



Fundamentals of Grantsmanship

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Grant Writing: The Art of Answering Questions

The elements of a good grant proposal are similar to those of a good news story – each identifies the WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, HOW and WHY of a subject or situation in order to weave a compelling narrative (or make a compelling case) that gets to the point and is easily understood by the reader. The following paragraph, from the introduction of a hypothetical grant proposal, illustrates just how much meaningful information one can quickly get across when approaching the task like a journalist would:

The Birch Clinic is a nonprofit rural rehabilitation facility serving Aiken County, South Carolina. We request \$20,000 in match support from the Bellwether Foundation to fund the facility's conversion to an electronic health records system (EHR). Foundation funds will be paired with a grant from a private donor, enabling staff to take an important step forward in streamlining operations, safeguarding patient data, and ensuring the highest degree of accuracy in dispensing medication. We estimate a transition to the EHR system will be completed by March of 2011 with Foundation support.

After reading this, the funder now knows all of the following:

WHO: The Birch Clinic
WHAT: A rural rehab facility making a \$20k request for an EHR project
WHERE: Aiken County, SC
WHEN: Project completed by March of 2011
HOW: Match with another donor will fund conversion to an EHR system
WHY: To streamline operations, safeguard patient data, and ensure the highest degree of accuracy in dispensing medication

Find ways to apply these six elements and answer these six questions throughout your proposal. Doing so will ensure you're providing the funder with clear, detailed information as well as an accurate picture of your needs, strengths, and strategies.

Each set of grant guidelines will be different, and each proposal should respond to the specific queries and instructions of the funding source, but reviewing the following sections will help prepare you for the rest of the writing process. Evaluate each bulleted item here as it applies to your situation, but more importantly, use this list to consider how your needs and/or projects should line up with a corresponding grant proposal.

WHO?

- Who is requesting funding for this project or activity?
- Who will directly benefit (or be served) as a result of grant funding?
- Who will be responsible for the day-to-day work of implementing the project, services, or activities supported by grant funding?
- Who indirectly benefits from this service or project, in your organization and in the community?
- Who might be interested in collaborating on this project, or sharing resources?
- Who else supports this project or your organization in general?
- Who will be responsible for monitoring, evaluating and reporting the results of grant-funded activities?

WHAT?

- What kind of organization are you -- 501(c)(3) nonprofit? City, county or hospital district? Individual hospital? Clinic? Community health agency? Health advocacy group?
- What is the amount of funding requested?
- What are the goals, objectives, and timelines associated with this request?
- What organizational/community needs will this funding address?
- What kind of effort is this? New and/or innovative project? Ongoing services? Demonstration project? Bricks and mortar? Awareness-building?
- What type of funding is requested? General operating expenses? Direct service support? Salaries? Emergency assistance? Special project funding? Match? Capital campaign donation? Equipment purchase? Education/outreach support? Challenge grant to attract additional foundations/donors to a project?

WHERE?

- Where will the major work and/or services of this project take place?
- Where do the proposed project beneficiaries live, and do you currently serve them?
- Where will grant dollars be targeted and spent in order to carry out the project?
- Where will the project/services/activities have the greatest impact? Within the organization alone? In the local community? In the region? Across the state or nation?
- Where else has your approach, solution, service model, or innovative idea yielded the kind of results promised in this proposal? Other hospitals? Nonprofits? Communities? Regions? States?

WHEN?

- When will this project begin and end?
- When will the proposed services/activities/plans be implemented?
- When will personnel be hired, materials be acquired, or equipment be purchased?
- When will you evaluate this project, and report results?
- When will you bring in collaborators?
- When will you seek feedback from participants or community members?
- When will the impact or success of the proposed project be evident, and when will its results be tangible?

HOW?

- How does the mission of your organization match the mission of the funder?
- How does the proposed project match the interests and giving patterns of the funder?
- How did you identify the need(s) and how will you solve the problems detailed in the proposal?
- How will you organize and carry out the day-to-day activities/services involved with this project?
- How will the organization monitor and oversee the grant to ensure proper use of donor funds?
- How will you collect information and data to evaluate the project?
- How often will you engage in evaluation activities, and/or report results to the funder?
- How will you inform the community about services available under this project?
- How will staff determine eligibility for persons participating in the activities/services to be provided?
- How will you recruit and engage collaborators for this project?
- How will you know the activities/services are having the intended impact or yielding the anticipated results?
- How will you fund this effort and sustain services to this population after the grant is over?

WHY?

- Why are you seeking funding from this particular agency/foundation/giving program/donor?
- Why is the need/problem identified in the proposal critical to address right now?
- Why is your organization the right entity to address the need or solve the problem?
- Why are the beneficiaries of this project important to serve/assist, and how do their issues compare to other communities/populations in similar or greater need?
- Why will other entities/agencies/community groups be interested collaborating and/or contributing resources to this project?
- Why does your proposal deserve greater consideration than others of comparable scope or methodology – is there something unique, innovative or timely about it?
- Why does your experience, as an organization or in terms of personnel, prove you are capable of administering this project, bringing it to completion, and handling all fiscal responsibilities involved?

