



GRANT WRITING STARTER KIT

Unlock the potential of your nonprofit with our comprehensive guide, 'Grant Writing Mastery: From Research to Results.'

This essential resource equips you with the knowledge, strategies, and tools to navigate the grant writing process and secure the funding your projects deserve.



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INTRODUCTION TO GRANT WRITING

UNDERSTANDING GRANT WRITING

Grant writing is critical for nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, and various entities seeking to fund their projects and initiatives. At its core, grant writing involves crafting a compelling proposal that persuades a grantmaker—a government department, foundation, corporation, or other funding body—to support your project financially. It's a strategic process that requires clear communication, thorough research, and a deep understanding of your organization's goals and the objectives of the potential funder.

TYPES OF GRANTS

Grants come in many forms, each with its own set of guidelines and requirements. Federal grants are often substantial and have stringent application processes, while state and local grants might be more accessible but with smaller funding pools. Foundation grants can vary greatly, from large grants given by national foundations to smaller, community-based funds. Corporate grants are another avenue, often focusing on specific areas of interest aligned with the corporation's corporate social responsibility goals. Understanding the landscape of grant types is crucial in identifying the right fit for your project.

THE GRANT APPLICATION PROCESS

Applying for a grant typically follows several vital steps: preparation, research, writing, and submission. Preparation involves ensuring your organization is 'grant ready' with a clear mission, solid programs, and up-to-date documentation. Research is about finding the right grant opportunities that align with your project's objectives. In the writing phase, you articulate your project's worthiness for funding, detailing your proposed activities, goals, outcomes, and budget. Finally, submission must be done per the funder's guidelines and deadlines. While the process can be challenging, the potential rewards make grant writing a valuable skill for any organization looking to make a positive impact.

NAVIGATING YOUR GRANT WRITING JOURNEY

As you embark on your grant writing journey, remember that this skill can be developed over time. Each proposal offers a new opportunity to refine your approach and increase your chances of success. The key is to remain persistent, learn from feedback, and build relationships with funders regardless of the immediate outcome. With each application, you're seeking funds and telling your organization's story and the critical work you do.

GRANT WRITING GLOSSARY

Abstract: A grant proposal summary that overviews the project goals, methods, and potential impact.

Award: The funds an organization grants to fund a project or program.

Budget Narrative: Also known as a budget justification, this is a detailed description of the costs associated with the project and an explanation of why each cost is necessary.

Capacity Building: Grants often fund efforts or initiatives within an organization to improve its effectiveness and sustainability.

Challenge Grant: A grant that provides funds based on the recipient raising an additional amount from other sources. These grants are often used to stimulate giving from different donors.

Direct Costs Expenses directly attributable to the project, such as salaries for project staff, supplies, and travel.

Fiscal Sponsor: A nonprofit organization that provides fiduciary oversight, financial management, and other administrative services to help build the capacity of charitable projects.

Form 990: An IRS form that provides the public with financial information about a nonprofit organization, which is often required by grantmakers.

Grant Agreement: A legal document that outlines the terms and conditions of the grant, including the responsibilities of both the grantmaker and the recipient.

Indirect Costs: Expenses that are not directly linked to a specific project but are necessary for the general operation of an organization, such as utilities, rent, and administrative salaries.

In-Kind Contribution: A donation of goods or services rather than cash, which can be used to offset and complement grant funds.

Letter of Inquiry (LOI): A brief letter sent to potential funders to gauge their interest in a project and determine whether they would invite a full grant proposal.

Matching Funds: Funds that are required to be provided by the grantee to match a portion of the grant money provided by the grantor.

GRANT WRITING GLOSSARY

Narrative: The part of a grant proposal that includes a detailed description of the project, including objectives, strategies, and anticipated outcomes.

Notice of Award (NOA): The official, legally binding issuance of a grant award.

Outcomes: The changes or benefits that result from the activities and outputs of a project or program.

Program Officer: A staff member of a grant-making organization who reviews grant proposals and manages the grant portfolio.

Request for Proposal (RFP): A formal document issued by a grantmaker inviting organizations to submit proposals for a specific program or project.

Sustainability Plan: This is a part of the grant proposal that describes how the project will continue to operate and be funded after the grant period ends.

