5 Key Steps for Successful Grant Writing

#1 Identify Your Organization's Needs and the Needs of the Community You Serve

Before anyone should start searching for grant funding, and before they determine which of the many projects they need to search for grant funding the most, every organization must prioritize their needs and the needs of the community it serves. This can be a daunting task only when done alone. It is essential to determine who within the community will benefit from any new project and determine who needs our services most.

Identifying resource partners, stakeholders throughout the community, financial partners, and funding partners is key to ensuring that any project will survive financially and strategically. Before you go looking for money, make sure you know if a project will sustain itself after a grant award is spent. Sustainability is a question on many grant applications. If you are not prepared to answer that question, you may as well not even apply for the grant.

#2 Plan the Project's Details

Of vital importance when preparing to seeking funding in any form is planning the project's details. Identify who is involved in the project you have identified as the top priority for which you are seeking grant funding at this time. Describe who will benefit from this project and what you will be doing during this project and with the grant funds. This will begin to describe why the organization and the community need the project. Planning the project's details will ensure that its goals match those of any potential funding source and that its budget falls within that of what a matching funding source can afford to fund at the time of your application.

#3 Search for Funding for your Proposed Project

With the millions of internet searches, you can come up with when you google search the word 'grants,' you have to either narrow down the search or be being very specific with the key terms. It is also essential to know where to find legitimate funding sources on the Internet. Many reputable sites list charitable foundations, while the federal government has its main website that houses where it lists where you can find its available grant funding opportunities.

Read the eligibility guidelines for each grant program and make sure its goals match your program's goals while ensuring that your project's timelines will meet their funding deadlines.

#4 Develop, Write and Submit a Successful Grant Application

Some grant writers may consider a grant proposal and a grant application to be the same thing. However, the grant application contains additional items not found in the written grant proposal. The grant proposal is the written portion of the grant funding request, including all information explained in detail by the organization applying for financial assistance. The grant application consists of all materials required by the funding source, including the written grant

proposal, proposed project budget, organizational documents, IRS tax-exempt status letter, the organization's financial statements, resumes of those involved in the project, letters of support for the project, and all required documentation.

Some foundations will ask for an organization to submit a grant proposal, and some foundations will ask for a full grant application. Regardless of whether you are applying for a federal or private foundation grant, do your research and, if necessary, contact the foundation or agency representative with questions regarding the application.

#5 Implement and Managing Your Grant-Funded Program

Those same people involved in the planning process need to be involved in this process. Implementation and evaluation are both budget items in every program that many funding sources are willing to pay to ensure the program's success. Some funding programs require these phases to be funded, and those people are involved, ensuring the program's success and accountability of funds. Reporting requirements will outline what must be done, so be sure you read and follow all requirements. As noted in Step #1, be prepared to sustain your program beyond every grant you obtain, and with more than just a grant will sustain the program with another grant. A successful organization keeps all of its programs and projects running with more than just grant funding.