Overwhelmed? Don't be. This information is provided to help you better understand what a funder may be looking for in your application, and that a good proposal usually reflects a well-planned project. However, the best information always comes directly from the source. It is completely appropriate (and strongly advised) that you contact each agency, foundation, or other grant maker directly with queries about their application process, especially if you are unsure about any part of their forms or guidelines. They are usually happy to guide you.

Grant Writing Assistance: Yes, It's Out There

Texas A&M's Center for Community Support provides grant funding search and proposal writing assistance to nonprofit organizations at no cost. Community-based organizations using the service are eligible for various types of support and training, based on their needs and resources. Visit <http://ccs.tamu.edu> for more information.

The Association of Fundraising Professionals is an excellent resource for locating and hiring qualified, experienced development and grant writing personnel in your geographic area. Many chapters host a job board and/or listserv to which you can send a position posting, as well as public events offering speakers or training on fundraising topics. Contact one of the regional Texas AFP chapters for further information:

Austin

<http://www.afpaustin.org>

Central Texas

<http://www.centexafp.org>

Coastal Bend

<http://home.earthlink.net/~cappleton/afpcoastalbend>

Dallas

<http://www.afpdallas.org>

East Texas

<http://www.afpeasttexas.org>

Fort Worth

<http://www.afpfortworth.com>

Houston

<http://www.afphouston.org>

Lubbock, Texas Plains, West Texas/Southern New Mexico

http://www.afpnet.org/chap_hp.cfm?chpt=TX4&folder_id=932

Permian Basin

<http://www.afppermbasin.org>

San Antonio

<http://afpsanantonio.afpnet.org>

Finding the Money: Homework and Strategies

This is a giant topic that will be covered more extensively in future TORCH Foundation trainings and webinars, but here are a few basic tips every grant seeker can effectively employ:

- Take the bulls-eye approach, and start in the center -- funders in your local community are the most likely to be aware of your purpose and mission, and invested in supporting your activities. Next, look at funding sources in your county, region, state and so on.
- Sign up for state, federal and foundation listservs related to your issue area, to receive email notices about new RFPs and grant competitions as they become available.
- Visit the Foundation Center library closest to your area. They have twenty cooperating collections in Texas, which provide the public with free access to funder databases, prospect research tools, even one-to-one assistance from a librarian or staff member. Learn to identify foundations and donors interested in your work, or use the powerful information gathering resources to craft a proposal that reflects the best match of your needs to a donor's interests. For a list of cooperating collections located throughout the state, visit <http://foundationcenter.org/collections/cctx.html>.
- Do some detective work – take notice of funders who are giving to other organizations in your geographical area, and to nonprofits providing similar services or programs anywhere in the state. Make note of news stories about prominent philanthropists or businesspeople interested in the same problems or issues you are working to address, and find out if they are associated with a foundation or corporate giving program to which you might apply.
- Perform regular, targeted searches on the Internet, and bookmark websites and resource lists that compile grant notices or foundation profiles related to your work. The following sites, for example, are good sources for current and future funding opportunities:

Agency for Healthcare Research & Quality – Funding Announcements

www.ahrq.gov/fund/grantix.htm

Department of Agriculture Rural Information Center – Funding Resources
http://ric.nal.usda.gov/nal_display/index.php?info_center=5&tax_level=1&tax_subject=319

Council on Foundations – Texas Community Foundations List
<http://www.cof.org/locator/SearchResults.cfm?state=TX>

Department of Health & Human Services – Grants Net
<http://www.hhs.gov/grantsnet>

Department of Health & Human Services – Health Resources and Services Administration Grants
<http://www.hrsa.gov/grants>

Department of Housing and Urban Development Grants
<http://www.hud.gov/grants/index.cfm>

Federal Register
<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/search.html>

Grants.gov
www.grants.gov

National Institutes of Health Grants
<http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/index.html>

National Science Foundation Grants
<http://www.nsf.gov/funding>

Rural Assistance Center – Health Education Financial Aid
(Grants, Fellowships, Scholarships, Loans and Loan Repayment Programs)
http://www.raconline.org/info_guides/funding/hpeducation.php

Rural Assistance Center – Funding in Texas
http://www.raconline.org/funding/funding_state_details.php?state=TX

Rural Assistance Center – Rural Funding Opportunities
<http://www.raconline.org/funding/>

Texas Governor's Office – State Grants Team
<http://governor.state.tx.us/grants/what/>

Texas Department of Health – Funding Information Center
www.tdh.state.tx.us/fic/fic.htm

Texas Office of Rural Community Affairs – Grants and Funding Clearinghouse
<http://www.orca.state.tx.us/index.php/Home/Grants+Clearinghouse>

To learn more about the process of finding funders and writing grants, sign up for TORCH Foundation training and webinars, check out the Grant Line newsletter, or visit www.torchnet.org/foundation. For specific questions, contact TORCH Grant Writer Robin Myrick (rmyrick@torchnet.org).



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