Developing a Powerful Grant Proposal: A Step-by-Step Tutorial

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NOTE: This document covers the steps involved in grant writing. The examples relate to a wide range of organizations. If you are seeking funds for child abuse prevention, be sure to use specific facts and information related to this field.

I. Introduction

A full proposal usually contains most of the components included in this document, but remember to follow the grant makers' guidelines if they're available. The grant maker's guidelines will tell you which elements to include, in what order and how long each element should be. If guidelines are unavailable, use the proposal components most relevant to your project.

The person who conceived the project should also author the proposal, if possible. It is often best if the author works with limited editorial assistance because the proposal will be stylistically consistent with fewer writers involved. For the best proposal possible, do not write by committee.

One of the keys to writing successful grant requests is to make sure that each request mirrors the program objectives of the grant maker. You will find the need to modify your grant request every time you submit it to a different grant maker.

Thoroughly understand the basic intent and objectives of the grant maker's program. Read through enacting legislation, annual reports and all published materials that explain the intent of the program. Remember to use the language of these documents when developing your proposal.

If possible, you want to ask each grant maker for a copy of a recent grant award (ask for the one with the highest score, if you're talking with government agencies) or talk with the author of a successful proposal to this grant maker to help you clarify the grant maker's:

- Preferred proposal length and level of detail

- Need for background information

- Requirements on budget detail, statistical data and other attachments

- Preference regarding personal contact.

Always make an outline of the grant proposal using the application guidelines before you begin. I like to keep this outline on a huge flip chart sheet of paper on the wall next to the computer while I am working on the proposal. It helps me "remember" how it all fits together as I write.

Readers appreciate brevity and clarity. To achieve this, include section headings and sub-headings, leave space between sections, choose a readable typeface and font size, use standard margins and double-space your request. Always use page numbers and identifying page headers or footers. Don't use letterhead anywhere in the request except for your cover letter.

Write a first draft and don't try to make it perfect. The task here is to capture your ideas on paper, add all of the information you've collected to date, and identify areas where you need more information. Editing and rewriting come later.

II. Motivating the Grant Maker: Developing the Statement of Need

Why should grant makers support your request for funding? It's not as if they don't have numerous requests for funding! Making your grant request ring true, as well as create a sense of urgency, is important if you want your request to remain in the selection process, round after round, as others are eliminated.

So, how do you create a powerful statement of need?

The statement of need should:

- Paint a picture of the overall issue, focusing on the global, national, or local scale, as appropriate;
- Describe the problem in terms of clients or the community using statistics or other documentation;
- Refer to the organization's internal needs if the request is for capacity building grants or operating support; and,
- Make a clear link between the need presented and the grant maker's funding priorities.

Painting the Picture

The need statement must engage the reader. You want to capture his attention, and not let him go. To do this, you may want to start with an individual case history or vignette, a "snapshot" that will help the reader see or feel the implications of the problem.

This snapshot will show the motivating, human dimensions of the problem or need and draw your reader into the proposal.

For example, the following request was to secure funds to start providing hospice care in Alaska Native villages:

> *In Alaska today, Athabascan culture dies one elder at a time:*
>
> | | | |
> |---|---|---|
> | *Jerry Smith* | *86 yrs* | *1920 – 2006* |
> | *Marie Childers* | *72 yrs* | *1934 – 2006* |
> | *Jamie Silver* | *87 yrs* | *1919 – 2006* |
> | *Carl Salmon* | *73 yrs* | *1933 – 2006* |
> | *Jeremiah Sullivan* | *67 yrs* | *1939 - 2006* |
> | *Claudine Sanders* | *84 yrs* | *1922 – 2006* |
>
> (Fairbanks Daily News Miner *Jan – May 2006.*)
>
> *Each of these elders grew up in rural Alaska, but was forced to move into Fairbanks once their illnesses no longer allowed them to live at home.*
>
> *Each of these people knew traditional ways to hunt, tell stories, settle disputes, dance, honor leaders, and bear grief.*
>
> *Each grew old and died without traditional contact with family and friends.*

Support the anecdote with broader information about how the problems highlighted by this vignette reflect community conditions.

Documenting the Need in Your Community
Cite relevant and pertinent statistics. Quote from reports, letters, or press accounts. Stay concise and focused. Be selective in your use of data. Use one or two clear facts or statistics, rather than many examples.

Need statements can deal with tangible problems such as homelessness, offenders returning to prison, children falling behind in their reading skills, youth dropping out of school or the location of a hazardous waste site.

Creating a compelling need statement is more challenging with less tangible subjects, such as programs that are artistic, spiritual or otherwise value-oriented. Producing a new opera, commissioning an artist and other projects that improve the quality of life in our communities are good examples of such programs. Funder profiles can assist you by providing detailed program and area of interest descriptions, potentially linking a grant maker's giving priorities to your request.

In your need statement, make it clear to the reader that there is a gap between "what is" and "what should be" for the populations you propose to serve. You must establish an urgent need to close this gap and prove that your project is an effective way to tackle the problem. You can establish "what should be" by using experts' statements or examples of successful projects in other places. You may also want to use a quotation from your mission statement at the end of the need statement to show why your

organization is tackling this problem.

The need statement should:

- Clearly define the need you intend to address;
- Support the existence of the need with evidence and documentation;
- Make a logical connection between your organization and the problem or need with which you propose to work; and,
- Describe how your proposal fits within the grant maker's priority funding categories.

By answering the questions on the worksheet below, you'll be well on your way to developing a compelling need statement.

Leave the reader asking the question, "I understand the extent of the problem or need, but what can this organization do to alleviate it?"

This implicit question provides the transition into your next section: Goals and Objectives, which we will cover next week.

Need Statement Worksheet

Gather a group to help you answer these questions. A two- or three-hour brainstorm session will be most helpful in developing the answers. You may want to use a flip chart. Write one question at the top of each page. Ask someone to act as recorder and someone else to act as the facilitator. Read each question and then read the examples we've provided to help guide the discussion. Remember, everyone has something important to say, so be sure and limit each person's comments to a few minutes for each question.

1. **What is the nature of the problem or need?** (For example, long lapse times in emergency response would constitute a *life threatening* problem; a high percentage of students failing the high school exit exam suggests a myriad of problems including *cultural, socio-economic, and other disparities* that contribute to poor performance.)

2. **What groups have been or are now affected by the problem?** (In the case of emergency response, you could be referring to rural, lower- to middle-income populations or disadvantaged populations in inner cities. Whereas, the failing students are clearly high school seniors.)

3. **What statistics or data document the nature and extent of the problem?** (The number of 911 calls whose response time is longer than accepted would be an excellent statistic to use in the first scenario. The second scenario is more complex and calls for taking a closer look at the demographics of the student body as well as everyone else affiliated with the high school or school district. Local economics and cultural influences are also important factors in determining the overall need.)

4. **Who else recognizes this as a serious problem?** (Try to demonstrate that others recognize this as a problem, and one that is indicative of larger issues. Quoting local political leaders, as well as community leaders will help substantiate either of these problems. Add a vignette about the victim of a long emergency response time, or a student who is intelligent but failing the exam because of a cultural difference and you have a strong statement.)

5. **What will happen if nothing is done about this problem or need?** (Predicted outcomes need to be substantiated via an expert, whether the problem is emergency response or education. For example, the Commissioner at the State Department of Education can predict the future rate of student failure based on current trends. *You* can't do that, but an expert in the field can.)

6. **What are the underlying causes of the problem or need?** (This is an exercise in peeling an onion. Your top layer is obviously the immediate problem or need you are trying to address. But to delve into the causes you need to peel this onion layer by layer.)

