

GRANT PROPOSAL PROCESS

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How can you fund that project you dream about?

In the world of working for justice and peace, securing funding can be a daunting task for organizations striving to make a difference. Many nonprofits face challenges in articulating their missions and demonstrating their impact effectively. This is where collaborating with a grant writer comes into play, transforming the landscape of justice by empowering these organizations to secure the funding they need to thrive.

Understanding the Importance of Grant Writing

Grant writing is not just about filling out forms and submitting proposals; it is a full process that requires an ability to work effectively with key leaders to define the specific needs of the organization. Effective grant writing can mean the difference between a project that flourishes and one that fails to launch.

The Role of Grant Writing in Justice and Peace Initiatives

Organizations focused on justice—whether they are working on peacemaking, full inclusion of everyone, justice for people on the margins—often rely heavily on grants to fund their initiatives. Here are some key reasons why grant writing is crucial:

- **Resource Allocation:** Grants provide essential funding that allows organizations to allocate resources effectively, ensuring that programs can be implemented successfully.
- **Capacity Building:** Through successful grant applications, organizations can build their capacity, allowing them to expand their reach and impact.
- **Sustainability:** Securing grants can help organizations establish a sustainable funding model, reducing reliance on a single source of income.

The Grant Writing Process

Navigating the grant writing process can be complex, but understanding its key components can simplify the journey. Here's a breakdown of the essential steps involved:

1. Define a specific project to be funded.
2. Describe details of the project (objectives, timeline, personnel, budget).
3. Research options for funders and available grants.
4. Submit a letter of intent (LOI) to one or more funders, if required.
5. Create a draft proposal and gain approval from key leaders.
6. Edit the proposal for each funder, aligning it with their mission.
7. Submit completed proposals with final approval from key leaders.

Conclusion

Transforming justice through grant writing consultations is not just about securing funding; it is about empowering organizations to make a lasting impact in their communities. By understanding the grant writing process, leveraging expert guidance, and learning from success

stories, organizations can enhance their chances of success and ultimately contribute to a more just society.

As you embark on your grant writing journey, remember that every proposal is an opportunity to tell your story and advocate for the change you wish to see. Take the next step by scheduling a grant writing consultation and watch your vision for justice come to life.

From dream to project

Many people dream big and have ideas of what they want to do. Turning those dreams and ideas into a specific project with essential funds to make it a reality can be challenging. Often the process requires time and knowledge that the organization's staff does not have.

A grant writer can facilitate that process in consultation with key staff and leaders. The first part of the process (steps 1-4) can be daunting and simply beyond the limits of the organization's leaders. An initial consultation can lead to a working agreement about roles and responsibilities – and costs – necessary to submit a compelling proposal to a potential funder.

STEP 1: Define a specific project to be funded.

When staff, board members, or volunteers hear about a grant being offered by a foundation – especially a large grant that “would solve all our problems” – they often look around for someone who could write a grant application for that money. The question of why they want the money comes after the initial excitement.

A grant writer knows that the first step must be defining the purpose – a specific project or program to be funded by a foundation. What do they want to do? What specific project within the capacity of the organization would help fulfill their mission and enhance their work of seeking justice and making peace?

STEP 2: Describe details of the project (objectives, timeline, personnel, budget).

The project can come from a dream or vision within the organization, but it must be defined in detail before a search for potential funders can be successful. Every platform that enables an organization and the grant writer to discover foundations and specific grants that will align with the project requires answers to detailed questions.

- Summarize the project itself and how it fits the organization's mission.
- Name the specific goals and objectives of this project.
- Describe the focus population for the project – who will be helped and how - or ways in which this project will enhance justice and peace in the world.
- Define the roles and responsibilities, with time and resources required, of everyone involved in completing the project or continuing the program.
- Develop a timeline for this project, based in part on whether this is a one-time or a multi-year grant.
- Build a budget for the project and show how it will impact the full financial resources of the organization.

STEP 3: Research options for funders and available grants.

Someone who writes grant proposals regularly works with a platform (like GrantWatch) to use data from the first two steps to generate a list of potential funders and open grant periods that fit the scope and timeframe of this project. That list can be narrowed to a few key grants to apply for at this point – and potential funders for the future.

Someone connected to the organization or in their network may have learned of an available grant being offered to add to the list – or as a place to begin.

STEP 4: Submit a letter of intent (LOI) to one or more funders, if required.

Some foundations require a letter of intent (LOI) for them to evaluate whether this organization and the proposed project fits with their objectives and current resources. Writing a proposal without a positive response from them would be premature.

Many grants announced by various funders do not require an LOI and invite open proposals. They may have issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) which will clarify their objectives and requirements to be used in writing a proposal.

By now we have completed enough of the process to begin the writing and full development of a successful proposal. We're not finished yet. Just getting started.

From project to funding

We are finally at the phase of the project too many people begin with. Writing a successful proposal requires taking those first four steps before the actual proposal writing begins. It's possible, of course, to sketch out a proposal around an idea and go back to collect data and plan the details of the project. We can also create a draft proposal and then go to the grantseeking platform or use our networks to find available grants and funders that fit with what we have done.

My experience tells me – and the experts agree – that completing the first four steps before beginning the first draft will save time and result in less confusion about what the project is and what will be needed and how all of that aligns with specific funders and grants.

Step 5: Create a draft proposal and gain approval from key leaders.

A successful grant proposal requires a first draft that key decision-makers in the organization review and approve, with opportunity to suggest changes. In fact, once people read through the whole draft describing this project, they may recommend significant changes in various elements – objectives, responsibilities, timeline, budget.

In creating this initial draft of the proposal, the writer often finds that important data is missing, that more information will be needed, that the proposal itself requires more work on the specifics of what will be accomplished. This step cannot be missed without jeopardizing a successful final proposal.

Step 6: Edit the proposal for each funder, aligning it with their mission.

Once people making the decisions and who will be responsible for implementing and completing the project have made their suggestions, and once all the incomplete information

has been gathered, a second draft will be written. And reviewed and evaluated again to give everyone confidence that the completed proposal will reflect everyone's commitment to the project once funded.

One more step remains before final proposals can be submitted. Every proposal submitted to a funder must clearly align with their specific objectives, purposes, and requirements. One proposal can be submitted to several potential funders, but each version will be slightly different for the "audience" of each funder.

Step 7: Submit completed proposals with final approval from key leaders.

As a grant writer working from outside the organization, I want complete confidence that the proposal I'm preparing to submit is what the decision-makers have approved. A final review of each specific proposal and the process for submitting it with at least one designated person in the organization would give that assurance.

The completed proposals have been submitted. That concludes the grant writing process with all its steps. What now? Every funder requires its own evaluation and reporting process be followed. That may mean one simple report at the end of a one-year grant. It may mean six-month and annual reports for a multi-year process. That work would normally be handled by organization staff, but a grant writer's agreement can be negotiated to include tracking the progress, working with staff on evaluations, and writing those reports. That's beyond the scope of grant writing itself.