



Grantwriting Tips

<http://lone-eagles.com/granthelp.htm>

Many Community Grant Templates are at <http://lone-eagles.com/rural-grant-templates.htm> to be shared without restriction.

Writing grant proposals to get money to make your project happen is becoming more and more common. Here are tips and resources for writing your first grant!

- 1. Find out which foundations have given grants in your region** similar to your planned proposal! Talk to those who got funded and ask for advice and ideally copies of their successful grants.
- 2. Read the current guidelines** for those foundations on what they will fund and when the grants are due. If a foundation says they won't fund equipment, don't ask them for equipment (unless it's a necessary component of the part of the grant they said they'd fund!) For example: A programmatic grant could ask for \$50,000 in support equipment, but would not be considered if they called themselves a technology project. Semantics do matter a great deal!

If they say they'll fund up to \$15,000, don't ask them for \$50,000. Foundations often shift their focus, and timing can be very important. Watch for timing-sensitive opportunities. Do your homework! Grant reviewers appreciate those who paid attention to their RFP's (Requests for Proposals.) Too few do!

- 3. Collect sample successful grants to use as boilerplate models.** Many foundations will send you, on request, proposals from past funded projects, or at least will give you the addresses of past grant recipients, so you can ask them directly for copies of successful proposals. The more good proposals you read, the more you'll understand how clear writing and following guidelines leads to funding.
- 4. Use the same terms in your proposal that the foundation used** to describe what they want to fund. Buzz phrases push important buttons. If they tell you what to tell them: listen, and be convincing as to how your project dovetails with their posted guidelines. If an RFP says they don't fund technology grants, don't use the word technology. Find other words to express your project, ideally taken directly from the RFP guidelines.
- 5. Get to know individuals who have worked with the foundations to which you're applying.** Talk to foundation personnel as much as is politely possible. Typically, little suggestions, and hints, you'll pick up, even from a phone conversation, will make major differences in the final form and focus of your proposal. The more personal contacts you make, the better for you. Foundations appreciate those who take the time to gather all the facts, and they might even recognize your name when your proposal comes up for review. Pay careful attention on what to emphasize and what to tone down.
- 6. Less is More!** Reviewing stacks of proposals is a difficult job. Grant reviewers quickly learn to scan text, particularly proposal abstracts, in an attempt to get a quick overview of exactly what you expect to do, with whom, when, how, and toward what measurable outcome. If you are short and to the point, and you've answered the key questions, your grant will be viewed as comprehensible and fundable. If you bog down the reviewer with too much ambling detail they'll have a hard time understanding your proposal and it is likely to end up in the "NO" pile. Good proposals are easy to

understand.

7. **A catchy name, like "Reach for the Sky"** which is also descriptive of the project, can make a big difference. First impressions and a memorable theme and name are important! Remember they will want to promote your project proudly as one of their great projects.
8. **Good writing should be easy to read, understand,** and should present your ideas in an exciting, yet specific manner. The abstract of your proposal is the single most important paragraph of your proposal. You should know exactly what you're planning to do with their money, and express it in elegant simplicity. If the grant reviewer has a good idea of the direction of your proposal from reading the abstract, it creates an important first impression that you do indeed know what you want accomplish, with whom, at what cost, and specifically how.

In reading an exciting, well-written proposal, one idea follows naturally to the next. One disjointed or boring sentence can kill the mounting enthusiasm of a tired grant reader. Maintain a tempo of easy to understand sentences that build on one another in a crescendo fashion.

9. **Show in your proposal that you're aware of who has done similar projects,** and that you've partnered with appropriate entities to assure your project will have enough support to make it through to completion. Big Sky Telegraph, BST, (my former 10-year project) has helped many people get grants because it was widely known we'd been around long enough that most funders assume we won't disappear overnight. Affiliating with BST gave the impression that the grantees will have technical telecommunications support to assure their grant's success.
10. **Sustainability is a big issue.** Too many grant projects disappear after the funding is gone. How can you assure ongoing benefits once the funding runs out is one of the biggest questions in the mind of the grant reviewer.
11. **Measurable outcomes.** Once the grant is over, exactly what was produced, how will it be disseminated and exactly how many people will have benefited? How do you intend to measure tangible outcomes to prove the projected benefit actually occurred?
12. In the passion of writing a grant **it is easy to get too ambitious.** A major red flag for grant reviewers is the indication you've planned to accomplish more than your budget makes realistically attainable. It is better to limit your proposal to less, more assuredly attainable goals, than to promise more than you can deliver. Most projects find they badly underestimated funding for staff and particularly technology support. Be realistic and conservative.
13. **Tie yourself to a major regional, or national, issue** and position your proposal as a model to be replicated once you've proved your idea works. Make it clear you're not just benefiting ten people in Two-Dot, Montana, but that you're solving a problem shared by all rural schools and are creating a replicable national model. A specific strategy for broadly sharing your solution should be specifically part of your proposal plan.
14. **Choose your partners wisely.** The more partners you have to deal with, the harder it is to keep everyone happy, particularly where control of large sums of money is the issue. If you plan to be working with your grant partners for years, you'd better be sure you know who you can trust and work with. Many projects end up with internal in-fighting that takes the fun out of getting funded. Money changes friendships. Tread cautiously.

