and areas of interest.
- **Don't Solicit Funds Over the Telephone:** A telephone call for contact or other general information is acceptable and frequently a great idea.
- **Follow Instructions:** Read grant applications carefully. If a request is being submitted for funds on an agency's application form, read the instructions and then complete the application as instructed.
- **Neatness Counts:** If using a typewriter, proofread the work carefully. Where corrections are necessary, make them neatly so the corrections don't distract the reader. If using a computer, be sure to replace the ink cartridge when the print is no longer dark and sharp. Good writing skills are a must.
- **Keep Word Choice Simple and to the Point:** Words in a proposal should be easy to understand.
- **Don't Use Jargon:** When drafting a grant proposal, it is very important to write on a layperson's level. If technical terms are necessary, remember to explain them fully. Not all grant reviewers are in your field.
- **Don't Use Acronyms:** Acronyms have become the enemy of many grant reviewers. What is common for the applicant could be confusing to the reviewer. Spell out the terms.
- **Don't Wave Red Flags:** There are several factors that raise red flags when the application is being reviewed that can lower the possibility of funding, such as inflating the budget, high consulting costs without a detailed explanation of the costs, only part-time staff on the project, and costs that are not explained in the narrative.
- **Consider Grant Reviewers:** Since grant reviewers are taking time out of their schedules to review applications, applicants should avoid: flowery language that lacks substance, appending long documents, providing too much information, and gearing the project only to getting money.
- **Submit a Strong Proposal:** Strong proposals are those that have a compelling problem; are clearly written, organized and complete; describe an innovative approach; indicate the applicant has thoroughly researched the problem and solution; and come from a credible organization.
- **Be Forward Looking:** Grant funding is usually only for a specified period of time. The applicant should provide information in their application on how they will continue the program once grant funds end.