



## Tips to Keep on the Grant-Writing Radar

By [Michele Israel](#) on Mar 08, 2017 in [Grant Writing](#)

Grant-writing novices are likely to be a bit tentative at first. Know that it takes time to hone the craft. Doing the work builds the requisite storytelling skills that will reap financial rewards over the long term. Here are some tips that will help toward that end.

### 1. Grants are money *and* things

Grants are typically associated with monetary awards. But also available are in-kind donations (or goods and services), ranging from musical instruments to technology and even organizational development focused technical assistance. These are as valuable as money. Think creatively and broadly about how to locate a variety of grant opportunities that include this type of gift.

### 2. Research and select appropriately

It's important to do due diligence when researching grant makers to be sure there is a giving match. Once possible supporters are identified, carefully read eligibility guidelines. If there is a potential fit, review past awards to make that determination. For example, a funder might indicate its support of schools, but tends to focus only on private institutions. If a funding source invites queries, reach out with a brief pitch. It might lead to an invitation to submit. Ultimately, if you don't qualify, don't apply. Keep looking for the right fit.

### 3. Build relationships

When possible, establish a relationship with a funding representative who is willing to learn more through one-to-one conversations, site visits, or Letters of Inquiry. These can sometimes result in possible future funding, lead to contacts at other funding sources, connections to under-the-radar fundraising opportunities, and partnerships.

### 4. Adhere to process requirements

It is critical to do what a funder requests, including the following:

- Follow the guidelines EXACTLY. Stick not only to specific narrative categories, but also to what might seem to be minutia—page, word, or character count; font size; and line and margin spacing.
- Know the difference among goals, objectives, methods, and outcomes. They are sequentially linked, not interchangeable, and an integral component of the grant application. (In fact, they are naturally part of the

- program development process, and thus should already be established long before grant seeking.)
- Get your data ducks in a row to underscore the need or desire for a program or item. Defend funding requests with concise details that demonstrate how support will help.
  - Ensure required documents are up to date and accurate, especially financials. Do not send materials that the funder does not request. While it may be tempting, funders are not likely to examine them...at least during the early round of the review and selection process.

### **5. Proofread...a few times**

It's not necessary to be a wordsmith, but a well-structured, concise proposal that clearly presents a story can propel a funder's interest. Write a draft; review, revisit, and revise (probably a few times) to make it a compelling read. Ask others to read it to provide content feedback. And then finalize. Make sure to do this work far ahead of the submission timeline. It's difficult to write a thoughtful, sellable proposal the night before it's due.

### **6. Say thanks and stay in touch**

When you get word that the grant was awarded, write a heartfelt thank you very soon after. It's not just a nice gesture; funders expect acknowledgement.

Make sure to let the relevant community know about the grant via existing communication tools, including websites, social media, in-house newsletters, and the press.

During the course of the grant timeframe, let the funder know now and again how the project is going. An anecdotal email, photo, participant testimonial, or newspaper article is proof that things are going as planned. Some funders require an interim report, which is perfect for sharing program success to date.

### **7. Accept rejection...and try again**

Will funding come rolling in once grant writing is in play? Some monies will come in, but it won't be a windfall. It takes time to build momentum, for one; first-time grants often are not funded. Funding sources receive lots of requests, so the competition is high. Grantors may give a set number of awards each year to a certain number of agencies. [There are myriad factors that determine who gets what and when.](#)

What to do then? Accept rejection as par for the course. Hone your grant-writing skills. Be persistent yet patient. Apply regularly. AND **ALWAYS** do the happy dance when you receive a grant!

**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.