

Grant Writing Training

CITY OF PONTIAC, MICHIGAN

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A street scene in Saginaw, Michigan, featuring a brick building with a mural, a 'Saginaw St' street sign, and a large 'Grants Overview' text overlay. The scene includes a crosswalk, traffic lights, and a clear blue sky with scattered clouds. The text 'Grants Overview' is centered in a large, bold, black serif font.

Grants Overview

What is a Grant?

A **grant** is a sum of money given to an agency or individual to address a problem or need in the community.

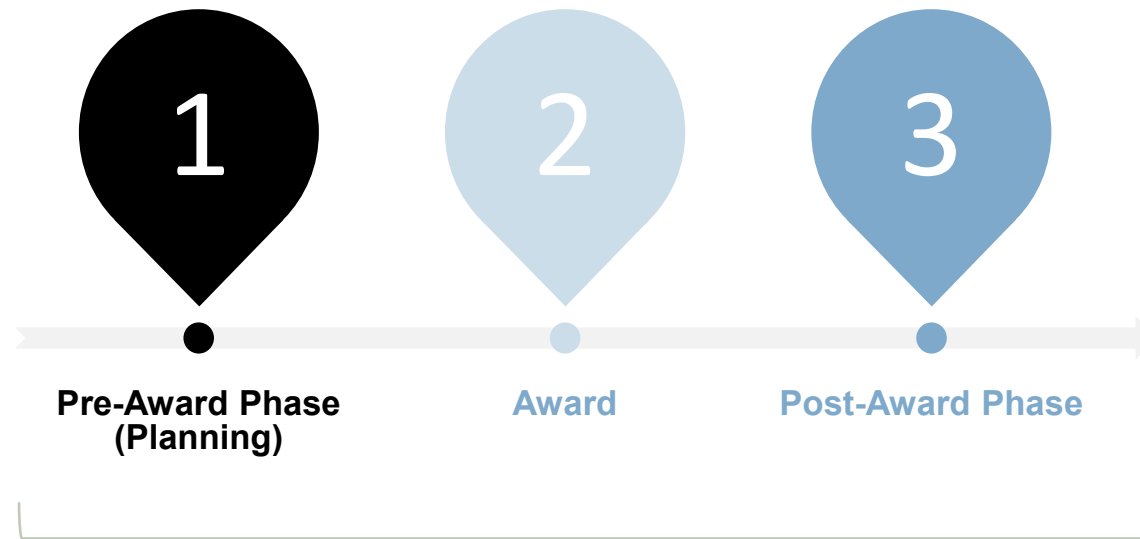
The written document that one prepares as a means of requesting or applying for this money (funding) is referred to as **a grant proposal**.

Organizations or individuals can use grants to accomplish their stated purposes and objectives within their own policies and guidelines.

Key Benefits of Grant Funding: Can assist with new project funding, expand an existing project short on funding, or can be utilized for specified purposes.

Grant Writing / Proposal Phases

In general, there are three primary phases in the grants management lifecycle: **1) pre-award phase, 2) award phase, and 3) post-award phase.**



Types of Grants

Formula Grants (can be Pass-through Grants) - Formula grants typically fund activities of a continuing nature and may not be confined to a specific project.

Discretionary Grants / Competitive Grants (can be Cooperative Agreements) - The Federal awarding agency generally may select the recipient from among all eligible competing recipients.

Continuation Grants - Receipt of a continuation grant is based on availability of funds, project performance, and compliance with progress and financial reporting requirements.

Mandatory Grants (can be Cooperative Agreements) – A grant awarded under a programs where the authorizing statute requires the head of the agency or designee to make an award to each eligible entity under the conditions and in the amount (or based on the formula) specified in the statute.

****Other forms of funding include Categorical Grants, Block Grants, General Revenue Sharing, Emergency Assistance Funding.****

Sources of Grant Funding

Various sources of grant funding exist:

Federal Grants: award of money or economic aid provided by the United States federal government. The money provided can be a loan, a portion of a certain project or organization's cost, or a complete funding of a particular project, research or other undertaking.

State Grants: funding provided by a state spending unit, regardless of the original source of funds, to an applicant upon application for a specific purpose.

Non-Profit Foundation Grants: offered by non-governmental organizations, usually charitable non-profit organizations that award funds for mission-specific purposes.

Private Corporations: offers grants for research, or purposes specific to the corporation.

Types of Grant Deliverables & Criteria

Concept Paper – can be 2-4 pages of high-level highlights for grant funding idea

Pre-proposal – can be 5 pages of reviewed submission, leading to the invitation of a full proposal

Full proposal – can be between 10-40 pages of specific formatted proposal in line with necessary forms, guidelines, attachments, etc.

Selection Criteria: Grant writers are tasked with framing the grant proposal in relation to identified selection criteria depending on those established by the grantor. Grant proposals can include:

1. *Quality of project design,*
2. *Project evaluation,*
3. *Need for the project, and/or*
4. *Project significance.*

Key Roles in Grant Management

Grant Researcher

- Individuals are needed to identify and assess grant funding opportunities through various government and private sources.