7. **Can you compare your situation with other communities, states, or regions?** (For example, if you are asking for funds to address the emergency response problem, you may want to compare your response time to the response time in the community where the funder lives. If this isn't feasible or doesn't make sense, then compare your situation to a similar community that may be familiar to them.)

8. **What is currently being done about the problem and who else is working on it?** (By answering this question you will let the reader know that

this isn't an isolated problem you're attempting to solve, and that others within the "community" are also concerned. For example, the Chief of Police may be working on getting a new 911 system funded at the state level. Or the State Department of Education may be implementing a training program for teachers to help them address the exit exam issues.)

9. **What are the current gaps in service?** (Describe the current situation, or what's happening now. Then describe what needs to happen to address that problem or need. The area between the two is the gap in service, and most likely you will be addressing most or all of the gap.)

III. The Big Picture: Establish Clear Goals and Objectives

Goals are Visionary
Goals are the long-term vision for your project or program. They are your motivation, the part of your world view that applies to the subject area of your grant proposal. Goals define what will occur for the people you serve if the program is successful. You may have one, or several, goals.

Goals are tied to the magnitude of the project. A $10 million request, for example, can afford an ambitious goal, such as:
> To create an effective, dynamic, fundamental reform of mathematics and science education that results in improved achievement for all K-12 students in our state.

In fact, this project is large enough that it may well have several achievable goals.

A more modest funding goal for a $100,000 request might read:
> To document the life of Fannie Quigley, a 20th-century woman who became a legend in her own time, providing a model of strength for women today.

Goals are visionary, but must also be somewhat achievable within the context of the grant request. There is a trend toward thinking of goals as "performance targets." Performance targets embrace change and often focus on the people who are being served by the project. Ask yourself, "How will this project change society?" Incorporate that answer into your goal.

Objectives are Measurable
Objectives are achievable and measurable within the scope of the proposed work. Start with "To," followed by a verb. Set a time limit in which to achieve your objective, if possible, and always try to be realistic when setting your objectives.

For example:

To ensure that at least 50 at-risk, pregnant women visit the health clinic regularly before delivery, and follow the advice they receive.

To create, in cooperation with five local arts organizations, a traveling Inland Sea exhibit and accompanying curriculum for grades K-12 by fall 2007.

Please note that an objective:
- Always specifies a result, not an activity;
- Describes just one result you want to accomplish;
- Tells when the result is to be accomplished;
- Emphasizes what will be done and when, but does not tell why or how it will be done;
- Clearly relates to one or more of the goals;
- Is specific, measurable, and verifiable; and,
- Allows for flexibility on the part of those implementing it.

For the first goal mentioned above – "To create an effective, dynamic, fundamental reform of mathematics and science education that results in improved achievement for all K-12 students of our state" – you could use the following objectives:

Objective 1. To develop a shared vision of and frameworks for mathematics and science education in Timbuktu that will establish regionally-relevant benchmarks, methodologies, evaluation procedures, and incentives for both teaching and learning.

Objective 2. To develop a statewide infrastructure for effective communications by electronically linking people, ideas, and resources.

Objective 3. To provide incentives and opportunities that sustain reform through expanded regional networks of communities, organizations, and individuals committed to improving our children's education in mathematics and science.

Objective 4. To empower all teachers of science, mathematics, and technology with the appropriate instructional skills, subject matter knowledge, resources, and support needed to realize successful outcomes for student learning through enhanced professional development opportunities.

Objective 5. To promote and support innovations and initiatives at local levels that will enhance statewide systemic change.

Objectives always come after the goals in the proposal, unless guidelines instruct you to do otherwise.

IV. Setting the Stage: Introducing the Grant Maker to Your World

The introduction to a proposal serves as a way of communicating to the potential grant maker the social, economic, and environmental context of your project or program. It provides the reader with a brief description of your geographic and social situation, with which your reader may be unfamiliar, especially when the grant maker is from a different region of the country or world.

The introduction is concise and contains information that captures your reader's attention and interest. It introduces the subject matter, setting, and principal players, and provides some background to the issue you will present in your project and need descriptions.

Though it may seem backward, it's often beneficial to write the introduction after drafting the need statement and the goals and objectives. Once those are written, you'll know exactly what general information will most appropriately introduce the reader to the request.

Be aware that the introduction you write for a foundation can be dramatically different from the one you write for a corporate donor. Why?

A foundation's interests are going to center on your clientele and the community you serve, as well as on the problem or need you face. While these issues are also important to corporate donors, they will also want to know how their company names can reach a lot of people. So they will be interested in the demographics of the region, possibly the number of visitors, and the visibility of their name and logo. Basically, they want to understand the market you may conceivably reach for them.

Keep in mind also that an introduction written for an in-state grant maker is much different than one written for an out-of-state grant maker. Out-of-state grant makers often need to understand the geography of a place (such as a wilderness area, rural farming community, and inner-city neighborhood) and the demographic and economic profile (such as ethnicity, high unemployment rate, lower-income population) if they are to make an informed decision.

An in-state grant maker, however, may take exception to such introductions as they probably take pride in understanding the state in which they operate. Please see the example below.

ALASKA: A WORLD APART

Alaska—the name alone conjures visions of arctic seas teeming with beluga and bowhead whales, salmon spawning in glacier-fed streams, sea spume embracing rainforests of red cedar, the aurora borealis dancing amidst Orion's stars, the

continent's northern cordillera calling adventurers to its Denali summit. Alaska, this fabled territory, is a land of vast wild refuges but few civilized habitats, of fragile ecosystems and tenuous man-made footholds, of a sweeping emptiness equally home to all things—caribou and wolf, flower and man.

The harsh realities of life in this distant frontier often stand in sharp contrast to the state's natural wonders. Ensconced in this pristine environment, Alaska's 21st century society copes with an array of social problems due in large part to its limited adaptation to both the terrain and the indigenous population, to the massive influx of fortune-seeking immigrants, and to the unforgiving economics of living and working in the arctic and sub-arctic. More and more often, Alaska's people find the wonder of life on the last frontier to be tempered by the unintended consequences of chaotic change, by meager human resources, and by the effects of the loss of heritage and culture.

Isolation is one of the state's harshest realities. Geographically separated from the contiguous United States by Canada, Alaska is even more isolated within by great distances, scarce roads, and enormous climatic variations. From the far end of the Aleutian Islands' 1,200 mile long arc to the southeast panhandle, Alaska spans a distance equal in breadth to that of the American continent. With a limited internal road system, the vast majority of its tiny, remote communities rely on airplanes or ferry boats for public transportation. Spanning five distinct climatic zones, Alaska's weather is extreme—from the fierce cold and snows of the arctic and subarctic to the Aleutians' unremitting storms and Southeast's 200 inches of annual rainfall.

Alaska's small population further magnifies the state's great distances. On average, there is only slightly more than one person per square mile, making the nation's largest state also its most sparsely populated. Remarkably, Alaska's 1994 census of just more than 606,000 represents a 51% growth rate since 1980. More than three-quarters of this total congregate in Juneau, the state's southeast capital, and along the "railbelt" corridor running between the Kenai Peninsula and the interior city of Fairbanks. Dozens of small towns and hundreds of tiny villages, representing only a quarter of the population, exist beyond these urban concentrations.

Alaska's people find themselves separated from mainstream America not only by their environment but also by profound differences in language, lifestyle, and culture. Beginning with the landing of Russian explorers over 250 years ago, a steady stream of Euro-Asian immigrants has arrived on Alaska's shores. Over the years, the diversity of these émigrés has continued to grow: today, more than 90 Asian and European languages are spoken throughout the state. Providing a backdrop to this rainbow of recent arrivals are 20 indigenous cultural groups, Alaska's First Peoples, whose total population exceeds 95,000.

