

The Three P's: Grant Writing 101

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A grant is . . .

**“
...a mechanism through which one
organization can influence the
behavior of another.”**

Eckstein, Richard M., ed., (2003). Directory of Operating Grants. Loxahatchee, FL: Research Grant Guides, Inc.

Types of Grants

- Program or project (public and private)
 - General operating funds/capacity building
 - Capital/equipment
 - Seed funding
 - Endowment
- 

What Makes a Winning Proposal?



The Three P's

- Position
- Persuasion
- Passion

Now I have to write a proposal...




- **Funding Priorities**
 - **Research**
 - **Relationships**
 - **Writing**
 - **Reporting**
 - **Resilience**
- 

Funding Priorities



What Are the Elements?

- **Mission Statement**
 - **Acquiring non-profit status**
 - **Credible programs**
 - **Setting funding Priorities:**
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Planning Session

- Fundability criteria
- Gathering Program Information:
- Concept, program, expenses

Research



. . . is to see what every body else has seen, and to think what nobody else has thought.

---Albert Szent-Gyorgyi

Research



- It isn't luck; it is hard work. Doing your due diligence is key.
- Look for limitations: Geographic? Gender?
- *READ first!! Many find out too late that they do not qualify!*
- Purpose and Activities: Does their purpose match yours? Don't try and mangle your mission to fit their funding priorities.

Research

Fields of Interest: Does your program fit the funding sources fields of interest? So you may have the same purpose – say, education BUT does the funder support, say after school programming OR just teacher retention

Types of Support: So the above categories match but the funder ONLY provides capital grants – you need general operating, do not attempt to send a grant in, in the hopes that it will get funded!

Research

Previous grants or grantees:

Have they funded similar projects? If so for how much? What did those projects have that you may/may not have?

Amount:

Is the funding source able to give you the amount you need? Your budget may be \$100,000 and they only fund grants up to \$5,000!

Research

Foundations publish their interests much like you do when you search for at home. The key is tapping into the database. Try the following sources:

- Associated Grantmakers of Massachusetts (www.agmconnect.org)
- Chronicle of Philanthropy (www.philanthropy.com)
- Foundation Center (www.fdncenter.org)

Research

- **Guidestar** www.guidestar.org
- **Hoovers** www.hoovers.com
- **Fundsnet Services** www.fundsnetervices.com
- **National Center for Urban Partnership**
www.ncup.org/links/nonprofit.htm
- **Grantsmanship Center** www.tgci.com
- **Community Foundations**
www.communityfoundationlocater.org
- **Government Grants** www.Grants.gov

Research

Print:

- **The Foundation Directory – 18,000 foundations**
- **The Foundation 1000 – profiles top 1000**
- **The National Directory of Corporate Giving – profiles 3,000 corporate grant making programs**
- **The Foundation Grants Index – 97,000 grants that have been awarded**

Grant Match Form

Name of Funder: Metro West Money Foundation

Project: Tutoring

Criteria	Match (1-5 points; 1 is lowest)	Comments
Grant Provider Goals		
Completed within requested \$\$		
Board member match		
Compatible evaluation methods		

Grants Calendar



Relationships




Relationship Calls




Introductory Call

- State why you are calling
- Introduce yourself and agency
- Inquire if you can submit a proposal
- Ask them if this interests them and then **BE QUIET!**

Questions to Ask :

- When will it be reviewed?
 - What size of grant do you give out to similar projects?
 - Request an appointment!
 - Always inquire whether ‘Is this is a good time to talk?’
 - Don’ t ever be rude if they turn you down!
- 

Quick Tip: Letters Of Inquiry/Interest

- Preliminary/test the waters
 - Usually two pages or less
 - Help to engage the funder
 - Set the stage for a longer proposal
 - Usually no need to include attachments
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Relationship Calls

- **Materials Received Call**
 - Did you get my proposal?
 - Am I missing any thing?
- **Status Call**
 - Have you reviewed it yet?
 - Did you need any thing else?
- **Rejection Call**
 - Why?
 - Can we resubmit?