Work Plan: A detailed description of the steps necessary to achieve the goals and objectives outlined in a grant proposal, including timelines and responsible parties.

BEST PRACTICES IN GRANT WRITING

UNDERSTANDING THE FUNDER'S PERSPECTIVE

Successful grant writing begins with stepping into the shoes of the funder. Funders seek projects that align with their mission and objectives and demonstrate a clear vision and measurable impact. It is essential to research the funder's history, values, and past funded projects to tailor your proposal to their interests.

ALIGNING YOUR PROJECT WITH THE FUNDER'S MISSION

Your project should resonate with the funder's goals. Clearly articulate how your project addresses issues or areas the funder is passionate about. Use language from the funder's materials to describe your project's objectives and outcomes, showing a direct connection between their mission and your initiative.

WRITING A CLEAR AND PERSUASIVE PROPOSAL

A well-written proposal is both clear and persuasive. It should be structured logically, with each section leading naturally to the next. Start with a solid executive summary that captures the essence of your project and its significance. Ensure your goals are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART). Your narrative should tell a compelling story that illustrates the need for your project and the change it will bring.

TIPS FOR CLEAR AND PERSUASIVE WRITING:

- **Be Concise:** Use clear, straightforward language. Avoid jargon unless it's industry-standard, and even then, provide definitions.
- **Be Specific:** Provide concrete details about your project, including who will benefit, how they will help, and what success looks like.
- **Be Organized:** Follow the grant application instructions meticulously, using headings and subheadings to guide the reader.
- **Be Compelling:** Use data and anecdotes to build a strong case for your project. Show the funder the human impact of their investment.
- **Be Honest:** Present a realistic plan with achievable outcomes. Funders will see through overpromises and unfounded optimism.

BEST PRACTICES IN GRANT WRITING

DEVELOPING A STRONG PROJECT PLAN

Your proposal should include a detailed project plan that outlines the activities, timeline, and personnel involved. This plan demonstrates your preparedness and the feasibility of your project. Include a clear budget that categorizes expenses and justifies the need for each line item.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH FUNDERS

Grant writing is not just about submitting proposals; it's about building lasting relationships with funders. Whether your proposal is accepted or rejected, follow up with the funder. Thank them for their consideration, and if you're not successful, ask for feedback. Use this feedback to improve future proposals and maintain an open line of communication for potential future opportunities.