Alaska's urban areas—Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Juneau—are all relatively new cities, having ridden to this status on the flow of North Slope crude oil. More than any other

single phenomenon, the booming oil economy has molded the social, economic, and political landscape of Alaska for more than three decades. With the possible exception of Valdez (the terminus of the oil pipeline), Alaska's cities have absorbed the massive infusion of people and dollars associated with becoming a world class oil producer. Communities once dominated by log homes have sprouted glass towers; membership warehouses have replaced "mom and pop" stores.

As might be expected from the explosive growth of the past 15 years, roughly 50% fewer people currently living in Alaska were born in the state as compared to residents of other states. Forever young (Alaska's median age is 29. 9 and the national median 33. 7) and on the move, only a small number have stayed to sink generation-spanning roots. Drawn by tales of riches, 10% of the state's residents migrate in or out in any given year.

More and more, Alaskan communities lying in this turbulent wake find themselves adrift, having lost something more precious than the sojourners themselves—shared memories, commonly held traditions, and functioning social structures. Tight-knit neighborhoods, once home to an Alaskan-style extended family of friends, have dissolved into expensively constructed subdivisions inhabited by strangers. Trading away their fabled sense of shared destiny, goodwill, and adventure like last year's fashions, Alaskans have replaced it with something infinitely less valuable—a lavish but tenuous lifestyle that clothes the body but starves the soul. Predictably, a host of social and economic woes has followed: racial tensions, street gangs, escalating crime and violence, drug trafficking, and homelessness, among others.

V. The Foundation of Your Request: Describing Your Project

The project description contains the project's goals and objectives, as well as a narrative description. The length and detail of this section depend on the number of pages allowed, the amount of money you are requesting, and the information needed to portray your project accurately. A $1,000 request may require only a short description, whereas a $1,000,000 request might call for many pages of narrative. The project description should answer the challenge presented in the need statement.

Usually you start by summarizing what you will do, then expand on it by adding detail. There is no need to repeat yourself. Once you've said something, assume the reader will remember it. Repetition is one of the main reasons grant requests grow too long!

Deciding how much detail needs to be included should directly reflect who will be considering the request. Having your request reviewed by a panel of peers allows you to add quite a bit of detail and use technical terms known in the business. If your request is being reviewed by program officers and a board of trustees, you might prefer to limit such technical details to avoid overwhelming them.

Besides including your project/program goals and objectives, you will want to:

- Describe the purpose of the project/program;
- Clearly connect the project/program to the overall activities of the organization;
- Demonstrate an understanding of the subject matter;
- Summarize how the project will be implemented (this will come right from your Plan of Action worksheet, which we'll review next week);
- Provide a profile of the client you will serve (if applicable) and how you intend to connect with them; and,
- Articulate how you will staff the project, who will be involved (including volunteers, consultants, and staff).

To help you develop a good project description, perform the Project Description Exercise below. Answering the questions presented in this exercise should provide the basic description of your proposed program or project. Try to create a description that provides an overview of the details involved (but don't detail every action item, as that will be the focus of the Plan of Action). Avoid repeating yourself when doing the exercise. After you've completed this exercise, take all of the different parts and craft a cohesive description.

Project Description Exercise
Answering these questions should provide the basic description of your proposed program or project. Try to be somewhat detailed. Don't repeat yourself. Once you've completed this exercise, take all of the different parts and develop a cohesive description.

1. Write a paragraph or two which describes the intent of the project/program for which you seek funding. Include in this description the outcome(s) that you anticipate.
This can be several sentences or several paragraphs depending on the complexity of your request. Remember this is an overview. You will add details after you introduce the initial concept.

2. Write a one paragraph description that clearly connects the project/program to the overall activities of your organization.
You can quote from your mission statement to demonstrate how this project fits into the work that your organization should be doing. You can also quote from strategic operating plans that identify goals/objectives that support the development of this project/program.

3. Demonstrate an understanding of the subject matter.
Take the time to research the issue you are addressing so you can refer to other projects/programs happening that address similar needs. You want to show a depth of

understanding in this particular area of need. This will go a long way toward building credibility with the grant maker.

4. Summarize how the project will be implemented.
You should be able to retrieve this information from the Plan of Action worksheet. Simply summarizing all of the action steps will create a detailed description of project implementation that will impress the best of them!

5. Provide a profile of the clients you will serve (if applicable) and how you intend to connect with these clients.
If you are serving the immigrant population in Texas, for example, you need to not only identify who they are (and their living/working circumstances) but you also need to discuss how you intend your services to reach this population.

6. Articulate how you will staff the project, who will be involved.
This is where having short biographies written up on all consultants, board, staff, and volunteers comes in very handy. You want to include one very short bio of each person who will be involved and a short introductory paragraph that provides an overview of the staffing for the project.

VI. The Money Is in the Detail: Conveying the Program Strategy

The plan of action, sometimes referred to as methods or strategy, is a step-by-step description of what you will do to accomplish each objective. Once you've informed the reader of the problem or need you are facing, and what you will accomplish to address that need (goal[s] and objectives), you need to tell them exactly what you plan to *do*.

The plan of action can make or break your request. If you cannot demonstrate to the grant maker that you have a strong, workable plan ready to implement, then it is unlikely you will receive the grant award.

Remember to tie every action step to an objective.

Make sure you've listed all the tasks needed to accomplish each objective. Be specific. Begin each task with a verb. For example:

> ➢ *Hire an architect*
> ➢ *Order 20 new computer stations*
> ➢ *Establish a policy review committee*

Assign a cost, time and responsible person for each task.

This list of activities and their sequence is very helpful to the project coordinator once the proposal has been funded. The step-by-step plan of action will generate the project timeline and guide budget development so it is important to make it detailed. Setting forth tasks or activities in this fashion can aid program planning. Without such a plan, certain necessary steps might be overlooked—which ultimately means your budget won't reflect the full cost of the project.

A Plan of Action worksheet will help you create a detailed outline of everything that needs to be accomplished under each objective. After listing every action item you can think of, pass the worksheet around the office to get additional thoughts and ideas about what has to happen to accomplish the objective. You will be amazed by what you have forgotten! Getting others to participate in this process also facilitates "buy-in" from staff and volunteers for the overall project.

The truth is, your plan of action will probably be too detailed for the grant proposal. You'll need to go back and summarize some of the items. However, you will have developed a detailed plan that you can follow when it's time to implement the award. In addition, if the grant maker has specific questions about any of the line items in your budget you can quickly refer to this detailed plan to answer them.

Here's a sample of a summarized plan of action, tied directly to one objective:

Objective #1: To establish and market a comprehensive and contemporary parent education program to 15% of the county population, or approximately 11,000 people, through a two-year outreach effort.

Action steps	Who's Responsible	When
Design contemporary outreach program	Community Educator	May-June
Expand community collaboration	Executive Director	March-on
Coordinate the new program w/ other agencies	Community Educator	May-June
Design and distribute monthly PSAs and ads	Community Educator	May-on
Develop a monthly calendar of events	Community Educator	May-on

VII. The Timeline Can Be a Selling Point

Preparing a timeline is often misconstrued by the grant writer as a throw-away task in the grant proposal development process. In other words, you do it because it has been requested, but you don't spend time working on it because it seems relatively unimportant. However, for the grant maker, the timeline is an early opportunity to see how you would put their funding to work.

Despite its tedium, the timeline is yet another section of the grant proposal to sell your project to the reviewer. Laying out the sequence of events as a timeline will provide the

reader with a visual cue to help understand the process necessary for your objectives to be met. Once someone thoroughly understands this process, you are halfway to getting approval for your request.

The timeline is simply a way for the reader to see the relationships among what needs to happen, when it needs to happen, why it has to happen in a particular sequence, and who needs to do it.