Grant Writer

- Individuals are needed to draft proposals and collect supporting information from research, surveys, and effectively understand and communicate the organization's mission into the grant proposal.

Grant Management and Administration

- Individuals are needed to efficiently manage awarded funds and project objectives. Other possible roles in grant management include reporting and compliance with grant funding guidelines.

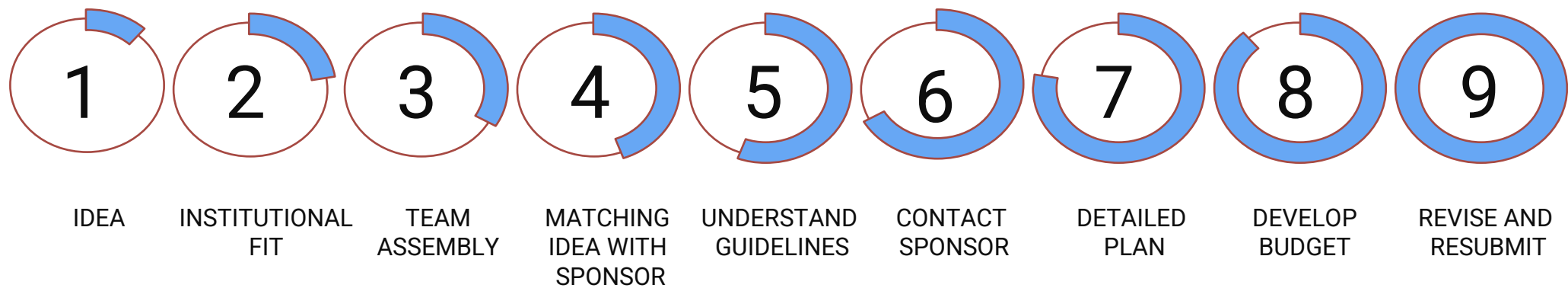
NOTE: the same individuals often perform multiple of these grant procurement and grant management tasks

Grant Writing Process

Grant Writing Process

To apply for competitive grant funding a **proposal** must be written. A proposal is a multi-phase process requiring varying degrees of time commitment, resources, and effort to submit to the awarding organization for review.

Grant proposal scopes are described in notifications disseminated by funding organizations. These announcements are called a variety of terms: **Funding Opportunity Announcements (FOAs), Request for Proposals (RFPs), Request for Applications, Request for Qualifications (RFQs), Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA), Notice of Funding Opportunities (NOFOs), or Program Announcements.**

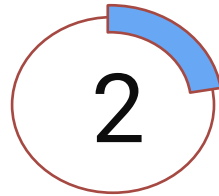


Grant Writing Process Expanded



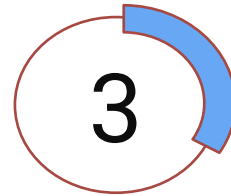
IDEA

The grant proposal has a clear and original idea in need of funding.



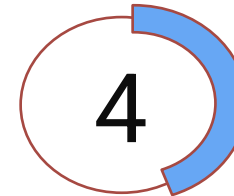
INSTITUTIONAL
FIT

The grantee's mission aligns well with that of the funding organization.



TEAM
ASSEMBLY

A team of highly focused and experienced staff work collectively to achieve funding.



MATCHING IDEA
WITH SPONSOR

Every attempt is made to align the funding purpose (idea) with the funding organization.



UNDERSTAND
GUIDELINES

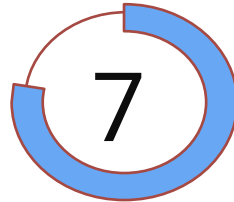
The grant writers thoroughly understand what the best proposal requires increasing the probability of a successful proposal.

Grant Writing Process Expanded



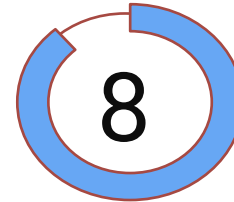
CONTACT SPONSOR

A key to successful proposals = contacting the proposal sponsor or officer overseeing the proposal process for the funding organization in order to build rapport.



DETAILED PLAN

The grant writing team has a step-by-step plan detailing their efforts for proposal completion.



DEVELOP BUDGET

A budget is used both to outline how grant funds will be spent, and to understand how the funds will impact the grantee.



REVISE AND RESUBMIT

After edits are suggested by the funding organization, revisions are common. Resubmitting the proposal with revisions is considered the final step in the proposal process.

Getting Started

Read instructions carefully

- Written proposals are expected to follow all provided instructions. Missing instruction items greatly reduces the chance of a successful award.

Specify aims

- Vague proposals or ones lacking clarity of mission around funding purpose are less qualified than clearly defined proposals with supporting documentation and research.

Core review criterion

- Identify internally whether the funding being requested is absolutely necessary, competitively necessary, or invitational (optional) to achieve the project objectives.

Standard Proposal Components

Instructions for completing each section are provided in the Request for Proposal (RFP). Below are common sections that can be expected when applying for a grant.

