Grant Seeking: Tips for Success

Success in securing contracts and grants comes with an understanding of the process involved and <u>lots</u> of practice. It is truly a case of "learn by doing." The following sections outline tips to improve your grant seeking.

Identifying the Funding Source

1. <u>Define the need</u> or problem you are addressing.

   --Use others in joint planning and development of ideas.

   --Involve other agencies as appropriate.

2. Determine the <u>best way to solve the problem</u>. This is the essence of the project.

   Solution = Project Idea

   What evidence is there to support your solution? Why will it work?

3. <u>Find the right source</u> to fund your program.

   Analyze the problem.

   Who has a stake in the problem?
   Where's the point of contact?
   What is the scope of the problem you are addressing (local, county, area, state, regional, national)?

   Identify potential funding sources. Examples:

   Internal sources within Iowa State University:
   >   4-H Foundation Program Grants
   >   Excellence in Extension Fund
   >   Helen LeBaron Hilton Fund
   >   Leopold Center Competitive Grant Program
   Iowa Energy Center
   State government (Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) Program)
   Local Government (County Board of Supervisors
   Local Non-profit School District (Local Chapter of the National Council for the Prevention of Child Abuse, United Way)
   Community Foundation
   Local Organization (PTA, Church, Lions Club, Kiwanis, Farm Bureau)

Local Business-Manufacturer (Pioneer Hi-Bred International – contact is through local manager; Walmart Partnering in Communities)

Corporation Foundation (Wellmark Foundation)

Foundation/Organization with a Regional Interest (North Central Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program)

Foundation with national and international interests (W.K. Kellogg Foundation)

Analyze the potential source.

Is point of contact for your project idea appropriate for the funding source's sphere of influence?

Is your project idea consistent with goals of potential source?

What kinds of projects have they funded in the past?

What size grants are usually made?

Is your project consistent with interests, priorities, and legal requirements of the selected funding source?

Who do you (or others with whom you are working) know at the potential source?

Plan the approach.

If you aren't sure whether your project "fits" with a grant program call the grants officer or visit with a member of the review committee.

How does the potential source want to be contacted – by letter of inquiry, by full proposal, by telephone?

Take time to plan the best approach, and consider each funding source as a unique situation; "form letters" don't work.

For competitive, federal or state grants programs, approach by written proposal may be sufficient.

Unstaffed private foundations (80-90% of the foundations), businesses, and corporate foundations generally require personal contact; approach each as you would an individual donor.

Personal contact is also important for the large, staffed foundations; most of these foundations have considerable prior contact before a proposal is reviewed and approved.

Market your idea

"You are an applicant not a supplicant." Norton J. Kiritz

Do not apologize or point to your weaknesses.

Focus on your resources and abilities to solve the problem.

Writing the Proposal

1. **Audience.** Probably the most important thing about writing any document, including grant proposals, is to know your audience. Learn as much as possible about the potential readers of your proposal. Use a reader-centered approach to writing.

2. **Format.** Many funding sources outline the format that should be used.   Follow those directions carefully.

3. **Review Criteria.** Find out who will review your proposal and how the review will take place. Study the criteria to be used in reviewing the proposal. As the writer, your task is to give the reader all the information he/she needs to review your proposal.

4. **Internal Check.**

   Remember that proposals are pieces of <u>persuasive writing</u>.

   Avoid assumptions. (Don't assume that the reader knows who you are as applicant.)

   Capture the reader's attention.

   Beginnings and endings are important. (Include key points at the beginnings and endings of paragraphs, sections, and the total proposal.)

   Use headings and bullets to:
   - **Organize** the most important information and set it down in an efficient, logical order.
   - **Encourage scanning** by the reader when time is short.
   - **Hold the reader's attention** when a paragraph might turn them off.
   - **Write efficiently.**

   Use quotes from letters of support.

   Include benefits throughout the proposal.

   End the proposal with a paragraph describing benefits of the project to clients, the applicant, and the funding source.

5. **External Check**. Have a non-involved acquaintance review the proposal to see if it is concise, clear and logical.

6. **Submission.** Package in an attractive form; follow directions in packaging and mailing.

   Believe deadlines.

   Remember, you'll have "no second chances to make a good first impression."

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