

# WRITING GRANTS

Some non-profit and faith-based organization leaders seem to truly believe that “For every action there is an equal or opposite government or *private foundation grant*.” Sometimes the Board of Directors or even the paid leadership of non-profit organizations appear to believe that all they need to do is to simply add the responsibility of writing grants to a staff member who also has other duties. Some Boards of Directors who see themselves as more progressive are willing to “hire a grant writer” and fully believe that the grant writer will bring in lots and lots of money to support existing programs, to pay for existing costs, and perhaps even help to pay off existing debt. This mistaken approach is a disaster waiting to happen.

Researching available grants is a time consuming task. Matching the goals and objectives of your non-profit organization with the funding guidelines of a potential granting entity is not a simple task. While well-written grant proposals that meet the goals of a potential grant source have a reasonable likelihood of success most non-profit organizations do not succeed the first time they submit a grant proposal. Non-profit organizations often are actively engaged in fulfilling their Mighty Mission and are not experienced in writing grants. While anything is possible in the area of fundraising and grant writing, it is indeed very rare that a non-profit organization obtains a significantly large or multi-year grant on the first proposal it submits to a potential grant source.

The rate of success with potential grant sources can be significantly enhanced when the goals of your non-profit organization fit well with the goals and the guidelines of a potential grant source. Well-written grant proposals that ask for realistic amounts for the project to be done have a better chance of success. Time spent getting to know and be known by a potential grant source increases the likelihood of success. Of course, non-profit organizations that have a great reputation for excellence and positive results have a much greater likelihood of successful grant writing.

## **Twelve Tips for Successful Grant Writing**

The process of successful grant preparation moves from identifying and studying a possible source to picking a grant to apply for.

1. Identify a potential project.
2. Do a Scratch Budget.
3. Pick an appropriate program.
4. Call the program contact person.
5. Locate a potential funder.
6. Make three outlines.
7. Revise the project.
8. Call follow-up staff person.
9. Revise the project again.
10. Fully develop the project.
11. Gather supporting statistics.
12. Write the proposal.

The process of locating potential grant sources, determining if or how they might fit your organization takes the time and effort of an individual with good creativity. The determination to pursue a possible grant needs to be shared with senior leadership before a significant amount of time is spent on writing a grant proposal that is highly unlikely your organization will get – or cannot perform if it actually is awarded the grant.

Writing an effective grant proposal will take the time of talented individuals that know your organization and both its current operations, including its short-term and near-long-term potential. Some organizations seek out professional “grant-writers” for this task. The best professional “grant-writers” may be very helpful in locating “sweet spot” moderate to fairly large sized grant opportunities. They may be able to provide a great deal of actual writing for a large governmental or corporate grant. However, they should not do this without the very significant involvement of the organization’s key paid and ultimately its volunteer leadership.

Most governmental grants prohibit using grant funds to pay such a person if the grant proposal is approved. Only if the professional grant-writer has skills and talents needed to carry out the grant and if that person was listed as one of the principles or responsible persons for the grant can they (or should that person) be an individual paid from grant funds. Of course there is no prohibition from your organization paying a grant-writer from its own “non-grant” funds for the work they did and possibly even paying a “bonus” if the grant proposal is approved and funded.

Most grantors and RFP’s (requests for proposals) expect that your organization will use grant funds for something in addition to existing operations. Grant funds may pay for “start-up” or expansion of a program. Once the grant funding ends the granting source normally expects that the new or expanded programs will continue without further grant funds. A carefully developed grant proposal can however, pay for some existing overhead and administrative costs. Of course those costs cannot be charged to the grant and to another source at the same time.

Well thought out grant proposals that are properly funded also can give non-profit, faith-based and charitable organizations an opportunity to hire highly skilled professional staff that while carrying out the grant are also helping to strengthen the overall organization. They may be able to increase the “organizational capacity” with skill sets that the organization could not otherwise have afforded. For example, they may develop such things as: outcome measurement systems, databases for persons served, strategic planning, and the proper delegation of budgeting responsibility and accountability.

The following Two Dozen Sequenced Steps to Successful Grant Writing provides more detail about how this process operates and hint at the level of professionalism required for successful grant-writing.

