Grantwriting 101

Khris Dodson
Environmental Finance Center

"There is no grantsmanship that will turn a bad idea into a good one, but there are many ways to disguise a good idea." - Norm Braverman, NIH

What keeps us from applying for grants?

REJECTED

Did You Know…

- only 1 proposal in 5 is turned down because the idea wasn't good enough
- A rejected proposal is worth about $10,873 of free advice
- the success rate is higher for proposals turned in a second time
- the success rate on a third submission is almost 1:1

Recycle your Rejected Proposal

Success means having
one in three grants funded

- A rejected proposal does not always mean the idea was rejected
- Obtain reviewer comments
- Call the program officer
- Rewrite, revise, resubmit

The grant process is never wasted

- Can't get a grant unless you write one
- Professionally fulfilling
- Requires you to focus your thoughts
- Armed with reviewers comments the second proposal is always stronger

What keeps us from applying for grants?

TIME

Not Enough Time

Writing is like an Olympic event
- needs constant practice.

- Write everyday at a regular time in the same place. 20 minutes

- Write an review as a team

What keeps us from applying for grants?

"I NO WRITE GOOD!"

Appropriate Writing Style

- Write to the funding source
- 5 W's
- Never write in 1st person
- Be Clear & Concise

- Write to inform
- Write to persuade
- Don't use biased language
- Current data from reputable source
- establish credibility
- No unsubstantiated opinions

Writing in Plain English

- Put sentences in logical sequence
- Use lists when appropriate
- Avoid openers with There is, There are, and It is – try"ing"

- Use the active voice
  - avoid "to be"
  - subject first
- Avoid noun strings
- Use action verbs
- Go on a "which" hunt

A Readable Style

- Scannability
- Make sure that all pages are not just solid text
- Use bulleted items & graphics where appropriate
- Use headings and subheadings, bold and underline
- Well construct introductory sentences in every paragraph, it is all they may read
- Use a readable type face
- Block justify

Words that paint a picture

"Better, greener stormwater practices will improve this community."

"Closed businesses, damaged roads, water and mud in homes are all regular spring occurrences in the Town of Floodsville."

The Title

The title is important. It should convey what the project is about. The title is your 'elevator speech'

No!: Local Waterfront Revitalization in the village of Littleville

Yes!: Creating a creekside Live/Work/Play district in downtown Littleville

Abstract/Summary

This is your first impression, and maybe the only chance to engage a reviewer.

- Should be able to stand alone
- Clear, concise, single space
- Avoid 1st person
- Do not refer to proposal in the abstract
- Cover all key elements in order

Editing your Grant

- After you have finished your draft:
  - set it aside for a day
  - revise
- Have someone else read it
- Have them tell you what your project is about
- Edit for clarity and conciseness

What keeps us from <u>GETTING</u> grants?

Keys to Success

Innovation and Creativity is important

Looking for new solutions to old problems

How do you create creativity?

Calling the Program Officer is one of the most important elements

85% of all successful grant seekers have had contact with the program officer

11 Reasons Why Proposals Fail

- Deadline not met
- Guidelines not followed
- Nothing intriguing
- Did not meet program priorities
- Incomplete
- Poor background or demonstration of need

- Appeared beyond applicants capacity
- Implementation plan weak
- Unrealistic budget
- Cost greater than benefit
- Poorly written

5 Tips for Successful Grantwriting

- Create an interesting, innovative idea to attract funding
- Work as a team; seek feedback
- Contact the funding program for feedback and to establish a relationship
- Create a checklist (if one is not already included in the funding program materials)
- Know the players and the process

Developing your ideas

- Commit your ideas to paper
- Thoroughly describe your program
- Create a concept paper
- State the goals and objectives of your program
- Construct a timeline
- Estimate costs for staff, materials, and equipment
- Plan for an evaluation of your program
- Write job descriptions for project staff

Is it the Right Grant?

- Are you eligible?
- Can you match?
- How many funded?
- How much money/ Range?
- Can you meet guidelines?
- Who do they fund?
- Type of project?
- Interest, but no grants

Geographic Spread

We're here to help…

Khris Dodson

Associate Director

315-443-8818

kdodson@syracusecoe.org

Environmental Finance Center
Syracuse University