

Tips For The Last Minute Grant Application

by Gloria Kraegel

Ideally, we would love to take the time to put together a grant application in a methodical manner that includes a compelling narrative with statistics and relevant reference resources. All too often, however, we don't have the amount of time we might like to complete a funding request.

It's more likely that you found the perfect grant for your program and the submission deadline is a week or two away. If that's not enough, the bookkeeper is on vacation, you're calendar is overbooked already, and the program manager is out of the office until next week. Panic sets in and you rush through the application - often missing critical points or not fully addressing what the funder is asking for. You need a plan and this article offers strategies that will work not only for the short-notice deadlines, but for those applications with longer lead times, too.

Use the funder guidelines as your proposal outline. Create a checklist from their submission requirements; number of copies, required support documents, financial information, etc.. Highlight those items that are more difficult to obtain and get them first.

Delegate parts of the grant application to team-members or others in your organization familiar with the project or access to documentation you need to include as part of the submission. For example, the office administrator would pull all supporting documentation, the bookkeeper would supply the financial statements, the program manager might answer several of the questions in the narrative section, etc.

Certain parts of your narrative should be standard "copy and paste" items. You should already have an organizational history from previous grant applications. A program description is probably already used in program literature and promotional materials. These parts can also be delegated to others to review and update as necessary and then easily incorporated into the final proposal.

Funder guidelines usually include a submission structure, list of questions, funding objectives, or topics related to what they expect to see in your proposal. Follow the structure; answer all questions in the order they are asked, and be sure to cover all items required by the funder. Use the language of the funder as part of your narrative or, as necessary, rephrase the questions as part of your answers. Be clear about how your project meets their funding objectives.

Make sure you understand what the funder is asking for. If you have any questions or concerns call the contact person for clarification. If they are unable to assist you they will be able to connect you with someone in their office who can. You've now accomplished two things; getting clarification so you can write a more effective grant request, and notifying the funder your intention to submit a proposal.

A common oversight on last-minute grant submissions is making sure the actual budget matches the financial narrative and any discussion of program expenses and project budget in the narrative. Be careful to ensure your budget matches associated references in your narrative.

Before you seal the envelope and run to the Post Office ask someone who hasn't had anything to do with it to read through the narrative, check the budget, and confirm that all required items are included in the final package.

Good grant writing involves more than just writing the request. It requires planning, research, gathering supporting data and resources, writing a proposal that clearly explains the need and meets funder objectives and expectations as outlined in their RFP. When you don't have the time fully develop the proposal package because of a short-notice deadline then follow the tips above to increase your chances of success.

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