### **Two Dozen Sequenced Steps to Successful Grant Writing**

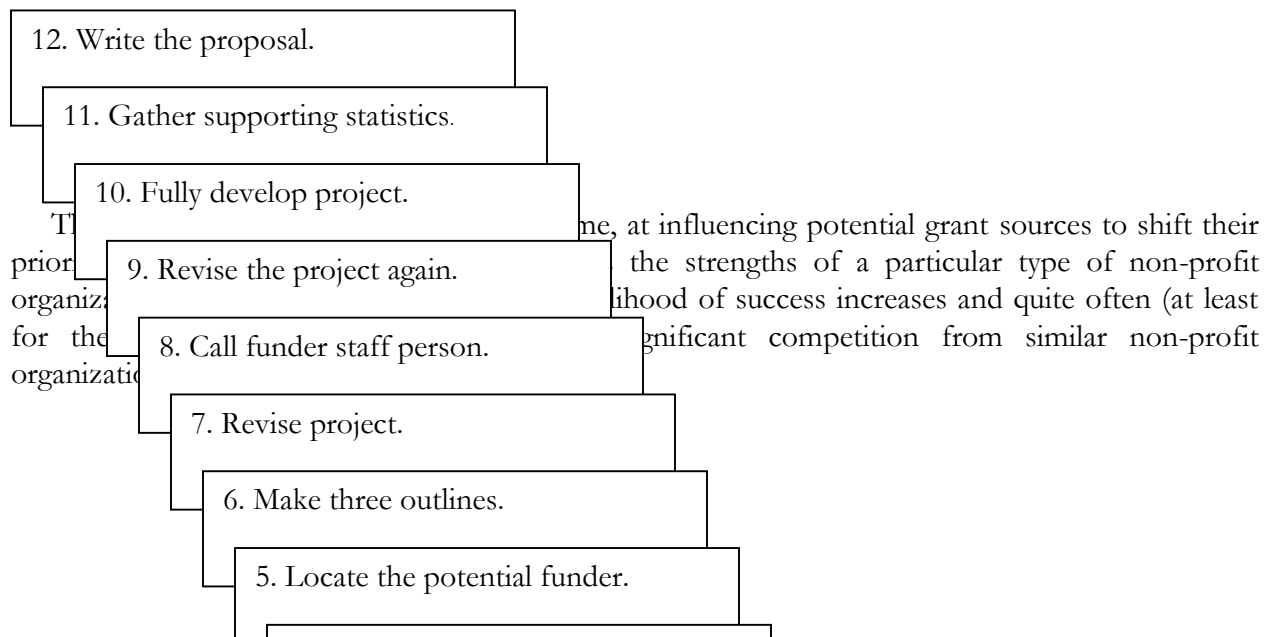
1. Establish a process to locate RFP’s (Requests for Proposal)
2. Determine which RFP’s best fits your organization
3. Do a “scratch budget” - determine financial feasibility
4. Pick an appropriate grant (or two) to review-in depth
5. Contact others that have been awarded similar grants
6. Contact grant program staff – ask for clarification
7. Make an outline of your proposal that fits the grant RFP
8. Review – edit – proofread – and revise your project proposal
9. Re-contact grant program staff - listen to what they say

10. Revise project key elements – make them a perfect fit with RFP
11. Fully develop the grant concept all sections of the grant proposal
12. Gather support for the grant from respected professionals in the field
13. Complete grant proposal - review – edit – proofread – and revise
14. Thank grant program staff for their help – legally and carefully
15. Submit the grant proposal about one week early – not too early
16. Use appropriate systems to be sure grant proposal was received
17. Wait, hope, and pray that the proposal is approved and funded
18. Review grant approval documents and sign and submit forms
19. Follow the grant rules, restrictions, and reporting requirements
20. Contact grant program staff to address grant execution problems
21. Meet - exceed the grant goals and objectives and promised results
22. Provide timely professional grant reports - always a few days early
23. Submit final grant report – results - financial data – and outcomes
24. Suggest ideas for future requests for proposals and/or follow/up

NOTE: If the grant proposal is not approved, most large (governmental) granting sources will provide a very valuable summary of the grant proposal ratings and comments gathered during the review of your grant proposal. This information can be very helpful in being better prepared for your organization's next grant proposal. This information also helps your organization choose which RFP's do not fit your organization and to not spend valuable resources on writing grant proposals that have little, if any, chance of approval. Corporate foundations and very large family foundations may give similar feedback. Smaller – foundations including family foundations rarely provide such feedback.

