



PTA as Grant Writing Guru

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Foundation, corporation, and government grants abound, but what prevents schools from reaching out for these opportunities to fund equipment and educational initiatives? The reality is that lack of time, resources, and knowledge about grant writing can often impede a school's fundraising potential.

Getting Organized

That is where the PTA can assist. An organized PTA effort can make the grant-writing process easier and more rewarding. To jumpstart work, here are key steps a PTA should take:

1. Create a Committee

Form a grant-writing committee to be led, if possible, by a volunteer with proposal development experience who can train others. If nobody has previous grant-writing skills, invite a professional to run a brief training session. Or, volunteers might want to participate in an external online training, such as those offered by [The Foundation Center](#) or in webinars like the ones offered by [GetEdFunding](#).

2. Assign Tasks

Delegate specific proposal development tasks—research, data collection, writing—to committee members. (Often, the work tends to fall on one person...and burnout ultimately takes a toll.) Encourage the team to stay the course because there is the potential for discouragement when requests are denied. But when there is an award, substantial gratification is gained that will fuel the desire to write more proposals.

3. Get Buy-In from School Leaders

Survey teachers and administrators about needs and wants, and then partner with the principal to identify priority projects. It's important to have buy-in from school leadership, especially if there are key service and programmatic gaps that a school must immediately address. If grant-writing efforts result in funds to support those areas of need, a principal is likely to ask for continued help.

4. Collect Important Data

Collect project details and all relevant data that will ultimately be at the heart of many proposal narratives, such as academic program descriptions, student demographics, test scores, and information on extracurricular activities. With that

information in hand, creating proposal templates to be reworked per specific funding guidelines is most practical.

5. Start the Search

Subscribe to funding alerts from several grant-focused websites, such as [GetEdFunding](#).

Benefits Abound

Sourcing funds through grants enables the PTA to achieve the following:

- Generate greater financial support for a school with a tight budget.
- Expand and diversify fundraising strategies and funding portfolio.
- Rely less on parents' financial contributions.
- Support individual teachers in building out and financing a “dream” project.
- Make the school visible as foundations, corporations, and public officials all like to publicly announce their support.
- Apply for PTA-specific grants from groups such as [PTO Today](#), the [National PTA](#), and state PTA associations.
- Give volunteers the opportunity to:
 - Develop grant-writing skills.
 - Support the learning/instructional environment.
 - Learn more about the inner workings of the school.
 - Wax creative about other ways to generate funds (grant writing becomes addictive, getting people to explore additional opportunities for financial support—and even materials donations—to then discover unlikely funding sources, such as mayors' offices or companies).

Grant writing is hard work and takes a strong team to see the process through. But, when the grant announcement is made, the check is in the mail, and the envisioned program now a reality because of funding, the fulfillment is intoxicating.

About the Author: *Michele Israel owns [Educational Writing & Consulting](#). She works with large and small educational, nonprofit, and media organizations to bolster products and programs. Her career spans more than 25 years of experience creating educational resources, generating successful grant proposals, and assisting in organizational and program development.*