



TOOLBOX



Grant Application

Grant Planning

Program planning and grant planning are intimately linked. Ideally, grant planning should be only one phase in the whole program development, program implementation, and evaluation cycle. Too often, it is treated as something separate and foreign. The best results in fund development will come when your grant and solicitation strategies are closely intertwined with your goals and program strategies. Build partners - not donors!

Having said that, if you can answer the following questions, you will be well on your way to both solid program development and successful fund development.

1) What's the problem we are addressing?

Remember - the problem is not your need - it's the community's need!

Who else is addressing, and what are the gaps in how it is being addressed?

Gaps can be programmatic, population, time/seasonal, or material. Gaps are the reason that you have a need!

2) How are we proposing to address the problem?

Paint a clear and specific picture of your program! Can your prospect see it in action in their mind?

How will things be different/will the problem be solved or improved, when you are done?

How will you know that you are succeeding? What will you measure in order to understand how you are doing and what needs to change or be adjusted?

3) What do you need in order to try to solve the problem?

This must tie to the approach you have described above. It's an opportunity to once again paint a picture of what you will be doing!

4) What resources do you already have? From whom?

Don't forget volunteers, donations and in kind services. Show the community participation in your project. Project the image that the funder is joining a winning team, not boarding a sinking boat!

5) What are the qualifications and experience that make your program the right one to take on this work?

History, key accomplishments, qualifications of staff and volunteers, relationships in the community....as they relate to this project.

6) Are there problems or barriers that you can foresee? How will you overcome them?

We all run into roadblocks when we try something new. Think through what you are going to do carefully. What's likely to trip you up? How can you anticipate these problems? Who will you turn to for help? Recognizing the possibility of problems is the sign of a sophisticated and professional program!

Application Outlines

As you research potential funders, you will sometimes encounter that tricky situation - a donor who specifies: "No application form is required, submit proposal." What proposal!?! you scream (but only out of hearing of the donor!) Well, a complete proposal has basic and time-honored elements - and here they are!

Note that when a brief proposal or letter is specified, you want to try to hit most of these points as well - only in a more abbreviated way.

1) Cover Letter

- No more than one page.
- Organization (who you are and your background briefly), purpose of funding, and the amount of your request should appear in the first paragraph.
- Include a contact name, phone number and address.

2) Proposal Summary

- Limit to one page.
- State the organization making the request and link organizational background to the proposal purpose.
- State your project purpose.
- Briefly state how your project will be implemented.
- State the results you expect from your project.
- Include your total budget amount, other funds that are committed and the amount of your request.

90% of funding decisions by private donors and foundations will be made by the time the funder finishes reading this page. It must be concise, compelling, and clear!

3) Introduction to the Organization

- History
- General Purpose
- Goals and objectives as they relate to this project, and in overview, as they provide a context for the work you want to undertake.
- Accomplishments, especially as they relate to this project or to your capacity to provide this project.
- Service areas and population served.
- Statement of Problem or Need
- Use a funnel approach.
- Start with the generalized problem as it occurs in your community.
- Move to the conditions, which make this a problem.
- Outline current resources that address this problem and identify gaps in those resources.
- Identify how your proposal will fill these gaps.

4) Project Goals and Objectives

- What specific goals are you trying to achieve?
- What measurable milestones will you reach in meeting those goals?
- How will you and the funder know that you are making progress towards your goals?

5) Methods and Schedule

- What actions will you take to achieve your goals?
- What steps must you take to achieve success?
- Who will do what? (Include here job descriptions and background statements of staff or the qualifications you will seek in staff for the project. This is true even if "staff" will actually be volunteers.)
- When will these actions take place?

6) Evaluation Criteria and Process

- How will you know whether you are achieving your goals?

- What will you measure to evaluate your progress?
- What records and information will you keep to allow you to measure your progress?

7) Budget

- More detail is better than less.
- Don't round out if possible. Use bids and estimates whenever you can get them - even if they are informal quotes.
- Don't pad your budget. Competent reviewers will know the cost of goods and services, and will understand prevailing wages. If they know you are trying to deceive them on budget, what else will they suspect you of trying to deceive them about?
- Do include all sources of support - including volunteer time, donated space and borrowed equipment. Don't shortchange the contribution your community is making to your project.