

Tips for Grant Seekers

Pre-Submission	Tip 1	<p>Review grant qualifications and ensure that you fulfill <i>all</i> the qualifications necessary. If you do not meet all the qualifications, do <i>not</i> apply. Grant programs are rigid in their evaluation process and immediately dismiss any ineligible applicants.</p> <p>Once you have determined your eligibility, get a head start on your application process by creating a folder comprised of federal and private grant applications from the previous year. It is rare that grant applications change much from year to year, so utilize your time by referencing the previous year's template.</p>
	Tip 2	<p>Be sure to sign up with www.grants.gov to receive up and coming federal agency grant opportunities when a Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) is published. Additionally, www.grants.gov offers the convenience of finding grant programs listed by field of interest.</p>
	Tip 3	<p>Devise new ideas on a weekly basis to stay abreast of potential grant proposals. Form group discussions with appropriate staff about the validity of grant ideas.</p>
	Tip 4	<p>Stay in correspondence with the grant program officials throughout the year. These contacts can aid in obtaining information regarding the grant application commencement date as well as any potential changes made to the process. A great tactic often used is to schedule a one-on-one meeting during the off-season with the grant program official; this can boost your consideration in the grant evaluation process. Be proactive and request that other pertinent personnel of the grant program be in attendance to your meeting.</p>
	Tip 5	<p>Utilize your congressional and federal agencies; these agencies can provide information on how to become a grant reviewer and/or become a member of directional committees which assist in determining the priorities of grant programs.</p>
	Tip 6	<p>Go outside the margins and increase your efforts. Get to know your state and federal congressional members throughout your application process. Becoming familiar with these members of your community as they can prove to be beneficial. They can also guide you to future opportunities or can offer letters of support to the program officials once the submission of the grant is complete.</p>
	Tip 7	<p>Due diligence is key when preparing for the grant application process. Conduct searches regularly to refresh your grant ideas. Keep track of the pertinent grant websites of your federal and private agencies. Use the "favorites" function for easy accessibility. The federal and private agencies are best known for keeping up to date information posted regarding funding opportunities and relevant contact information.</p>
	Tip 8	<p>Be sure to sign up with www.foundationcenter.org, so if the grant is offered through a foundation, you can obtain the organization's latest IRS Form 990 submittal. This form offers essential information on a foundation's assets, financial activities and most importantly a thorough list of grants awarded for the indicated fiscal year. This list serves as a research tool for grant seekers and sheds light on the foundations past giving history.</p> <p><u>Non-profit organizations</u> with an exempt letter from the IRS may qualify for foundation grants as well as government grants. <u>For-profit businesses</u> (corporations, partnerships or sole proprietors) may qualify for government grants depending on the specifications of the governmental agency.</p>

	Tip 9	Remember that local funding opportunities are available to you as well. Businesses in your area will most likely have charitable opportunities that often favor community locals and thus place your entry as a priority.
	Tip 10	Once potential grant opportunities are found, contact the program officials for additional information. Unlike some private funders, federal funding opportunities do not generally restrict contact with program officials, so contact them. E-mail correspondence is generally the preferred initial contact method. Check the respective private and federal funding websites to confirm that contact from the grant seeker is allowed.
	Tip 11	Generally the success rate for grant applications are low, so non-profit grant seekers should be prepared to apply to numerous federal agencies, private foundations and corporations. Constant group discussions should take place to devise innovative ideas for funding proposals.
	Tip 12	Overlooking a prospective grant agency based on its name is one of the most common mistakes one could make. Many times, agencies will have grant programs that cater to outside industries. If your nonprofit organization relates to the theme of the industry, you should be eligible to apply for the grant program.
	Tip 13	When conducting research, preview the list of former winners. A previous grantee may have a program that can be modified for your area. These non-profits generally are more than happy to provide additional information, because the more their project is used, the more cache the group attains.
	Tip 14	Keep a file of pertinent information, including your DUNS and SAMS numbers, employer ID number (EIN), bank account information, a good outline of your organization's mission as well as any partnerships that are strengthening it. Online applications are the norm with all funders. Be sure to include lists of members and donors, if any, in your files as well
Submission	Tip 1	Once the grant opportunities and corresponding deadlines are determined, create schedules and task lists for each opportunity. Set your schedule end date a week prior to the <i>actual</i> end date. The schedule should be flexible to allow room for any internal approvals and unforeseen changes.
	Tip 2	Do not be overenthusiastic when submitting your grant. Federal and several private opportunities offer short submission windows; however, use all of the allotted time. Grants submitted early in the cycle are generally considered sub-par...even if they are not.
	Tip 3	It is highly recommended that the program grant guidance within the NOFA is read a few times. A thorough understanding of the guidance will provide a sense of tone and structure of the grant narrative.
	Tip 4	Keep track of the technical assistance information provided. Technical assistance seminars are popular with federal agencies, as are online grant tutorials. If available, be sure to utilize these and other resources.
	Tip 5	Your time to develop and write the grant narrative should take approximately forty percent (40%) of the allotted time. Designate another forty percent (40%) of your time for internal approvals, review and editing/proof reading, and last minute modifications. Submission should consume the remaining twenty percent (20%) of your scheduled time. Refer to the grant NOFA, as it will dictate the most crucial sections and requirements of the narrative. For instance, federal guidance usually provides a breakdown of the scoring process. If the narrative says the proposed project portion of the narrative is worth 80 out of 100 points, then 80% of the allotted narrative drafting should be consumed by this task.
	Tip 6	Typically, federal agencies tend to show preference to applicants that have never won funding from their programs. Non-profit organizations that have not been successful with a

