

# Proposal Writing



Presented by  
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## SECRETS OF SUCCESSFUL GRANT WINNING



- Propose your significant **results first**
- Connect proposed activities to **outcomes**
- Keep your **promises**
- **Talk** to the decision makers
- Find connections and build **relationships** with potential funders
- Find **donor value** in your programs by:
  - finding hidden value
    - bundling projects for maximum impact
    - appealing to your donor's world view
- Create **newness** by:
  - incorporating new issues and partners into existing programs
  - offering new audiences for donor portfolios
    - or, developing new programs from what you have learned
- Become a **pacesetter** and speak like one
- Predict your best **future...** and plan for it

## TYPES OF GRANTMAKERS

**Private Foundation:** Nongovernmental, nonprofit with funds (usually from a single source, such as an individual, family, or corporation) and program managed by its own trustees or directors. Private foundations are established to maintain or aid social, educational, religious, or other charitable activities serving the common welfare, primarily through the making of grants. \*

**Staffed:** An independent private foundation with professional staff who review and recommend proposals to a board of directors. The family of the donors who created the foundation may have little or no role in final grantmaking decisions.

**Family** An independent private foundation whose funds are derived from members of a single family. Family members often serve as officers or board members of family foundations and have a significant role in their grantmaking decisions. \*

**Community Foundations:** A 501(c)(3) organization that makes grants for charitable purposes in a specific community or region. The funds are derived from many donors and held in an endowment; income earned by the endowment is used to make grants. Most community foundations are classified as public charities and thus eligible for maximum tax-deductible contributions from the general public. \*

**Corporate Foundations:** A private foundation whose assets are derived primarily from the contributions of a for-profit business. While a company-sponsored foundation may maintain close

ties with its parent company, it is an independent organization with its own endowment and as such is subject to the same rules and regulations as other private foundations. \*

**Federated giving program:** A joint fundraising effort administered by a nonprofit "umbrella" organization that distributes the contributed funds to several nonprofit agencies. \* The United Way, the United Jewish Appeal, Catholic Charities, International Service Agencies, Earthshare, and the National Alliance for Choice in Giving are examples of federations.

**Government Agencies:** Government grants and contracts total approximately 35% of US nonprofit revenues. Federal, state, county, and municipal government as well as many quasi-governmental agencies award grants.

**Grant-making Public Charities:** Nonprofits that qualify for tax-exempt status under section 501(c)(3) of the IRS code. Public charities are the recipients of most foundation and corporate grants. Some also make grants to other charitable organizations. \*

**Operating Foundation:** A 501(c)(3) organization classified by the IRS as a private foundation whose primary purpose is to conduct research, social welfare, or other programs determined by its governing body or establishment charter. An operating foundation may make grants, but the sum generally is small relative to the funds used for the foundation's own programs. \*

\* Definitions from: The Foundation Center, [www.fdncenter.org](http://www.fdncenter.org)

## HOW CAN YOU FIND GRANT OPPORTUNITIES?

### \* **Grants.gov**

Free, searchable database of all funding opportunities leads to all federal granting agencies. Restrict search to grants available to nonprofits as most are for other government agencies.

### \* **Foundation Directory Online**

<http://fconline.foundationcenter.org> - Subscription required: \$19.95 per month and up. Access to details on 96,000 foundation and corporate grantors, prior grant histories, etc.

### \* **Rhode Island Foundation**

<http://RIFoundation.org> - Rhode Island's community foundation with open application for up to \$7,500 for organizational planning, board development, financial management and other capacity-building.

### • **Legislative grants**

Talk to your state Senator and Representative about discretionary grants at their disposal. Can range from mini-amounts to sustaining support.

### \* **Network and learn!**

Participate in RI Land and Water Partnership, regional and national land trust / watershed associations, RI Chapter of Association of Fundraising Professionals, attend RI Foundation, United Way and New Roots Providence training for small organizations.

## BASIC ELEMENTS OF A PROPOSAL

*This is a typical sequence. Always understand and follow the funder's required format!*

- Summary
- Introduction
- Problem Statement with Needs Assessment
- Goals and Measurable Objectives
- Methods, workplan, timeline
- Evaluation plan
- Future or other necessary funding
- Budget
- Supporting documents



## TIPS ON WRITING WINNING PROPOSALS

- Speak the same language as the funder
- Establish compelling needs
- Prove it with data, evidence and testimony
- Focus on results
- Demonstrate theory/best practices in your program approach
- Make sense
- Show evidence of strategic endorsements
- Well organized
- Clearly-written

## **YOUR PROGRAM PLAN – HEART OF THE PROPOSAL**

- **What problem are you trying to solve?**

**Be clear about why you need to do the program. Introduce supporting evidence such as acreage lost, development trends, recreational needs, threatened habitat in your community as well as wider trends that may contribute to the need.**

- **What are the big results you need to achieve?**

**What, specifically, will you accomplish with the funding you seek? Funders will be looking for significant results they can see in terms of numbers, unique outcomes, new audiences, etc. Best if this can be stated as one major goal.**

- **What is your plan?**

**How do your proposed actions lead logically to your proposed results? We recommend use of a logic model format that helps you fill in all the blanks between idea, need, actions, outcomes and significant results. It helps to break your big goal down to several (typically three) objectives. Objectives should be “measurable and time-bound.” (How many and by when?)**

- **How will you know you have succeeded?**

**Funders want you to show how you will know what you have achieved. If you have done your program planning well, evaluation planning should emerge fairly easily (remember your “measurable and time-bound” objectives?) Use “process indicators” (e.g. held six trainings on habitat restoration) as measures of program implementation as well as “outcome indicators” (80% of trainees assisted in three or more field projects).**

## SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

In addition to the requirements we have already covered, funders usually ask for a range of supporting documents. Make sure that you give yourself enough time to gather all of the documentation required by the grant.

Support documents may include:

- \* Confirmation of 501(c)3 status (if you are applying as a nonprofit)
- \* Special forms to present various parts of the proposal (this might be a checklist, a summary of materials included, a special budget form)
- \* Various certifications required by federal grants (e.g. drug-free workplace, lobbying)
- \* Resumes or job descriptions of key personnel and proposed contractors (be sure that the qualifications listed are well-suited to this proposal)
- \* Letters of support from proposed partners (these need to clearly demonstrate that the partners you have listed are ready and able to participate in this project)

## ASSEMBLY

Precisely follow the instructions provided in your grant proposal. If you fail to follow these instructions, you run the risk of losing critical points used to determine winning proposals, or even worse, you may have your proposal disqualified from consideration.

Some things to look for:

- Limits on the number of pages per section and overall
- Order of the proposal
- Bound or unbound
- Type size and margin requirements
- Number of copies required
- Necessary checklists
- Appendices
- Cover letter signed by the right person
- Postmark and submission requirements (to whom, when, etc)
-

## WANT TO LEARN MORE?

- \* **The Foundation Center**

<http://foundationcenter.org> - Massive collection of research, resources and studies on foundations, funding trends, nonprofit management etc.

- \* **Grantsmanship Center**

<http://www.tgci.com/> - Features grantseeker-oriented resources, training and grantor database. Known for excellent training seminars, grant alerts.

- \* **Cause & Effect, Inc.**

[www.ceffect.com](http://www.ceffect.com) - Offers Nonprofit Toolbox of program development, communication, board development and fundraising tools we have developed in our practice with dozens of small and medium-sized nonprofits.

*Thank you for joining me today!*