



United States
Department of
Agriculture

National Institute
of Food
and Agriculture

GRANT WRITING BASICS

February 25, 2015

2:00 – 4:00 PM

(Eastern Standard Time)

Download documents
at:

<http://michaelfields.org/grant-writing-basics-can/>



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AND COMMUNITY



FOOD SAFETY
AND NUTRITION



INTERNATIONAL
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Presenters

“Grant Writing Tips for Success”

Dr. Mark Mirando

National Program Leader USDA-NIFA

“Grant Writing Basics, You Can Do It!”

Ms. Margaret Krome

Policy Program Director, Michael Fields Agricultural Institute

Ms. Una Van Duvall

Senior Project Manager, Cross Management Services Inc.



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Grant Writing Tips for Success

“Ten Things You Must Do”

Mark Mirando, National Program Leader
National Institute of Food and Agriculture



Ten Things You Must Do

1. Find the right program for you and your idea

- ◆ Main purpose of program (funding priorities) – does idea fit in mainstream or on the fringe
- ◆ Don't waste time applying to the wrong program... square pegs don't fit in round holes
- ◆ Eligibility restrictions ?



Ten Things You Must Do

2. Become a “student” of the RFA

- ◆ Understand the main goals of the program
- ◆ Understand the instructions outlined in the RFA on how to assemble the proposal
- ◆ Read the RFA !!!



Ten Things You Must Do

3. Develop a timeline for proposal preparation

- ◆ Develop timeline that allows for completion of proposal 4 weeks before submission deadline
- ◆ If you rush preparation of the proposal, it will show – reviewers will notice and not be kind



Ten Things You Must Do

4. Understand criteria for evaluating proposals

- ◆ RFA normally contains the criteria that will be used by reviewers to evaluate your proposal
- ◆ Understand these criteria BEFORE you begin preparing your proposal – provides better understanding of where to put greatest efforts during proposal preparation



Ten Things You Must Do

5. Understand review process and reviewers

- ◆ Reviewer may be assigned 10 to 20 proposals
- ◆ Following directions in RFA helps reviewers; not following directions makes them work hard
- ◆ Preparing proposal logically and clearly helps reviewers; not doing so makes them work hard



Ten Things You Must Do

6. Write the proposal logically and clearly

- ◆ Organize proposal according to outline in RFA or evaluation criteria, whichever is most logical
- ◆ Following the prescribed format makes reviewers happy and more generous
- ◆ Making reviewers work hard hurts you



Ten Things You Must Do

7. Prepare budget with a strong justification

- ◆ Unreasonable budgets hurt proposals – create skeptics within reviewer ranks (credibility)
- ◆ Keep budgets within guidelines in the RFA – they are judged on the degree of reasonableness



Ten Things You Must Do

8. Obtain critical input from experienced and successful colleagues. Someone who....

- ◆ Talks frankly, bluntly and clearly – don't want someone who beats around the bush
- ◆ Has little sympathy for your ego
- ◆ Has been successful in obtaining grants



Ten Things You Must Do

9. Fill out forms completely and correctly
10. Allow time for intramural administrative requirements - send to arrive on time
 - ◆ A deadline is a deadline is a deadline!



One Final Thought

A proposal is not a mystery novel !!!

Get to the point....

quickly, clearly, concisely, logically



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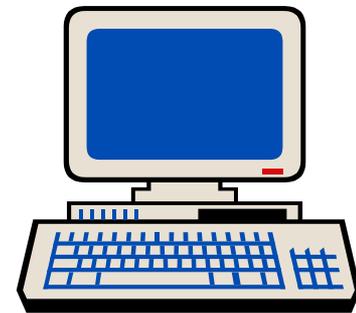
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What to Do if You Have Questions?



Contact the
Program Staff!!!



Grant-writing Basics

You can do it!