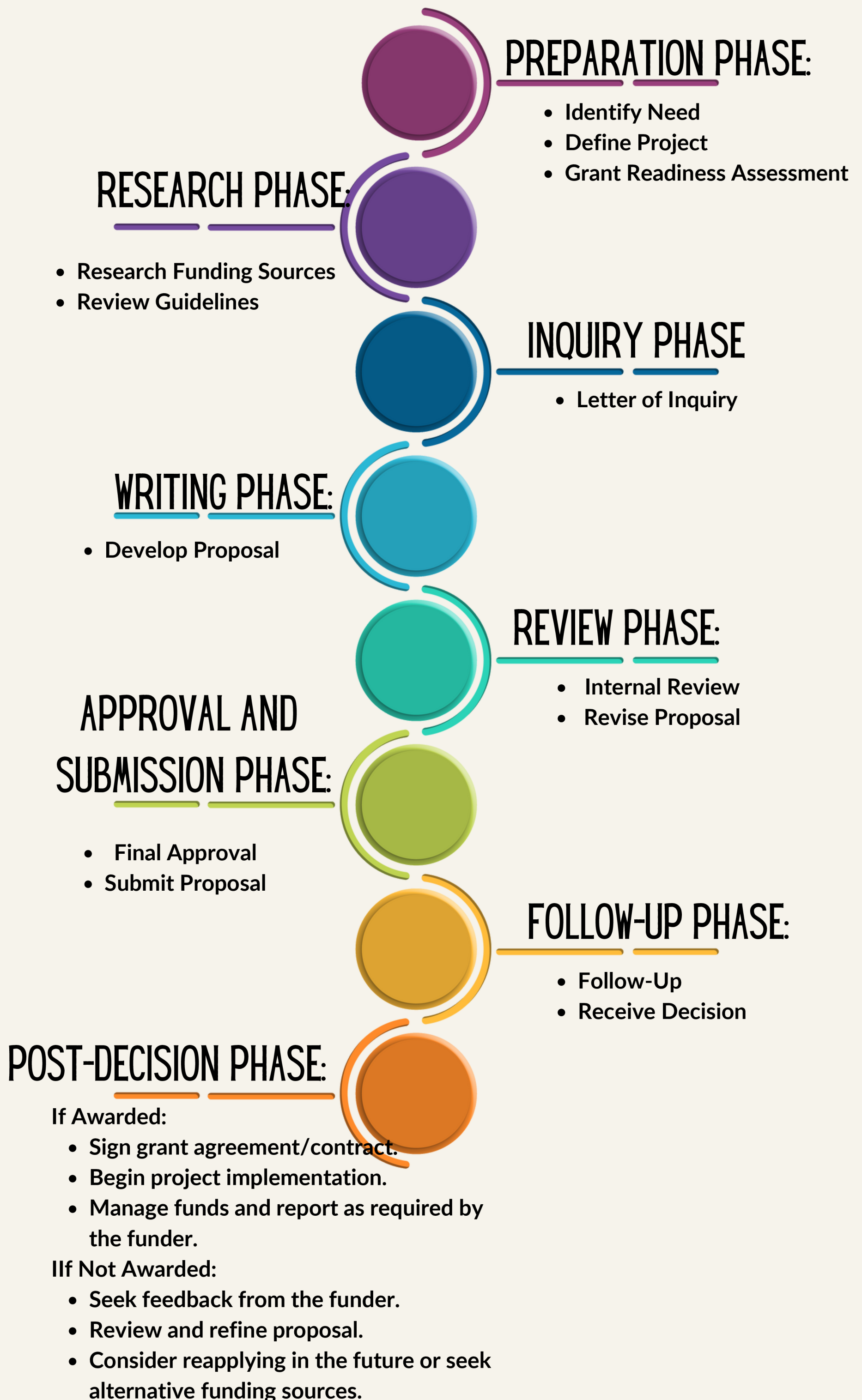
REVIEW AND REVISE

Before submission, review your proposal multiple times and have it reviewed by others. Fresh eyes can catch errors and suggest improvements. Ensure that every part of the proposal is polished, from the narrative to the budget to the supplementary materials.

CONCLUSION

Remember, grant writing is both an art and a science. It requires creativity, precision, and a deep understanding of your organization's goals and the funder's priorities. Following these best practices will increase your chances of writing a successful grant proposal that stands out in a competitive landscape.

GRANT APPLICATION PROCESS FLOWCHART



15 COMMON MISTAKES TO AVOID IN GRANT WRITING

1. **Ignoring the Guidelines:** Not adhering to the funder's application guidelines is a surefire way to have your proposal dismissed. Always follow the submission instructions to the letter.
2. **Lack of Research:** Failing to research the funder's mission and past funded projects can lead to a misalignment between your proposal and the funder's interests. Tailor your proposal to fit the funder's priorities.
3. **Overlooking the Budget:** A vague or inaccurate budget can undermine your proposal's credibility. Ensure your budget is detailed, realistic, and aligned with the narrative.
4. **Being Too Ambitious:** Proposing a project that's too large in scope can be daunting for funders. Start with a manageable scope that shows clear, attainable goals.
5. **Neglecting the Need Statement:** Not clearly defining the problem or need your project addresses can leave funders unconvinced of its necessity. Clearly articulate the need and how your project addresses it.
6. **Underestimating the Timeline:** Unrealistic timelines can be a red flag for funders. Provide a realistic timeline that accounts for all project phases.
7. **Forgetting About Sustainability:** Funders want to know that your project will have a lasting impact. Describe how your project will continue after the grant period.
8. **Inadequate Evaluation Plans:** Funders can't measure its impact without a clear plan for evaluating the project's success. Include specific metrics and methods for evaluation.
9. **Poor Writing:** A proposal that's difficult to understand or full of errors can detract from your message. Write clearly and concisely, and proofread your proposal multiple times.
10. **Failing to Tell a Story:** Data and making a human connection is essential. Use stories or testimonials to complement your data and illustrate your project's potential impact.
11. **Not Following Up:** If you don't follow up after submitting a proposal, you might miss feedback or further instructions. Always check in with the funder post-submission.
12. **Lack of Organizational Information:** Failing to provide enough information about your organization can leave funders questioning your legitimacy. Include details that establish your credibility and experience.
13. **Overlooking Partnerships:** Not mentioning strategic partnerships or community support can weaken your proposal. Highlight collaborations that strengthen your project's feasibility.
14. **Submitting Last Minute:** Waiting until the submission deadline can lead to rushed mistakes. Plan to submit your proposal well in advance.
15. **Not Customizing Proposals:** Using a one-size-fits-all approach and recycling content for different funders is evident and often unsuccessful. Customize each proposal to the specific funder.

