The Fundamentals of Effective Grant Writing:
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Overview
- Being ready:
  - Being ready to write
- Being ready to submit a proposal
- Putting the proposal together:
  - Step-by-step "checklist" for each section
  - What works and what doesn't

Fundamentals of Effective Grant Writing:
Be Prepared to ...
- Send, refine, develop your idea
- Know your topic, the literature, the funder
- Understand what funders want
- Know funder's priorities, requirements, funding limits
- Match funding sources to your needs
- Review many funders
- Focus on your strengths, uniqueness
- Executive, track record, resources
- Don't stretch too far
- Develop and sustain effective collaborations
- Manage the time needed to develop a clear, compelling argument

Be Ready
- Anticipate "Requests for Proposals"
- Be ready for one time/new RFP's
- Assume it will take you more time than you expect
- Know funding cycles

Fundamentals of Effective Grant Writing:
Understand What Funders Want
- Read websites, past and current RFPs
  - Pay close attention to statements on mission, values, priorities
  - Look at funding history
    - Must have a "track" - what is it?
    - Typical or maximum size of grant funded?
    - Projects they have funded
    - Partnerships they have funded
    - Find out what's new or what's coming
    - Be aware of potential updates in funding priorities

Purpose/mision
- The Commonwealth Fund is a private foundation that aims to promote a high performing health care system that achieves better access, improved quality, and greater efficiency, particularly for society's most vulnerable. Read the 2007 Annual Report for highlights of the Fund's activities.

The Pew Charitable Trusts is driven by the power of knowledge to solve today's most challenging problems. Pew applies a rigorous, analytical approach to improve public policy, inform the public and stimulate civic life.

Judd Foundation's mission is to maintain and preserve Donald Judd's permanently installed living and working spaces, libraries, and archives in New York and Marfa, Texas. The Foundation aims to promote a wider understanding of and appreciation for Judd's artistic legacy by facilitating public access to these spaces and resources and by developing scholarly and educational programs.

Fundamentals of Effective Grant Writing:
Understand What Funders Want
- Pay attention to funding cycles for new RFPs
  - Start planning well in advance (1-6 months)
- Consider contacting program officers
  - Test ideas, get advice early
  - Have a well formed idea ready, be flexible
  - Understand review criteria, scoring system
  - Pay attention to scoring procedures
  - Plan length of section
  - Concise is better
Fundamentals of Effective Grant Writing: Develop, Refine Your Idea
- Something that you are truly interested in
  - Don’t just “chase” money
- Identify:
  - Type of grant being sought, e.g.
    - Program or infrastructure development
    - Intermediary/evaluation
    - Research
    - Potential project locations
    - Target groups to be served, researched

Fundamentals of Effective Grant Writing: Focus on Strengths, Uniqueness
- Be clear about skills, expertise you bring
  - Make sure they relate to proposal
    - Identify projects
    - Build on collaboration
  - Don’t be vague
    - Trajectory of work, past success
    - Commitment, ability
    - Track record of effective use of grant money

Creating a timeline
- Developing the idea (don’t underestimate)
- Checking the literature, be current
- Thinking through the implementation
- Anticipating challenges and discussing them
- Working with collaborators
- Developing an evaluation plan
- Give yourself a few weeks to fine tune

Fundamentals of Effective Grant Writing: Managing Time for Proposal Writing
- Plan on writing a number of drafts
  - First draft: Overall idea, logic
  - Next drafts:
    - Develop logic, begin linking pieces
    - Respond to feedback from peers
    - Identify, resolve problems
    - Review, refine readability, assure consistency
    - Strengthen what makes you stand out, what you can deliver

Fundamentals of Effective Grant Writing: Effective Collaborations
- Begin developing ongoing, effective collaborative relationships before writing the proposal
  - Don’t do it alone
  - Takes time to develop working relationships
    - Different assumptions, perspectives, language
    - Different timelines
    - Different realities
  - Find in as a strength for your proposal
    - Identify – and value – differences
    - Different perspectives will likely strengthen proposal, project, outcomes

Fundamentals of Effective Grant Writing: Managing Time for Proposal Writing
- Allow time to ask for review by peers
  - Can offer other perspectives, interpretations
  - Select reviewers strategically
  - Reviews at different stages of development
    - Specify what stage the draft is in
  - May want to specify what you’d like reviewed
    - Logic
    - Consistency, continuity
    - Methods
Use your colleagues
- Share early ideas with colleagues
- Ask for candid, constructive feedback
- Show them review criteria
- Ask specific questions
- Phase your feedback

Colleague Feedback
- Match with the mission
- Novelty of the idea
- How compelling is your proposal?
- How realistic is your proposal?
- How sustainable is your proposal?
- How clearly is your proposal written?
- Picking colleagues to help you
- Explain it back to you

Fundamentals of Effective Grant Writing
Comments? Questions?

