

What's the difference between a grant that's funded and one that's rejected? Often not much. Follow these tips when writing your proposal, and your school's high-tech ag program will stand a better chance of getting the cash it needs

Write the GRANT,

Get the MONEY

This is the second part of a two-part article.

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Perhaps you've spent hours preparing a grant for your agriscience program, only to have it rejected. Why did someone else's grant proposal receive funding and yours didn't? Here are some common reasons why grantors reject proposals:

- Missed deadline.
- Writing is unclear and difficult to understand; contains poor grammar and misspellings.
- Proposal is too long.
- Proposal lacks important information.
- Grantor already allocated funds in same geographical location.
- Proposal outside geographical location of grantor's giving.
- Political pressure.

Pay Attention to Details

When money's at stake, there's always more demand than supply. You can be sure that the grant proposals you write will be judged against many others, all competing for the same attention and dollars. Successful grant writing often comes down to doing small things right.

- Follow the outline as given in the appli-

cation so the reader can locate information easily. Foundations may request a letter of inquiry concerning your request before asking for a full proposal. This saves time for the grantee and grantor.

- Check titles of former grants. Once a grant is funded through an agency, it remains in the public domain, meaning you can request a copy of the document or download it from the foundation website. Did they use a catchy title or a more generic one? Federal and state grants may not need a title.
- Honor the deadline. If a federal or state grant proposal arrives past the submission deadline, it will not be read. Some give the postmark date, others the date it must be received. Foundations and corporations usually read on a quarterly basis. If you miss one deadline, submit the following date.
- Follow the guidelines. All grants have the same basic format, but each is different. Check the preferred font, margins, page numbers, and type size. Deviating from even one guideline may cause your grant to be tossed in the unread basket.

- Collect data on the last three years on your school or organization and have it available for inclusion in all grants. Include free/reduced lunches, geographical location, racial mix, family income levels where the school is located, numbers in housing projects, dropout rate, number of children in foster care, test scores, teen pregnancy, etc. Place all this data in one file for easy reference. Numbers make a difference. They represent a need in funding new programs such as high-tech gardening. On larger grants, compare your local figures to the same ones reported by state and federal agencies.
- Avoid giving percentages without numbers: write "25% (or 100 students) of 400 enrolled."
- Write in your clearest prose. Rewrite statements to use terminology that appears in the request for proposal (RFP). Consider using a judicious amount of bold print for emphasis.
- Make sure the authorized person has signed the grant. Blue ink is preferred,

unless indicated.

- Make a personal contact, if possible. Grantors are more likely to remember the names of grant writers who make a personal visit, phone call or email. Read the RFP before asking questions, because the information you seek may be covered in the instructions. If you still have questions or want advice, get in touch with the grantor before the application is submitted. After the grant is submitted avoid personal contact.
- Seek support of local politicians. Write up a summary of your grant and request for funding, then send it to your state and federal representatives. Follow-up with a phone call and request a letter of support. Politicians want money spent in their district. Plus, they need constituents to know of local involvement.
- Submit the required number of copies. Stamp “Original” on one and “Copy” on the others. Make sure the authorized signature

is on the original. Staple your submission at the top left-hand corner. Do not enclose it in a binder or use a report cover. Place the cover sheet or title page on top.

- Always keep a copy of the RFP and your proposal for your records. Provide any collaborating agencies with a copy.
- Use the U.S. Postal Service to submit your document, and mail well ahead of the deadline to ensure on-time delivery. Foundations like to see that you have mailed your application on time without the need to overnight it by private courier. Also, the federal government wants to promote use of the mail service. However, your proposal can't be late, so by all means use a private courier for overnight delivery if you must. If you miss a deadline, resubmit the proposal the following quarter since most foundations meet quarterly.
- When the grants have been awarded write a thank-you letter, whether you receive funding or not. Thank the grantor

for reading your proposal. If you did not receive funding, indicate that you will reapply in the next funding cycle.

Persistence Pays Off

Don't give up if a particular grantor turns you down. Instead, find out what you did wrong and make needed corrections, then reapply. This tells grantors that you mean business, and they'll begin to take you more seriously.

Just remember to look at your work critically and to learn from your mistakes. Soon you'll be putting together grants that keep those all-important dollars rolling in!

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Glossary for Grant-Writers

Use these terms correctly in your grant application, and you'll improve your chances of success.

Abstract: A one-page proposal that contains an overview of the grant. Also called the summary.

Addendum: Supporting materials that have been mentioned in the narrative of the grant and which are included at the end.

Budget: A three-column plan that tells how you will spend the money. Use whole dollar figures.

Coordinator: The person responsible for administering the entire grant or a portion of it. Signs authorizing signature.

Cover letter: A formal letter appearing at the front of the grant package.

Deadline: The date the grant is due on the

grantor's desk.

Dissemination: The approach you will take to telling others about your project, such as organizing workshops, talking to the media, etc.

Evaluation: The quantitative and qualitative means you will use to determine if the program succeeds.

Final report: Grantors often supply their own form. Be thorough in writing about the project's expected outcome.

Goal: A broad statement that addresses the need.

Grantee: The organization or individual receiving the funds.

Grantor: The organization or person giving the award.

Guidelines: The exact requirements for applying for funds. Follow them as stated or you may lose points when your grant application is reviewed by the grantor.

In-kind: Contributions such as volunteer time or products (not monetary) donations.

Indirect cost: The cost of handling the grant funds, usually ranging from 5% to 10%. This does not cover the cost of equipment.

Letter of support: Statement from another agency or individual who will work with you on the grant. Include these in the addendum.

Narrative: The part that tells, who, what, when, where, and how.

Objective: A measurable statement telling what you plan to accomplish.

Project director: Person responsible for conducting activities, evaluation, and follow-up.

Qualitative data: Surveys, interviews, and case studies that shows how people are feeling or behaving. Use in the needs part of the narrative.

Quantitative data: Figures and statistics such as test scores, graduation rate and others that show the need for the grant.

Site visit: A planned visit to the grantee by the grantor to observe the grant in action.

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