

## **The Art of Good Grant Writing**

It's easy to get excited about a proposed project that will benefit your literacy organization and its students. But writing an effective grant proposal means getting the foundation or corporation to get excited about the project too. Here are basic guidelines for crafting a strong proposal. Be sure to request and follow any special guidelines that the funder may have.

### **Abstract**

In less than one page, introduce the organization and its mission and summarize your funding request. Describe the project's goals, plan of action, and method to evaluate results. At the end, summarize your funding request by listing the dollar amount requested and your project dates.

### **Introduction/Program Background**

Provide an overview of your literacy program—its objectives, audience, services, and staff. Briefly describe your organization's history, expertise, and major accomplishments. Describe the population you serve and your geographic location, especially if these characteristics are mentioned among the funders' priorities. Cite examples of successes or program statistics (such as the percentage of students meeting their goals).

### **Statement of Need or Problem**

Define the problem or need that you will address with the funding. Use objective research, not personal observations, to make your case (for instance, high school dropout rates in your community). Use real evidence to illustrate that a need exists and that your audience will use the services, information, or other benefits you plan to provide.

### **Goals and Objectives**

Explain the desired outcome of your project, the goals you plan to achieve. Goals should relate directly to the need and reflect the people your organization serves. Then identify specific, measurable objectives as part of that outcome. Write the goals as a short narrative and then list anticipated results or objectives.

### **Work Plan/Methods**

The work plan identifies the major tasks of the project, describing the activities you will implement to accomplish your objectives. Answer the questions: **HOW** will you achieve your goals, **WHO** will do the work, **WHAT** exactly will you do, **WHEN** will you do it, and **WHERE** will this all happen? This will generally be the longest section of the proposal.

Write the plan in step-by-step format and in chronological order. Demonstrate that you have a realistic management plan to get the job done. Provide a timeline for project activities.

## **Evaluation**

Explain how you will measure the progress and outcome of the project compared with the original objectives. Cite the specific techniques that will be used to gather this information.

## **Budget**

Provide an itemized list of project and administrative costs—a list that directly reflects the work plan. Do your homework to find out what items, such as trips and materials, cost. The budget includes:

- direct costs
- salaries/benefits
- outside services (e.g. training)
- supplies
- equipment (purchase/rental)
- travel
- communications (e.g. phone, postage)
- publications/printing
- other costs (e.g. facilities)
- indirect costs, including all general support or overhead expenses (About 12 percent is generally accepted for this portion of costs.)

Follow standard accounting principles, listing expense descriptions in the left column and dollar amounts in the right. If you are proposing a specific project, submit a project budget plus a general operating budget for the organization. List other sources of funding. List other sources of funding. If you are requesting donations of equipment, be sure to explain how you will pay ongoing upkeep costs.

## **Institutional Issues**

You may include this section if a funder requires it or if it applies to a particular project. For instance, if you're seeking funding for a joint project between two community agencies, you will need to describe the administrative structure for handling the grant. In addition, some funders may want you to identify the staff people implementing the plan, including their qualifications and job descriptions.

Note: Some foundations and corporations prefer a brief overview proposal or letter of inquiry before receiving a formal proposal with attachments. Such “mini-proposals” should be less than three pages, and in some cases just a one-page letter describing your organization, its objectives, and your funding request. A funder who likes the overview will request a more detailed proposal. Ask about this preference during your research.