

BASIC ELEMENTS OF GRANT WRITING

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting evaluates hundreds of proposals each year for a variety of funding purposes. This publication is an easy guide to the basic elements of grant writing and is offered to assist applicants to CPB and to other funding sources. It offers guideposts to help you through each stage of the process.

These guideposts are transferable to a variety of grant writing situations, from searching for data and resources, writing and packaging proposals, to a funder, and follow-up. Here are some steps that will help.

PREPARATION

Stage 1: Preparation (76.6 to 76.6)

1. Define your project.

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- Goal: To improve production quality.
- Objective 1: Recruit advanced production talent.
- Objective 2: Train mid-level producers.
- Objective 3: Upgrade production equipment.
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These goals and objectives suggest the proposal will request support for recruitment activity, production training, and equipment purchase. In contrast, a different proposal with the same goal might focus only on equipment upgrades.

2. Identify the right funding sources.

Foundation centers, computerized databases, station development offices, publications, and public libraries are some of the resources available to assist your funding search. Do not limit your funding search to one source.

Look for a match between your project and the grants you seek by looking for consistency between the purpose and goals of your project and the funder. In addition, pinpoint specific funding priorities and preferences.

Make direct contact with funders to support projects like yours.

Request proposal guidelines. Also request a list of projects previously funded. Perhaps an annual report is available.

Inquire about the maximum amount available. Also, find out the average size and funding range of awards.

Determine if funding levels of the grants you select are appropriate for your project. Note whether there is a funding floor or ceiling.

Find out whether the funder has other grant sources for which your project is eligible.

3. Contact the funders.

Think of the funder as a resource.

Identify a project officer who will address your questions.

Some funders offer technical assistance, others do not. Ask for technical assistance, including a review of proposal drafts.

Inquire about how proposals are reviewed and how decisions are made.

Inquire about budgetary requirements and preferences. Are matching funds required? Is in-kind acceptable as a portion of applicants' share? What may be counted as in-kind, and how might it be applied? Learn about payment processes, including cash flow.

Remember, the contacts you make may prove invaluable, even if not for now.

4. Acquire proposal guidelines.

Guidelines usually tell you about:

- submission deadlines
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- whom to contact
- other submission requirements

Additionally:

Read the guidelines carefully, then read them again.

Ask the funder to clarify your questions.

5. Know the submission deadline.

Plan to submit your proposal on or preferably before the deadline.

Be realistic about whether you have time to prepare a competitive proposal that meets the deadline.

Know the funder's policies on late submissions, exceptions, and mail delays.

Find out how the funder will notify you about the receipt and status of your proposal. Factor this information into your timeline.

6. Determine personnel needs.

Identify required personnel both by function and, if possible, by name. Contact project consultants, trainers, and other auxiliary personnel to seek availability, acquire permission to include them in the project, and negotiate compensation. Personnel compensation is important budget information.

7. Update your timeline.

This is a good point at which to update your timeline, now that you know about submission deadlines and review timetables. Factor into your schedule time to write multiple drafts, gather relevant and permissible materials, and prepare an impartial critique of your proposal for clarity, substance, and form.

WRITING THE PROPOSAL

Structure, attention to specifications, concise persuasive writing, and a reasonable budget are the critical elements of the writing stage.

There are many ways to organize proposals. Read the guidelines for specifications about required information and how it should be arranged.