February, 25, 2015

Margaret Krome, Policy Program Director

Michael Fields Agricultural Institute,

East Troy, Wisconsin

MICHAEL FIELDS
AGRICULTURAL INSTITUTE



Una Van Duvall,

Cross Management Services,

Milwaukee, WI



CROSS MANAGEMENT SERVICES, INC.



Funding for...





**Start by
Designing
Sound
Projects**

Designing Sound Projects

Some questions to ask:

- What problem (or opportunity) are you addressing? What are your goals and measurable objectives?
- Have others, addressed this problem? What can you learn from their work?
- Who else might care about your problem? Should they be involved in your project?
- What's your main strategy to address your problem? (among several options)

Designing Sound Projects

Other questions to ask:

- What's a realistic project timeline?
- What resources (people, \$\$, materials) does your project require? (Which do you already have?)
- Who else needs to know about your project?
What's the best way to reach that audience?
- How will you measure and evaluate your project's outcomes?

Identifying Possible Funding



Identifying Possible Funding

- Use www.grants.gov to get notified about fed'l programs:
- Click on "Manage Subscriptions." You will see several options for getting notices.
- Click on **"Notices for Advanced Criteria."**
- The next page, **"Subscription Services,"** lets you to select among categories of programs, categories of eligible applicants, and categories of agencies.
- Give them **your email address** and you will begin to receive notices of the kinds of programs you asked for.

Identifying Possible Funding

Building Sustainable Farms, Ranches, and Communities

<https://attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/summaries/summary.php?pub=279>

BUILDING SUSTAINABLE FARMS, RANCHES AND COMMUNITIES



A GUIDE TO FEDERAL PROGRAMS
for Sustainable Agriculture, Forestry,
Entrepreneurship, Conservation, Food
Systems, and Community Development



Identifying Possible Funding

Other Resources:

Libraries, Extension, Networking, Internet:

**Grassroots Guide to Federal Farm and Food Programs,
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition**

<http://sustainableagriculture.net/publications/grassrootsguide>

USDA Organic Information:

<http://www.ams.usda.gov/OrganicInfo>

USDA NRCS Program Resources:

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/national/programs/?cid=stelprdb1048817#sthash.gXsyBcwh.dpuf>

Identifying Possible Funding

- **Think creatively** and broadly about **your project's needs**. Can multiple types of assistance be useful?
- **Identify programs** whose purposes and available resources seem **most suitable** to your purposes. Consider a program by answering the following questions:

Finding Possible Funding: ?s

- Would your project advance a program's stated mission and goals? And vice versa...
- Is the program's form of assistance appropriate to your needs?
- How big is its funding pool? What's the average amount and duration of grants?
- Is funding available up-front or (more typically) only on a reimbursement basis?

Identifying Possible Funding

- What are eligibility requirements, financial match requirements, and restrictions on a program's use?
- Are a program's application deadlines and funding timeframes suited to your needs? Does the program fund multi-year projects?
- Do past grantees feel that a program's reporting requirements are reasonable and that the program is well-administered?

Identifying Possible Funding

How to answer those questions:

- **Read the RFP!** (or MOSA, or NOSA, or RFA, etc.) – on website, from linkages from www.grants.gov, etc.
- **Participate in webinars** for potential applicants.
- **Call the program staff.** Contact info is on their website and on the RFP.
- **For some questions, ask past grantees**

Basic Grantwriting:

- **Sound Practices**
- **A Few Things to Avoid**
- **Commonly Requested Attachments**
- **Getting Help**

Basic Grantwriting: Sound Practices: BE ORGANIZED

- Start early!! You'll **need more time** than you expect.
- Read the RFP **at least 3 times and follow its instructions.**
- Break down your work into sections so it's not overwhelming, and **use an outline** to keep it logical.
- Be willing to **readjust your proposal** for each program to which you submit it.

