

Grantseeking Quicktips

Avoiding Common Grant Proposal Mistakes

Writing a grant proposal can be time consuming. In most cases, it should be. Coming up with a project plan, researching data on its anticipated, or historical, effectiveness and preparing a budget are not simple tasks. But doing your homework usually pays off.

When sitting down to write the text of an application, remember that clear, precise language is crucial to effectively communicating your intentions to the funding agency. Consider these recommendations when creating your proposal and avoid these far too common mistakes:

- Write your application for the particular funding opportunity you're seeking. Sticking to generic language that can be used in just about any proposal likely won't get your project funded because it will be difficult for them to see how their specific goals can be met by your vague, generic solution.
- Ensure that the points you make in your application are precise and backed by evidence. Making claims without supporting them with data or reliable information makes grant reviewers weary of awarding funds to applicants.
- Avoid piecing together an application using remnants of past applications. This technique may save you time, but it can also find you submitting information that is not exactly tailored toward the specific funding opportunity you are seeking. Your proposal may end up sounding inaccurate or out of date.
- Don't repeat language used in the funding notice. The applicant reviewers oftentimes are those who helped write the notice of funding availability, and they are not likely to be impressed at seeing their words inserted into your proposal.
- Keep your language simple and to the point. Writing the proposal in language that is flowery or overly rhetorical may leave some reviewers confused at the true message of your proposal.
- Use technical terms and jargon sparingly within your application. Peer review boards for application reviews can be made up of people from a variety of backgrounds that won't necessarily be familiar with terms that are too technical within the field.
- Be sure to provide all the requested documents with your proposal.
- Establish a direct line of communication between your organization and the funding agency. Grants.gov provides a contact on all funding notices, so if you have a question, don't hesitate to call the agency for clarification. Similarly, if there is a problem with your application you want the agency to know who to contact to clear up any problems. Also, the Grants.gov call center can be reached at 1-800-518-4726 between 7 a.m. and 9 p.m., Monday through Friday every week for technical assistance with electronic applications.
- Make your proposal as organized as possible, with several clearly marked sections and subsections. Include charts and photographs where appropriate and helpful, and be sure to explain their relevance to your proposal. 

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