GRANT PROPOSAL OUTLINE TEMPLATE

Title Page

- Project Title
- Name of Organization
- Contact Information
- Date of Submission
- Grant Program (if applicable)

Executive Summary

- Brief overview of the organization
- Summary of the project proposal
- Statement of need
- Description of the project's goals and objectives
- Total funding requested
- Expected outcomes and impact

Statement of Need

- Detailed description of the problem or need
- Supporting data and research
- How the need aligns with the funder's priorities

Project Description

- Goals and objectives of the project
- Strategies and activities planned to achieve the objectives
- Timeline for implementation
- Description of the target population and benefits

Organizational Information

- History and mission of the organization
- Summary of past and current projects
- Organizational structure and leadership
- Partnerships and collaborations

Project Evaluation

- Methods for measuring project success
- Evaluation criteria and performance metrics
- Plan for reporting results and findings

Project Budget

- Detailed budget outlining all project costs
- Justification for expenses
- Information on other funding sources, if applicable

Sustainability Plan

- Strategies for continuing the project after the grant period
- Potential for future funding and support



GRANT PROPOSAL OUTLINE TEMPLATE

*Appendices (if required)

- Resumes of key staff
- Letters of support or endorsement
- Organizational charts
- Additional supporting documents

Conclusion

- Recap of the proposal's main points
- Final appeal for support
- Thank you, and contact information for follow-up

SAMPLE LETTER OF INQUIRY #1: COMMUNITY HEALTH INITIATIVE



[Your Name]
[Your Title]
[Your Organization]
[Your Address]
[City, State, Zip Code]
[Your Email]
[Your Phone Number]
[Date]

[Recipient Name]
[Title]
[Funding Organization Name]
[Address]
[City, State, Zip Code]

Dear [Recipient Name],

I am writing on behalf of [Your Organization's Name], a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving community health outcomes in [Your Area or Community]. We are seeking funding for our upcoming project, [Project Name], which aims to [briefly describe the goal, such as "increase access to mental health services in underserved areas"].

Our organization has a strong track record of [briefly describe a relevant achievement or past project], and we are committed to addressing the challenges of [briefly describe the issue, such as "mental health disparities"]. The [Project Name] is designed to [describe what the project will do, such as "provide free mental health screenings and affordable counseling services"], serving approximately [number] individuals annually.

We believe that the [Funding Organization Name] shares our commitment to [mention a shared value or goal, such as "health equity and community well-being"], making your foundation a potential ideal partner for this initiative. With your support, we are confident that we can make a significant impact on the lives of many in our community.

We are seeking [amount of funding] to [briefly describe what the funds will be used for, such as "launch the program and cover the first year of operations"]. A detailed proposal is available upon request. We would be honored to discuss this with you further and explore the possibility of collaboration.

Thank you for considering our request. We look forward to the opportunity to partner with [Funding Organization Name] to make a lasting difference in [Your Area or Community].

Warm regards,

[Your Signature (if sending a hard copy)]
[Your Typed Name]
[Your Position]



NM Grant Writers, LLC
Turning Red Tape Into Green Lights

SAMPLE LETTER OF INQUIRY #2: EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM EXPANSION



[Your Name]
[Your Title]
[Your Organization]
[Your Address]
[City, State, Zip Code]
[Your Email]
[Your Phone Number]
[Date]

[Recipient Name]
[Title]
[Funding Organization Name]
[Address]
[City, State, Zip Code]

Dear [Recipient Name],

I am reaching out from [Your Organization's Name], which has been at the forefront of educational innovation in [Your Area or Community] for [number] years. We are initiating an expansion of our [Program Name], aimed explicitly at [briefly describe the goal, such as "bridging the digital divide for low-income students"].

