MAKE IT RAIN:

HOW TO WRITE A KILLER GRANT

ELI GUINNEE
CHAUTAUQUA-CATTARAUGUS LIBRARY SYSTEM

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NYLA 2017
Why?
How?
Traditional

Formulate Idea

Out of thin air?

Manage Award

Find Funding

Submit Proposal

Develop Proposal
More Likely

We champion projects that use our input!
What?
• Where to Look
• Basic Proposal Structure
• What do Reviewers look for?
• Key points
• Common Mistakes
• Case Studies
Where to Look?

• Foundations
  • Foundation Directory

• Government Grants
  • Federal: Grants.gov
  • State: Get grant notices from appropriate departments

• Local Businesses

• Corporate Giving Programs

• Where else?
The Basic Structure of a Proposal

• Summary of the proposal
  • Amount requested and “Why?”
• Organization description/history/mission
  • Does the organization have the capacity?
• Background
  • Describe the problem
  • Demonstrate the need
The Basic Structure of a Proposal

• Program description
  • Address the problem
  • Who does it serve?
  • Components of the project
  • Assess success
  • Align program goals with the funder
  • Leverage collaborations
  • The bigger picture
The Basic Structure of a Proposal

• Impacts/Outcomes
  • What are the anticipated benefits of the program?
  • If this isn’t specifically asked, put it in the narrative

• Program Timeline
  • When will the project begin and end?
  • When will the major component parts begin and end?
  • When will funds be expended?
The Basic Structure of a Proposal

• Program Budget
  • Broken into categories (e.g. salaries, equipment, etc)
  • In-kind support
• Budget Narrative
  • Describes each budget line & how the figures were reached
  • Gives enough description to answer potential questions
  • How will budget shortfalls impact the project?
What do Reviewers Look for?

• Applications that are complete & follow the instructions
  • Is the application on time?
  • Have all the parts been filled out completely?

• Proposals that are clearly communicated
  • Is it clear what the applicant plans to do with the money?
  • Is it clear what the project is?

• Realistic budgets with a lot of backup (e.g. quotes/bids)
What do Reviewers Look for?

• Proposals that have demonstrated thoughtful planning
  • Is the applicant chasing money or is the project part of a well-designed planning process?

• Does the proposed project meet the purpose and intended outcomes of the grant?
  • The project should help the granting agency accomplish its goals

• Does the application use the language I’m looking for?
Key Points—Most Importantly

• Read the Instructions!
  • What does the granting agency fund?
  • Structure your proposal to fit the application
  • Is it worth your time?
  • Follow the directions!
  • Meet deadlines
Key Points—Timeline

• How often are applications reviewed?
• Does your program period match the timeline?
• Do you have the same fiscal year as the funder?
• What part of the application will take the longest?
Key Points—Talk their Language

• Build a relationship with the granting agency
  • Call and talk about your proposal
  • Ask questions! Ask for advice!

• Clear goals and objectives
  • SMART Objectives:
    Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound
Key Points—Sell it

• Demonstrate a clear need
• How will your project fill a need or solve a problem
• Echo the granting agencies’ language
• Reference local economic development plans
• Know your story!
Key Points—Evaluation

• How will you evaluate your project?
  • Quantitative or Qualitative?
  • Outcome-Based Evaluation
  • Project Outcome
Key Points—Take the Final Report Seriously

• Know ahead of time:
  How you write the proposal may change when you know what you are expected to report.
• Are changes allowed?
• Will you be eligible for future funds if you do not fulfill the grant requirements?
Common Mistakes (and how to avoid them) cont...

• Too much Copy and Pasting
  (Tailor your ask)

• Shoehorning
  (Your project does not fit the grant)

• Missing the deadline
  (Start early)

• Being a stranger
  (Call the agency)

• Being a bad partner
  (Be effusively thankful)
Common Mistakes (and how to avoid them)

• Not answering every question
  (Read instructions carefully... and follow them!)

• Sloppiness
  (Have another pair of eyes review your grant)

• Lack of effort
  (Take your time! If it’s not worth your time, don’t do it)

• Not knowing what the grant covers
  (Read the guidelines!)
Common Mistakes (and how to avoid them) cont...

- Using hyperbole or conversational language
- Using jargon or slang
- Using overly complex language making your sentences difficult to read & annoying.

(Write clearly and directly)
Case Studies: You are the reviewer!

In groups of 2 or 3, 10 Minutes:
Read the applications as if you are the reviewer

- Did the applicant follow instructions?
- What common mistakes did they make?
- What could they have done better?
Case Study #1: Corporate Giving

Peace through Crafts” Grant Application

Which Common Mistakes did the applicant make?
What would dramatically improve their chances of getting the grant?
What are your main concerns as a reviewer?
Case Study #2: Federal Grant

Which Common Mistakes did the applicant make? What did they do right? Should they have applied for the grant? What are your main concerns as a reviewer?
If You Don’t Get the Grant

• Relax, it happens.
• Thank the funder for their consideration.
• Ask how your application could be improved.
• Is the project still worth doing?
• Apply again, apply elsewhere
Resources

- Elements of a Grant Proposal: [http://www.hotwinds.com/Grant_Prop.html](http://www.hotwinds.com/Grant_Prop.html)
- GrantAdvisor: [https://grantadvisor.org/](https://grantadvisor.org/)
- Guide to Outcome-Based Evaluation for organizations w limited resources: [https://managementhelp.org/evaluation/outcomes-evaluation-guide.htm](https://managementhelp.org/evaluation/outcomes-evaluation-guide.htm)
- Proposal Checklist: [https://www.archives.gov/nhprc/apply/evaluation-checklist.html](https://www.archives.gov/nhprc/apply/evaluation-checklist.html) (specific to archives, but lots of good info to think about)
- Purdue University’s OWL on Grant Writing: [https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/981/1/](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/981/1/)
- Shaping Outcomes Course: [http://www.shapingoutcomes.org/course/overview/a1.htm](http://www.shapingoutcomes.org/course/overview/a1.htm)
- SMART Goals & Objectives: [http://www.bpcc.edu/grantsexternalfunding/goalsojectives.html](http://www.bpcc.edu/grantsexternalfunding/goalsojectives.html)
Thank You!

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