If your project is fairly simple, you'll want to add detail to the timeline to demonstrate that even though it is a small request for a fairly straightforward project, you have considered which details need to be attended to and in what order.

If the project is complicated, the timeline can communicate benchmarks and reflect the goal(s) and objectives to be achieved.

In addition, the timeline can be used outside of the proposal process to communicate with clients, board members, collaborative partners, and others who need to have a definitive understanding of the project and the complexity of tasks involved.

Quality Content
A visual timeline can be a powerful tool. It can create a visual "epiphany" for your project or program. The timeline can convince someone that what you intend to do *can* be done. To develop the timeline, refer back to the Plan of Action worksheet. Summarize the action items and the time dedicated to each one. You are trying to demonstrate to the grant maker what steps it will take and when they will be taken to meet your objectives.

Presentation
You can do this in a very straightforward manner by listing deadline dates and tasks. Or, you can do something a bit more creative and present this information on a chart. Any sort of visual presentation seems to help the reader understand how the tasks fit together over time. Design a timeline that is visually appealing and easy to read.

This section is usually not too long. It can, in fact, be very brief. That's why a visual can be very helpful, as it will break up the narrative and provide for easy reference. Your timeline doesn't have to be fancy.

Here are a few tips for making the timeline (usually a chart) visually appealing and easy to read:

- **Color code your task bars**

For example, if you're an arts organization undertaking an audience development project, you could code all of the outreach tasks yellow and all of the design tasks blue. If you are a large organization, you could color code by department tasks.

- **Keep the timeline concise**

Exclude any sub-tasks. If you feel any particular task needs more detail, create a second timeline instead of trying to put everything into your primary timeline.

- **Let different people review the timeline.**

Circulate a copy of the timeline you've created to everyone involved in the project. Let them each review their own responsibilities and benchmarks. Collect their feedback and incorporate suggestions that will make reading the timeline easier.

Always remember that the timeline is an opportunity to make your objectives resonate with the grant maker. Be smart about how you present this information.

VIII. Measuring the Impact: Evaluations

Federal and state funding sources place a heavier emphasis on evaluation than most private grantmakers. There is a trend, however, toward accountability for dollars spent, which, in turn, demands better methods of evaluation.

Every project is unique, and the evaluation design should reflect the project's unique qualities. Instead of regarding evaluation as a nuisance, you should focus on this opportunity to gain insight into making a good project better. The final report of an evaluation process can serve as the foundation for your next grant request; keep that in mind as you design your evaluation process.

Be sure to include the evaluation costs in your budget, and to indicate evaluation dates clearly in the timeline.

Who conducts the evaluation?

The first step in developing a strong evaluation component for a project is to select the people who will be involved in the evaluation process. There are three possible approaches:

➢ **An in-house evaluation team** - This could include the project director, project staff, a board member, and an on-staff, designated evaluator. This approach is the most cost effective, but it is also least objective.

➢ **An outside evaluation team** - This could include a board member, a community leader and someone in your field of work who is not directly linked with the project. Usually these individuals are offered a small honorarium ($100 to $500) for their work. You can incorporate the cost of the honoraria into your project budget. An outside evaluation team is more objective than an in-house team.

➢ **A professional evaluator** - If the project is complex and the outcome measurements are important to quantify, it is most effective to contract with a professional evaluator. Check with your nearest college or university to find one. There are also freelance consultants in many communities whose activities include project evaluation. They will often prepare an evaluation plan at no cost in exchange for being written into the proposal as the evaluator. Professional evaluators can be costly but they are extremely objective.

How do you design the evaluation?

The evaluation design depends on what information you need to collect in order to make major decisions as the project matures and to write solid reports for the grantmaker, your board, and others involved in the project.

As you begin to design the evaluation component of your project/program, remember that there will be trade-offs in the breadth and depth of information you gather. The more breadth you want, usually the less depth you get (unless you have a great many resources to carry out the evaluation). On the other hand, if you want to examine a certain aspect of a program in detail, you will likely not get as much information about other parts of the program. The evaluation report directly affects the project and will reflect on your organization. Accuracy, clarity, and tone are all very important.

One way to strengthen the evaluation section is to send the proposal to several potential professional evaluators. Ask them to review the project and estimate how much they would charge to evaluate it. Ask them to provide you with an outline of their approach. Their reviews and estimates will be very useful as you design the evaluation.

Qualitative vs. Quantitative Measurements

Qualitative evaluations are somewhat open-ended and examine a small number of cases in detail. The process often involves collecting vignettes, testimonials, and/or comments from program participants to questions such as, "How did the school-to-work program affect your plans after high school?"

Quantitative evaluations are based on statistics and are more scientific in their approach. They are characterized by a large data-collection effort, coding of this data, and a standard analytical approach to conclusions.

Evaluations are essentially technical documents, but they can also serve public relations purposes. Once you have completed your project's evaluation, create a press release highlighting your successes.

Once you have designed your evaluation process, use this checklist to double-check that you've covered everything required in an evaluation. Did you:

__ Describe specific, measurable criteria for success?

__ Describe the process to be used to collect data and monitor progress?

__ Provide detail about how you will keep records?

__ Provide a short bio of each evaluator, including their relationships to the project or your organization?

__ Outline your reporting procedure providing specific due dates, and the format and content of evaluation reports? Have you included the evaluation timeline in the overall project timeline?

__ Include the costs to evaluate your project in your budget?

Remember, the evaluation section of the grant request is very important. It should stress that the evaluation method has been carefully planned and will be easy to implement.

Let's talk about outcomes-based evaluations

According to the United Way, outcomes-based evaluation looks at "impacts/benefits/changes to your clients (as a result of your program(s) efforts) during and/or after their participation in your programs. Outcomes evaluation can examine these changes in the short-term, intermediate term and long-term." There's a great article by Carter McNamara, "Basic Guide to Outcomes-Based Evaluation for Nonprofit Organizations with Very Limited Resources," with tons of definitions and helpful ideas for developing an outcomes-based evaluation at this website: http://www.managementhelp.org/evaluatn/outcomes.htm.

Program evaluation with an outcomes focus has become increasingly important to both grantmakers and grantees. If the grantmaker requires an outcomes-based evaluation, you should definitely read McNamara's article.

Here's one way to think about evaluation design:

If you know what results you want your proposed project to achieve, you can work backwards through the steps in your planning process that it will take to accomplish the results. For example, say that the ultimate objective of the project is to make sure that every child in grades K-3 begins the school day with a healthy breakfast. Your planning process might begin this way:

- If they begin learning at 8 am, then they need to eat before that time.
- If they can't get a good breakfast at home, then we need to provide them with food here.

- If we provide them with a breakfast every morning, we need to make sure we have someone to prepare and distribute these breakfasts.

And so on. Working backwards always helps you look at the project from a different perspective, and fill in areas of your budget, timeline, and project description that you may have missed. This method should help you double-check project feasibility as well as catch items or objectives that you may have missed in your planning.

Evaluation Worksheet

Answering the following questions will help you develop the narrative description of how you intend to evaluate the proposed program or project. Remember, the evaluation is a way to measure the success of each of your objectives, so you'll want to refer to your objectives as you move through these questions.

Start with two basic questions:

1. Who needs to use the information collected from this evaluation, and how will they use it? (Consider what all interested parties might learn from the evaluation.) This is a good question to ask at a staff meeting. Brainstorming the answer will help you think outside the box!

2. What is the level of funding available for the evaluation? The range of funding for the evaluation provided in a project grant can run from a small percentage of total project costs to a major portion of the grant. Some grantmakers refuse to pay for evaluations, but they still demand them. How much are you willing and able to spend?

Drafting the evaluation

In a relatively short narrative, state what your specific measures of success will be and how they relate to your Plan of Action and Objectives. Use this worksheet to help you develop this section

1. Who will conduct the evaluation? (Be sure to include a short bio of each person participating in the evaluation and provide an overview of their jobs/tasks.)

