

TIPS FOR GRANT WRITING

In this time of shrinking budgets, seeking additional funds through grant programs is a common solution. Whether the office or department is large or small, additional funds are often crucial to supplement or expand the demands upon the jurisdiction. For law enforcement, however, grant writing can be more challenging as this is generally an area where most law enforcement officers have little knowledge or experience.

Because of the tight economy, the demands for grant funds have increased and therefore competition is a given. Successful grant writing is usually achieved over time with each experience because the writer will learn from mistakes and errors. However, all is not lost. There are basic principles and tips that can be followed to improve the chance of funding.

1. First, read the entire application instructions *thoroughly*. Highlight areas that are critical, such as the purpose, the required format, and the deadline and the method of delivery. This will cut down on errors later when the rush to submit the application looms.
2. Focus on the intent of the funds. Ensure that your request meets the purpose of the grant funds.
3. Be kind to the reader. Unless the application specifies otherwise, use a 12-point easy to read font. Proposals should be checked for typographical and grammatical errors.
4. The project description section is one of the most important sections. It must be logical and persuasive. It is important to neither oversell nor undersell your request. Always include statistical documentation pointing to the problem. Select the best and most compelling statistics and include local information.
5. Never assume that the funding organization knows who you are. In the project description, include a *brief* overview of not only your department but also your community. It is important to provide a verbal picture for the grant readers. The purpose of a grant is to both inform and instruct about a need.
6. The proposal should be concise enough to clearly express the need but not so long that the reader becomes lost in extraneous, unnecessary information. Remember that the grant readers must read *numerous* applications. When the application is complete, reread it or have someone else read it and ask the question, “Would I want to fund this proposal?”
7. Get help in writing the goals and objectives. This is the second most important section and often the weakest area of most grant proposals. A goal is a broad, general statement that identifies what will be accomplished in the long-term. It is the desired result or outcome. The objectives are nothing more than the means for achieving the goals. Objectives are specific, attainable, and *measurable*.
8. Read the directions for each section and be sure to include everything that is requested. For example, if the directions in the project description request you to identify the need for the funds and provide statistics, don’t leave out the statistics. Be sure to ask yourself if you have addressed each request in the directions.

9. Follow the instructions for submitting the grant proposal to the *letter*. More grant applications are disqualified because the applicant did not read the instructions. The most common errors for disqualification include:
 - the application was not in the requested format;
 - the number of copies of the application was not provided;
 - the application was incomplete or missing sections;
 - the person required to sign the application didn't; and,
 - the applicant didn't justify the need for the requested funds.
10. Once a grant has been submitted and the awards made, one of the most important steps is missed nearly 99.9% of the time. Whether the grant proposal was funded or not, get *feedback* from the grant readers on how the proposal could have been improved.

These are just a few suggestions that may help write a successful grant. The energy and time required to write a grant can be well worth the end result. But remember, grant writing is competitive and a good proposal will not always be funded. Don't be discouraged by this, just keep trying.

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