

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 and flowery 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 and slang, etc.
- Never tell a funder what you are not 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 as much as possible. 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 demonstrating how you do them.

- 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.
- You can use AI / Chat GPT to help draft or edit your narrative but don’t submit whatever it creates without editing it. It typically spits out a generic formula of answers. Funders are familiar with the format and they will reject your proposal if it’s obvious that you didn’t do any work writing your request.
 - It also embeds code when text is copied directly from the site. Some funders run your requests through programs that search for that code.
- 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 work, they will check your website and/or social media pages to learn more about you. If your marketing tells a different story than your funding request, they won’t believe what you wrote in your grant is true.
- Make sure any work samples provided are relevant to your request. These are meant to demonstrate your qualifications for doing the work you are proposing.
- 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.