Writing



You don't write because you want to say something, you write because you have something to say.

– F. Scott Fitzgerald

Cheat Sheet: A Grant at a Glance

- Cover Letter=1 page; 4 paragraphs
- Executive Summary = 1 Page; 4 paragraphs
- Organizational Information = 1 page; 3-4 paragraphs
- Problem Statement/Need = 2 pages
- Work Plan/Specific Activities = 1 page
- Outcomes/Impact = 1 page
- Evaluation= 1 page
- Budget Narrative = 1 page
- Other Funders = ½ page

If you can tell stories, create characters, devise incidents, and have sincerity and passion, it doesn't matter a damn how you write.

--Somerset Maugham



Cover Letter

Your cover letter should be:

- brief – one page with 3-4 paragraphs maximum
- get to the point quickly
- should not simply repeat the information that is in the proposal
- should tell the reader how well you understand the funder and how your grant fulfills the funder's requirements

Since the reader has an entire proposal to plow through, you don't want to make him or her impatient by having to read a long cover letter.

Cover Letter

- Use your organization's letterhead. Put the same date on the cover letter that is on the completed grant application. Be consistent!
- In your salutation, use "Dear" plus the personal title (Mr., Ms., Mrs., Dr., Messrs., etc.), followed by the last name. ***It is very important that the letter be to a particular person. Call the foundation or corporate office to make sure you have the right person and the right personal title.***
- **Your first paragraph:**
Should be short and focused. Introduce your organization (its legal name) and tell the funder how much money you are requesting and why and name the funder you are requesting funds from. Establish a personal connection in the first paragraph (Hint: remember our personal conversations with funders!).

Cover Letter

- **Second Paragraph:**

Introduce your organization in a sentence or two. Introduce your program/initiative.

- **Third Paragraph:**

Include a sentence or two about what your organization does, and then include one research-based point that shows there is a need for what your organization does.



Cover Letter

- **Final Paragraph:**

- State your organization's mission in relation to the funders mission and how they are in sync with each other.


- Use a closing such as "Sincerely."

- The letter should be signed by the executive director the board president, or both. Below the signature, type the signer's fist name, middle initial, last name, and job title. Although the ED or board president should sign the letter, the contact person's name and contact information can be included at the end of the last paragraph.

- ***At the bottom of the letter, include the word, "ENCLOSURE" (in all caps).***

Cover Letter

Four paragraphs:

- Paragraph #1: Name of agency, amount requested, and project name. If relationship establish that in this paragraph.
 - Paragraph 2: Agency description.
 - Paragraph 3: Project description.
 - Paragraph 4: Make the request again, and conclude with a powerful sentiment.
- 

Any man who keeps working is not a failure. He may not be a great writer, but if he applies the old-fashioned virtues of hard, constant labor, he'll eventually make some kind of career for himself as writer.

--Ray Bradbury



Executive Summary


The summary comes first and helps the funder to understand at a glance what you are seeking. At the beginning of your proposal, or on a cover sheet, write a short (two or three-sentence) summary of your proposal.

Example:

"The Women's Relief Society requests \$10,000 for a three-year training program for disadvantaged women. Training will cover basic financial skills, job hunting skills, and interviewing techniques."

Executive Summary

Four paragraphs:

1. Paragraph 1: Name of agency and project name. Establish agency reputation.
 2. Paragraph 2: Describe project/agency.
 3. Paragraph 3: Tie that together to reflect agency and foundation mission.
 4. Paragraph 4: Request \$ amount; and why this is critical to project/agency success.
- 

*Not that the story need be long, but it
will take a long while to make it short.*

--Henry David Thoreau

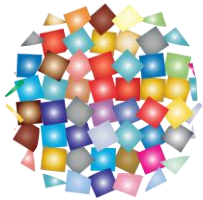


Organizational Information

- Give a short history of your organization, state its mission, the population it serves, and an overview of its track record in achieving its mission. Describe or list your programs.
- In a few paragraphs explain what your organization does and why the funder can trust it to use the requested funds responsibly and effectively.
- Be complete in this part of your proposal even if you know the funder or have received grants from this grant maker before.