**Return on Investment (ROI).** Organizations that conduct fundraising must do so with the clear intent of generating a reasonable amount of net funds raised. They should carefully plan their activities and manage their expenses so that the amount of funds raised when compared to the cost of raising those funds is reasonable. They must be sure that their fundraising efforts will in the foreseeable future help their organizations to fulfill their Might Missions. Planning well and obtaining a good return on investment will generate not only more money for the organization today, but it also builds credibility with current donors. This credibility is critical for donor retention and to position them as candidates for larger future donations and even for estate gifts.

The **Grant Writing Steps** that follow illustrate how the grant writing process actually works.



Some major grant sources have money they must award. The staff of the potential grant sources is truly looking for good grant proposals. They want grants to be awarded to non-profit organizations that will meet the grant's goals and will fulfill all grant requirements. These non-profit organizations make the life of the grant source's staff less stressful. These individuals are normally conducting follow-up on current projects and reviewing final reports on completed grants at the same time they are reviewing new grant proposals.

Quite often corporate foundations, public foundations, governmental granting sources, and even small family foundations are looking for grant project that will have a positive impact. Some seek immediate impact while others recognize that success occurs in phases and steps. But few granting sources provide funding for ongoing operational expenses. Some granting sources may fund a particular current expense if it is seen as an important component of the grant proposal.

Some potential grant sources do not require new projects, or cutting edge concepts, or even the use of new techniques or tools to obtain positive results. Some granting sources are willing to fund ongoing operational costs. Some will fund scholarships for those served who could not otherwise be served. Some will be willing to fund only new construction.

**Airports get grants.** Small municipal airports, regional airports, and even large commercial and international airports get government grants. It is not at all unusual for federal funds to pay for seventy- five percent of a project. For example, in 2005 an entire runway was moved to accommodate a NASCAR track being built nearby. In 2009, a regional airport with declining passenger usage because of a terminal that was too small was awarded \$10 million or seventy- five percent of its terminal expansion.

**Colleges and students get grants.** Students attending state universities, those attending private colleges, those going to more economical community colleges get federal grant after grant. In 2009 the federal government is budgeted to spend \$95 billion in grants, guaranteed student loans, and work-study programs. Not to be outdone, every state in the United States has similar grant programs. In Arkansas (using lottery proceeds) began awarding scholarships to Arkansas high school graduates with a 2.5 GPA or higher.

**A Catholic School** that was struggling with generating enough income to continue may soon begin getting education grants from the State of New York. The school will have to re-vamp its curriculum and will no longer be able to teach religious classes during the school day. But this school, which has been around for generations, will continue. This school will retain most of its teachers. This school may even strengthen its operations so that in the future it could convert back to being a Catholic School when economic conditions improve.

**Grants are available for almost anything.** Faith-based and non-profit organizations can, with good research, proper relationship building, and skillful writing, successfully write, obtain, and implement grants to help them to fulfill their Mighty Missions.

Potential grant sources often have a wide array of the types of grant funds they provide. Some grant sources provide direct funding to purchase items which have an immediate and personal impact on individuals. Some examples are: eye glasses, adaptive equipment, wheelchairs, and medical equipment. Others may fund direct services such as: speech or physical therapy, a special needs fund for individuals served, and even closing costs for programs such as: "A Home of My Own."

Some potential grant sources are very interested in quality of services. They have even been known to fully fund the development and implementation of a system to develop a method to measure and track outcomes and other important information management and performance

improvement data. They sometimes even fund the creation of systems of continuous quality improvement and even the cost of obtaining international accreditation or certification. Other potential grant sources realize the importance of a non-profit or faith-based organization recruiting and retaining high quality personnel. They may fund: specialized training, wage subsidies, employee benefits, staff recruitment and retention effort. They may even fund efforts an organization makes to learn how to best motivate and support its employees.

