



Finding Funds for Your Bright Ideas

Grant Writing Tips & Techniques

Collected by Heather Sparks, NBCT

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Notes & Ideas

In addition to the sites listed below, I would like to acknowledge the sharing of ideas by Terri Grissom of the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. She can be reached via email at ***tgrissom @oshrhe.edu***.

Grant resource sites:

Online Grant Writing Tutorial

www.cobweb.ecn.purdue.edu

Current Grant Offerings:

www.educationworld.com/a_admin/archives/grants.shtml

www.publiceducation.org/newsblast_grants.asp

www.grantsalert.com

Additional Grant Resources and Tips

www.hisparks.com/forteachers.html

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Writing the Proposal

If you have a copy of the grant proposal form, make several copies of it before you begin. These copies will serve as your working drafts. Answer all the questions without worrying about spelling or limiting the words; getting your ideas down on paper is the point here.

If you are applying for a grant that does not have a form, begin by typing the requirements of each category, saving each as a separate electronic document. In this way, you can quickly find the various parts of your proposal and make changes as needed. Gather each piece into a folder so they can be easily accessed.

If the proposal will be electronically submitted, you can also write each section as a word document. Then, you can copy, cut and paste each section to the electronic form. This way, your finished proposal will be free of most, if not all, spelling or grammatical errors.

GOLDEN RULE #1: “K.I.S.S” (Keep It Short & Simple)

Grant evaluators do not have time or the patience to “figure out” your proposal. Revise your rough draft until it is easy to understand. Keep in mind that you may be the only one envisioning this project, so you must paint the picture for everyone else! It is helpful to have people who do not know about your project read your proposal so they can tell you what they don’t understand.

When the final editing is done, you must make your proposal visually appealing. The majority of grants do not allow staples, special covers, or other distinguishing features, so you must make sure your proposal stands apart from others by using a laser printer and pictures and graphics when appropriate. Finally, include a strong evaluation plan. Although difficult to develop, it is what usually separates the winner from the losers.

Post-Proposal Blues

Well, it happens to many of us: Rejection. Be persistent and try not to be discouraged if you are not successful on the first try. Be sure to write the funding agency and ask for feedback. Many times, they will send you your scorecard so you can work on your weak sections and resubmit the following year.

SACRED RULE #1: Submit your proposal to only one funding source at a time. If it is denied at one, feel free to submit the same project idea to another funding source.

You may, of course, submit several grants in one year each for different projects. Remember that the smaller the grant, generally the more competition and therefore the less your chance of being funded. Teachers seem to believe they can write for small grants, but few apply for the large ones.

To save yourself a lot of work and improve your chances for funding, call the funding agency if you have any questions. Over one-third of all grants submitted are rejected due because of failure to follow grant submission guidelines or rules!

Additional Ideas

While many teachers consider grants a great opportunity to get more “stuff” for their classroom and students, you might also consider writing a grant for school programs or events. You are only limited by your imagination (and budget!), so think big!

“What makes greatness is starting something that lives on after you.”

~Ralph W. Sockman

Funding Sources

It is important that you target your grant audience. Obviously you would not write Apple Computer for an outdoor classroom grant. Do your homework. Most state universities have research departments with grant resource software that allows you to search for funding sources for your grant ideas. You can then print a list of the funders that are the best match for your grant needs.

While many commercial sources for grant information exist, you can easily find grants at no cost to you. Magazines including Teacher Magazine, Teaching K-8, NEA Today and others generally post upcoming proposal deadlines in special areas of the magazines.

Also, don't forget your community! Many cities and towns are setting up local educational foundations. Check with your district or principal for information on these small grants. For larger grants, you will want to contact the State Department of Education. Besides nationally known projects like Title I, topical grants are also awarded throughout the year based on guidelines from NCLB.

I can't leave out another important information source: Our colleagues and friends! Telling them about your project idea may spark a reminder in them when they see information on upcoming grants. Also, larger companies in your area may offer grants as well. Wal-Mart, OG&E, and Radio Shack are several companies that offer grants within the communities they serve.

Mining the internet via search engines can also provide you with a variety of grant resources. Check out the links on page 5 of this guide for my favorite "gateway" sites that maintain up-to-date grant opportunities.

Initial Preparation

If money were no object, what would you dream of for your school or classroom? This is where you begin. Or, if you know your school has a specific need, you can begin there, too!

Next design your project. Write down what you expect to accomplish with your project. Does your project idea fit your building, district, state, and national goals? Add power to your proposal by telling how!

Once you have your idea on paper, you are ready to research. Review the wording and style of successful grants. Read journals and other publications to find out what grants are available and what others are doing in your field of expertise. Their ideas will help support and even validate the need for your project. Don't forget to communicate with the administration and other teachers about your idea. Listen to their suggestions and try to incorporate them. For a more political move, make it sound like it was there idea!

Next, begin collecting pictures, artwork, and examples of student work to include in your proposal. It will provide a temporary connection to the reader. Make as many "human" connections as possible. It is much harder to say "no" to a face. If your school or community has special circumstances that relate to the grant, be sure to highlight them!

Do your budget homework. Locate costs, sources and model numbers of equipment. The more specific your budget, the better. Double-check your figures and don't forget to add shipping! Grantors generally give only what you ask for, so if you forget something, you are out of luck!

Finally, develop a track record. Prove that you are the type of person who leads a project to success and will have a lasting impact!