



Successful Grant Writing

Anyone can learn to write a successful grant with the appropriate tools and a basic knowledge of grant writing. Writing competitive grants means being a little better than the rest in researching, formatting, and writing your proposal. If you're willing to invest the time and energy necessary in learning how to do it right and follow the tips provided in this pamphlet, you'll find that your grant proposals will almost always be read. Not always awarded, but at least you'll know they were read and that alone will put you one step ahead of most of the competition.

There is no way every aspect of creating a grant proposal can be covered in a single chapter. The information presented in this chapter is designed as a guide and as a reference tool for novice grant writers.

Successful Grant Writing

What Is a Grant?

A very simple definition is a grant is a source of funds that an organization or corporation wishes to donate for a worthy cause. Most grants are awarded for specific programs, activities, or projects.

Funding organizations are much more likely to fund small grants — \$3,000 to \$5,000 — than large ones. However, grant awards can and do go into the millions of dollars. One important point to remember as you begin your fund-raising activities into the area of grants is don't get greedy.

There are a number of types of grant proposals one may submit. The requirements for each may differ somewhat.

- « **Program proposal.** To provide one or more services to individuals, families, groups, or communities.
- « **Research proposal.** To study a problem, group of people or organization, or to evaluate a service or program.
- « **Training proposal.** To offer training and educational programs to individuals, groups, organizations, or communities.

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- « **Planning proposal.** To provide planning, coordination, and networking in connection with a problem or among a group of organizations or programs.
- « **Technical assistance proposal.** To provide assistance to groups, agencies, and organizations in developing, implementing, and managing programs, studies, or other activities.
- « **Capital improvement proposal.** To build or remodel buildings and acquire equipment.

There are other types of grant proposals. However, these six are the major types.

Sources for Grants

Government. Total funding available: \$100 billion annually.

Foundations. Approximately 22,000 funding sources.

- « Newsletters are available from 200 of these funding sources.
- « Annual reports are available from 300 of these funding sources.
- « A handful have guidelines for writing proposals.
- « Industry only 35 percent of 2.3 million corporations give away anything.
- « Of the 35 percent, only 6-10 percent give away more than \$500.
- « Corporations give 40.8 percent to the education sector, 30.2 percent to the health/welfare sector, 12 percent to the civil sector, and 11 percent to the culture sector.
- « Corporations only give funding to projects which can help them directly or indirectly to improve profit, to assist in making them better corporate citizens, to help in product development, to help in worker support, to better understand main philosophy.

Where To Begin

#1 Decide What You Want Funded

Perhaps you need funding for:

Training programs.

Cadet scholarships.

A building for your squadron.

Few funding bodies grant monies for general operating expenses. Be specific. Identify a specific need.

#2 Visit the Foundation Center at Your Public Library

There you should be able to find large volumes listing foundations and the type of activities funded.

Locate foundations in your general area (or state) that traditionally fund activities similar to yours. Always pick four or five sources (at the very least) to apply for funding. To only pick one would drastically reduce your chances of securing funding. Submitting grants to several sources

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A Promise

The third part of your proposal is a promise. You will make a commitment to the fund administrator that certain things will be done during a specified time period at a specific cost.

Persuasion

The fourth function of a proposal is that it is an instrument of persuasion. Through the proposal you will seek to persuade some person or organization to support the proposed activity by allocating funds to it. In addition to providing money, the funding source normally lends its name to the project, helping to legitimize the project. Money and legitimation are not easily disbursed, so the fund administrators need to be convinced that their support should be granted.

Writing Your Proposal

The average person's span of attention when reading is 10 minutes. After that he will begin to scan the document, picking up key words, and may miss an important point. You must grab the reader's attention if you want your message to get across. What can you do to make sure that your writing captures and keeps your reader's attention?

Use **boldface**, UPPERCASE, underlined, or *italicized* type for key words, phrases, or sections

Use double spacing and wide margins on all sides.

Use bullets to list key points.

