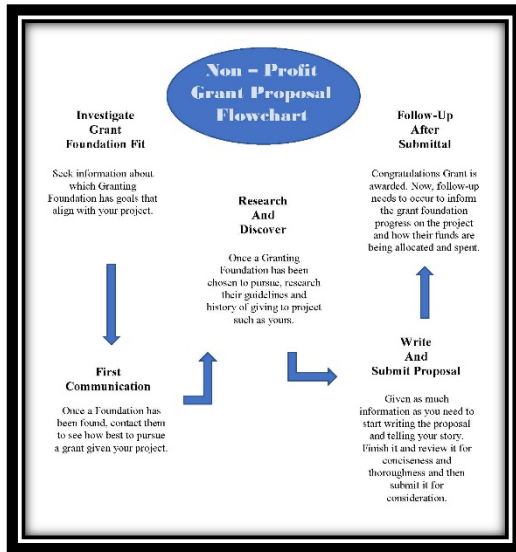


# The Process of Non-Profit Grant Proposal Writing

## Steps to Successful Submittal and Acceptance

Just like reading a book; if the story is good, then you will finish the read and draw a conclusion as to its success. Otherwise, the book returns to the shelf.



Grant writing is not different – Do you have a good intriguing story to tell? If the answer is ‘YES,’ then you are on your way to preparing an application that will be read and highly considered for funding.

Preparation of information to convey to the ultimate reader is the key. There are general steps to follow, but the main focus should be on the project being described and the success it will have for the organization and ultimately the community.

[Do Your Grant Writing Basics Homework](#) is great way to start the process.

**Grant Foundation Research** – Oftentimes the organization seeking funding doesn’t know what type of funding is needed to successfully achieve the project goals. Inquiry within the community will provide some answers as to whether there are enough funds available locally from businesses, private donors, local fundraising opportunities and events, cash on hand, etc. to achieve the financial needs.

If additional funding is required, then a Grant Foundation proposal is the answer. The search for the right foundation must begin. Does the grant foundation support your project category? The Internet is great for this as local funding foundations are oftentimes listed, but inquiry with other local organizations who have previously received grants will provide a good lead.

Information and direction of funding pursuits saves time and oftentimes structures the approach to a granting foundation. Gleaning information and/or ideas of approach to a grant foundation is the most valuable step a grant seeker can take.

**First Contact** – If a potential candidate for funding is found, reach out to them to see what is required to be considered for funding. Nowadays many foundations have websites where their funding interests are itemized and application paperwork needed by the applicant is available for download. Still, if there are questions, it is important to contact the foundation to get answers, get your organization’s name known, and to also determine who reviews the application in-house.

- Who is the audience? Who will be reading the application and making recommendations for approval?
- If it can be determined, then the cover letter might be focused on that person or team, Board appointed point person, etc. Open the door to communication.

**Research and Discussion** – Once a project has been chosen by your organization and a person chosen to spear-head the information gathering required for the grant and, ultimately, write the grant application, the real work begins. Every ounce of information about the project needs to be discussed

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and finalized. Many questions will be asked and the answers need to be full and solid. The grant will write itself from here if all of the pertinent information is gathered.

### **Grant Foundation Information Available:**

- Inquiry with potential Grant Foundations for best fit with your project.
- Grant Foundation website: grant guidelines and application process.
- Focus on the granting foundation and what their mission statement is regarding funding opportunities.

### **Project Team Grant Writer - Grant Team Approach (Local Information):**

- Interview the key people involved in the project. ... Ask lots of questions to gain a full understanding of the project.
- Several consultation sessions should occur to gather data and insight into the non-profit organization and what they are looking for in funding.
- Plus, gain an understanding of the people who will implement the project once funded.
- Breakdown of Board of Directors and supporters who will be involved and their skills and talents.

**Write and Submit** – It may take several iterations and revisions to get the story ‘just right.’ There is only one opportunity to finalize the submittal to the granting foundation, so take your time and make sure all of the questions are answered.

### **Application Process:**

- Pull all the details together into a cogent dialog about the project.
- Beginning – Middle – Ending: All so important to get across to the audience.
- Clearly and eloquently define:
  - What the goals for the project are.
  - How the success of the project will be determined.
- Application might be or include a short letter, an online application, a five-page narrative, an in person interview, etc.
- If the application is online, the submittal will be much different than a paper document submittal. The format will certainly be different, but the information and story to be told should be the same.
- ONLINE SUBMITTAL: The information and format might be limited by character content and attachment files. So be concise and direct to the point of why your organization is seeking funding.
- USPS MAIL SUBMITTAL: A mailed submittal may differ in page quantity and more detailed information sent vs. online; but, again, the information should be the same as the online version.

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**Follow-up** – If the project period is a lengthy one (up to a year or more), the granting foundation might require interim progress reports to make sure that everything is on track. Foundations might provide a progress form or may require a formal letter showing project status and how their grant funding is being spent.

Status reporting is vital to the success of the relationship with the funding organization as they don't like to be kept in the dark about how their money is being used.

Also, for historical purposes and as a learning process for the foundation, a Project End Report might be required to summarize how the project was completed and its results. Special consideration should be given to how the funding was spent to accomplish completion. If not instructed, it is important to inquire immediately if the grant is awarded as to the procedure for the reporting. Sometimes how the money was spent/disbursed can lead to future funding.

### **Do Your Grant Writing Basics Homework**

Before starting a grant proposal, make sure your research is complete. Therefore, you should know:

- The funding priorities.
- Application process.
- Application deadline.
- The organization's grant history.
- The granting foundation's geographical distribution.
- The average grant award size.

#### **Important Questions to Ask:**

- Who will be implementing the project requirements to success?
- What are the qualifications of this person/team to make it so and make the project successful?
- What is the timeline for the project?
- Does the project timeline meet any specified timeline of the funding?
- Average Grant Size: It is important to note that if the grant awarded is less than the project requires, there might be an opportunity to team with like-minded grant foundations through an established consortium of foundations.
  - Oftentimes the grant funders have a group of foundations they work with to provide the total funding required, but in smaller pieces.
  - If they feel the project warrants it, the original granting foundation might suggest this joint opportunity and will support the effort through a letter or direct contact.
  - This idea of a consortium is something that needs to be investigated prior to sending in the final proposal.
  - If a formal consortium is not established, mentioning that other foundations are being contacted might stimulate some agreement for the granting foundations to join forces to make the project happen.

Once you know all the details surrounding a grant, you then can ask the right questions when contacting a grantor. This is the path to building that important relationship with the people who are awarding the grants. [\(Return to Top of Page\)](#)