A very competitive type potential grant funding is from those who primarily fund research. They fund basic research done under carefully controlled conditions (often laboratories). They fund replication studies, statistical studies and dissemination of research findings. In fact the type of funding available from potential grant sources covers the full spectrum of one's imagination. Grant sources provide funding for sources ranging from A to Z.

### **The A to Z of Grants**

*Grants are available that match the Mighty Mission of almost any non-profit organization. Grant funds are available for many purposes ranging from highly controlled laboratory research to advancing one's faith and from strip mine restoration to land mine removal. This alphabetical list is an illustration of some grants which have been awarded by family foundations, corporate foundations, community foundations and governmental grant funding.*

*Animal Shelters & Alzheimer's Research; Basic Research & Barn Restorations; Criminology & Creationism; Disability Adaptation & Demilitarization; Economic Development & Early Childhood Programs; Forestry & Faith-based Programs; Gerontology & Gender Identity; How to squeeze more food from a raindrop & Homeless Veterans; Interplanetary Travel & Impressionistic Art; Job Training & Jousting Festivals; Kinesthetic Movements & Killer Bees; Libraries & Leprosy Prevention; Marine Corps Museums & Mussel Removal; Neurosurgery & Neolithic Studies; Ocelot Restoration & Olive Oil Benefits; Pollution Abatement & Physical Fitness; Quality Measurement & Quail Habitat; Road Construction & Reforestation; Schizophrenia & Salmon Spawning; Turtle Sanctuaries & Teenage Pregnancy; Urban Redevelopment & U-Boat Salvage; Vision Restoration & Visitation of the elderly; War on Drugs & West Nile Virus; X-Ray Overusage & Xylophone Studies; Youth Fitness & Yuppie Preferences; Zoysia Golf Course Grass & Zebra Mussels.*

In addition to the A to Z of grants listed prior, there are other grants which are funded year upon year. These range from purely governmental grants to local and international service organizations. These worthwhile organizations all seem to practice "service above self."

**Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)** From Portland, Maine, to San Diego, California, from Seattle, Washington, to Key West, Florida, and in both Alaska and Hawaii CDBG Grants are available. The primary objective of these grants is "the preservation and development of viable communities by providing decent housing, a suitable living environment, and economic development opportunities." These grants have also been awarded for public service activities and public facility improvements designed principally for people with low to moderate incomes.

**Lions International gives grants.** The Lions International Foundation provided grants to assist Lions districts with large-scale humanitarian projects that are too expensive for local clubs to finance on their own. Lions Clubs gather eyeglasses from all over the world and go into areas where these glasses give sight to those who otherwise would be nearly blind. The Foundation aids Lions in making a greater impact in their local communities, as well as around the world. Lions ease pain and suffering and bring healing and hope to people worldwide. Grants are also provided for assistance following natural disasters and long-term disaster relief. Grants help preserve sight, combat disability, promote health or serve youth.

**Kiwanis Club members are addressing world-wide iodine deficiency.** Their information indicates that, every day, 113,000 babies are born at risk of iodine deficiency. These children often are not able to learn as quickly as others and this in many cultures could significantly reduce their quality of life, their potential for employment, their education and could hinder their chances of survival itself. In addition to its iodine deficiency program, every day, Kiwanis Club members are revitalizing neighborhoods, organizing youth sport programs, tutoring, building playgrounds, and performing countless other projects to help children and the communities where Kiwanis club members live and work.

**The Rotary Foundation is eradicating Polio from the world forever.** The Rotary Foundation, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and the British and German governments announced in January of 2009 that they were committing more than \$630 million in new funds to fight polio, a crippling and sometimes fatal disease that still paralyzes children in parts of Africa and Asia and threatens children everywhere. In addition to pledging needed funds, Wars have been stopped so that polio vaccination could be given to children. National political and religious leaders are urged to join Rotary and its partners promoting an aggressive vaccination program to every village, to every hamlet, and into the deepest jungles.

