Grant Writing Tips

Top 3 tips:

1. **Know who you're speaking to.**
   Your narrative will change slightly depending on who is reviewing your application and what knowledge they have of your region, industry, project, or organization. Different funders use different reviewers – from staff to trustees to peer-review panels.

2. **Answer the questions being asked.**
   Most grant writers focus on the story they want to tell and often don't provide the information funders need to make their decisions. Always answer the questions being asked first, then fill in your narrative as much as your able to.

   If you feel like you're being redundant or have already answered a question, you probably misunderstood one of the questions and should ask for clarification.

3. **Use your character/word limits wisely.**
   You need to provide enough information so the reviewers have the answers they need to feel good about funding your organization, but not so much information that they feel overwhelmed or stop reading.

   Remember – there are actual people reading your grant applications and they could have 20 or 200 applications to read. We bring our emotions and state of being to all of our work, so you need to help the evaluators stay focused and excited about your application.

Other tips:

- Be clear, direct, and concise. Get to the point quickly so your answers are easy to find.
    - This isn't a dissertation, so cut out all unnecessary words, jargon, or phrases.
    - But provide enough detail to fully answer the who, what, where, when, why, and how.

- Use white space to make your narrative easier to read.
    - Include paragraph breaks, headings, titles, bullet points, lists, etc.
    - Note: This will use up some of your characters (if there is a character limit), so plan appropriately!

- Demonstrate your need without sounding desperate.
    - Provide examples, statistics, testimonials, and other examples whenever possible.

- Don't assume the reviewers know what you know.
    - Spell out acronyms, provide backstory, avoid technical jargon, etc.

- Never tell a funder what you are <u>not</u> doing.
    - Avoid phrases that start with, "We strive to…" or "We aim to…". This phrasing indicates that you aren't doing these things.

- Use active voice, not passive voice. Statements should always be phrased, "We do [this]…".

- Be prepared to back up any direct statement you make with examples. Don't just say you do these things without giving examples.

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- Have an answer for who / what community you serve. No one serves "everyone". If you say this, you are telling funders one of three things:
    - You don't know.
    - You do know but don't want to say who you serve.
    - You don't care as long as someone is showing up.

- Have someone else read your application, preferably someone who does not have the same level of institutional or programmatic knowledge you have.

- Review your web presence (website, social media accounts, etc.) and make sure they align with the story you're trying to tell.
    - If a funder is not familiar with your organization, they will check your website and/or social media pages to learn more about you. If your marketing tells a different story, they won't believe what you write in your grant is true.

- Always ask for feedback – even if you get a grant. This will provide valuable insight into what you did right and where you need to improve.

- Reach out to the program officer for guidance, direction, and questions. This person is your advocate and is an invaluable resource to ensure your success. Develop and maintain these relationships.

- Give yourself as much time as possible, especially if there are required attachments.