



Techniques for Effective Grantwriting

Identifying a funding source and developing and writing a successful grant proposal can be challenging. Applying for small grant amounts may involve as much work as applying for large grants. Below are some suggestions for developing and writing a successful proposal to fund your project.

Step 1. Develop program idea and research funding resources

A. Clearly define program idea, purpose and mission statement

Potential funders need to understand exactly what you are asking them to support, and what the benefits will be to the target population and community.

- Define the intervention program you would like to implement.
- Research whether this intervention program has been tried before.
- See if the program has been evaluated and consider evaluation results and recommendations.
- Consider the setting in which the program has been previously implemented and compare that to the proposed setting.

B. Identify the right funding sources

Target funders that have an interest in the program community you serve, or in the type of program you wish to implement. Foundation centers, computerized databases, station development offices, publications, and public libraries are examples of resources available to assist you in your funding search.

- Do not limit funding search to one type of funder, such as private foundations. Look for government grant opportunities (federal, state and local,) United Way agencies, and other funding sources as well.
- Look for a match between the proposed project and the grants you seek by looking for consistency between the purpose and goals of your project and the funder's mission or mandate.
- Develop your program ideas and plans so that you will be prepared for funding opportunities that arise, such as competitive grant announcements.
- Pinpoint specific funding priorities and preferences.

This document has been published by the Suicide Prevention Resource Center at EDC as a collection of resources, promising initiatives and other helpful information on the subject of suicide prevention. It is the reader's sole responsibility to determine whether any of the information contained in these materials is useful to them. This material is based upon work supported by the Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration under grant No. 1 U79 SM55029-01. Any opinions, findings and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.



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C. Contact possible funders

Make direct contact with funders inclined to support projects and communities like yours.

- Identify a project officer to whom you may address questions.
- Ask for technical assistance, including a review of proposal drafts (some funders offer technical assistance, others do not.)
- Determine if available funding is appropriate for your project. Note whether there is a funding floor or ceiling
- Learn about the proposal review and decision-making process.
- Request proposal guidelines and a list of projects previously funded. (Perhaps an annual report is available.)
- Find out whether the funder has other grant sources for which your project is eligible.

D. Acquire proposal guidelines

Guidelines usually tell you about submission deadlines, eligibility, proposal format, award levels forms, margins, spacing, evaluation process and restrictions on the number criteria of pages, etc.

- Review funder's timetable, budgets, funding goals and priorities, award levels, evaluation process and criteria, whom to contact, other submission requirements.
- Inquire about budgetary requirements and preferences. (Are matching funds required? Is in-kind acceptable as a portion of applicants' share? What may be counted as in-kind, and how might it be applied?)
- Review proposal guidelines to ensure that you are not requesting funding for any item for which the funder does not allow use of their funds (e.g. some funders do not allow use of their funds for buying new equipment.)
- Learn about payment processes, including cash flow.
- Know the maximum amount available. Also, inquire about the average size and funding range of awards.

E. Know the submission deadline

Even the best proposal cannot be considered if it is not delivered on time.

- Be realistic about whether you have time to prepare a competitive proposal that meets the deadline.
- Know the funders' policies on late submissions, exceptions, and mail delays.
- Plan to submit your proposal on or preferably before the deadline.
- Find out how the funder will notify you about the receipt and status of your proposal. Factor this information into your timeline.
- After submitting the proposal, check to make sure it has been received.



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Step 2: Write a need statement, define goals and objectives

A. Write a need statement

A need statement is a brief narrative of program purpose and a compelling, logical reason for why the proposal should be supported.

- This section must include background information to provide perspective to the needs statement.
- Including relevant and accurate data helps strengthen the statement.
- Statements made in this section must be factual and attributed to their source.
- Anecdotes help personalize a needs statement.

B. Define goals and objectives

While goals may be broad, objectives must be specific, measurable, accurate, realistic and time-based.

- Determine the program goals.
- Identify the specific objectives within each goal that define how you will focus the work to accomplish those goals.

Step 3. Develop methods, work plans and budgets

A. Develop methods and work plans

Operationalizing your proposed intervention project is a critical step. A proposal for funding must clearly describe how the project will be implemented and the different steps necessary for accomplishing goals and objectives.