Our program has successfully [briefly describe a success story or impact], and we are now poised to scale this impact by [describe what the expansion involves, such as "providing tablets and internet access to over [number] additional students"]. This initiative directly aligns with [Funding Organization Name]'s focus on [mention a shared value or goal, such as "educational equity and technology access"].

To realize this expansion, we are seeking a partnership with your foundation and an investment of [amount of funding]. These funds will be instrumental in [briefly describe the use of funds, such as "procuring technology and supporting educational programs"]. We are eager to provide a complete proposal detailing our plans and budget for your review.

We appreciate [Funding Organization Name]'s dedication to [mention a shared mission or value] and believe we can achieve remarkable outcomes for the students we serve. We would like to discuss this exciting opportunity with you further.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

[Your Signature (if sending a hard copy)]
[Your Typed Name]
[Your Position]





NEW MEXICO GRANT WRITERS CHECKLIST

Before You Start:

- | | |
|--|--|
| Confirm your organization's eligibility for the grant. | |
| Ensure your organization is 'Grant Ready' | |

Finding Grants:

- | | |
|--|--|
| Identify funding sources relevant to your mission. | |
| Research past awardees and their projects. | |
| Register with the grant portal (if required). | |

Writing the Grant Proposal:

- | | |
|--|--|
| Understand the funder's guidelines and criteria. | |
| Write a compelling executive summary. | |
| Clearly define the problem or need. | |
| Develop SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) objectives. | |
| Outline the project design and implementation plan. | |
| Prepare a detailed project budget. | |
| Describe the project evaluation plan. | |
| Include sustainability plans for post-grant period. | |

Supporting Documents:

- | | |
|--|--|
| Attach letters of support or partnership agreements. | |
| Include proof of tax-exempt status. | |
| Add resumes or bios of key project staff. | |
| Provide your organization's non-discrimination policy. | |

Final Steps:

- | | |
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| Review the application against the grant checklist provided by the funder (if available). | |
| Proofread the proposal for clarity, grammar, and spelling. | |
| Ensure all required signatures are in place. | |
| Submit the grant proposal before the deadline. | |

After Submission:

- | | |
|--|--|
| Confirm receipt of the application with the funder. | |
| Prepare for follow-up questions or requests for additional information. | |
| Debrief with your team to discuss lessons learned and document insights for future applications. | |

Remember:

- | | |
|---|--|
| Keep copies of all submitted materials. | |
| Mark decision dates on your calendar. | |
| Plan for grant reporting if awarded. | |

Misc:



RESOURCE LIST FOR FURTHER LEARNING IN GRANT WRITING

BOOKS:

1. "The Only Grant-Writing Book You'll Ever Need" by Ellen Karsh and Arlen Sue Fox
 - A comprehensive guide to the entire grant-writing process.
2. "Grant Writing For Dummies"*by Beverly A. Browning
 - A user-friendly guide that breaks down the complexity of grant writing.
3. "The Complete Book of Grant Writing: Learn to Write Grants Like a Professional" by Nancy Smith and E. Works
 - Offers insights into writing grants and securing funding from various sources.
4. "Writing Successful Grant Proposals" by Ellen W. Gorsevski
 - Focuses on crafting proposals that stand out and get funded.

WEBSITES:

1. Grants.gov (grants.gov)
 - The go-to site for finding and applying for federal grants.
2. Foundation Center by Candid (candid.org)
 - Provides information on foundations and the grants they offer.
3. GrantSpace by Candid (grantspace.org)
 - Offers many resources, including sample documents, training programs, and research tools.
4. The Grantsmanship Center (tgci.com)
 - Provides training, resources, and articles on grant writing and funding strategies.

ONLINE COURSES:

1. Udemy Grant Writing Courses (udemy.com)
 - Offers a variety of courses for different levels of grant writing expertise.
2. Coursera Grant Writing Courses (coursera.org)
 - Features courses taught by university professors and industry experts.
3. Ed2Go Grant Writing Classes (ed2go.com)
 - Provides online courses that cover the basics to advanced grant writing techniques.