Writing the Proposal: Step-by-Step Pointers by Section
- Introduction
- Statement of the Problem
- Goals, Objectives and Outcomes
- Methods
- Budget
- Abstract (first section read, last section written)
- Appendices

For Each Proposal Section, I’ll Discuss ...
- Purpose of the section
- Key questions to ask yourself
- Some writing tips
- Common rejection reasons

Proposal Introduction: Purpose
- One of the most important sections
- Establishes the context of your proposal
- Convinces the funder of the need for your project
- Establishes the importance and novelty of your idea
- Convinces funder you are the one to do this
- Link to the funder’s mission/priorities

Proposal Introduction: Does it ...
- Establish clearly who you are?
- Describe your organizational goals?
- Begin to establish your (and your organization’s) credibility in the project topic area?
- Lead logically to the problem statement?
- Show that you have done your homework?
- Show consistency and mastery?

Proposal Introduction: Some Writing Tips
- Explain how project ties into your overall career or organizational goals
- Explain how proposed project matches up with the values of the funder
- Discuss track record in similar projects
- If no direct track record, “harness” credibility via collaborators, consultants, support letters
- Be clear, concise, coherent (not wander or purpose)
- Show you are ready and capable
- Your writing will tell those who you are: fast researcher, organized or disorganized, clear or muddled, direct and deliberate or rambling...

Proposal Introduction: Common Rejection Reasons
- Does not sufficiently address (or raises questions) credibility issues
- Competence, track record, expertise, level of effort, collaborations, support, sustainability etc.
- Basic assumptions are unconvincing, not current
- Does not make clear what will result
- Insufficient evaluation
- Uncertain what will be done
- Changing purpose
Statement of the Problem:

Purpose
- Establishes that problem represents a gap between what exists and what could exist
- Your chance to propose closing the gap
- Establishes that funding project will help the funder/sponsor fulfill their mission
- Your chance to frame your problem/need statement from the perspective of the funder/sponsor

Goals, Objectives, Outcomes Section: Purpose
- Goals:
  - Represent the idealized dream of what you want to accomplish
- Objectives:
  - Specify the end products of your project
- Outcomes:
  - Are the benefits, changes, or effects that will occur as a result of project

Objectives: Keep Them SIMPLE
- Specific: What will be different when project is finished?
- Immediate: Why should project be acted on right now?
- Measurable: What quantitative or qualitative data will be gathered and analyzed?
- Practical: Are objectives realistic and feasible?
- Logical: Do objectives relate to goal and sponsor’s priorities?
- Evaluable: What are your criteria for success?

Goals
- To improve the bicycle safety of children in Oakwood neighborhood
- To improve the access of older adults in the Oakwood neighborhood to primary care services
- To reduce the incidence of obesity in children attending Leopold School

Objectives
- At the end of the study, the percentage of children wearing approved bicycle helmets will increase from the current 10% to 90%
- At the end of two years, the rate of obesity in grade four students in Leopold School will decrease from 40% to 30%

Statement of the Problem:

Does it ...
- Convey project focus early in the narrative?
- Demonstrate that the project is important and sufficiently addressed?
- Contain appropriate, current citations (e.g., to support problem definition, or to previous work and ongoing studies)?
- Include appropriate supporting data?
- Help assure that identified problem is solvable?
- Correspond to the mission/purpose of the RFP?
Goals, Objectives, Outcomes Section: Some Writing Tips
- Include both types of statements:
  - Goal (ultimate)
  - Objectives (immediate)
- Don’t confuse objectives (ends) with methods (means)
- Present each objective in no more than 1-2 sentences
- Use action verbs
- List objectives in chronological order

Goals, Objectives, Outcomes Section: Common Rejection Reasons
- Objectives framed as “global” statements
- Better be specific, measurable, achievable actions
- Objectives not realistic, feasible
- Objectives not appropriate to purpose of grant
- Objectives more comprehensive than covered by the methods
- Outcomes diffuse, unclear, of limited significance
- Objectives not attainable
- Not cost effective or sustainable
- Not important enough
- Significance for wider world not established

Methods Section: Purpose
- The action plan to describe how project activities will accomplish objectives
- Details who is going to do what, and where
- Describes project:
  - Components
  - Sequence
  - Flow

Methods Section: Does it ...
- Describe major activities for reaching each objective?
- Identify key personnel who will carry out each objective?
- Identify all project data to be collected for evaluating project outcomes?
- Explain how data will be collected?
- Explain how people will be recruited

