



Grant Writing Tips

General

- Read and follow the directions.
- Give yourself plenty of extra time. Everything will take longer to do than you think, so expect delays, especially with larger and more complex projects, and increasingly with electronic submissions processes.
- Neatness and accurate spelling adds important credibility to the project.
- Avoid acronyms, agency jargon, and scientific verbiage.
- Cooperative efforts show local support for the project. Do not list cooperators from whom you have not gotten support.
- Communicate with the grantor/program staff to answer questions about the project content or how the Request For Proposal (RFP) guidelines apply to your project.
- Do not include reference materials, pictures, articles, letters of support, etc. unless the RFP says you may.
- Do not try to apply political pressure to get the project funded. Let your project stand on its own merit, and let the reviewers do their job.
- Have someone not involved in the project read your proposal and provide feedback.

Plan of Work

- Read and follow the directions.
- Follow the format required in the RFP guidelines.
- Make it clear why your project advances the mission and goals of the grantor.
- Limit the project to a maximum of 3 goals and objectives. The more measurable your objectives, the better.
- Make sure action items pertain to your goals and objectives.
- Develop a realistic time line for action items, including what/when/who.
- Quantify activities as much as possible, such as # of events, newsletters, attendees, etc.
- Do not get too technical, as not all reviewers will have relevant technical background.
- Give careful attention to both outreach activities and project evaluation process.

Budget

- Provide as much detail as possible, e.g., quantify # hours, # purchases, etc.
- Many things cost more than you think, so do your homework on actual costs before you submit the grant.
- If there is any question or doubt about an expense, contact the grantor and ask.
- Do not include expenses that are not eligible (except for matching).
- If you think something isn't clear, explain it in a "budget narrative" as part of the proposal's text.

Common Reasons Proposals Are Not Funded

1. The deadline for proposal submission is not met.
2. The guidelines for proposal content, format and length are not followed exactly, or the proposal is not complete.
3. The study or the project is not a priority topic to the grantor or sponsoring agency.
4. The proposed research question, research design, and(or) research methods offers nothing unusual, intriguing, or innovative and(or) lacks significance.
5. The proposal isn't absolutely clear in describing one or more elements, e.g., how the project would be managed, activities monitored, or results evaluated and reported.
6. The project appears beyond the capacity of the individual or institution to carry out.
7. The methods are not explained, justified effectively, or seem unsuited to the project.
8. The budget is unrealistically high or low or isn't well justified.
9. The costs of the project appear greater than the benefits.
10. In the literature review section or the background section, the writer shows lack of knowledge relevant to the proposed initiative. For example, sources cited are out of date, or the writer overlooked important reference material and previous studies.
11. The rationale for choosing a particular approach as the best solution to a problem is missing or not very well thought out.
12. The constraints most likely to be encountered are inadequately considered, and there are no tactics for overcoming them presented.
13. Lessons learned from previous institutional projects are not shown or not made relevant to the proposed project.
14. The quality of the writing is poor. The proposal is hard to read, makes sweeping generalizations or illogical statements, is excessively repetitive or too long.
15. The document contains an unreasonable number of mechanical errors (e.g., typos, pages upside down or in backwards) showing an inattention to detail and quality of work.