



10 TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL GRANT WRITING

1. LEARN ABOUT THE FUNDER

What is the funder's focus or goal? What kind of work do they usually support? Who are their board members?

2. DO YOUR HOMEWORK

- Be able to explain why your project should be important to the funder and how it matches their grant guidelines.
- If others are doing similar work, explain what makes your work unique.

3. FOLLOW DIRECTIONS

Read all of the guidelines and directions and be sure to include all of the information asked for, in the format requested.

4. DO NOT BE AFRAID TO TALK TO THE FUNDER

- Call the funder if you are unsure of something or if you have questions.

5. SLICK DOESN'T COUNT! PREPARATION DOES

A good proposal isn't just fancy format, paper or graphics. Good proposals are made of good ideas, lots of planning, and careful work.

6. WRITE IN A STYLE THAT IS SIMPLE, DIRECT AND PERSUASIVE

- Don't assume that the funder knows anything about your mission, community or project, unless you've told them.
- Make sure that your ideas are organized and easy to understand.
- Don't use jargon or other special words that people outside of your field won't know.
- Spell out abbreviations
- Have someone else proofread your proposal to correct any errors.

7. BE AS SPECIFIC AS YOU CAN

- Use numbers, percentages and other data. Don't write:

"Last year, we served hundreds of developmentally disabled children."

When you can write:

"Last year, we served 1,235 individuals between the ages of 10 and 16, or more than 27% of all developmentally disabled young people in Waldo County."

8. IT IS OKAY TO BE CREATIVE AND USE NEW IDEAS AND APPROACHES

Many funders want to support new approaches and innovation.

9. PROVIDE A STRONG AND ACCURATE BUDGET

- Whenever possible, show that your project has other forms of support:
 - List other grants or sources of funding you have received or are trying to get
 - Don't forget to include in-kind support.
- Double check your budget to be sure that it is correct.

10. DON'T FORGET TO RESPOND TO THE FUNDER

- If you are successful, thank the funder.
- If you were not successful, call and find out why. Remember that foundations receive far more proposals than they are able to fund and just because you did not get funding does not mean the project is not worthy.

Helpful Resources

1. **Maine Philanthropy Center** (<http://www.megrants.org>) The Center acts as an information and education source for issues of concern to Maine grantmakers and provides funding information and education to Maine nonprofits.
2. **Guidestar** (www.guidestar.org) GuideStar is the leader in providing comprehensive data on more than 1.5 million nonprofit organizations. The information they provide contains searchable data from IRS Forms 990 and the IRS Business Master File, including comprehensive facts on grant activity.
3. **Maine Association of Nonprofits** (<http://www.nonprofitmaine.org>) Maine Association of Non Profits is dedicated to strengthening the leadership and management effectiveness of Maine's non-profits.
4. **Foundation Center** (www.fdncenter.org) The Foundation Center is an excellent source of information on private philanthropy in the United States. They help grantseekers better understand the field of philanthropy. Their Web site provides help with proposal writing, tools for locating prospective funders, or a library or training class near you.
5. **Foundation Finder** (<http://fdncenter.org/funders/>) Search more than 2,000 annotated links to grantmaker Web sites. The links are categorized by grantmaker type, and all annotations are searchable (except those of Community Foundations, which are listed alphabetically by state).
6. **Council on Foundations** (www.cof.org) The Council on Foundations is a membership organization of more than 2,000 grantmaking foundations and giving programs worldwide. They provide leadership expertise, legal services and networking opportunities—among other services—to their members and to the general public.
7. **Fundsnet** (www.fundsnet.org) & **Fundsnet/Maine** (www.fundsnet.org/maine.htm) Fundsnet provides numerous of links to grantmaker Web sites, categorized by type and other grantmaking and fundraising resources. One Web page is dedicated to grantmakers in Maine.
8. **Center for Nonprofit Management** (<http://www.cnmsocal.org/>) The Center for Nonprofit Management fosters healthy neighborhoods and communities by improving the performance of nonprofit organizations addressing critical issues and serving underserved populations. The Center for Nonprofit Management provides training in software applications such as Microsoft Word and Excel, as well as classes in strategic use of technology in such areas as fundraising and information management.