2. How will you verify the extent to which objectives are achieved? It's easiest if you list each objective and then include an evaluation procedure to address each one. You may want to combine and summarize these procedures as you write the final evaluation narrative. For now, examine each procedure separately so that you can decide how best to determine if you've met your objectives.

3. Describe any data gathering method(s) you will use for each objective. Add a timeline so the reader will know when you intend to collect data. (For example,

you will distribute and collect an audience survey at each of the eight performances scheduled for 2007.)

4. How will you determine whether you succeed? Describe how the information you gather will be analyzed and who will do this analysis. (For example, who will review the survey tool distributed to the audiences, and what sorts of outcome benefits are they looking for? Including the survey tool (even in draft form) would be helpful to the reviewer.

5. Explain how your findings will be used throughout the process to modify the program or project throughout the grant period. Clearly identify a timeline for collecting both qualitative (numbers, statistics) and quantitative (vignettes, testimonials, comments) information and then using that information to make adjustments in the program, if necessary.

6. Tell the grantmaker when you will submit evaluation reports and what will be contained in each report. If the grantmaker has provided you with a reporting procedure, you will want to adhere to those guidelines.

Once you've answered all of these questions, you should be able to develop a fairly comprehensive evaluation approach that should satisfy almost any grantmaker.

IX. Make the Numbers Work for You: Preparing the Budget

Most grant makers will want to see two budgets: the one for the proposed project and your organization's annual operating budget. We'll assume you already have an annual operating budget and concentrate on how to develop the project budget.

The project budget will clearly indicate both expenses and revenue. Start preparing your project budget by taking an imaginary shopping trip: purchase whatever you need for this project and don't tie your hands by thinking too small. Have fun as you consider the possibilities.

Make a list and don't forget to include salaries, consultant fees, office space, postage, travel, supplies, insurance, printing and publicity. For instance, will you need to install a new phone line or lease equipment? Include administrative fees (indirect rate), usually 10-18% of the project budget. Keep this imaginary list for reference as you build the budget. You won't think of everything the first time you make the list. You'll revisit the budget several times as you continue to develop the proposal adding and sometimes deleting items.

Take the Plan of Action worksheet you developed and go through every single action step. Add budget items to support the tasks. Can you account for all the salaried time, equipment, travel, and other expenses identified in the plan of action? Almost every

task has an associated cost, so this is a great way to make sure you're covering all costs affiliated with the project.

If you think of a cost you are sure to incur but that cost doesn't tie in with any of the plan of action items, then you've missed something in your plan of action. It's a good way to double check that everything is covered in both the plan of action and the budget.

As you build your budget, strive to show community support in the form of in-kind contributions of time, services, space, supplies and so on. In-kind gifts refer to non-cash donations made to your organization, such as land, buildings, goods and services. Show an estimated value of these commitments in the budget.

At this point, you will also need to consider evaluation costs. Though you have yet to design the evaluation component of the proposal, you will know by now whether it is needed to strengthen your project and make it adhere to the grant maker's guidelines. Evaluation costs can include consultants' fees, testing, printing, attending a conference to disseminate results or release time for staff to be trained or interviewed.

The budget clearly differentiates costs to be met by the grant maker from those provided by other parties. The budget should:

- Tell the same story as the proposal narrative, but in numbers, not in language;
- Be detailed in all aspects;
- Contain no unexplained amounts for miscellaneous or contingency items;
- Include all items being requested from the grant maker;
- Include all items paid for by other sources;
- Reflect volunteers' contributions and in-kind gifts;
- Detail fringe benefits, separate from salaries;
- Include all consultants' fees;
- List all non-personnel costs separately;
- Include indirect or administrative fees when appropriate; and,
- Be sufficient to perform the tasks described in the narrative.

Make your budget detailed, not general. The more information you include, the fewer questions will come up as the review board discusses your request.

Make notes explaining who provided you with quotes or how you reached a certain figure. This will help when developing the budget narrative and it strengthens your credibility with the reader.

X. The Budget as Storyteller: Developing the Budget Narrative

The budget narrative is yet another place to reinforce everything you've explained in the grant request. Not all grantmakers will request a budget narrative, but if they do you should be prepared to include it. If you aren't asked for a budget narrative, you should still include notes throughout the budget that show how you reached certain figures.

The budget narrative allows you to elaborate on the assumptions you made to calculate line-item costs in the budget. It places all of the budget line items in context. This is also the time to put definitive costs on every single line item in the budget. Up to this point, you may have guessed at the costs with little or no research. Now you will need to demonstrate to the grantmaker that you have done your research and have solid numbers for the budget.

Go through the entire budget and write one or two sentences to clarify how you determined the cost for each line item. For example:

> **Line Item 26   Freezer $2,700.00**
> We received three quotes from local vendors for an 8 x 12 foot walk-in freezer to install in the shelter. All three quotes included installation. We selected the lowest quote (Franklin's Appliances), which was $300 less than the other two quotes.

As you can see, it's time to make calls or get on the internet to get specific prices for all items in the budget. This is an ideal job for a volunteer, saving you hours of time.

Have a financial person in your organization check the budget and budget narrative for accuracy.

A few tips about budget development:

- Encourage your staff to collect cost information about equipment, software, hardware, office supplies, workshops, and conferences, and other items throughout the year. Keep this information in a wire basket or file on your desk. Make it easy for them to clip items they think would be useful in the office and add them to your basket/file. This collection will help you considerably when it comes time to build the budget. Having this information at your fingertips helps you flesh out the budget, and can often provide the financial means for a staff person to get what they really need to do their job well!

- File budgets from other grant requests and use them as reference when building your current budget. Sometimes you can pull line items and the budget narrative for those items right off old requests.

- Get three quotes on any budget item over $5,000. It just makes sense and it will help build credibility with the grantmaker. Some federal and state agencies require quotes for budget line items – and they will tell you at what level they require these quotes.

- Ask for quotes in writing as you will find that much of the information the vendor or consultant gives you can be added to the budget narrative. There are times when written quotes can also help you flesh out the project narrative.

- Whether using hourly or daily rates or percentages of time for personnel costs, always provide the annual salaries of the staff, the basis for calculating work, the period covered by the project (e.g., one year, 18 months), and the tasks to be performed by each member of the staff assigned to the project.

- Create a list of fringe benefits, the percentage for each benefit, and the cumulative percentage. You will use this list in almost every budget narrative.

- When travel costs are involved, provide the reason for the travel and each destination; anticipated lodging, per diem, and ground transportation costs; airfare (and the basis for any estimated airfare); and the number of persons traveling.

- Always break down travel costs, especially when they seem out of balance with the rest of the budget. For those located in remote areas of the country – Alaska, Hawaii, Florida Keys, U.S. Virgin Islands, or almost anywhere in rural America – this is fairly important.

- For indirect costs, provide a current copy of your organization's Indirect Cost Agreement with the Federal government if you have one, or a copy of your recent audit report that substantiates your rate.

Reinforce the Story: The Budget Narrative
How do you build out the budget narrative to draw in the reader? Remember, before reading the budget narrative the reviewer has just gone through the budget figures. He may have forgotten exactly what you're trying to accomplish with this new program or project, so you want to re-connect him to the project quickly and painlessly. Opening with a short summary of the project helps bring him back to what you're trying to accomplish with the proposed program or project.

Here's an example of an opening for the budget narrative for a capital campaign:

Budget Narrative
The proposed design is cost effective, appropriate for the site and location, and meets the needs of low-income clients of the community and the Vocational

Training Center. The Center has completed preliminary cost estimates and schematics for the facility. The schematics with elevations of the proposed facility appear in Exhibit D.

