

GRANTWRITING HELP



Good grantwriting, like good grantmaking, is a balance between head and heart. A strong application will include both quantifiable information like demographic data, and a compassionate depiction of the clients or issue touched by the agency and proposed grant.

At the King Foundation, we've reviewed nearly 3,000 letters of inquiry and 1,800 proposals since 2006. From that experience, we offer tips to grant seekers about strengthening proposals, regardless of the funder you are approaching.

DO YOUR RESEARCH

First determine if the foundation you are approaching is a good prospect. You can use foundation websites, printed directories, and subscription-based services such as the Foundation Center (now Candid). Don't "stretch" your program to the point of breaking just to make it align with a funder's guidelines.

CALL THE FOUNDATION

Try to talk to a staff member at the foundation, either by phone or in person, before you submit. Not all foundations talk to applicants in advance, but ask. At the King Foundation, we will tell you whether we believe your request is a good match, how much you might request, and when you can or should submit.

FOLLOW INSTRUCTIONS

Make sure you understand, and follow to the letter, the foundation's instructions for submitting an application, especially the deadline and method for submitting. Do not wait until 4:29 p.m. to submit for a 4:30 p.m. deadline. And if you don't understand what you're being asked to submit, ask—don't assume, or leave something out.

FOCUS ON CLIENTS

Keep the focus in your writing on your clients, not the agency itself. Even if the request is for something like administrative office equipment, communicate what the grant will do for your clients.

BE SPECIFIC

Support your request with facts and specifics. Instead of providing your own conclusions of need, give the reader the data from which to draw the conclusions that support your case. If you're relying on public information, such as the census, make sure you use the most recent version available.

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PROVIDE RESULTS

Every agency should be able to answer the question, “How do we know we’re doing a good job?” The answer, and method for reaching it, will be different for every agency. But all agencies should be asking the question. And once you’ve established your goals for a program, tell the funder how the program actually did last year, not just what your goals were.

PROOFREAD YOUR SUBMISSION

Read it. Don’t rely on spellcheck alone, because that tool misses many errors. Remember that an application, even if submitted electronically, is still a formal business communication. Don’t abbreviate or use symbols as you would in a text or email.

USE YOUR SPACE WISELY

Many application forms, include the King Foundation’s, limit the length of various parts of an application. Don’t waste your “real estate” by including information—like a long historical timeline of the agency—that won’t have much influence on a funding decision.