Use graphics — lots of them.

Paper

Color can create a more conducive mood for reading. Does the funding source appear to be conservative or liberal? Make this determination by the previous types of projects they have funded.

Conservative sources

Only use white, gray, or buff colors.

Regional preferences

Great Lakes region — blue or green shades.

Eastern seaboard (or any of the top 10 foundations in the nation) — white or gray.

Rest of the U.S. — pastel shades, harvest gold, wheat, buff, peach, light brown.

NEVER USE COLORED PAPER WITH STATE OR FEDERAL GOVERNMENT GRANTS.

Organization & Components

Select a Name for the Project

A tried and true fact: the project name will serve as a driving force to help you in writing your grant proposal. It should be brief, suggestive of purpose, and memorable.

Two Orders for Organizing

Your proposal will have two orders:

Writing order.

Final project order.

The Writing Order

- | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Introduction | 8. Bibliography (if applicable) |
| 2. Statement of Need | 9. Definitions |
| 3. Plan of Operation | 10. Abstract (Summary) |
| 4. Evaluation | 11. Table of Contents |
| 5. Key Personnel | 12. Cover Page |
| 6. Commitment and Capacity | 13. Cover Letter |
| 7. Budget | |

Final Project Order

1. **Cover Letter** (loose, not attached to the proposal).
2. **Cover Page** (also known as the title page).
3. **Table of Contents** (preferably if your proposal is over 10 pages total).
4. **Abstract** or summary (again, this is if your proposal is over ten pages long).
5. **Definitions** (only if you use a lot of jargon or abbreviations).
6. **Introduction** (the who, what and where).
7. **Statement of Need** (What is the problem?).
8. **Plan of Operation** (detailed solution).
9. **Evaluation** (How will you measure effectiveness).
10. **Key Personnel** (Team members responsible for the project).
11. **Commitment and Capacity** (What resources are already available to you?).
12. **Budget** (Try to tie each dollar requested to an objective. Ask, does the money match the request?).
13. **Endnotes** (Use endnotes, rather than footnotes).
14. **Attachments** (letters of support, audit statement, IRS nonprofit status letter, and other supplementary documentation).

Use the **writing order** when composing your grant proposal. Use the **Final Project Order** when organizing your grant proposal.

Tips: When writing a government grant proposal you will have numerous forms to fill out, as well as a detailed proposal narrative. Specific guidelines will be required. They can be quite long. A length of 40 pages is not unusual.

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However, most foundations do not provide specific guidelines. You will be expected as an "experienced grant writer" to demonstrate how thorough you can be in as few words as possible. LESS is always better.

Format for Foundations

Three primary elements:

Cover Letter

Introduction

Additional Materials

The Cover Letter

Your cover letter will determine if your grant proposal will be read by the funding body. It will be your primary motivator in determining if you are indeed better than the competition. So follow the following points closely — it could determine success or rejection. Your letter should....

- be brief (one page).
- proclaim the urgency of the problem you propose to address.
- say something different.
- cite dramatic need or unique quality.
- highlight outstanding endorsements.
- name linkage persons.
- offer to provide additional information/clarification/answers to questions.

Finally, show evidence of organizational commitment to your proposal through the cover letter. Commitment by the board of directors is required by some funding sources. In most cases the letter should be signed by a top authoritative figure within the organization.

The Proposal

Introduction

Be different. Make your proposal stand out from the rest.

Your introduction is the who, what, and where of CAP and your squadron/wing....a mental trip through Civil Air Patrol. Your introduction should be no more than two double spaced pages. Use factual information in describing your organization.

Introduce the organization.

State where is the organization located.

Tell the purpose of the organization.

Use legal name of organization.

Include address, city, and state of your location.

Note interesting information about your area.

Demographics (unemployment, average income, population, etc.), what is unique about your county, city, squadron, etc.

Date the organization was founded.

Circumstances leading up to the organization's establishment (CAP has an interesting and exciting beginning — *Be excited about it.*)

Your organization's **mission**.

