

***Are you losing sleep over your grant proposal?
Grant writing doesn't have to be an exercise in frustration!***

Here are a few tips to simplify the process.

Understand your project. If you put the energy and excitement that you felt when you thought of your project into thinking through a few more details, you'll have a better program and a more successful grant seeking experience. Ask yourself a few questions.

- *What need does your project fulfill?* You probably already know the answer to this question; so this part should be fun. Just remember: when you describe the need, you want to win hearts as well as minds. You win hearts by telling stories about the target population. You win minds by providing statistics or citing studies that demonstrate a strong need for the service you want to offer.
- *Exactly what will your project do and how will it do it?* Think about the outcome you want to achieve. Make a list of the steps you need to take in order to achieve that outcome. What activities will each of these steps require? What resources and materials will you need for each activity? Answering these questions now will increase your chances of getting funded, and just as importantly, help ensure that your project is a success once you get it up and running.
- *What does the budget look like?* Everything on your list of activities should be in your budget. Be sure to include all of the relevant direct and indirect costs. Consider this scenario: You want a grant of \$50,000 to launch a community music school inside an existing community center, and you plan to spend the entire grant amount on musical instruments. Even though you don't have to pay rent, you need to include in the budget the value of the space your school will occupy. The same is true for the utilities you'll be using, administrative support you may receive, and so on. In a different part of your budget, you can itemize the in-kind contributions you will receive to cover these costs. Now instead of asking for a grant to cover 100% of your costs, you are asking for only a portion of the total costs, and you're showing that you've thought through all of the important details.

Choose foundations carefully. Now that you can articulate all of your project's vital details, you're ready to search for the foundations that share your goals. Careful research really pays off here. Use foundation databases and then go to foundation websites and guidestar.org to get a detailed picture of the foundation's current priorities. It is better to send out one grant proposal to a foundation that has a real interest in your project than to submit twenty proposals to foundations that *might* be interested.

Read the funding guidelines. Read them again. Foundations can be pretty picky about how they want things done. Make sure you give them what they want. Who knows, maybe they'll give you something very nice in return.

Tips provided by your friendly neighborhood grant writer.

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