Grant Writing Tips

General

- Read and follow the directions.
- Give yourself plenty of extra time. Everything will take longer to do than you think.
    Expect delays, particularly with larger and more complex projects.
- Neatness and accurate spelling adds important credibility to the project.
- Avoid acronyms, agency jargon, and scientific verbiage.
- Cooperative efforts show local support for the project. Do not list cooperators from
    whom you have not gotten support.
- Communicate with the grantor/program staff to answer questions about the project
    content or how the Request For Proposal (RFP) guidelines apply to your project.
- Do not include reference materials, pictures, articles, letters of support, etc., unless the
    RFP says you may.
- Do not try to apply political pressure to get the project funded. Let your project stand on
    its own merit, and let the reviewers do their job.
- Have someone not involved in the project read your proposal and provide feedback.

Plan of Work
- Read and follow the directions.
- Follow the format required in the RFP guidelines.
- Make it clear why your project advances the mission and goals of the grantor.
- Limit the project to a maximum of three goals and objectives. The more measurable
your objectives, the better.
- Make sure action items pertain to your goals and objectives.
- Develop a realistic time-line for action items, including what/when/who/where.
- Quantify activities as much as possible such as number of events, newsletters, attendees,
etc.
- Do not get too technical, as not all reviewers will have the technical background that
    you have.
- Give careful attention to both outreach activities and the project's evaluation process.

Budget
- Provide as much detail as possible, e.g., quantify number of hours, number of miles,
costs per supply item, etc.
- Do not include what ineligible expenses, such as capital expenses. When in doubt,
contact the grant program administrator and ask.
- Many things cost more than you think. Get actual costs before you submit the grant.
- If you think something isn't clear, explain it in a "budget narrative" as part of the
    proposal's text.

Common Reasons Proposals Are Not Funded

1. The deadline for proposal submission is not met.

2. The guidelines for proposal content, format and length are not followed exactly, or the proposal is not complete.

3. The study or the project is not a priority topic to the grantor or sponsoring agency.

4. The proposed research question, research design, and(or) research methods offers nothing unusual, intriguing, or innovative and(or) lacks significance.

5. The proposal is not absolutely clear in describing one or more elements. For example, the proposal does not describe how the project would be managed, how the activities would be monitored, and results evaluated and reported.

6. The project appears beyond the capacity of the individual or institution to carry out.

7. The methods are not explained, justified effectively, or seem unsuited to the project.

8. The budget is unrealistically high or low, or it isn't well justified.

9. The costs of the project appear greater than the benefits.

10. In the literature review or background section, the proposal writer shows he or she simply does not know the area of his or her subject matter. For example, sources cited are out of date, or the proposal writer overlooked important reference material and previous studies.

11. The rationale for choosing a particular approach as the best solution to a problem is missing or not very well thought out and/or explained.

12. The constraints most likely to be encountered are inadequately considered, and there are no tactics for overcoming them presented.

13. Lessons learned from previous institutional projects are not shown or are not made relevant to the proposed project.

14. The quality of the writing is poor. The proposal is hard to read, makes sweeping generalizations and illogical statements, is excessively repetitive and too long.

15. The document contains an unreasonable number of mechanical errors (for example, typos, pages upside down or in backwards, budget numbers don't add up) showing an inattention to detail and quality of work.