Basic Grantwriting

Sound Practices: BE CLEAR

- Use clear, simple language to be readable.
- Explain early how your proposal advances the RFP's goals.
- Be precise, accurate; don't exaggerate.
- Develop your proposal's small team of collaborators.
- Have a trusted colleague review: Is it clear? Logical?
- Be sure your budget is accurate, clear, and accompanied by a budget narrative, if needed.

Basic Grantwriting: Sound Practices: BE STRATEGIC

- For **letters of support**, offer **thinking points** or even a draft for their authors (but don't make them all alike)
- Make sure you **understand the review process**; know the point values of each section of the proposal.
- Identify the **weakest aspect of your proposal** and give yourself time to **fix it**.

Basic Grantwriting

Sound Practices:

PAY ATTENTION TO DETAILS

- Follow the **format** exactly.
- Follow the **RFP's checklist**; if none exists, make your own.
- Get matching funds, named partners, signatures lined up.
- Submit well in advance of the **deadline**.

Basic Grantwriting: Electronic Submissions

Plan enough time (4-6 weeks) to register through www.grants.gov – A few easy extra steps (see handout)

- If *submitting* as an individual, *register* as an individual.
- If submitting for an organization, first register that organization through www.grants.gov:
 - Obtain a DUNS number and
 - Register w/ System for Award Management (SAM)

Submit your proposal through www.grants.gov **early** - at least a few days ahead of deadline to avoid delays.

Basic Grantwriting: A Few Things To Avoid

- **Don't include materials not requested.**
- Don't exaggerate; be precise, **accurate.**
- **Don't recycle a proposal blindly.** If you've submitted to one program, tailor that proposal **to a new program's** specifications, based on its RFP.
- **Don't be discouraged!** If you're **turned down** by a program, **find out why** before writing another.

Basic Grantwriting: Typical Grant Application Format

Project Summary: What are you going to do and why ?

Need : What are the **need, goals,** and **objectives** and what facts support them?

Approach/ Method : What steps do you plan to take to reach the goal?

Time Line/Workplan: How long will each step require?

Organizational Mission : Tell your story. Why are you the best candidate to fund?

Personnel Credentials : List the key staff, their skills, education and experience.

Budget: What will this cost– by **Expense** Category, by **Objectives**? What non-fed'l **match** (cash, in-kind) can you contribute? Use a **budget narrative** if needed.

Communication/Outreach: To whom and how will you communicate about your work?

Evaluation: How will you measure your progress toward goals and objectives? How will you gather the data?

Basic Grantwriting

COMMONLY REQUIRED ATTACHMENTS

This standard information should be submitted at the same time as the completed proposal. Not to do so may disqualify your request.

1. Support letters
2. Complete list of the **organization's officers and directors.**
3. The organization's **actual income and expense statement for the past fiscal year**, identifying the organization's principal sources of support.
4. The organization's **projected income and expense budget for the current fiscal year**, identifying the projected revenue sources.

Basic Grantwriting

COMMONLY REQUIRED ATTACHMENTS (CONT'D)

5. The organization's most recent **audited financial statement** including notes and IRS Form 990.
6. Copies of the **IRS federal tax exemption determination letters**.
7. **Program Budget** (multi-year if applicable). *NOT required for general operating requests.*
8. **Agency Annual Report**

Basic Grantwriting: Getting Help

- Participate in programs' explanatory **webinars**
- If you've read the RFP 3X, and still have questions, **call the program staff**
- Find **resources available to help you:**
 - find funding possibilities – **librarians**
 - review your proposal – **friends, colleagues, Extension, local development agency, etc.**
- Challenges with www.grants.gov – **call help line**

Additional resources to help you:

- Today's webinar and many documents useful to grantwriting will be posted here:

http://www.nifa.usda.gov/nea/ag_systems/res/smallfarms_grant_webinars.html

- MFAI offers free grants advising in the Midwest, especially for underserved farmers and groups assisting them. Anyone, anywhere can sign up for our grants notices:

<http://michaelfields.org/grants-advising-services-provided-through-michael-fields-agricultural-institute/>



Questions?

