Turning Ideas into Reality: Tips for writing grants.

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Tips:
Reading the guidelines is much more important than writing the proposal.
99.9% of what you need to know is in the grant guidelines when looking at eligibility.

You may not succeed in getting your first or second grant, but be persistent!

Know your district's policy for grant applications. Do you have to get board approval if over a certain amount? Does the superintendent need to approve it? What are the necessary steps that have to be taken before submitting a grant? Touch base with the accounting department. Are others in your district writing for the same grant?

Research your topic. Do you need letters of support?

Look for support of projects, not dollars.
Know your funder. Research the organization. Look at what they have supported in the past.
Think like a reviewer. Get on a committee and review grants.

State the essence of your idea in one simple sentence.

Give yourself time, know the deadline.

Remember that funding is a process of exchange you're not asking for money, you are offering a service or product of value and presenting it to potential buyers in the best possible light.
One way to do this is to use the term give them an "opportunity" to fund your project.

You have found a grant. Now what?

I. The Introduction
The proposal introduction is the section in which you describe your agency's qualifications as an applicant for funding. In a proposal for private funding, to a foundation or corporation, the introduction should be **extensive** – perhaps even half the length of your proposal. Your qualifications or credibility may have more to do with your being funded than anything else. In a government proposal you will seldom be asked for an introduction. Instead you may be asked for a description of the applicant or background of the applicant. This is the same as your proposal introduction.

Some ideas for what one needs to put in an introduction:
Find a good opening line, something to **entice the reader.**
A statement of purpose, goals and philosophy

Significant events in your history
Prior and current activities
Accomplishments and impact
Size and characteristics of your students
The results of internal or external evaluations of your programs, put some data in, put in some quotes

Checklist for proposal introduction:
Clearly establish who is applying for funds
Describe purpose and goals of the agency
Describe programs
Describe students, clientele
Provide evidence of accomplishment
Offer statistics to support credibility
Offer statements and or endorsements to support credibility
Support credibility in program area in which funds are sought
Lead logically to problem statement
Interesting
Free of jargon
Brief

II. The Problem Statement or Needs Assessment
This is **the most critical** part of your plan. It represents the reason behind the proposal. A needs assessment focuses on the conditions in the lives of your clients or constituents that you wish to change. A problem statement looks at that particular situation, relates it to similar situations in other communities and shows the broader implications of your program.
1. It should be clearly related to the purposes and goals of your organization.
1. It should be supported by evidence drawn from your experience, from statistics or from testimony of persons known to be knowledgeable about the situation.
1. It should be of reasonable le dimensions – a concern that you can realistically do something above the course of the grant.
1. It should be stated in terms of clients or constituents, rather than the needs or problems of your organization

Checklist for problem statement:
Relate to purposes and goals of organization
Is of reasonable dimensions
Is supported by statistical evidence
Is supported by statements from authorities
Is stated in terms of clients or beneficiaries
Is developed with input from clients and beneficiaries
Is not the lack of a method
Doesn't make assumptions
Doesn't use jargon
Is interesting to read

III. Program Objectives

Objectives are problem related outcomes of your program. They are not vague descriptions of methodology, mixed with goal statements. Goals are long-range benefits you may be seeking.
If you begin your statements with words like these you are talking about objectives: to increase, to decrease, to reduce.
If you begin your statements with words like these you are talking about methods and not objectives: to provide, to establish, to create.
Program objectives that are **measurable** become the criteria by which you judge the effectiveness of your program.
To be really useful, program objectives should:

1. Tell who
1. Is going to be doing what
1. When
1. How Much
1. How we will measure it?

Checklist for objectives:
Describes problem related outcomes of your program
Does not describe your methods
Describes the population served
States the time when the objectives will be met
Describes the objectives in numerical terms if possible.

IV. Methods

How do you hope to achieve the objectives? Just as objectives should flow naturally from the problem statement, so should methods follow from the objectives.
Clearly describe program objectives
State reasons for selection of activities
Describe sequence of activities
Describe staffing of program
Describe clients and client selection
Presents a reasonable scope of activities that can be accomplished within the time allotted for program and within the resources of the applicant

V. Evaluation

This has two components. One evaluates the result of your program the other examines the conduct of the program.
The results is a product evaluation and uses procedures that determine:

1. The extent to which the program has achieved its stated objectives
1. The extent to which the accomplishment of objectives can be attributed to the program

The conduct is a process evaluation that determine:

1. Whether the program has been conducted in a manner consistent with the plan
1. The relationship of different program activities to the effectiveness of the program

Evaluation is logical. If the purpose of your program is well defined, if its objectives have been stated with clarity, then certain questions must be asked in an evaluation.

There are a series of useful steps you may wish to consider in developing the evaluation component of a proposal:

1. Clarify program objectives – objectives should be clear and measurable

2. Determine the potential audience for the evaluation.

3. Will you conduct a process evaluation, a product evaluation or both? It is a good idea to include both types in your proposal.

4. Who will conduct the evaluation?

5. Should the evaluation include and analysis of cost benefit or cost-effectiveness? Cost benefit relates the costs with its social benefits. Cost effectiveness assumes that of two programs that have approximately the same social benefits, the one that costs less is much more cost effective.

6. How will evaluation data be collected?

7. How will the evaluation data be analyzed?

8. How will the evaluative information be reported?