Methods Section: Some Writing Tips
- Justify selection of methodology
  - Have others used your approach?
  - Is there solid reason to believe methods, approach will work?
- Include and task chart
- If consultants to be used, explain roles

Methods Section: Common Rejection Reasons
- Lack of experience in essential methodology
- Description diffuse, superficial, artificial
- Proposal appears unrealistic
- There is no claim for major tasks
- Significant uncertainty that methods can be accomplished within required time frame
- Does not clearly indicate who is responsible for carrying out each task
- Inefficient personnel
- Inaccurate cost estimates
- Insufficient evidence of ability to carry it out

Project Budget: Purpose
- More than just a simple statement of proposed expenditures
- Alternative ways to:
  - describe the project
  - establish its credibility
  - apprise its value
- Gives important clues about applicant’s commitment and time availability
- Shows understanding of time, resources required and commitment of organization

Project Budget: Does it ...
- Follow all pertinent guidelines, formats specified by funder
- Include a budget narrative justifying major budget categories?
- Show sufficient detail, so reviewers will know how all budget items are calculated?
- Request sufficient resources to effectively carry out project?
- In kind support needs clear explanation
- Check for last minute charges

Project Budget: Writing Tips
- Budget narrative/justification
  - Briefly justify each category
  - Show the basis for line-item calculations
- In multi-year budgets, allow for yearly increases
  - Indicate assumptions regarding increases
  - If project to occur in phases, identify costs associated with each phase
  - If some are required, do not count as ‘double dipping’
  - Check for expenses that are not allowed
Project Budget: Common Rejection Reasons
- Too high for expected or promised results
- Not sufficiently explained or justified
- Not linked to specific objectives
- Insufficient salary support requested to cover the work described
- Appears to ask to cover costs: normally borne by operating budget, or for resources already in place

Abstract: Purpose
- First read, last written
- To provide a cogent summary of proposal
- Should offer rapid understanding of:
  - significance
  - generalizability
  - potential contribution
- Often used to prepare summary for presentation to review panel
- Should help simplify that task!
- CLEAR and CONCISE

Abstract: Does it ...
- Effectively summarize the project?
- Effectively describe project outcomes?
- Comply with length/word limits?
- Use key subheadings to highlight proposal sections?

Abstract: Writing Tips
- Don't write until proposal is completed
- Unless otherwise indicated, limit abstract to between 250 and 500 words
- Include at least one sentence each on problem, objectives, methods and outcomes

Abstract: Common Rejection Reasons
- Important points or problems:
  - Raised in the abstract not explained or resolved in the narrative, or described in the narrative not mentioned in the abstract
  - Unclear, not well-reasoned or well written
  - Word limitation requirements are ignored
  - Remember: this is the first impression

Appendixes: Purpose
- Contain supportive secondary information to strengthen proposal narrative
- Judicious use!
- Helpful when funder page limits are constraining
- Place to put charts, graphs, tables, formulas, timelines, other forms of visuals
- Essential proposal information should go in narrative, not in appendices
- Not always read/should not be vital part

Appendixes: Key Questions to Ask in Preparing
- Could reviewers evaluate the proposal without any appendix information?
- Are strong letters of support, commitment and cooperation included?
- Are resumes included for all key project personnel and consultants?
- Do resumes reflect expertise essential to project?

Letters of Support
- Find the appropriate person
- Help them write the letter
- Ask way in advance
- Talk to them first
- Specifics of anticipated impact
- Specifics of what makes you the best person/organization

Fundamentals of Effective Grant-writing: General Writing Tips
- Clear, compelling writing takes practice and time
- Always keep audience in mind
- Your writing is never as clear to others as it is to you
- Don’t use jargon or abbreviations
- Address problems directly and honestly
- Make clear transitions between sections
- Use subheadings
- Every change you make has a ripple affect
- Review for implications for other sections of proposal
Fundamentals of Effective Grant-writing: Review of Key Points

- Spend time early on, to develop, refine ideas
- Focus on work/project that interests you
- Don’t hesitate to ask for peer review
- Know priorities, requirements of funder
- Focus on your strengths
- Be realistic. If needed, find/create strengths via collaboration, consultants
- Begin developing effective partnerships, collaboration early in grant-writing process
- Effectively manage time to write grant

Grant Reviews

- Ask for criteria
- Look at point system if there is one
- Information in the right section
- Be explicit. Don’t make people work to find the answers or read between the lines
- Find out who is reviewing

Sustainability

- Very important
- Usually missing
- Often cavalier
- Make it sound like a good investment
- HOW will you continue?

Fundamentals of Effective Grant Writing

Thank you

Comments?
Questions?