1. Cover letter, title page, and abstract:

Usually limited to one page, this section describes the agency's interest and ability to implement the proposed project. Some RFPs require a letter of intent prior to the submission of the grant proposal.

2. Statement of the Problem / Needs Statement:

Highly important section, describing the need for the funding with supporting information on the extent of the "problem", this section should document what is being addressed, describe causes, and identify solutions. Relying heavily on data and research in this section is crucial to a successful grant proposal.

3. Project Description (goals and objectives and methods / activities):

After describing the need for funding, this section outlines the clear details on fund implementation step-by-step. Some main pieces can include goals and objectives, methods or activities for addressing the problem, and a time-line.

Standard Proposal Components

4. Evaluation Plan:

This section shows how you will measure the completion or success of the program. This section is important for identifying the impact of the grant program.

5. Budget Request and Budget Justification:

Common budget line items can be staff salaries, taxes, fringe benefits, indirect costs, in-kind items, rent and utilities, equipment and supplies, postage, and travel. The budget should correspond to staff positions and activities.

6. Applicant Qualifications:

Describing your agencies history, mission, and emphasizing strengths can increase funding chances.

7. Future Funding Plans / Plans for Sustainability:

Weaving aspects of self-sustainability and long-term benefits is important to include within your proposal.

8. Appendices:

Condense supplemental and supporting materials in this section, including marketing plans, project staffing flow charts, letters of support, etc.



Grant Writing Tips

Components of a Strong Grant Submission

Quality of Idea:

- Most grant proposals are written based around a narrative or idea. This idea forms the basis for the reason the funding is needed. Well thought-out ideas that are particularly appealing to the grant organization amplify the possibility of an award proposal, and at the least, align with the proposal instructions.
- Research into the granting organization and their mission to align the written narrative of your organization's proposal is recommended.

Following Guidelines:

- Grant writers need to understand the required guidelines provided for grant opportunities, preferred submission structure, sections to include.

Spelling and Grammar:

- Proposals are expected to be written free of errors and grammar mistakes – be sure to check!
- Other technical considerations grant writers should remember include margin requirements, type requirements, page limits, spacing, numbering, etc.

Contact with Grant Officer:

- Grant proposal submissions have an increased likelihood of approval when the supporting grant officer is contacted to build rapport prior to submitting a grant.
- Constant communication and clarification of what is needed can go a long way for a well written grant proposal – 85% of successful grant proposals involved communication with the grant officer.

Collaboration within your Organization:

- The grant writer should synthesize their organizations initiatives and input about multiple departments.
- Collaborating with your organizations departments is vital to build a well-rounded case for the grant funding and bolstering an informed written narrative.

Reasons For a Rejected Proposal

- Deadlines were not met
- Writing guidelines were not followed or deemed incomplete
- Lack of sparked interest by reviewer
- Proposal was not written in a way that aligns with the grantors' priorities
- Proposal may lack sufficient supporting research
- Unrealistic budget included
- Controversial narrative
- Poor grammar / spelling

NOTE:

Many times, a proposal is not successful due to the writing quality, creativity, and written narrative.

Other Grant Writing Considerations

1. Your organization can pursue as many grants opportunities as you like while keeping in mind the capabilities of the organization to administer the grants properly.
2. If your organization is not awarded a grant, the organization may re-apply if the Request for Proposal (RFP) period finishes, and the opportunity comes up for request again.
3. Private grant funding may require more stringent proposal submissions and reporting criteria.
4. Federal grant funding may require disclosure of other government grant sources since some funds may be already allocated for a specific project from another government grant source.

Resources

Refer to the following resources when preparing to write for grant applications:

Grants.gov (www.grants.gov)

- This website is managed by the Department of Health and Human Services as initiative under the governance of the Office of Management and Budget. Grants.gov provides its users with the Grants Learning Center that provides a variety of grants topics to assist with writing and managing a grant.

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (www.hud.gov)

- The website for the Department of Housing and Urban Development (“HUD”) offers grant writers an informative list of “Tips and Tricks For Writing a Winning Grant Submission.” This list consists of five parts assisting writers from the start of the grant submission process until the end.

National Science Foundation (www.nsf.gov)

- The National Science Foundation is an independent Federal Agency funding nearly 25% of all federally funded research for U.S. academic institutions. The Foundation’s “Guide For Proposal Writing”, available at their website, can be used by any grant writer in any sector as it extensively highlights a successful grant writing process.

Center for Disease Control (www.cdc.gov)

- Like HUD, the Center for Disease Control (“CDC”) website has tips for writing grant proposals (ex. “Tips for Preparing Grant Applications”). This resource walks through various steps in the process while referencing Grants.gov and ways to adequately apply for and submit grants.

U.S. Department of Justice (www.ojp.gov)

- The Department of Justice, through their “Office of Justice Programs” website, provides grant funding, grant writing, and “Grants 101” informational resources. Each section shares proposal writing tips for grant writers and grant management teams to consider when applying for grants.