Population you serve — type and size.

Unique qualities of your squadron/wing.

Niche. State organization's/squadron's/wing's niche or area of expertise, awards, or recognition.

Statement of Need

ALWAYS provide a transition statement from one section of your proposal to the next.

Example: At the end of the "Introduction" you might write, "The purpose of this request is to enlist (garner, elicit, encourage, seek) your support for Project (name of project)."

Use a Thesaurus. Everyone doesn't have the vocabulary of *Webster*. Your introduction will establish your credibility. Your "Statement of Need" will demonstrate your ability to plan a good program. **NEVER, NEVER** list a "lack of money" as the need! Everyone understands you are asking for money. It is a given.

In this section, only describe and document the situation that will be dealt with if you are awarded the grant funding. **DO NOT** go into the method you will use to deal with the situation — save that for later.

In this section you should

- use the most impacting language in your entire grant.
- use factual terms supported by statistics.
- use quotes from authorities.
- make a case for the problem/project on a local level.
- use hard hitting language and information.
- provide heart-wrenching picture of your need if possible.

CLUE: Only identify the need in this section. To do this you must understand the difference between problems and needs and the methods of solving problems or satisfying needs — which you'll cover later in your proposal.

Four Rules for Writing Your Statement of Need

1. Make a logical connection between the organization's background and the problems and/or needs with which you propose to work.

2. Clearly define the problem(s), need(s) with which you intend to work. Make sure that what you propose is workable — that it can be done within a reasonable time, by your organization/squadron/wing and with a reasonable amount of money.

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3. Support the existence of the problem/need by evidence. Statistics, statements from groups in the community concerned about the problem/need, from individuals involved with similar or related situations, and from other organizations working in your community and from professionals in the area.

4. Be realistic — don't try and solve all the problems of the world in the next 6 months.

CLUE: Give careful consideration to your presentation in this section. This is not the area to project hope or a solution—repeat — that will come later. Avoid using the phrase "a lack of" anything. To do so denotes a lack of method, also.

Plan of Operation: (or methods and procedures)

Now you will tell how you plan to accomplish the goals you set in your proposal. Your Plan of Operation is your vision, in detail, of a solution to your problem.

Necessary components of your Plan of Operation are:

1. A **clear statement of the purpose** of your project (the opening paragraph), and
2. **Attainable goals**, listed in rank order, with objectives following each goal. Think each goal through carefully. Make certain it is measurable and fits the definition listed below:

Goals — Outcomes. What you want your project to accomplish by the end of the funding period.

Objectives — Measurable steps your project will take to achieve the related goal and address the problem introduced in the Needs Statement.

A **timetable** should be included to indicate when you intend to accomplish the project objectives. Don't underestimate the time it will take to accomplish your goals, just because you think it sounds good in your proposal. Do not use specific dates in this section. You do not know when funds will be awarded. Use *month 1, month 2*.

A **flowchart** tracking the flow of each activity (objective) is helpful, but takes more time to develop. Various software programs can lessen preparation time.

Include your methods to accomplish the objectives. The methods should flow from the objectives. Make them understandable and include a detailed explanation.

Always include alternative methods, if applicable, for reaching the objectives. Often you can incorporate methods used by other organizations in this section.

This is not the section to skim on. The "keep it short and simple" rule does not apply in your Plan of Operation. Unless the guidelines provided by the foundation state a "one page" Plan of Operation. Always follow the guidelines provided.

Evaluation

The evaluation portion of your proposal will have two components:

- the **outcome evaluation**
- the **process evaluation**

Outcome evaluation measures the results of your program. Did the program (1) achieve its stated objectives? and (2) show how this accomplishment can be attributed to the program.

Process evaluation determines whether it has been conducted in a manner consistent with the proposal's plan, and the relationship and impact that other CAP programs had on the project's success.

If you do not include an evaluation plan, the foundation will use its own plan and it may be much more critical of the program than if you provide your own plan.

