



Money Grant Writing

Is Your Nonprofit Organization Grant-Ready?

By Tarra Nystrom, MBA

Being grant-ready is more than checking a few boxes on a list of suggested documents or having 501(c)3 tax-exempt status. More important than having an electronic folder of attachable-ready files is a grant-ready mindset. Funding is the lifeblood of any organization. I know you think that lifeblood is the mission and commitment of staff and volunteers. However, without funding, the mission is lost, and the commitment is not sustainable.

I have found that small- to medium-sized and start-up nonprofit organizations want the (grant) money but are often not in the mindset to do what is most necessary to get the money. Here is what I have found these organizations erroneously believe:

- A volunteer, board member, or staff member can write a grant proposal effectively
- A grant is written in a couple of hours
- \$12 an hour is the going rate for grant writing
- Necessary information for most grant proposals is ready because they have marketing collateral and a business plan
- The organization should not spend money to get money

Whether you want to submit a funding request to local foundations or globally recognized corporate foundations, you need to be ready to present your best effort. It is natural to think that since most grant funding does not come with a repayment schedule or interest rate that it is free. And in a sense, it is. It is also natural to think that something free should not incur costs to obtain. Wrong. Writing is daunting, and most do not do it well. Formal business writing, which is precisely what a grant proposal encompasses, is more daunting than any other type of writing. Most volunteers, board members, and staff are not good writers, nor do most people like to write, especially formal business writing.

Although well-intended, the offer to write proposals for free can end in disaster more times than not. The idea of getting grants written for free might seem like a good idea, but remember free is often not FREE. While there is no invoice associated with a volunteer effort, a poorly executed effort can result in not getting much-needed funding, diminished organization reputation, or eliminating the likelihood of being awarded money from that grantmaker in the future because of a less-than-competent submission. It can also result in damaging the relationship the organization has with that volunteer, board member, or staff member. There is a risk of wasting time and delaying receiving funding by missing deadlines, unnecessarily long time periods writing and editing proposals, writing and submitting proposals that were not thoroughly or adequately researched and vetted, or not being aware of funding opportunities.

Simply stated, most volunteers, staff, and board members do not know the grant writing process.

The first step to being a grant-ready organization is to accept the fact that you need an experienced grant proposal writer. Recognizing that fact includes understanding there is a monetary value to using someone with proven experience, and therefore, an expense. Understanding these value and expense components progresses you to accept that it will take money to get money. It is ideal if an experienced grant proposal writer steps up to assist your organization like being given a winning lottery ticket, but as with most winning lottery tickets, it doesn't just show up and knock on your door. Your organization must include grant writing in its budget, and not as an in-kind donation line item or included in volunteer hours. This requires a grant-ready mindset.

Once your mindset is grant-ready, you can start gathering the documents and information needed for effective, well-written, awarded grant proposals.

For more information about grant proposal writing, please contact Tarra Nystrom at SMARTMoneyGrantWriting@gmail.com or visit my [Grant Writing Services information](#).