

8 Tips for Competitive Grant Applications

Do your research. Only apply for grants that are a good fit in terms of focus and size. Make sure that you meet the criteria prior to applying. If you are unsure, contact a program officer and ask for clarification.

Avoid mission creep. Don't start a program outside your organization's mission or expertise in order to be eligible for new funding sources.

Consider the goals of the foundation when deciding if you can submit a competitive application. Some funders prefer to fund small grants that serve an immediate need; others prefer to fund part of a long-term strategy which has a systemic impact. Make sure that your request is a good fit.

Write with clarity and have well defined activities and outcomes. Don't jumble a bunch of activities together, rather make sure that they are cohesive and fit together naturally. Organize your thoughts and writing so that your application can be easily understood by someone unfamiliar with your program.

Emphasize research and evaluation. Foundations want to know they are making a good investment and look more favorably on applications that are based on research-tested assumptions or include a viable evaluation methodology.

Demonstrate sustainability. Foundations rarely want to be an organization's primary funder. Show that the project has a variety of funding sources and that it is a priority for the organization. If it is a new program, provide a sustainability plan.

Be a good community partner. Detailing how your organization/program successfully partners with others is important. Including meaningful and well thought-out collaborations will often strengthen your application. Provide letters of support from your partners if applicable.



Follow directions and make sure the application is complete. This sounds simple, but you would be surprised at how many applications fall short in this area. Be sure that all sections of the application have been completed and that all attachments are included. It helps to label each attachment, and to enclose the attachments in the order requested on the application.

General Resources for Grant Seekers

Philanthropy Northwest - regional funder database
<http://www.philanthropynw.org>
The Foundation Center
<http://foundationcenter.org>
Puget Sound Grant Writers Association
<http://www.grantwriters.org>

Education Specific Resources

Grantmakers for Education
(<http://www.edfunders.org>)
Principles for Effective Education Grantmaking (PDF Report dated May, 2005)
www.edfunders.com/downloads/GFEprinciples_6.13.05.pdf