\?

Tips: Ask Yourself? (Who)




- Who are you?
- Who do you serve *currently*?
- Who you *want* to serve?
- What demographic, cultural, educational, and other challenges set your target population apart from society at large?

(HINT: Should have done this already while setting funding priorities!)

Organizational Information

Facts to include via four short paragraphs:

1. Date founded and significance of founding.
 2. Names of those involved – if notable!
 3. At least 10 accomplishments over the decades.
 4. At least 5 accomplishments from prior fiscal year.
 5. Current leaders and the bio of your Executive Director (or comparable leader). Keep this short!
- 

I have been successful probably because I have always realized that I knew nothing about writing and have merely tried to tell an interesting story entertainingly.

--Edgar Rice Burroughs



Problem/Need/Situation Description/Project


- This is the meat of your proposal and where you must convince the funder that what you propose to do is important and that your organization is the right one to do it.
- Assume that the reader of your proposal does not know much about the issue or subject. Explain why the issue is important and what research you did to learn about possible solutions.

Tips: Ask Yourself? (Why)



- Your project should have strong rationale behind it. Does it?
- Why you are targeting who you are targeting?
- Why you have decided on what you will do?
- Why are you focusing on this problem?
- Why now?

Strong Need Statements

- The need you address must be clearly related to your nonprofit's mission and purpose.
 - It should focus on ***those people you serve***, rather than your organization's needs.
 - It should be well supported with ***evidence*** such as ***statistical facts, expert views, and trends***.
 - It must be directly connected to, and ***substantiate, your organization's ability to respond to that need.***
- 

Strong Needs Statements

- It must be easily digestible. Use the KISS principle (*keep it sweet and simple*). Avoid jargon and make it easy for the reader to get what you are saying.
- It should avoid circular reasoning, a common error in grant proposals. The Foundation Center defines circular reasoning as the presentation of the absence of your solution as that actual problem. Then your solution is offered as the way to solve the problem.

For example. . .



- **For example:**

The problem is that we have no senior center in our community. Building a senior center will be a good thing.


Reframe the problem:

40% of our community members are over 55; 20% are over 70. Seniors living alone face isolation and risk of physical and mental health problems. (citation) A senior center would provide a welcoming place to help mitigate these problems and to increase the quality of life for our older community members.