**Insurance Companies make grants.** The Aetna Foundation, the independent charitable and philanthropic arm of Aetna Inc. “helps build healthy communities by promoting volunteerism, forming partnerships and funding initiatives that improve the quality of life where our employees and customers live and work.” It’s Employee and Retiree Grants Program/volunteerism program gives up to \$300 per employee or retiree volunteer to eligible organizations where that person volunteers 20 hours or more each year. The [Personal Donations](#) matching gift program provides up to \$5,000 to support an individual's donation to a qualifying non-profit organization. Aetna also matches donations made to the annual [giving campaign](#) which supports the United Way and many local educational, regional community health programs and quality of care programs.

**Grants are given for Alzheimer’s disease research.** All across the United States groups work hard to raise money for Alzheimer’s disease research. For example, it was reported that in Northwest Arkansas the 2008 “Cherish Every Moment Alzheimer’s Gala” raised \$115,000. Also in December of 2008, Utah State University announced that associate professor Maria Norton of the Department of Family, Consumer and Human Development received \$970,549 from the National Institutes of Health to study how cumulative stress may lead to Alzheimer’s disease. This three-year study, will examine the extent to which psychosocial factors and their interaction with genetic factors increase risk for Alzheimer’s disease. The study is being conducted with USU colleagues JoAnn Tschanz and Chris Corcoran in collaboration with Duke University, the University of Utah, Johns Hopkins University and the University of Gothenburg in Sweden. Other researchers are pursuing different approaches. For example, at the University of Pennsylvania, Dr. Paul Axelsen is studying whether “a mechanistic link can be made between oxidative stress and amyloid fibril formation.”

It appears that grants are given by nearly every possible organization. In January of 2009, a quick scan of a Northwest Arkansas newspaper told of grants given by several family foundations and by organizations such as the Daughters of the American Revolution, American Heart Association, the Dental Mission of Mercy, a Corvette Club, and a chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Society. This same edition of the newspaper also announced grants for cancer support homes and for young cancer survivors preparing for higher education.

Even in the midst of a country-wide economic downturn, these grants were given in Northwest Arkansas. In sunny south California, non-profit organizations have a chance to participate in providing services with some of the \$3.76 million made available by the California Community Foundation in Los Angeles. This foundation acknowledges the positive economic impact of immigrants and seeks ways to help immigrants become even more productive.

Writing grants successfully takes hard work. It takes good research on potential grant sources. It takes a good understanding of the goals of each potential grant source. It takes careful responding to every one of the potential grant source's guidelines and answering all of its questions. Grant writing "isn't rocket science" but it does take good writing skills.

Successful grant writing depends on the strengths of the organization. One set of steps to success – one way to do what matters most when writing grants is to follow these "Ten Tips to Successful Grant Writing."

### **Ten Tips to Successful Grant Writing**

Seeing these grants listed or even just reading the newspaper makes getting grants seem so simple. However the success of an organization's grant writing will significantly increase if it implements these ten grant writing tips.

1. Be sure that your organization has a Mighty Mission and that you can communicate in a clear and compelling manner.
2. Identify and prioritize your organization's urgent, compelling and unmet needs and develop a planned response to meet those needs.
3. If money or donated items or equipment will meet those needs, clearly identify how they would meet these needs.
4. Develop a one page outline and simple budget of what your organization would request from a grant source.
5. Screen and identify local, regional and national grant sources which have some interest in your type of organization and location.
6. Prioritize potentially grant sources and carefully review their goals, guidelines, limitations and past grants awarded.
7. Identify how your organization would utilize their funds, expected outcomes, and how the project will be sustained.
8. Develop a proposal specific to the potential grant source with the best fit to your organization and the needs you have identified.
9. Wait a few days then review your work again for fit with the grant source and its goals and guidelines.
10. If the grant request is approved, celebrate. If it is not approved, tactfully learn how to improve your proposal.

The authors have often been asked by leaders of even some of the best run of non-profit and faith-based organizations, "Where do we look to find potential grant sources?"

