



## Seven things every new grant writer should know

If you're new to grant writing, it can be an intimidating prospect. To help make the process a little easier, I've come up with a list of seven things every new grant proposal writer needs to know. These are...

(1) Grants are seed money for new projects or initiatives. Do not expect to find a large number of funders who want to give your district money to pay for ongoing teacher salaries, or the rising cost of gas for school buses. Education grants are given to fund projects that meet an identified need and have specific outcomes, often related to students and their academic achievement.

(2) Know the difference between “need” and “want.” Make sure your project meets a specific need that you have identified and that can be supported with documentation. Wanting new technology because the neighboring district just got some will not make a convincing needs statement in your proposal!

(3) The “dogs that eat homework” also eat proposal sections. Make sure you plan ahead, and give other people enough time to provide you with the information you will need for the sections of a proposal. Send them a memo outlining what you need and what they have agreed to supply—and give them a deadline. As the deadline approaches, gently remind them of their assignment.

(4) Be familiar with your district's policies and procedures about submitting proposals. Does your school board have to approve your proposal before it is submitted? Do teachers have to get prior approval before starting to put a proposal together? Does your superintendent want to see a preliminary summary of the project before you start putting the proposal together? Does your district have other policies or procedures? You should know the answers to each of these questions before you get started pursuing grant funding. If there are no policies or procedures in place, develop them.

(5) Always give your business office a “heads up” about proposal submissions.

Ask your business office to play a role in the proposal process by either helping to develop the project budget or reviewing the budget that you have developed. Provide a copy of the grantee requirements to your business office (these are usually stated in the Request for Proposals), so there are no surprises when you receive notification of your grant award.



(6) Spend the majority of your time conducting research, and hone your research skills. Unfortunately, there isn't one magic web site you can visit that lists all of the possible funders and funding opportunities available. You have to identify key web sites to visit (OK, here's one: eSchool News Online) and key eMail lists to join—and always keep your eyes and ears open for potential sources of funding.

(7) Create and maintain a large, impressive network. One of the keys to success in this field is having a network of proposal writing colleagues (who understand the frustrations of rejection and share the joy of getting an award), funders, program officers, legislators, and potential collaborative partners. Build this type of network quickly, and keep adding people to it as you go along—and you will reap many benefits in the months and years to come.