

Common Grant Writing Mistakes

1. Not being clear and concise. State the needs and objectives of your project clearly and concisely. Do not waste words. Good writing should be easy to read and understand. Use active rather than passive verbs. Use proper grammar and correct spelling. A well-written proposal plays an important role in the grantmaker's decision-making process, so your goal should be to create an interesting, persuasive, and unique application.

2. Including too little detail. Contact the grantmaker; before you begin to write your proposal, to be sure you clearly understand their guidelines. Present your ideas in an exciting, yet detail-orientated manner.

3. Forgetting to include an abstract. The abstract is the most important paragraph of your proposal because it provides the grant reviewer with an overview of your proposal, so be sure to include ample details. For instance, state why you are seeking a grant, what you plan to do with the money, and why your project is a good fit with the grantmaker's objectives. The abstract will create an important first impression, so be direct and engaging.

4. Proposing more work than what is feasible. Planning, research, and vision should be evident throughout your application. The proposal should have a clear timeline that includes reasonable accomplishments during the grant period.

5. Not thinking like a reviewer. Before you submit your application, review it carefully to ensure that it answers who, what, when, why, and how much.

6. Not reviewing successful grant samples to use as models. Many foundations will send you, upon request, grant proposals that have been funded, or at least will give you the addresses of past recipients, so you can contact them for copies. The more good proposals you read, the more you'll understand how clear writing and following guidelines can lead to funding.

7. Not using the organization's terms in your proposal. Buzz words/phrases can push important buttons, so if they tell you what they want to hear: listen, and be convincing as to how your project matches the organizations posted guidelines.

8. Forgetting to name the project. A catchy name which is also descriptive of the project can make a big difference. A memorable name will make your project stand out from the rest.

9. Not choosing partners wisely. Partnerships can create a win/win or lose/lose situation. Tread cautiously. Choose partners you know and trust so they can help you meet your projects objective(s).

10. Forgetting about measurable outcomes. Upon completion of the project, you should be able to clearly identify what was produced and exactly how many people have benefited. You should state in your initial application how you intend to measure outcomes to prove the project benefit actually occurred.