Strong Needs Statement

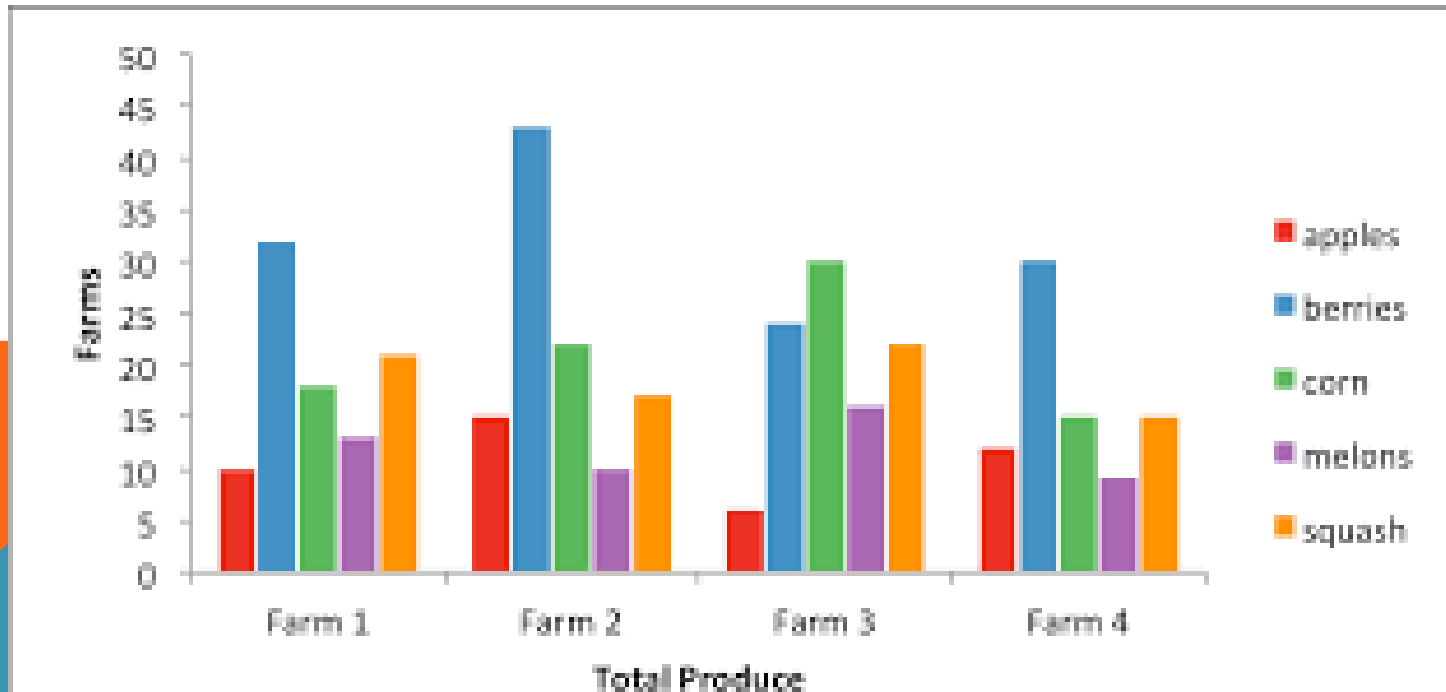
- Use comparative research. Citing a community that did something similar to your proposal and its beneficial results makes a strong case for your proposed actions.
- Use stories but anchor those stories in the bedrock of hard data. A well-supported need statement that also includes effective stories is a winner.

Strong Needs Statement

- Quote authorities on your topic. Include names and the sources so the information can be verified.
 - Document all your data. If you collect data from the Internet, be sure the websites you reference are reputable and the links are current.
 - Provide a sense of urgency. Help the funder understand why the funding is important NOW!
- 


Integrating Charts And Tables

- Lots of sentences can get dull!
- Drive home point about target audience!
- Shows done research on population and explaining the problem grant funds can solve with a visual.
- Pie chart, column, line, scatter, bar, area, other.




Need Statement

Paragraph #1:

1. Introduce the problem. Start the section with a defining statement. Essentially state the problem.
 2. Provide a few viable solutions.
 3. Explain why your method is the best method.
 4. Explain your success in providing a solution.
- 


Need Statement

Paragraph #2:

1. Provide statistics that back your solution.
 2. Name the sources for those important statistics.
 3. Compare those statistics to a possible situation where 'your' solution was not provided.
 4. Close the paragraph with a concluding sentence that highlights one statistic.
- 

Need Statement

Paragraph #3:

1. Provide a real life example. Use real names if possible.
 2. Make it vibrant. Larger than life portrayal of someone served.
 3. Provide a quote from either that person/situation or another to support - more real life data/story.
 4. Provide a staff members view on this person/situation.
 5. Provide a 'happy ending'.
- 

Need Statement

Paragraph #4:

Final paragraph for this section.

- Define what would happen if 'you' didn't exist
- Provide strong rationale in one sentence about your approach being a successful one.
- State a number that can help reader determine – huge numbers served.
- Close the section with a defining sentence. Essentially state how 'your' program fixed the issue.

*First, find out what your hero wants, then
just follow him!*

--Ray Bradbury



Work Plan/Specific Activities

What does your organization plan to do about the problem? What is your project's logic model? List details including:

- What you will do. Describe the activities.
- What will you achieve?
- What will be the benefit?
- How will you measure the benefit? (evaluation)
- When will the project take place? Do you have a project start date and end date?
- Who will manage the project?