The Center has considered initial construction costs for the facility and has opted for a steel building design. When compared to a wood frame building, steel designs provide a lower per-square-foot cost, lower maintenance expenses, longer useful building life, and easier expansion or internal modification when necessary.

The budget reflects the total facility construction and is based on a two-story, 21,344 square-foot steel building with an estimated cost of $71.75 per square foot. The total cost for the project, including administration, construction, design, inspection, and contributed land, is $2,838,665. The Center has raised a total of $1,170,000 in funds for this project (as reflected in the budget) from the local community ($270,000) and regional and national private foundations ($900,000). This request to HUD is for the balance of funds needed: $1,668,665. The following budget narrative demonstrates how we reached this figure.

I like the way this summary begins. It's succinct and makes the reader feel as if the grantseeker is very confident in the choice of design and location. This opening sentence also reminds the reviewer that this building will be serving low-income clients, bringing her attention back to the heart of the matter.

Note the detailed information and figures, and the explanations for these figures. This summary clearly states they've opted for a "steel building design" and why (lower per-square-foot cost, maintenance, longevity of the building, etc.)

Here's another example of an opening summary for a budget narrative. This is an arts/humanities project.

Budget Narrative
The *Imagination in the South* production is rooted in place - connecting artists and elders of the southern states through storytelling and performance. The budget for the entire *Imagination in the South* series is $166,315. Most of this total is allocated for expenses associated with creation, rehearsal, production, performance and documentation of the new piece. In March 2006, the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Arts Partners Program awarded a grant of $101,500 in support of the project. (Please see the enclosed letter dated March 6, 2006.) This was followed by a grant of $24,000 from the Rockefeller Foundation Multi-Arts Production Fund. (Please see enclosed letter dated March 17, 2006.) Earned income from ticket sales is projected at $6,750. In-kind contributions from the Festival and the University total $25,365. A grant of $8,700 is requested from

this agency to support the humanities events in the *Imagination in the South* series.

Again, note the opening sentence, which immediately anchors the reader in the outcomes of this project. Following that initial statement there is a simple summary of the budget, who else is investing, what money has been raised or is expected to be raised (ticket sales) and finally, the requested amount of the grant.

XI. Future Funding: Creating a Sustainable Program

Grantmakers are much more likely to fund your project or program if they are assured that you have a plan for sustaining the project beyond the initial award. The future funding section of the grant request outlines a plan for continuation after funds from this grant and others have been expended.

Include a specific plan to generate funds if the program will continue. For example, if you propose to construct a facility or purchase equipment, describe how you will procure maintenance funds. Let's say that you intend to rent out the second story of a new facility and use a percentage of the annual lease for ongoing maintenance. Be sure and include a letter of interest or commitment if you intend to lease out this space. You'd also want to show that the Board of Directors has committed to setting aside a percentage of the annual lease for maintenance purposes. You can show the Board's commitment by quoting from a motion passed at a board meeting (date stamp this information).

Not every project needs to address future funding, but demonstrating that you won't be dependent upon one funding source forever can strengthen your proposal. Most grantmakers are buying a piece of the future. It is in their best interest to see your project continue. If their guidelines don't ask about future funding, you can add this information in the budget narrative, right up front in the summary.

You are trying to demonstrate minimal reliance on future grant support from this grantmaker, as well as indicate you've thought ahead.

As you develop a future funding strategy, remember that grant awards are not the only source of funding. There are also membership dues; investment income; government contracts; program-related investments; earned income from businesses, goods and services and numerous other methods of funding.

Here's a list of nine major areas of potential future funding:

1. Internal money management (operating economy and cost sharing)
2. Membership dues

3. Earned income (income-producing services or products such as newsletter ad space or subscriptions, space rental, consulting, workshop fees, etc.)
4. Individual donations (door-to-door canvassing, phone-a-thons or telethons, direct mail or direct e-mail, payroll deductions, etc.)
5. Planned giving (bequests, life insurance, trusts, etc.)
6. Endowments
7. Grants
8. Program-related investments (no-interest or low-interest loans)
9. Special events

Obviously you won't use all of these methods to address sustainability, but this list should help you think through ways you might develop sustainable revenue to continue the program long after the grantmaker has faded to the background.

Answering the following questions will get you started on developing your sustainable funding plan:

1. Is the organization willing to turn grant funding positions or any other costs into organizationally-funded positions once the grant period has ended?
2. If there is training involved in the project, is the organization willing to incorporate this training into ongoing professional development activities/costs?
3. Can the activities or services offered continue after the grant has ended? Can these services or activities be absorbed by general operating costs of the organization?
4. Is there another source of funds that might make the commitment to pick up some of the costs of the project after the grant period? Examples might include a major donor who may be particularly fond of the project, a corporation or local business that could gain community recognition for ongoing support, or even the local government.
5. Are there any earned income possibilities with this new program or project? (Ticket sales, consulting opportunities, service fees, etc.)

Grantmakers are not only interested in how you will financially sustain a new program, but they are also interested in the change that has been brought about by the grant they awarded.

XII. Who are you?: Developing an Engaging Organizational History

First and foremost, understand that you should not always use the same organizational history in every grant application. Why?

Almost every grantmaker is interested in a different aspect of your organization and you want to focus on that particular aspect as you draw the reader into understanding who you are and what you do.

For example, if you're applying to a private grantmaker for funds to expand delivery of healthcare to rural areas in your region, you may want to focus on past experiences when you successfully expanded a program or worked in rural communities, rather than the run-of-the-mill organizational history that simply states who you are and what you do.

To get started, write a concise history of your organization establishing its credibility. Open with a short vignette that actually tells the story of how and why your organization developed.

This section should:

- Establish the organization applying for funds;

- State the organization's mission and its goals;

- Describe programs and activities;

- Define clients or constituents;

- Provide evidence of accomplishments;

- Offer quotations and endorsements in support of accomplishments;

- Support qualifications in the area of activity for which funds are sought (e.g., research, training, service delivery, etc.); and,

- Include a brief overview of the board of directors and key staff (not individual bios – but something like, "We have 17 board members and three key staff, including the Executive Director, Housing Loan Officer and the Vice President of Development."

The key to making history work for you
In one word – customize. Don't rely on the same old organizational history that has been written and pasted into numerous grant requests. Always focus on those aspects of your organization's history that will help the grantmaker understand that you are the right organization to do the job.

As you write this section, make references to the goals of the grantmaker as you understand them to apply to your project and your organization's goals.

Don't overuse testimonials – one embedded somewhere in the history usually does the trick. It's the same with other endorsements. Mentioning the endorsement(s) can be a

powerful example of how the community supports your project, but you don't want to overwhelm the reader with endorsements.

The key to capturing the reader's attention
Using a short vignette to open the history section will help draw the reader in. Here's an example:

> **History of the Arctic Winter Games**
> In 1967, the Commissioners of the Northwest Territories and the Yukon looked on as their young athletes were overpowered event after event by urban counterparts at the Canadian Winter Games, then being held in Quebec City. The two Commissioners realized that their relatively small pool of athletes suffered from limited access to good facilities and training opportunities. It was clear that northern athletes were at a significant disadvantage when competing at the national level. They decided to do something to give their kids a better chance. They opened discussions with Alaska's then-Governor, Walter J. Hickel, and with his enthusiastic support, jointly established the Arctic Winter Games Corporation.
>
> The first games were held in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories in 1970 with 500 participants from the two provinces and Alaska. Since then, the Games have enjoyed the unflagging support of their state and provincial governments. They now attract athletes from all over Alaska, Canada, and Greenland.

The history section goes on to describe the types of games that are part of the event (both traditional and non-traditional) and how the organization is structured and managed today.