RESOURCE LIST FOR FURTHER LEARNING IN GRANT WRITING

TRAINING PROGRAMS:

1. The Foundation Center's Proposal Writing Boot Camp
 - An intensive three-day project-based immersion course.
2. American Grant Writers' Association (agwa.us)
 - Offers certification programs and workshops for grant writers.
3. Grant Professionals Association (grantprofessionals.org)
 - Provides networking opportunities, conferences, and professional development for grant writers.

PODCASTS AND WEBINARS:

1. "Grant Writing & Funding" by Holly Rustick
 - A podcast that offers tips and interviews with industry experts.
2. Nonprofit Ready's Free Grant Writing Classes (nonprofitready.org)
 - Free online courses and webinars on grant writing and nonprofit management.
3. TechSoup for Libraries (techsoup.org)
 - Webinars that often cover grant writing for technology grants in the nonprofit sector.

BLOGS AND FORUMS:

1. DH Leonard Consulting & Grant Writing Services Blog (dhleonardconsulting.com)
 - Offers insights and tips on grant writing and fundraising.
2. Grant Professionals Association Blog (grantprofessionals.org)
 - Features articles and advice from experienced grant professionals.
3. r/grantwriting on Reddit (reddit.com/r/grantwriting/)
 - A community forum for grant writers to share experiences and ask questions.

10 TIPS TO IDENTIFY POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES

1. Understand Your Needs:

- Clearly define your project or program's goals, the required funding, and the support you need (e.g., general operating, project-specific).

2. Start with Your Network:

- Leverage your organization's existing relationships. Board members, volunteers, and staff may have connections to foundations or know of grant opportunities.

3. Use Dedicated Grant Databases:

- Subscribe to grant databases like Grants.gov, Candid, Instrumentl, Grant Gopher or your local library's grant-finding resources to access a wide array of funding opportunities.

4. Research Funders' Priorities:

- Review potential funders' missions, funding priorities, and past grant recipients to ensure alignment with your project.

5. Look for Government Grants:

- Don't overlook federal, state, and local government grants, which can often provide substantial funding for various types of programs.

6. Consider Corporate Giving Programs:

- Investigate corporations related to your cause; many have corporate social responsibility programs or foundations that provide grants.

7. Check Eligibility Requirements:

- Carefully read the eligibility requirements for each grant to ensure your organization qualifies before investing time in an application.

8. Pay Attention to Deadlines:

- Organize opportunities by application deadlines and plan your grant writing schedule accordingly to avoid last-minute submissions.

9. Review Previously Funded Proposals:

- If available, study previously funded proposals to understand what made them successful and how they align with the funder's interests.

10. Network with Other Nonprofits:

- Connect with similar organizations to learn from their experiences with different funders and to get insights into their grant research strategies.

CONCLUSION: EMPOWERING YOUR GRANT WRITING JOURNEY

As we reach the conclusion of our exploration into the world of grant writing, we hope that the resources, tips, and guidance provided have illuminated the path to successful grant acquisition for your organization.

The journey of grant writing is one of strategy, perseverance, and continuous learning. It is a journey that seeks funding, fosters partnerships, builds community and ultimately brings visionary projects to life.

Remember, the key to successful grant writing lies in clear communication, a deep understanding of your funder's objectives, and a well-articulated presentation of your project's impact. Whether you are taking your first steps into grant writing or are looking to refine your skills, the resources and strategies discussed are designed to support and enhance your efforts.

At NM Grant Writers, we are committed to your success. Our services, from grant readiness assessments to proposal reviews and writing, are tailored to meet your unique needs and challenges. We stand ready to assist you in navigating the complexities of grant applications, celebrating the successes, and learning from the experiences.

As you progress, we encourage you to stay engaged with the grant writing community, remain curious, and continue seeking learning opportunities. The landscape of grant funding is ever-evolving, and staying informed is crucial.

We invite you to contact us with questions, for guidance, or to discuss your next project. Together, we can turn your goals into achievements and your projects into benchmarks of success.

Thank you for allowing us to participate in your grant writing journey. We look forward to supporting your endeavors and witnessing the positive change your work will bring to the communities you serve.

With warm regards and best wishes for your continued success,

Gwen

Gwen Valentino
NM Grant Writers, LLC

