

GRANTSMANSHIP: TWENTY HELPFUL HINTS

Responding to a Request for Proposal? Developing the right information to secure the funding you need is not as difficult a task as it may seem. You don't have to hire a professional grant writer to create a successful proposal. Check out the helpful information below before you get started.

1. **Know your potential funder.** Know what they're interested in funding and what they're not. Know the funding criteria and address them thoroughly.
2. **Tailor your request to the funder's objectives without compromising what you want to accomplish.** How can you help the funder accomplish its objectives? On the other hand, don't sell out just to get the grant.
3. **Make sure that your request fulfills a service or need of interest to a targeted population demographic .** Most funding bodies, especially government ones, are not going to be interested in funding something that is not wanted or needed by the community. Who else is interested in your project and how can you document their support? On the other hand some funders may be interested in more esoteric projects with limited public appeal. Know the difference.
4. **Be realistic but not timid about what you propose to accomplish.** Funders can tell if you're proposing to do more than is feasible and they don't want to be associated with poor results. They also don't want to be associated with a project that will not positively impact the community.
5. **Be honest. Never, under any circumstances,** falsify anything in an application. Don't even stretch the truth by exaggerating. Don't pad budgets. This is not the place for hyperbole. Your information will be revealed as false at some point in the grant process. It's not worth risking your personal reputation or that of your organization.
6. **Write clearly and concisely.** Have someone who isn't familiar with your organization or your project read your application. Never use two words when one will do. Don't use jargon unique to your organization or field.
7. **Be neat and accurate.** The application should be professional and error free. Remember to proof read. No one wants to read an application with typos, hand-written corrections, too-small type and decorated with night-of-the-deadline coffee. Is all of the information accurate? Do all of the numbers add up?
8. **Follow directions to the letter and don't ask for exceptions.** Don't assume it's okay to make substitutions, changes in the application form, or submit material that's not requested. In many cases, the result is disqualification for that year's funding.

9. **Don't assume any prior knowledge on the part of the funder.** Even if your organization is well known, approach the grant process as though information was being presented to a stranger. Assume no knowledge on the part of the funder.
10. **Don't ask for too much or too little.** How large a percentage of the total budget are you asking the funder to provide? Who else is supporting your project and to what extent? Find out the average grant size that the prospective funder gives and try to stay close to that amount if possible.
11. **Meet all deadlines.** Although some funders will make exceptions to published deadlines, many will not. Know which type your prospective funder is. Better yet, don't place yourself in a position where you will need to ask for an extension.
12. **Understand the funder's decision-making process and use it to your advantage.** If panels of experts are used for application review, is it permissible to invite them to events? Can you attend panel meetings?
13. **Invite representatives of the funding body to experience your project first-hand.** Invite them to opening nights, receptions, performances and exhibits. On the other hand, don't take a declined invitation personally.
14. **Don't resort to political pressure.**
15. **Don't be a pest.** Calling to ask questions when you're working on preparing the application is usually permissible and often encouraged. Making numerous calls to inquire about the progress of the review of your application once it's submitted is not.
16. **If turned down, politely inquire as to why so you can learn from the experience. Don't take it personally.** Learn from the experience. Use the opportunity to gather information to better prepare future applications, not to question the wisdom of the funder's decision. Is it even remotely possible that the funder is right?
17. **If funded, send a sincere thank-you letter to the head of the funding organization and drop a note to the program officer who helped you through the process as well.** Although you may think this is unnecessary, put yourself in the position of the funder. Don't you like to be thanked? Remember you may want to approach this funder again in the future. Don't go overboard though. Although personal gifts are not appropriate, if a funder has been particularly generous a plaque, framed poster or other token of appreciation may be given to the funding organization.
18. **Follow up: Do what you said you were going to do.** Yes, this should go without saying but you might be surprised how often it doesn't happen. If you do need to make changes in the project, make sure you ask permission.
19. **File all required reports accurately and on time.** Again, stating the obvious.
20. **Give credit generously.** Find out what the funder's credit requirements are and exceed them. The only thing people like as much as being thanked is be given credit for someone else's work.