

Essential Grant Writing Checklist

1. Understand the purpose of the grant and its requirements

Remember to seek grant opportunities that match your school's objectives rather than the other way around. The goal of grant writing is not simply to bring in more money, it's to fund the programs your students really need. Each state publishes grant guidelines and requirements for each government-funded grant program. Foundations and Corporations publish their guidelines online. From "funding exclusions" to postmark/arrival deadlines, be sure to follow them to the letter.

2. Be brief and consistent

Due to the number of applicants for educational funding, grantors appreciate precise and succinct language. It's tempting to embellish, but it detracts from your message. Make sure that your message is consistent in all sections of the proposal.

3. Make sure the proposal answers each question in the RFP

One of the biggest mistakes grant-writers make is to leave out vital information. Even if you feel that you're repeating yourself, address each question. Then double and triple check that you did so.

4. Establish your goals and activities very clearly in the proposal

Err on the side of simplicity as you define your school's needs, objectives, activities and budget. If the reviewer can't quickly and easily find and understand this information, she won't spend very much time with your proposal.

5. Be sure to consult with required stakeholders for the proposal

Talk with teachers, principals and district managers about their experiences and needs. They may have valuable statistics, budget breakdowns or grant-writing expertise that could help you create a better proposal. Private schools must be included in NCLB grant planning and services.

6. Make sure the solution meets NCLB requirements

Every federally-funded education grant requires funding be used for research-based and scientifically proven programs that support NCLB requirements. You will need to demonstrate the validity of the program's curriculum and the success it's produced in other schools.

7. The appearance of your proposal matters

- Use a reasonable font type and size (between 10 and 12-point).
- Leave plenty of white space (use at least 1" margins and double-space if possible).
- Include graphs, photographs or sidebars occasionally
- Bold headings and sub-heads for easier skimming.
- Triple check spelling and grammar.

8. Send a thank you and ask for reviewer comments

Even if your proposal is not funded, always send a thank you note to the grantor and ask for reviewer comments so you can improve your grant-writing skills for next time!