Provide a brief paragraph stating who will conduct the evaluation. Sometimes an outside evaluator will do the evaluation. You can provide for the cost of the evaluation in your budget.

Identify what you hope to learn from the results of the project evaluation — for example, problem areas, areas of strength, areas to improve, and ways to redirect your efforts.

A sample evaluation plan is included at the end of this chapter.

Key Personnel

Identify your key personnel: Project director, administrators overseeing the project, and any others who will be involved in your project.

List the following:

Educational background.

Current educational pursuits (if applicable).

Detailed professional experience (as it relates to the project area).

Indicate what percentage of each individual's time will be devoted to the project.

Include the organization's equal opportunity statement at the end of your key personnel section.

If you are not sure who will direct the project, include a job description instead.

Commitment and Capacity

What is the capacity of CAP (or your squadron) to implement and manage this project?

What assurances can you give the funding source?

If the project is part of CAP's long-range strategic plan, then discuss the plan and how this project fits in.

If "partnership" organizations will be working with you in a collaborative effort, include their names and roles in the project.

If the organization will be providing in-house support, list it in this section. In-house support could include personnel time, space for the project staff, utilities, maintenance, duplication, clerical support, and any other resources that will be made available by CAP or your staff to the project at no cost. Assign an estimated amount (value of services) to this Commitment Statement.

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Some, but not all, of the following areas can be addressed in this section:

Commitment to the proposed project.

Fiscal capacity.

Program capacity.

Future intention of responsibility for the program after funding period is over.

Adequacy of budget.

Effective management plan.

Budget

Make sure the budget you submit is a well thought-out, well-researched estimate of what your project will cost.

Offer a detailed narrative on each final line item in your budget. Include specifics on personnel costs, fringe benefits, travel costs, equipment, supplies, contracted services, construction, and other expenses.

You may want to break out your budget into categories:

Personnel costs.

Non-personnel costs.

Indirect costs.

Personnel costs will include a listing of all full and part-time staff in the proposed program. Even if the staff is a volunteer staff, show the time the volunteer(s) will be spending and assign a value to that. Funding bodies often require the organization to "donate" 20 percent to 25 percent of the grant amount. Volunteer time can account for this.

Non-personnel costs will include space costs (facilities), rental, lease or purchase of equipment, supplies, travel, and other costs. Other costs include items like dues, printing, tuition, etc.

Indirect costs are defined by the federal government as "those costs of an institution which are not readily identifiable with a particular project or activity, but nevertheless are necessary to the general operation of the institution and the conduct of the activities it performs." This could include operating and maintaining buildings and equipment, depreciation, general telephone expenses, etc.

Checklist for Grant Writers

These tips are invaluable. Read them before you begin your writing and again when you feel you have finished.

Be clear. Before starting the application process, be clear about what you want to accomplish. Draw up a long-range plan that projects goals at least 5 years ahead.

Research potential funds thoroughly — a cursory look through a foundation directory isn't good enough. Then apply what you've learned. Don't ignore a fund administrator's guidelines in the hopes of "fitting" your proposal into their niche.

Preview successful applications from grant-seekers whose projects are similar to yours. You'll not only get some good ideas, but an understanding of the competition, too.

Verify available funding, divide your efforts into three further phases: writing the proposal, marketing, and management.

Gauge your time. Writing the proposal should take only about 40 percent of your time. Try to get program officials to review a 3-5 page summary of your plan first, to make sure you're on the right track.

Basic rules of proposal writing. Don't ask for more than you need; take your time writing the proposal; never lie; never use the same application twice; be upfront about asking for money; and don't waste time getting to the point.

Don't overlook marketing. It should take at least 10 percent of your time. Make sure your organization will appeal to a potential fund giver. Be professional and involve key community figures where possible.

Management is vital. You must be able to demonstrate that you have the management skills and experience that can deliver success.

