



A Baker's Dozen: 13 Tips for Writing a Grant Proposal

Bill Carruthers and Rita Lewis

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1. **Become a student.** Take some time to study grant writing tips that others have developed and are readily available on the Internet. For instance, Google “grant writing tips.” Or visit:
 - a. **Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance - *Developing And Writing Grant Proposals***
http://12.46.245.173/pls/portal30/CATALOG.GRANT_PROPOSAL_DYN.show
 - b. **Grantsmanship Center, The - *Magazine archives*** <http://tgci.com/magazine/proposal.shtml>
 - c. **Milwaukee Area Technical College - *Twelve Tips for Proposal Writers***
www.matc.edu/administration/twelvetips.html
 - d. **White House Faith Based and Community Initiative - *Developing a Quality Grant Proposal***
www.whitehouse.gov/government/fbci/grant-proposals.html
2. **Network with and learn from colleagues.** The Grants Information Network is a regional resource providing information services including Web Resources, Grant Alerts, a Discussion Forum, and bi-monthly meetings—all free. Two-day training programs in grant writing are conducted twice a year for only \$55. Visit www.GrantProseInc.com to learn more.
3. **Know your funding source.** Study their website, review their IRS 990 (if a foundation), talk with their program officers, explain your ideas, ask for advice.
4. **UNDERSTAND the request for proposal...and follow it !!!** Every grant writing training program everywhere emphasizes how important it is to follow exactly the specifications described in the request for proposal. Why is it that many applicants ignore this advice?
5. **Match your proposal to the interests of the funding source.** Your idea is a square peg and the funding source is a round hole. Without changing your organizational mission, vision and goals, you need to fit your proposal to the interests of the funding source rather than the reverse.
6. **Don't create a project that is a mile wide and an inch deep.** There is a tendency to promise too much to try to impress the funding source with how much they will get from your proposal. This can be a fatal flaw if the funding source questions whether you can deliver everything you say you will.
7. **Re-visit the RFP frequently during the grant writing process.** People read the RFP before they start writing the proposal, and then put it aside. We have a tendency to drift further away from the RFP and closer to our own agenda as we write. Re-read the RFP at least once, twice and three times after you start writing to keep you from straying off course.

8. **Create a logic model before starting to write.** Logic models show the relationship among inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes. If you think these through before starting to write, you will be better prepared to organize your ideas and compose your text. Google “logic model” to learn more.
9. **Write well.** Use proper semantics, syntax, paragraph construction and writing styles or, if writing is not your strength, find someone who can write well. Follow standard conventions such as those found in the *Chicago Manual of Style* or the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*.
10. **Write with conviction.** Rather than say, “We may...” or “We can...”, say “**We will...**”
11. **Write using the active voice.** Rather than say, “It is believed by experts . . . “ say, “Experts believe . . . “ Active voice—subject + active verb—is stronger than passive voice and will reduce your word count.
12. **Reconcile the budget with the text, and the text with the budget.** Items in the budget need to be explained in the text. And activities described in the text that have associated costs need to appear in the budget.
13. **Start yesterday.** The deadline comes sooner than you’d like—always. One of the first things you should do is get started on letters of support and commitment. Ask your collaborators if they’ll support your project. If the answer is Yes, the fun begins. Usually you must write the letters for them, gently prod them to sign, and (often) pick them up yourself. Don’t underestimate the time this will take.