

To obtain grant dollars, you must write a strong application. Although no two grant applications are the same, most focus on eight areas. Address those areas effectively, and you will increase your chances of receiving grant awards.



1. Summary—In grant applications, a *Summary* is usually the first thing requested, but it should be the last thing written.

It encapsulates the other seven grant proposal components: (a) applicant description; (b) problem statement; (c) solution objectives; (d) program outline; (e) evaluation summary; (f) budget details; and (g) sustainment plan. As a result, those areas should be addressed before the Summary is drafted. Then, a couple key statements from each of those areas can be reiterated to create the Summary. By approaching the Summary in this way, it almost writes itself!

2. Applicant Description—

Funders want to know something about the people asking them for money. Consequently, they often ask applicants to describe themselves in the *Introduction* of an application.

In response, applicants should detail (a) their qualifications for managing a proposed program; (b) their success in operating similar programs in the past; and (c) their suitability for working with those who would benefit from a proposed program. Of course, these statements should be supported by cited statistical data from reliable sources.

3. Problem Statement—Without question, the *Problem Statement*, or *Needs Assessment*, is the most important component of any grant proposal. After all, if there is no problem, there is no need for grant dollars.

Therefore, an applicant must use this section of an application to (a) define the problem, or need; (b) note the causes of the problem; (c) detail how the applicant's proposed program would address that problem; and (d) describe how addressing the problem would aid those served by the grant.

This section also is the appropriate place for quotes from key stakeholders, including those who would be served by the program, as long as those remarks pertain to the stated problem or the proposed program. Finally, statistics with reliable, cited sources should again be used to support important points.



4. Solution Objectives—In the *Objectives* section of an application, the applicant must offer the funder specifics, in measurable terms, as to the change that would occur through the proposed program. For example, an applicant must indicate the number of people expected to be served or the percentage of improvement projected over a certain period of time. Of course, a sound basis for the cited numbers must also be provided.

Remember, objectives and goals are not the same. Goals are general intentions, while objectives are precise targets. If a funder requests objectives, an applicant would be wise to avoid stating, for example, "Our sole objective is to make the world a better place." Instead, an applicant would be better served by starting off with something like, "Based on the results of a similar program we offered a year ago, as described in detail in the Applicant Description section above, we expect to serve 100 at-risk teens through our program during its first year." Then, the applicant would go on to set forth other specific objectives.



5. Program Outline—This section of a grant proposal is where an applicant describes in detail the *methods*, or *action plan*, and *timeline* that make up the program proposed to address the issue noted in the Problem Statement. This description should include the names of the program partners as well as the specific activities for which each partner will be responsible. The sequence of activities, along with the time frame during which those activities will be accomplished, should also be outlined. Finally, the applicant should explain how the program will be staffed and how that staff will be trained to do their various jobs effectively.



6. Evaluation Summary— The *Evaluation* component of a grant proposal gives an applicant the opportunity to tell the grantor how the various objectives identified in the Solution Objectives section of the application will be quantitatively assessed. The grantor wants to know (a) who will



conduct the program evaluation; (b) the data-gathering tools and methods to be used; (c) when the evaluation will be done; and (d) how the gathered data will be analyzed and reported.

7. Budget Details—In the *Budget Details* section of an application, the applicant must set forth in dollars and cents exactly what the proposed program will cost over a given period of time. To accomplish this, the applicant needs to address the cost of all activities and staff noted in the Program Outline. The application may include a budget template that separates expenses into two categories: personnel and program costs. If no such template is supplied, the applicant should design one, placing personnel costs in one area and program costs in another.

8. Sustainment Plan—In the *Sustainment Plan* section of the proposal, the applicant must explain how the proposed program will continue to exist after the grant period ends. How will it be funded? How will activities get accomplished? Funders prefer to support efforts designed to continue long after their financial support ceases.

Quick Tips for Grant Writing

- 1.** Follow all application directions! Use the type of font requested. Do not exceed the page limits. Answer the questions as asked. Submit the proposal on time. Do not second guess the grantor.
- 2.** Make sure the proposal is consistent. The Budget Details section should include only those items discussed in the Program Outline. The proposed program should be designed to meet the stated objectives. The objectives, if met, should resolve or effectively address the problem as set forth in the Problem Statement. In other words, the grant application should flow.
- 3.** Focus on the people who will benefit from the proposed program. Do not merely offer crime statistics or report that crime is bad in the proposed program area. Rather, also tell about the people being victimized. Certainly do this in the Applicant Description, the Problem Statement, and the Program Outline. However, do not be overly dramatic; you are not writing a novel.
- 4.** Use simple language. Do not use acronyms or technical jargon. Assume the application reviewers know nothing about you or your work.
- 5.** Be positive. Do not accuse or indict others and do not give the funder ultimatums. Grant money is awarded on the strength of the applications, not on an applicant's ability to guilt the grantor.
- 6.** Make the application interesting. Use quotes from relevant people, including stakeholders and experts. Offer sound data too. However, do not overwrite.
- 7.** Proofread, proofread, proofread!

For informational purposes only. The U.S. Attorney's Office does not guarantee grant success by following these tips.

Tips for Grant Writing



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