Know the fund administrator. Your chances of success improve by as much as 300 percent when you make contact with the fund administrator before and during the proposal-writing process. Don't ask for hidden agendas, but do find out about general trends or new ideas the fund administrator is currently interested in.

Stick to your timetable. Make sure you have enough time to complete the application so it meets the fund administrator's deadlines. If you don't have time to do it properly, don't compete for the grant at all.

Consider cooperation. Many fund administrators, particularly federal agencies, like applications where more than one organization is involved. If you submit a cooperative proposal, remember to make sure that there is both a formal and informal relationship between grantees.

When dealing with any fund administrator, but especially federal agencies, remember to read the instructions before applying. It sounds simple, but federal institutions live by two rules:

1. The agency is always right, and
2. When in doubt, refer to rule 1.

Provide proof. Don't just tell the fund administrator about the existence of the problem you intend to solve; prove it with statistics, case studies, testimony, and any other measurable data.

Know your budget. It's probably the first thing a fund administrator will look at in your proposal. It needs to be realistic and give credibility to your entire proposal. Present the budget separately from the rest of the application, make sure the figures are correct, and that the budget accurately reflects your needs. Keep a record of how you arrived at your costs.

Writing Tips

1. Avoid filling your proposal with jargon.
2. Begin each section with a strong, clear sentence.
3. Don't go overboard, but do try to make your proposal interesting to read.
4. Check with the fund administrator to see if there is a desired format, type style, etc.

If your proposal doesn't win support, keep calm. Never berate funding officials or grant reviewers. Try to get more information and ask whether it would be worth resubmitting your proposal.

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Assurances

Evaluation Plan — Foundation

GOAL 1: To increase learning options for children and youth at-risk in Orange and San Marcos counties.

Objectives

- At-risk and other elementary students in Orange and San Marcos counties will show significant gains in achievement, motivation, and performance of basic skills in participating classrooms.
- At-risk and other elementary students will show significant gains in self-esteem, communication, and other important social skills in participating elementary classrooms.

Measurement

- As measured by teacher and parent observation and standardized tests used in the participating districts.
- As measured by teacher and parent observation and our self-concept assessment.

Inventory and other selected effective measurement devices as per requirements of participating districts.

GOAL 2: To increase wellness opinions for children and youth at-risk in Orange and San Marcos counties.

Objectives

- At-risk and other elementary students will show significant improvement in knowledge, attitude and skills, allowing them to choose healthier life-styles in regard to nutrition, physical fitness, substance abuse, and stress management.
- At-risk and other elementary students will show significant gains in participation in activities that enhance healthy lifelong habits in the areas of nutrition, physical fitness, substance abuse, and stress management.

Measurement

- As measured by the pre/post screening using surveys from the statewide Health in Education Project, the Ohio State Youth Fitness Test, and teacher parent observation.
- As measured by project logs showing participation levels on support groups.

GOAL 3: To support and model health behavior and increase the effectiveness of parents and community members who work with at-risk children and youth in the Orange and San Marcos counties.

Objectives

- Parents and community members who work with at-risk and other children and youth will increase model health behaviors through project activities.
- Parent and community members who work with at-risk and other children and youth will increase their effectiveness through project activities.

Measurement

- As measured by pre/post surveys of parents/community members involved in project activities.
- As measured by project logs and parent/community member evaluations as part of project activities.

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GOAL 4: To support model health behavior and increase the effectiveness of middle and high school youth who work with at-risk children in Orange and San Marcos counties.

Objectives

- Middle and high school students who work with at-risk and other elementary students will increase model health behaviors through project activities.
- Middle and high school students who work with at-risk and other elementary students who work with at-risk and other elementary students will increase their effectiveness through project activities.

Measurement

- As measured by pre/post surveys of middle and high school youth involved in project activities.
- As measured by project logs and middle/high school youth evaluations as part of project activities.

Interpretation of Findings

When young people who are educationally and socially at-risk are introduced to learning and wellness options, their life-style changes to a more positive mode, thus the beginning of generational life-style changes.