Consider whom you may have to work with if you get funded and whether you should include them for a share of the funding to avoid future resistance to your project. Grant reviewers look closely to see who is flying solo, and who works well with the other girls and boys. The better partners you have, the safer their money is when invested in your project.

15. **Even if your first grant-writing effort doesn't get funded,** the planning and writing process still allows you to resubmit your idea elsewhere. Often project partners get so committed to a good

idea, even if funding isn't won, that the means for moving forward on a project can still be a possibility. Boilerplate paragraphs from old grants are typically recycled. Seasoned grantwriters are skilled recyclers, reusing paragraphs from successful grants.

16. **Make it fun!** If you get funded, you'd better enjoy working hard to make your dream happen. Be careful what you ask for, because you just might get it! Once a grant ends, what will you have built for the future? Will you be right back where you started having to write another grant? Plan accordingly.
17. **Many web sites exist to support grant-writers**, even specifically educational technology grant-writers. Knowing this, find them and use them! Search the Web for "educational technology grants" and/or "grant-writing." Below are a sampling of the best grant-writing and funding sources web sites.
18. **Evaluations are the means by which you prove your success** at the end of the grant period and are often the key to winning your next grant. Be tangible and realistic in what you set out to achieve, and in how you'll know whether you've achieved it after the money is spent.
19. **While it is considered to be inappropriate to submit the same grant to multiple funders** at the same time, one option is to change the grant slightly so multiple funded grants would actually dovetail together instead of creating duplication.

Grantwriting and Funding Sources

- **An Easy First Introduction to Grant-writing**
<http://lone-eagles.com/mira2.htm>
From Lone Eagle Consulting's community training workshops.
- **A New Federal Grants Portal**
<http://www.grants.gov>
All federal grant information available here!
- **A Short course on proposal writing**
<http://fdncenter.org/learn/shortcourse/propl.html>
A quality mid-level tutorial on grant-writing.
- **The Foundation center**
<http://fdncenter.org>
Searchable database with most foundations listed!
Ex. Enter "Native Americans" for a listing of all funders for Native American projects.
- **The Chronicle of Philanthropy**
<http://philanthropy.com>
The newspaper of the non-profit world. Extensive resources.
- **Grantsmanship Center**
<http://www.tgci.com> **The world's leader in grantsmanship training.**
Includes federal register announcements
- **Cal State's Guides to the Internet**
<http://web.calstatela.edu/academic/orsp/Grantwriting%20Tips.htm>
- **Rural and Community Networking Funding Sources**
<http://www.aspeninstitute.org>

Great listings of funding sources for rural community networking.

- **Grant Sources for K-12 Schools**
<http://www.schoolgrants.org> One-stop for K12 grant information.
- **Markle Foundation**
<http://markle.org>
Watch for community development grants programs.
- **Morino Institute**
<http://morino.org>
Netpreneurship, YouthLearn, and Venture Philanthropy resources.
- **Office of Vocational and Adult Education**
<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OVAE>
Major Funding for Community Technology Centers
- **Federal Technology Opportunities Program (TOPS Program)**
<http://www.ntia.doc.gov/top/>
No more funding, but extensive evaluations for over six hundred past community projects.
- **Educational Technology Grants and Grant Writing**
<http://www.netc.org/grants/index.html>
- **Grants and Funding for K12 Educational Technology**
<http://www.lwc.edu/administrative/library/grants.htm>
- **The U.S. Department of Education Grant Site**
<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OCFO/gcsindex.html>
Note that the "Federal Register" is the master listing for all new Federal funding opportunities.
- **The National Science Foundation Grant Site**
<http://www.nsf.gov/home/grants.htm>
Recent funding trends include 'collaborative' community emphasis.
- **Kathy Schrock's Grant Listing**
<http://school.discovery.com/schrockguide/business/grants.html>
- **The Digital Divide Network Links to Grant Resources**
<http://www.digitaldividenetwork.org/content/webresources/index.cfm>
Resources listed by category - Federal, Corporate, Private
- **Community Technology Funding Sources**
<http://www.cyberte telecom.org/usf/funding.htm>
- **The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation**
<http://www.gatesfoundation.org/>
Microsoft's grant program. One to watch closely!
- **Univ. of Tennessee Educational Technology Grant Sources**
<http://www.utc.edu/Teaching-Resource-Center/grants.html>
- **The Community Technology Empowerment Project**
<http://www.technologypower.org> <http://www.technologypower.org/links.html>

- **America Online Foundation**
<http://www.aolfoundation.org/grants/grants.html>
- **An online lesson on Grantwriting**
<http://lone-eagles.com/asdn18.htm>
From an online course by Lone Eagle Consulting.
Includes grant templates.
- **Council on Foundations**
<http://www.cof.org> (links to "Looking for Grants?--long list, then go to "Foundation Center", then to "For Grantmakers" or "Finding Funders")

NOTE: Grants you're welcome to borrow from are listed at <http://lone-eagles.com/articles/articles.htm>

MORE:

Rural Development Institute Resources

<http://www.rdiinc.org/cdr.html>

Good listing rural community development organizations and funding sources like these below:

Center for the Study of Rural America

www.kc.frb

From the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City

Philanthropy NW

www.pngf.org

(a guide to Northwest grant makers)

Rural Information Center (funding resources)

www.nal.usda.gov/ric

The Ford Institute for Community Building

www.fordinstitut