XIII. The Executive Summary: Write It Last; Read It First

The executive summary, or abstract, is the single most important part of the grant proposal. It can be anywhere from several lines, to a full page in length. This summary presents the most scholarly aspect of the proposal in a succinct, clearly articulated manner. Grant proposal reviewers often read only the summary. They may never see the rest of the request, so the summary must convey its substance.

Begin by outlining each of the proposal sections and use that outline to develop a motivating summary. Write this section after you have completed the proposal and don't repeat what you have already stated. Instead, summarize the main points.

Many grantmakers provide forms with explicit directions for presenting the executive summary. These forms often limit the amount of space and number of words you can use. Carefully follow the directions on these forms.

Here's a sample executive summary that should provide you with a clearer idea of how this section should read:

The Preventer Fire Safety Project combines health promotion training for members of the AmeriCorps network with a pilot smoke detector and fire safety training project. Four communities from Bracken County, located in southwestern Alabama, will participate in the project. All communities are rural, with an average 31% of the population living below the poverty level.

There are two primary target groups: AmeriCorps network members and children eligible for Head Start programs in the four participating communities. However, the region's demographics and the nature of the project suggest that the entire population in each community will benefit. The combined population of these communities is 4,753 people.

The project has been formulated to address a leading health problem in southern Alabama: fire-related deaths. Alabama is second in the nation for the highest rate of death per 1,000 house fires, and Bracken County has the highest mortality rate in Alabama for children ages 0-4.

As a result of funding from this grant, a smoke-detector campaign will be launched.

This executive summary goes on to summarize the campaign, the coalition that has come together to launch this program, the amount requested, and how much money has already been pledged or raised.

When writing the executive summary you are trying to accomplish two things:

1. Create curiosity
2. Establish credibility

Why create curiosity?

You can't have a face-to-face discussion with the readers, so you need to find a way to draw them into the conversation – make them curious about what you are doing and why you feel compelled to do it. Your proposed project will have a greater impact on them once they become engaged. Curiosity does that.

Here are a few ways to build curiosity in the executive summary without playing games.

> ➢ Provocative questions, such as "why create curiosity" will draw them into the prose. A simple, interrogative statement, such as, "Why are there so many house-fire-related deaths?" makes people stop and wonder.

- Sharing just enough information to make the readers want to know more is always a good way to draw them into the longer, more detailed statement of need and project description.
- Provide just a glimpse of how you will address and hopefully solve the problem. Don't tell them too much – just enough for them to be intrigued.
- If you can, use the fact that others are supporting this project as a way to leverage the momentum of the moment. In fact, use language like "community momentum to address this problem" or similar powerful phrases to let the reader know there is a movement to address the issue.

Establishing your credibility (trustworthiness) doesn't need to be relegated to its own paragraph. In fact, it is better if you lace the executive summary with small bits and pieces that reinforce that you are the right organization to be doing this project, and that you have all the resources (except the funding) to do it.

It is easy to do this as you write the executive summary. In the following few paragraphs you will see that we summarize the situation, draw in the reader (the simple question), and establish credibility:

Since 1947, the Greater Kanawa Historical Society has served as the guardian of our community's heritage, recording our ancestors, cataloging events – both past and present, and serving as a repository for our regional culture. But over the past decade this rich community story met an unexpected adversary.

Who is this adversary?

Climate. Weather. Call it what you will, but it is the one element from which our history has not been protected. It will take three-years to properly build and install all the necessary climate controls so that the history of this wonderful region of our country is not lost forever.

Of course, the executive summary goes on to cover all the other points we've discussed, but curiosity will get the reader to read more and the organizational credibility established in the opening paragraph will make readers trust that yours is the right organization to address this particular problem. Use this executive summary worksheet to help you formulate your approach.

XIV. Attachments: What Should You Submit with Your Request?

Attachments can provide the winning edge when your proposal is compared with others. Throughout the proposal development process, collect materials that may be added to the grant request. You may not end up using them all and in fact, you probably won't. At least you'll have a set of possible attachments to sort through when the time comes to package the grant request.

Reviewers will often not have the opportunity to "see" the attachments, so make it a point to refer to any attachments that you feel must be reviewed in the body of the full proposal. For example, if you quote from one of your letters of support in the project description section, add something like (Please see attached Letter of Support, Superintendent of Schools, Cutty School District.) in parentheses. You can use the endorsements of your supporters for your proposed project to build your credibility right in the narrative. But use them sparingly!

Read the application guidelines thoroughly to discover what attachments you will include. If the grantmaker is very clear that they only want three attachments – your IRS letter, Board of Directors profiles, and one letter of support – then so be it!

If, however, they leave you a little room for creativity, rather than using run-of-the-mill attachments like brochures or annual reports, attach something that enthusiastically supports your project, like one support letter signed by a dozen local organizations.

If there are more than five attachments, include a separate table of contents (on top of the attachments) so they are easy to review. Never include video or film, DVD, CD, or audio tapes unless requested to do so. This goes for books, as well.

Attachments might include:

> Endorsement letters (each should make a different point or have a different focus)

> A profile of each board member (usually one paragraph each)

> Résumés of key staff and consultants or short bios of each

> Tables, graphs and research supporting the problem or need statement

> Organizational publications, including brochures, annual reports and newsletters

> Maps of the state, region, neighborhood or community

> The organization's audited financial statement

> A copy of your IRS tax-exempt designation, if appropriate

> Photographs and architect's drawings, if applicable

> A resolution or statement from the board of directors supporting the proposal

> Significant publicity reprints

➢ Other funding sources you have approached

➢ A list of foundations and corporations that have made previous grants to your organization

I want to say something about attaching maps. Most people love maps. They want to see where you are in this world. Don't be shy about including a map of the region. For example, if you're located in the Florida Keys, it's important for the grantmaker to get an idea of the geographic isolation of your community. No matter where you are located, urban or rural, geographically distant from resources or right in the midst of Manhattan, grantmakers need to know what your day-to-day reality is.

You can pick up maps of your community at the local Tourist Information Center, topographical maps at your local U.S.G.S. office, or road maps from the gas station.

XV. How to Use the Cover Letter Effectively

The cover letter, which also serves as a type of summary, might seem redundant after you have just written the executive summary or abstract. It is, in fact, somewhat repetitive as you'll be using your best quotations and phrases in each. Don't worry about the fact that you're repeating yourself as the cover letter and executive summary are technically parts of two separate documents.

What goes in the cover letter? Introduce yourself or your organization. Include a brief description of your proposal (your title may be enough), the amount you are requesting and a simple but convincing explanation of why this project is important and timely.

Refer to the goals of the grantmaker as you understand them to apply to your project. If you know what is important to them, they'll be more open to what is important to you. Offer to answer questions and indicate how the grantmaker can contact you.

If you are applying to an out-of-state grantmaker, consider mentioning the time difference for phone calls (if there is a difference) or closing with the personal touch of a few words about the season or the quality of life where you are.

Always submit the cover letter on your organization's letterhead. Assume your cover letter will be separated from the full proposal. (This is why redundancy is not a problem.) The purpose of the cover letter is to:

➢ Describe your project in one or two sentences, including the amount of money you are requesting
➢ Outline the need or define the problem as you see it and cite one or two supporting statistics
➢ Show how your problem or need complements the mission and/or goals of the funding source

➢ Briefly describe your solution to the problem or need
➢ Remind funders of previous contact with them, and changes you have made based on their input.

Have a top officer or the board chair sign the letter. You may want to sign it, too, if you have been working closely with the grantmaker. It is acceptable to have two signatures.

XVI. Make Proposal Development Easy: Hot Tips!

Writing a grant proposal, whether you are new to this type of writing, or you have been doing it for years, can be tedious work. Over the past 30 years or so, I have collected a set of what I call "hot tips." These are ideas from other grant writers, grantmakers, and grant review boards.

