

Writing the Narrative for a Grant Proposal

1. Do your homework! Read up on the grantor and its mission and priorities. Read the grant instructions as often as needed to gain a “big picture” understanding of what the grantor wants to accomplish through grantees.
2. Read narratives of successful proposals, if possible.
3. What is your story? Draft a one-page executive summary of your program or project. This will help keep you focused and on track.
4. Follow instructions to the letter! Many worthy grant applications are declined because organizations requesting assistance did not follow instructions.
5. Cut and paste instructions or questions into a draft document. Questions and instructions should be in a different color font. Answer as many questions as possible in plain, simple English.
6. Seek and draft answers to remaining questions. Don’t be concerned about style, transition, etc.
7. Be certain you have answered completely and that your answers are easy to understand.
8. When you are satisfied with your answers, highlight or change font color of corresponding questions. This should eliminate the possibility of leaving questions unanswered.
9. Cut and paste answers into another document and begin knitting everything together. Avoid adjectives! Instead, rely on verbs to paint the picture. Plan to review and revise several times.
10. Ask someone with good writing skills who knows nothing about your program or project to read your narrative and highlight anything that is confusing, repetitive, boring, or appears to be inaccurate.
11. Ask someone who knows grammar, punctuation, spelling, etc. to proofread your draft. Typos and grammatical and punctuation errors suggest a careless attitude and lack of attention to detail.
12. Review again, paying special attention to facts and figures. Highlight all numbers, percentages, etc. throughout. Make sure your math is correct and the data are accurate and consistent.
13. Circulate the draft and ask for input from co-workers, board members, etc.
14. Incorporate suggestions as appropriate, then let the draft marinate a few days.
15. Add finishing touches, the press “Send”.

Miscellaneous Recommendations

1. Buy and read Strunk and White’s The Elements of Style.
2. **AVOID USING PASSIVE VOICE.** It’s boring and wastes words.
3. Respect the time and intelligence of the grant reviewer by being honest and *making every word count*.
4. Don’t provide information the grantor has not requested.
5. Make your story interesting and compelling by “putting a face on it” when possible.