

Key Steps for Strategic Grant Writing

by Cindy Kane, Grant Writing and Social Enterprise Consultant

Do you approach grant writing strategically or are you using a shot gun approach?

When you see a grant announcement, do you begin writing immediately and simply take into consideration the amount you can request? If so, you are setting yourself up for disappointment and frustration, as well as wasting precious resources (yours and your staff's).

Think and act strategically when grant writing and you can almost guarantee an increase in the number of grant awards you receive. Below are a few key steps for strategic grant writing:

- **DO YOUR HOMEWORK.** Confirm that the funder's focus, priorities and areas of interest align with your organization's mission, services and geographic area. In some cases, funders have pre-selected the organizations they will support and do not accept unsolicited applications. Take time to make a phone call and talk to someone about the funder's priorities. Do not assume a website is correct.
- **CONFIRM THE DUE DATE.** Do you have the time and resources to submit the application by the due date? It is okay to pass up a looming deadline and wait until the next time an application will be accepted. Be aware that some foundations may review applications only one time per year.
- **CONSIDER THE AWARD AMOUNT.** Is the amount of the award enough to cover the expenses and provide the services? Just because your organization is a 501(c)(3) doesn't mean you cannot cover your costs. Is there a required match? Is so, can the match be in-kind or cash?
- **KNOW THE APPLICANT/LEAD AGENCY.** Are you the correct applicant or lead agency? In some federal applications, the required applicant might be a school district, government entity, or faith-based organization. In most cases, a foundation will not accept an application from an individual.
- **RESEARCH REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.** Are the reporting requirements within your capability and are they reasonable considering the amount of the award? If the reporting requirements are extensive and create more work for you and your staff, passing on the opportunity may be a better decision.
- **DEVELOP RELATIONSHIPS.** If you don't have a relationship with the funder or potential funder, establish one now. If you don't know anyone inside the foundation, does a board member or volunteer know someone to provide an introduction? Invite funders for a site visit; send them invitations to events, newsletters and your annual reports.

- **CONSIDER COLLABORATION.** In some cases, the strength of a grant application is enhanced when two or more organizations collaborate. You write the application together, highlighting the strengths of all involved.

Homework and Relationships are the most important keys to strategic grant writing. From my experience, more time is saved and more grants are awarded by doing your homework and developing relationships.

Cindy Kane assists non-profit organizations in capacity building through grant writing, social enterprise training and sustainability planning. Contact Cindy via [email](#) or phone (813) 295-9595.