Start With Your Goal

- Mistaking goals for objectives is a common mistake.
- **GOALS** are broad statements that give the reader a general idea of the point of the program
- **OBJECTIVES** are promised improvements in the situation described in the problem statement.
- They are **S.M.A.R.T**: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-Limited

- **Think of a GOAL first**
 - *Example: Citizenship Program*
 - *Goal: Increase the number of naturalized citizens in Lowell, MA*
 - **Then add promised improvements:**
 - *Objectives: Raise awareness and provide education about the benefits of U.S. citizenship and the resources that exist to support individuals in applying for naturalization*
 - *Provide citizenship preparation classes to ensure applications have the knowledge to pass the naturalization exam*
 - *Support refugees and immigrants in successfully completing and submitting citizenship applications (N-400s)*

What Will You Do: Creating Activities Around Objectives

- You should be able to describe succinctly what you are going to do.
- *Example:* Becoming a Citizen
 - Activity: Informational Sessions
 - Description: Organize public information sessions to advertise naturalization exam and interview preparation classes and application services

What Will You Achieve: Outputs

- An output tells the story of what you produced or your organization's activities.
- *Example:*
 - Activity: Becoming a Citizen Informational Session
 - **Outputs: 5 informational sessions conducted, 25 guests per session attend**
- Outputs do not address the value of the impact of your services for your clients.

What Is the Benefit: Outcomes

- Outcomes are the difference made by the outputs. Tell the funder how you expect the project to affect the targeted population. How will the situation change as a result?
- Example:
 - Activity: Becoming a Citizen Informational Session
 - Outputs: 5 informational sessions conducted, 25 guests per session attend
 - **Outcomes: Increase knowledge within refugee and immigrant communities about the naturalization process while expediting pre-application processes**

How Will You Measure the Benefit?

Evaluation

Outcomes are the difference made by the outputs. Funders want to know that their dollars actually did some good. So decide now how you will evaluate the impact of your project. Include what records you will keep or data you will collect and how you will use that data. If the data collection costs money, be sure to include that cost in your budget!

Example:

- Activity: Becoming a Citizen Informational Session
- Outputs: 5 informational sessions conducted, 25 guests per session attend
- Outcomes: Increased knowledge within refugee and immigrant communities about the naturalization process while expediting pre-application processes
- **Evaluation: Participant feedback survey and # of screening appointments arranged**

Evaluation: Qualitative and Quantitative

- **Qualitative:**

Evaluation measures used to explore and gain an understanding or insight

Example: Participant feedback survey used to measure knowledge gain


- **Quantitative:**

Evaluation measures expressed as numbers (how many, how much, how often).

Example: # of screening appointments arranged



Evaluation Tips

- Make sure that your evaluation systems are in place and not a figment of imagination.
 - Keep it SIMPLE to perform: Make sure your evaluation measures are realistic--saying you can evaluate and then being unable to do so really ticks a funder off.
 - Most popular evaluation is a 'stakeholder' evaluation! (Surveys, focus sessions, etc.)
 - Record, Track and Target!
 - Do you want to disseminate your evaluation?
- 

When Will the Project Take Place: Timeline

- Project activities will usually last for a period of time during grant funding. 2 months? One year? Three years?
- Example:

Activities	Q1			Q2		
	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR
Information Sessions	X		X		X	


Who Will Manage the Project and Perform the Activities? Staffing

- Assign staff position(s) responsible for each project activity
- Example:
 - Activity: Becoming a Citizen Informational Session
 - Outputs: 5 informational sessions conducted, 25 guests per session attend
 - Outcomes: Increased knowledge within refugee and immigrant communities about the naturalization process while expediting pre-application processes
 - Evaluation: Participant feedback survey and # of screening appointments arranged
 - Staffing: Citizenship Program Coordinator

Conclusion

- This is a good place to call attention to the future.
- Prepare funders for next request.
- Area to make final appeal for your current project.
- Don't be afraid to use emotion to solidify your case at this point.

Other and Future Funding

- Provide concrete sources
 - Provide accurate numbers
 - Partnerships in place
 - Funders spoken with
 - Monies accrued to date
- 


Write without fear
Edit without MERCY!