- Outline activities and briefly describe how each activity will help the program reach its goals.
- Include a description of intended scope of work with expected outcomes.
- Describe personnel functions and activities of key staff and consultants.
- Designate staff responsible for planning and executing these activities.

B. Develop a timeline

Funders need a clear sense of what you can accomplish and when it can be done.

- Outline a weekly or monthly schedule of activities, as appropriate to the duration of your program.
- Include the estimated start and end dates of each activity.



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- Indicate projected outcomes of each activity.
- Mention the program objectives that will be achieved by successful completion of each activity.

C. Develop budget

Budgets are cost projections. They are also a window into how projects will be implemented and managed. Well-planned budgets reflect carefully thought out projects.

- Include sufficient budget detail and explanation.
- Make sure the program goals can be accomplished with the proposed budget. The budget should be consistent with the proposed activities.
- Costs must be reasonable for the market in which the program is proposed.
- Many funders provide mandatory budget forms that must be submitted with the proposal.
- List in-kind and matching revenue, where appropriate.
- Design a flexible budget in case the funder chooses to negotiate costs.
- Mention any other sources of funding that you have already secured.
- Check whether your organization charges for overhead costs or administrative fees and whether the funder has restrictions about paying these costs.
- Review the budget with your organization's accountant and get necessary approval.

Step 4: Evaluate and devise next steps.

A. Develop an evaluation plan

Most funders require a detailed evaluation component to demonstrate that their funds have been used effectively to address the problem.

- Specific and time-based objectives can easily be translated into an evaluation plan. (Consider objectives written in Step 2.)
- The Centers for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC) recommends Continuous Quality Improvement as a simple and useful evaluation tool. This tool considers the timeline proposed for the program activities and monitors successful completion of these activities as per the proposed schedule. If there are delays or problems with any of the proposed activities, this can be easily noted and corrective steps can be taken promptly.

B. Devise next steps

Funding is almost always for a specified term. A proposal should also outline how the project will evolve once this funding cycle is completed.



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- Once a program has been successfully implemented, it must be disseminated and developed further.
- Describe how you will share the results of your program with others – journals, presentations etc.
- Include a brief section on how you envision your program developing into a stronger and better program over time.

Step 5: Assemble the proposal

A. Obtain supporting materials

Supporting materials are often arranged in an appendix. These materials may endorse the program and the applicant, provide certifications, add information about any proposed program personnel and consultants, exhibit tables and charts, etc. Policies about the inclusion of supporting materials differ widely among funders. Whether to allow them usually depends upon how materials contribute to a proposal's evaluation. Restrictions are often based on excess volume, the element of bias, and relevance.

- Find out if supporting materials are desired or even allowed.
- Be prepared to invest the time to collect resources, obtain letters of support, document capability, update a resume, and include reference reports as needed.

B. Make sure the proposal meets all of the funder's specifications

Tailor proposal writing to specifications found in the guidelines. Include only the number of pages allowed. Observe the format desired by the funder.

- Authorized signatures are required. Proposals may be rejected for lack of an authorized signature. Be sure to allow the necessary time to acquire appropriate signatures.
- Write a brief cover letter, including reference to the proposal number mentioned in the guidelines. Address the cover letter to the correct person. Give a 1-2 sentence description of your program, highlighting the factors that make your proposal unique and also align the program with the purpose and goals of the funding source.
- Do not send the same proposal to more than one funder at a time. Receiving recommendations from one funder's review will help you improve the proposal before sending it to another funder. In addition, funders often communicate with each other and reject proposals that have been simultaneously submitted to multiple funders.



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Some Important Online Resources

Government grants	
Online federal resources	www.firstgov.gov
Federal grantmaking information in the US Department of Health and Human Services	http://www.hhs.gov/grants/index.shtml#funding
Federal Grant Opportunities Department of Education	http://www.fedgrants.gov/
Your state website	www.ed.gov

Foundation sites	
Associated Grantmakers	www.agmconnect.org
Grantmakers In Health	www.gih.org
The Foundation Center	www.fdncenter.org
The Grantsmanship Center	www.tgci.com
The Chronicle of Philanthropy	www.philanthropy.com
Philanthropy Journal Online	www.pj.org
National Network of Grantmakers	www.nng.org

Sites for needs statement research	
Census information	www.census.gov
CSN Economics and Insurance Resource Center	www.csneirc.org
Suicide data	www.cdc.gov/wisqars
Your local library	

