



Top Ten Tips for Successful Grant Writing

By Jenna Green, intern of Five Star Education Foundation

When writing a grant, it is important to create a compelling case for your school and/or program. Think about the things a grantmaker would need to know about in order to invest in you. Granters want to know who it will benefit, are you good at what you do, will you use the money well, how do you use partnerships to strengthen your organization, and what's in it for them. Lastly, you must inspire them with your WHY so they choose your program over others. Let's break this down with tactical steps so you will have success time and time again.

1. Find a grant that is a good fit.
 - a. Make sure you meet all requirements for the grant. If you don't meet all the requirements, you're wasting your time and theirs. Find a grant that aligns with your goals and objectives and avoid drifting from the mission. *Do not create a program to fit a grant.* Focus your grant on one specific project.
2. Reach out to the granting organization.
 - a. There should be contact information listed with the application. You can always contact the organization giving out the grant *unless it specifies not to.* They'll let you know if your program is a fit for their organization or not, saving you valuable time. It's also a great way to get your request on the radar.
3. Give yourself plenty of time.
 - a. Most grants are very thorough and ask a lot of questions that might require time to research and collect data. Give yourself plenty of time before the deadline to write, review, and submit the grant. Grants are *never* accepted beyond the deadline given.
4. Create a template to use over and over again.
 - a. Most grants ask the same or similar questions. Create a strong foundation to copy and paste from and then you can tweak each grant accordingly. Most grants will ask for the organization's background, organization goals, current program descriptions, and evaluation of the programs. They may also ask for a timeline, budget, list of collaborators, and successes you've had.
5. Pay attention to details.
 - a. Sometimes grants want you to answer multiple pieces in one question. Make sure you answer every part concisely. Don't leave the reviewer guessing to fill in any gaps. Assume they know nothing about your proposal. Pay attention to any length or margin requirements. Don't include attachments they don't ask for. The better you follow directions, the better chance your proposal will have. *Fifty percent of grants are rejected for not following instructions.*



6. Avoid industry jargon.
 - a. Assume the review committee has little to no knowledge of the current state of education. Clearly layout your proposal using language anyone would be able to understand. Keep your proposal focused and use measurable outcomes as your goals.
7. Be a good storyteller and differentiate yourself.
 - a. Write a grant that inspires the reviewers and pulls on their heartstrings. Inspire them to invest in your project and students. It is also a great idea to support your application with data and direct quotes. Find a good balance between the emotional appeal and data to support your claims. What makes your program different from other programs out there? Separate yourself from the masses to make your application stand out.
8. Explain WHY
 - a. Writing a grant application includes storytelling, data analysis, and an appeal. The glue that holds everything together is your WHY. Don't just state that your program is different from other programs, explain why that difference makes your program the one to invest in.
9. Be sure it makes sense.
 - a. Recruit an objective reviewer to make sure it makes sense, there are no gaps the reader has to fill in, and your math in your budget aligns with your documents and request. If an outsider who has little to no knowledge about your program understands your proposal and is not left with questions, your proposal will stand a better chance with the grant reviewers.
10. If at first you don't succeed, ***try again***.
 - a. Grant writing is challenging and competitive. If your proposal is not accepted, that is not the end of your program's story. Review your grant and see if there is anything that can make it stronger (new data points or better storytelling).

Pro-tip:

Reach out to the Five Star Education Foundation. Not only will we review your grant and provide input, but we can open doors. There are a lot of grants that will only provide funding to 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations, which we are! We can communicate your needs with donors and local businesses looking for ways to support our students. Use us as a resource!