### **Finding Potential Grant Sources**

Sometimes non-profit organizations don't know where to start as they search for potential grant sources. The tips listed below should produce a wealth of information about potential grant sources. Used well the information gathered can be the first step toward obtaining significant grant funding. Some sources to find potential grants are:

- The Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance provides detailed information about existing federal programs and announces grant availability.
- The Federal Register is the official daily publication for rules, proposed rules, availability of grant funds, and other notices of Federal agencies.
- Annual subscription newsletters such as the Federal Grants and Contracts Weekly which says of itself, “Whether you’re an experienced grant seeker or new to the game, whether you’re looking for grants in one specialized area or trying to cast a wide net for all available opportunities.”
- Internet searches can be very helpful in locating potential grant sources. These searches might be made by topic, by geographic area, or for information on a specific granting source.
- Conduct a search on your own state websites. In most cases this will be something like [www.arkansas.gov](http://www.arkansas.gov) or [www.iowa.gov](http://www.iowa.gov). From 2007-09 the Arkansas website had information on 68 large grants and the Iowa website had information on 104 grants.
- Search your state website specifically for foundations, corporate giving, and community foundations. For example, a search of the state of Iowa website identified 26 community foundations and 25 corporate giving programs and also showed 104 foundations that in the prior year gave an average of \$2.5 million in grants, with the largest foundation awarding over \$17 million in just one year.
- Grants that have been awarded and are announced on local (or national) TV and radio stations and newspapers clearly identify the granting entities
- Many university libraries and some local libraries have foundation directories which give detailed information about potential grant sources.
- Personal contact with the leadership of local or multi-state corporations can help to learn the funding priorities of these potential grant sources.
- Commercial firms sell access to their databases. In some cases, for a fee, they will identify several good prospective grant sources for your organization.
- Annual Reports of for profit and even non-profit organizations often identify grants awarded or received.
- Large and successful fundraising organizations such as university foundations may provide some leads that do not compete with their own needs for funding.
- Meeting individually with the staff of large foundations may provide information on available potential grant sources.
- Interviewing some of your organization’s current donors who have significant power and influence may identify potential grant sources.
- Centers for Philanthropy, such as The Center of Philanthropy at Indiana; Purdue University at Indianapolis, Indiana; The Center on Community Philanthropy at the Clinton School of Public Service at the University of Arkansas; The Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy at Grand Rapids, Michigan; Center on Philanthropy and Public Policy at the University of Southern California, often post resources on grantwriting.
- Commercial grant training company websites offer resources and training. One example is the Grantsmanship Center, Los Angeles, California, which says of itself “It’s more than grant seeking and proposal writing: It’s about those you help every day. And what they need. We ask the tough questions that will help you to create programs that get funded, stay funded and are aligned with your mission.”

The authors have often been asked by faith-based and non-profit organizations, “Should we try to apply for a grant?”

### **Determining whether your organization should apply for a grant**

Choose Grant Opportunities Carefully. Some nonprofits are in the happy position of having more grant opportunities than they can pursue. The decision to apply for a grant—whether to a public agency or a private funder—is important. Your organization’s time and energy should be focused on seeking funding for the top priorities of your organizations. You need to make the best utilization of your organization’s time and resources so the proposals that it submits are top notch. Submitting a mediocre proposal not only reduces the likelihood of it getting funded; it also projects a bad image of your organization and may give it a bad reputation with funders.

- **Determine whether there is a good fit with the funder.**
  - Will the funder support your organization directly?
  - Is your organization eligible for the grant?
  - Would your proposed project fit the funder’s program guidelines?
  - Has the funder supported similar projects in the past?
  - Have you cleared the project idea with the funder’s program officer?
  - Is your organization in the geographical area that the funder serves?
  - How many awards will (or has) the funder made?
  - Does the project budget fit within the size of awards to be made?
- **Determine whether there is a good fit with your organization.**
  - Is the project a top priority of your organizations?
  - Is the idea included in the strategic plan?
  - Which key internal stakeholders will advocate for this project?
  - Is there internal consensus that this project should be promoted?
  - Are there experts on staff who can develop and manage the project?
  - Are collaborative relationships in place (or likely) for this project?
  - Are there competing compelling proposals in the same geographic area?
  - Is there a willingness to devote resources to develop the proposal?
  - Are resources available to continue the project after funding runs out?