I would like to share these tips with you. I have broken them down into three sections: procedures, content, and style. Unfortunately, I'm not sharing all of these tips with you – as there are just too many. But I have hand-selected a set that I think will peak your interest.

Procedures

1. If the grantmaker has guidelines, follow them faithfully. Organize your information under the headings provided. (You can add your own subheadings.)

2. Request a copy of a proposal that has been funded by the grantmaker or talk with the authors of successful proposals. You want to clarify the grantmaker's:

    - Preference for length and detail;
    - Need for background information;
    - Requirements on budget detail, statistical data, and other attachments; and,
    - Preference regarding personal contact.

3. Thoroughly understand the basic intent and objectives of the grantmaker's program. Read through enacting legislation (if the grantmaker is a government agency), annual reports (for foundations and associations) and all published materials that explain the intent of the program. Remember to use the language of those documents when developing your proposal.

4. If you do not have the time, talent, or experience to write a proposal, find someone who does. Do not let the proposal writing process become drudgery; it will show.

5. Know your limitations. If you don't have a strong writer on your team, hire a professional writer to edit and rewrite your proposals. If you can't handle

statistics, find a capable professional who can advise you or compute the statistics for you.

6. Write a first draft and don't try to make it perfect. The task is to capture your ideas on paper. Editing and rewriting come later. This process can help you clarify your understanding of the problem you will present to the grantmaker.

7. While you are in the early stages of development, think about potential partners. Identifying partnerships early in the process can strengthen your proposal, and may provide critical assistance in the development of the concept.

8. Your editor should identify for you the strengths and weaknesses of the draft. Provide her with the following items for reference:

  - The draft proposal
  - The application guidelines
  - A statement of the grantmaker's mission and goals.

9. Ask your editor to summarize the proposal. Can he tell you the "gist" of the proposal? Can the editor identify and articulate the challenge, what part of the challenge you plan to address, and how that fits into the mission of the grantmaker?

Content

1. If the proposal is ten pages or longer, include a table of contents.

2. Don't make a mystery out of your proposal. Begin with the most important point.

3. If you are applying to a federal or state agency, use its data to document the problem.

4. Be selective in your use of data. Use one or two clear facts or statistics, rather than many examples.

5. Mention any and all partners or collaborators.

6. If you don't have partners, try to enlist the participation of one or two other organizations. It will greatly strengthen your request if, for example, your statewide smoke detector campaign includes the involvement of the Statewide Fire Marshall's Office (even if only in an advisory capacity).

7. Refer to model programs. Doing so lets the grantmaker know that you are aware of what is happening in your field, and that you do not intend to reinvent the wheel but rather to build on successful models.

8. Even if your project is very local - like a new soccer field for the local elementary school - it is still advisable to make reference to other successful projects.

9. Fill in all items on federal applications. Write NA (not applicable) in an item, rather than leaving it blank.

10. Use maps, charts, and graphs to summarize and illustrate your points whenever possible.

11. Use captioned photographs.

12. Make letters of intent succinct; don't let them ramble to multiple pages. Describe who you are, what is proposed, and how much funding is needed.

13. Your organization should have an established (via board approval) administrative fee. (A normal range is 10-18%) This covers audits, bookkeeping, and other overhead expenses.

14. The conclusion of your project narrative should be strong and should serve the purpose of summarizing your proposal.

15. Include a title page that includes your title; amount requested; project time period; name, address, and phone number of organization and contact person; and submission date.

Style

1. Open with a strong sentence. For example, "In Alaska today, Athabascan culture dies one elder at a time [names and dates]. Each of these people knew traditional ways to hunt, tell stories, settle disputes, dance, honor leaders, and bear grief. Each grew old and died without traditional contact with family and friends. . ."
2. Use short paragraphs.
3. Avoid confusing words and technical jargon.

4. Brevity is better. What information, words, or phrases can be deleted?

5. Trust your intuition: if something sounds confusing or strange, it probably is. Work to improve it.

6. Don't be afraid to use subtle humor.

7. Write in the third person. It sounds more generous to sing "their" praises than your own.

8. Use contractions when two words sound too stiff or formal. "It isn't appropriate to pursue that course of action in an election year," rather than "It is not..."

9. Be positive. Discuss your proposal as if it is funded, but be clear about the distinction between current and proposed work. "Staff will report progress to the board each month," rather than, "Staff would report"; "The director will lead three workshops," rather than, "The director would lead"; "Clients can request editorial assistance as well," rather than, "Clients could request."

10. When referring to a situation or event that may occur in the future, use the word "believe" rather than the word "hope." The latter word implies uncertainty and a state of wishful-thinking not based on solid facts.

11. "Iffy" and hopeful statements weaken your presentation. Stick to the present, the facts and your most accurate projections of results.

12. State the facts. Let your readers come to their own conclusions. When your facts are well chosen and your logic is tight, understatement is a powerful tool.

13. Avoid the use of opinion words, but don't hesitate to be warm and personal. Speak of friendship, joy, grief, and confidence, but avoid references to selfish tactics, incredible scenery, immeasurable value, and wanton waste.

14. Use the active voice: "The community will determine the content of the film," rather than, "The content of the film will be determined by the community." "The advisory board will select an architect to design the planetarium," rather than, "The planetarium will be designed by an architect selected by the advisory board."

15. Include examples of real people with relevant needs.

16. Be thorough, but concise.

17. Explain any omissions rather than hoping no one will notice.

18. Use charts, graphics, italics, etc., to make the job easier for the person reading your proposal.

19. Use a table for complex text or numerical data, or when comparison is important. Label every table. Use consecutive Arabic numbers and a unique name.

20. Explain all abbreviations and terms someone outside your organization may not understand.

21. To make your title more interesting, include a "handle" and a descriptive phrase. The handle is a catchy, intriguing, inspiring phrase. The description clarifies the subject and region. For example:
    o **Waiting to Happen:**
      Preparing Rural America to Meet the Threat of AIDS
    o **Mining the Wastestream:**
      A Model Project to Promote Recycling in Appalachia

22. Create a title that emphasizes the benefits and results, rather than the problem or the activity you propose. "Project Nurture" is a better title than "Trans-disciplinary Counseling for Alcoholic Mothers."

23. Consider using a quotation or graphic on your title page.

24. Write as if you are communicating with one person. This may be the person to whom you addressed your cover letter. Assume that this person will be responsible for distributing and presenting your proposal to the others who are involved.

25. When stating your need, use the words of a client, an expert, or a contact with whom the grantmaker is familiar. This lends credibility to your case.

26. Break up long lists of information with bullet points or a numbered series. (Sort of like this one!)

27. Use lowercase letters in parentheses for shorter lists within a sentence. For example: The target population for this project includes: (a) bilingual teacher's aides, (b) certified Alaska Native teachers who are not fluent in their indigenous language, and (c) high school students interested in bilingual education as a career.

28. Number every page in the narrative. Place the number in either the footer or the header.

29. Never criticize a rival organization, especially one competing for funds from the same source. If a reference to that organization is essential, be factual and positive.

30. Be aware that reviewers commonly read a proposal out of order. Often, a reader may look first at the abstract, then at the budget and budget narrative, then at goals and objectives. These three sections create a snapshot of your project. Be sure to make them count.

31. Choose a style manual and follow its instructions to create a consistent format for your document and references. If your funding source recommends a

particular style, always use it. Otherwise, follow your favorite format. Most bookstores carry a variety of style manuals.

XVI. Other

Each funder may have different requirements and/or formats for submitting proposals. Be sure to always understand the funder's expectations and do all that you can to meet them. If your project is well-thought out and your plans are presented in a clear and easily understandable format, your chances of being funded are much greater.