A Second Type of Grant...A Letter Proposal


- Sometimes the scale of a project determines this route.
- No more than 3 pages
- Components: Ask for the gift; Describe the need; Explain what you will do; Provide agency data; include appropriate budget data; Close: as with a longer proposal a letter proposal needs a ***strong concluding statement.***

Third Type of Grant: Public Funding Proposals

- Eligibility requirements may be different
 - RFPs prescribe format for proposals and require certain activities/formal submission requirements in detail
 - Requires internal coordination with organizational departments (Programs, Finance)
 - Application processes and deadlines very firm
- 

Third Type of Grant: Public Funding Proposals

Continued

- Often complex application, administration and compliance procedures
 - Changing political trends affect security of some programs/availability of fund can change rapidly
 - Can require matched resources
 - Often funding is structured as cost-reimbursement
 - NOT easy money!
- 


Public Grant Workplan

- **See handouts**

Writing Tips

- Avoid Jargon
- Sort your thoughts out first
- Do not repeat information
- Keep it simple – flowery or wordy does not help
- Revise. Revise. Revise. Edit. Edit. Edit & finally
- SPELLCHECK!

Writing, Revision, Editing

- Write to get content down-thoroughly and accurately
 - Share draft with selected people on team (or others?) and ask for feedback on **CLARITY – Does this make sense?**
 - Revise based on feedback
 - Pass draft around again and ask selected readers to look for
 - ACCURACY –fact checking
 - Mechanical, grammatical, spelling, punctuation errors
 - Formatting consistency (font size, spacing)
 - If multiple writers, assign one main writer with final; say who can provide unified voice
- 

Additional Materials

Funders are likely to want the following:

- IRS letter proving that your organization is tax-exempt.
- List of your board of directors and their affiliations.
- Staff qualifications
- Financial statement from your last fiscal year.
- Program budget
- Budget for your current fiscal year.
- Budget for your next fiscal year if you are within a few months of that new year.

Rejections

You will get rejected if:

- It is not clear what need is being addressed by the proposal
- It is not clear what the outcome of the project might be, or what would constitute successor failure.



It is vital to discuss what contribution to society would be made by the project.

Rejections

You will get rejected if:

There is no evidence that the proposers will succeed where others have failed: It is easy enough to write a proposal with an exciting-sounding wish-list of hoped for achievements, but you must substantiate your goals with quantifiable evidence of why you have a good chance of achieving them.



***The proposal is just a routine application of other known techniques:
What sets you apart is what makes you different!***

Rejects

You will get rejected if:

- ***The proposers seem unaware of related research:***
Related work must be mentioned, if only to be dismissed. Otherwise, the committee will think that the proposers are ignorant, and therefore not the best group to fund.
- ***The proposal is badly presented, or incomprehensible to all but an expert in the field:*** Remember that your proposal will be read by non-experts as well as (hopefully) experts. A good proposal is simultaneously comprehensible to non-experts, while also convincing experts that you know your subject.



Rejections

- ***The proposal is too expensive for the probable gain:***
If it is easy to see how to cut the request for people/equipment/travel, etc. to something more reasonable then it might be awarded in reduced form. More likely, it will be rejected.
- ***The proposers seem to be attempting too much for the funding requested and time-scale envisaged:***
Such lack of realism may reflect a poor understanding of the problem or poor research methodology.



Resilience And Persistence



The pursuit of foundation funding isn't for the faint of heart! Some foundations get ten times the number of proposals a They actually fund. The key is to not give up!

This is a competitive process. Nevertheless, I believe that Armed with the right attitude, tools and information, any development professional, even volunteers, can succeed in pursuing foundations.

Resilience And Persistence

- Submitting and Follow-up
- Can be a letter, a report, or a visit
- Way to share success stories
- Helps pave the way for a next grant
- Timeliness counts!

Sources

- Foundation Center www.foundationcenter.org
- Grantstation www.grantstation.com
- Chronicle of Philanthropy www.philanthropy.com
- Guidestar www.guidestar.org
- Government Grants Grants.gov