		certain federal program should always check on the “Novice Priority”. If the program mentions a novice priority, make sure to highlight that factor in your grant proposal.
	Tip 7	Federal and private funders want to see experience and capacity in handling funding and partnerships. Novice grant seekers shouldn’t panic if they lack a wealth of experience with grant management, but rather play up their partnerships and potential for leveraging resources in the proposal. Additionally, make sure partners are involved in the grant submission process.
	Tip 8	Make sure the grant narrative is written in an “on-line-friendly” manner. Formatting might be stripped from the document once it is posted on-line, including any bullets, italics and quotation marks, etc. Either change these once posted, or use other methods (hyphens, parentheses or all caps) from the beginning. Again, refer to the NOFA for details.
	Tip 9	In spelling out the need for the proposal, provide as much supporting evidence on the problem to be solved as possible. Use recent statistics, case studies, testimonies and other measurable data. Do not use outdated statistics, anecdotal stories, or unsubstantial information or data.
	Tip 10	In the grant narrative, clearly spell out goals and deliverables. This is best accomplished with lists, with supporting paragraphs spelling out how each of the goals and deliverables will be accomplished.
	Tip 11	Assume the grant reviewers know nothing about your organization. Do not confuse them with jargon; explain things clearly.
	Tip 12	Upon the completion of your draft narrative, contact the grant official for the targeted program (unless otherwise told not to do so) to see if they will review it. Be ready to provide a synopsis over the phone because they generally will not review the proposal for you; however, they might listen to the verbal synopsis and provide guidance.
	Tip 13	Once the grant application is compiled, get all staff members, board members and volunteers involved in the review process of the proposal. This is especially crucial if the proposal mentions the participation of a particular staffer or department. The objective is not to have any surprises when the grant is funded.
	Tip 14	Know your budget! Establish a realistic budget which will give credibility to the entire proposal. On-line submission systems generally provide space and/or opportunity to provide additional information on the expenditure; do not leave this sections blank. Provide as much information on the budget as possible.
	Tip 15	Prior to submission, have a fresh set of eyes take a look at the grant application. Ideally this would be a staff member who has some knowledge of the subject matter.
Post Submission	Tip 1	Keep the online grant submission verification e-mail in your files for future reference. On-line glitches may occur, so make sure to submit the grant proposal <i>at least</i> a day in advance of the deadline. This leaves time to contact the agency the next day to ensure the proposal was received.
	Tip 2	Contact congressional offices, program officials and partners to let them know the grant has been submitted. Provide a copy of the grant application to each, if possible. Ask the congressional staffers and partners to submit letters of support for the program.
	Tip 3	A positive sign you are approved for a grant is if you receive a call or email from the agency or foundation to clarify your information. This generally means the proposal has been approved for funding, but a few questions are outstanding. Do not panic when this happens, just answer the questions honestly. At times, the agency will lower the proposed budget amount, but not significantly.



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	Tip 4	If your proposal isn't successful, do not become disheartened. Contact the program official to gather insights on the weaknesses and strengths of the proposals. If a federal agency, ask for a copy of the reviewer's comments for future references.
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