



Tips on the Grant Writing Process

(Taken from Mistakes to Avoid: Ensure That Your Proposal is Funded by Alice Rocha, Program Officer, Vanguard Public Foundation)

- Foundations cannot fund every grant application received. Because of the high numbers of applications that Program Officers have to consider, organizations should take the initiative to follow up with the foundations to find out why they are not considered.
- Even if organizations were not funded the first time they apply, depending on foundation budgeting amounts or mistakes in the proposals, organizations should be encouraged to apply the next year.

| Common reasons for denial: | Tasks to do for a complete proposal: |
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| 1) Organizations neglected to read the guidelines carefully to see if their organization fits with the funder's criteria. | Know your funder's priority areas. Make sure you cover specific requests. |
| 2) Organizations do not provide a clear project or organizational overview. | Don't just provide statistical data, but give a detailed organizational history. Highlight past outcomes as result of your work. Include in the program overview clear and precise: program activities, strategies, measurable objectives and outcomes. |
| 3) Neglect to make a persuasive case about the critical needs that the organization is addressing and why out of the many proposals received that your organization should be funded. | Show statistics, data, ties to trends. Show your organizations' uniqueness. |
| 4) Duplicate existing services. | If your program is found elsewhere, explain why you are reaching that specific special population. |
| 5) Organizations do not show the capacity to take on new program due to limited financial and administrative capacity. | As a general rule of thumb, foundations will not provide grants in amounts significantly exceed the total annual operating budgeting of an organization. |
| 6) Objectives not measurable. | <p>Ex: Measurable Objective (activities) – Provide education and outreach to a minimum of 300 individuals in the communities of Central Valley about existing environmental issues and the impact on their health.</p> <p>Outcome (impact) – Local communities will be formed in each community to organize around the environmental issues affecting their communities so that they can begin to monitor and address these issues. Thereby, reducing any health problems associated to the environment.</p> |
| 7) Inappropriate budget. | Make sure specific line match the purpose and activities of the proposed program. Watch for overestimated costs. Justify reasons for line items why they are needed in their objectives, activities, or timelines. |

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| 8) Community inclusions/involvement not demonstrated. | Partnerships and coalitions with community are vital to the success of programs and local issues. Involve constituency in identifying local issues, e.g. focus groups, needs assessments, client surveys. Involve constituency as part of the program strategic planning, staff, boards, or advisory board members. |
| 9) Neglect to submit all of the application materials. | Include all the materials requested to assist foundations in the decision process, including agency financial information. |
| 10) The applicant organization has limited experience in providing the type of program/services or in working with the target population. | Demonstrate how the program complements, supports, or strengthens the organization's current activities. |
| 11) Do not be overly ambitious and not realistic about what can be accomplished. | Include staff as a part of the planning to make sure everyone is in agreement with what is doable. |
| 12) <u>Understand the difference between a Capacity Building Grant Proposal and a Program Grant Proposal</u> | <p>Vanguard Public Foundation, HIP/Funders Collaborative, The California Endowment and others offer Capacity Building Grants. Capacity Building funds provide technical assistance toward building the internal capacity of your organization to more effectively do your important work. It is important to have clear ideas of how this grant would help to improve the organizations ability to meet the goals of your program. Capacity Building activities should support the organization's ultimate goal to improve the organizations work in the local communities not the work itself.</p> <p>Example: HIV/AIDS organization requested funding to help clients join an advocacy group around HIV/AIDS issues. The request would be a program activity. It would be capacity building if the organization had requested technical assistance for training staff around advocacy so that they can train clients on how to advocate for themselves.</p> |

For the Original "Mistakes to Avoid: Ensure That Your Proposal is Funded," please contact our resource librarian napafasa@napafasa.org

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