

8 TRAITS OF SUCCESSFUL GRANT WRITERS

Follow these steps to increase your likelihood of success with grant writing

TurnKey Writing Solutions



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Grant writing success comes with experience. Done well, it can change the landscape of your nonprofit and the lives of your clients. Adding grants to your fundraising strategy can be daunting, but by emulating these traits of experienced and successful grant writers, you can increase your likelihood of success when submitting requests.

Successful grant writers:

Clearly articulate their nonprofit's need and can back it up with data.

Defining your need is a critical early step in the grant writing process. Just needing money isn't enough to secure a grant or

convince pretty much anyone to support your organization. If it is not immediately evident and your nonprofit is presented with an opportunity to request funds, look at your programs and determine areas in which you could expand or improve if additional funding was available. Mind-mapping is an excellent tool that can help you visualize your organization and work from your mission outward. Successful grant writers know if you can't clearly articulate your need, it is unlikely that you will be successful in pursuing a grant.

Meet all of the requirements of the grant-making organization.

Review the requirements from the grant-making organization before

you start drafting your narrative or application. You need to be confident that you have access to all of the information they are requesting in the time frame prior to the deadline. "One of the most commonly overlooked requirements (or forgotten by the time the deadline arrives) is the amount of copies of your proposal an organization requests," says Melanie Lambert,

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-Melanie Lambert, Managing Director - TurnKey Writing Solutions

Managing Director of TurnKey Writing Solutions. With over a decade of grant experience, Lambert knows that successful grant seekers are meticulous when it comes to each funding organization's requirements. "Don't try to bend the requirements," she states. "It's one of the fastest ways to ensure that your proposal isn't even considered. If you can't meet the requirements now, wait until the next grant cycle."

Understand the grant-maker and what they typically fund.

Consider for a minute that you are applying for a job. Which applicant do you think is more likely to secure an interview? The one who addresses the cover letter with "Dear Hiring Manager" or the one who takes the time to find out the name of the individual reviewing the applications? The one who sends a standard resume or the one who highlights their experiences that match the requirements of the position the company is seeking to fill? While creating a template could save you time if you're applying to a lot of different organizations for the same project, be sure that you are aware of each funding organization's unique expectations and funding priorities. For example: While two foundations may each support homeless shelters, one may be more

interested in how your organization addresses hunger and one may want to know how you assist your clients with job placement. And while you qualify for both, you'd want to focus on each of those areas for the corresponding interests of each foundation.

Contact the grant-making organization (or have tried to).

There can be so much value in a five to ten minute conversation with a grant administrator. "I spoke with one recently," shares Lambert. "Everything on paper looked like a perfect fit for one of our clients. Before I could ask any questions, she thanked me for calling and said that they had stopped awarding grants for at least two years. They had overextended themselves and simply needed to wait a few years to recoup. She said so many nonprofits just sent them proposals and she was frustrated at the time they had wasted." Don't waste your time or the time of the funding organization. If they allow phone calls, take five minutes and ask some basic questions to ensure that what you're asking for is a project they would fund. Verify their requirements while you're on the phone. If calling is not an option, use email. Depending on the size of the organization and the amount of inquiries they

receive, you may not get a response. But, always try.

Ask someone else to review their proposals.

Always, always have someone else review and proof your proposal documents. Provide a list of requirements as well and ask him/her to make sure you haven't missed anything. Often, we read something so many times that our eyes start to overlook misspellings or omitted words. "I often suggest that nonprofits writing their own grant proposals have someone outside of the organization review the narrative," Lambert states. "This gives you the opportunity to see how well you've explained the mission of your organization, your current programs, and your need."

Combine good storytelling and data.

Successful grant writers learn the balancing act between data and heart-warming client impact stories. While both are important, including too much of one and not the other could lead a reviewer to believe that you simply don't have the information. A foundation wants to know that you are in touch with both the human element of your nonprofit's mission as well as the rationale for why it exists and the data to prove that your programs are or will be successful.

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Give themselves plenty of time ahead of the deadline.

While it's not impossible to be awarded a grant you threw together within days of the deadline, it's not the best way to approach grant management. Once you've defined your need, create a calendar of upcoming opportunities and build in extra time to ensure you can draft the content in a way that would be most applicable to each foundation, review and proof your documents, and meet all of the requirements. When you speak to the grant administrator, ask if he or she is available to review your grant prior to the deadline. Some may, some may not. But, if you are simply making sure your envelope is postmarked before the deadline, you won't have time to take advantage of opportunities that could provide you with a higher likelihood of success.

Always follow-up with the grant-maker regardless of the outcome of their proposal.

It's obvious that you would always follow up with a grant-maker that has agreed to fund your project. You would want to thank

them for their commitment and ensure that you are aware of any details for post-grant reporting or acknowledgement. But, calling or emailing when your request is rejected is not always the natural next step of some grant writers. Successful grant writers know making a quick phone call or sending an email could help better understand why your proposal wasn't funded, anything you could have done differently, and whether or not a proposal in the future would be invited. This information is not only helpful for this particular foundation, but could help you revise your proposal in a way that would be more appealing to other potential funding partners.

While no one can guarantee that if you follow a certain formula or check certain boxes your organization will always be successful with grant requests. Part of the process is being prepared for the "thanks, but no thanks" letter when it comes and responding appropriately and constructively. However, utilizing the knowledge and experience of a seasoned grant professional

could mean the difference between a successful proposal and one that ends up at the top of the rejection stack.

TurnKey Writing Solutions offers our clients an affordable and convenient way to add grant management to your fundraising strategy. Backed by over a decade in nonprofit fundraising and multiple millions of grant dollars raised, our subscriptions instantly add an experienced grant writer to your team who will build a custom grant proposal and comprehensive grant research for your nonprofit and its funding priorities. For more information about TurnKey Writing Solutions visit www.turnkeywritingsolutions.com or call 1-888-8GRANTS.

**Call 1-888-8GRANTS
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