

The 12 Steps to Writing a Successful Grant Proposal

From CTAP 4 <www.ctap4.org> and CTAP 9 <www.ctap9.org>

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Step 1:

Conducting your needs assessment is step one because you must know—and be able to state clearly—WHY you are writing your grant. Think through what is lacking, what is less than successful, or what needs improvement in your classroom, your school, or your district. Decide how the use of technology can improve the situation. Next determine what sources of information you can use to prove your case. Your proposal will be strongest when you can cite detailed data to substantiate your need. Here is a useful web site with data from California districts and schools: <<http://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/>>.

Step 2:

Find an appropriate funding source. If you do not have one targeted, then Check out these web sites:

- CTAP Region 4's Technology Funding Alert at <<http://www.aceoissi.k12.ca.us/ctap/fundingalert/techfa.html>>
- For U. S. Department of Education grants, regularly search the Federal Register at <<http://www.ed.gov/legislation/FedRegister/announcements/index.html>>.
- For California state-sponsored grants, go to <<http://www.cde.ca.gov/funding/>>. Note that you can join the California Department of Education's listserv and they will notify you of new funding opportunities by email.
- To find granting opportunities through foundations, try out this site <<http://fdncenter.org/>>. A particularly interesting page at this site is under "Researching Philanthropy" and then "Top Funders." You can learn a great amount here about the biggest foundation funders, how much they give, and what organizations they have funded. Contact the officer listed on the site prior to submitting a proposal.

Step 3:

Get a copy of the funding source's Request for Proposal (RFP), also called a Request for Application (RFA). Read it thoroughly, cover to cover. Pay special attention to the deadline. Some grants have an open deadline, but most have a specified due date. A word of caution—some deadlines refer to a postmarked date, and other deadlines mean that the grant proposal has arrived at the funding source by that date. This is something that you want to be clear about right at the start.

Step 4:

You need to research your district's policies and procedures about grant writing. Some districts require a Board approval for grants over a certain amount. This is something you need to be aware of early in the game, because if you have to go to the Board, it will impact your time frame.

Step 5:

Now it is time to assemble your writing team. If this is a small classroom grant, probably you are the writing team! If it's a larger grant (school- or district-sized), you will want buy-in from the people who will be impacted, and you may want a multi-person writing team to share the load. There are no set rules, but some experts say to keep the larger group of stakeholders informed, develop a group of five to seven to give input, hold the writing team to three to five—and definitely have one quarterback to make sure the job gets done.

Step 6:

Organize your grant according to the Request for Proposal. If the funding source gives you headings for various sections, it is wise to use these as your proposal's sub-titles. Be sure to follow the format the funding source requests.

Step 7:

Write your Needs section first. This is the foundation upon which your grant is built. Then write your Goals, Activities, Evaluation, and the other sections requested by the funding source. Be sure that your proposal demonstrates internal consistency. Your goals address the specific needs, your activities fulfill the goals, and your evaluation plan measures when and to what extent you complete the activities and accomplish the goals.

Step 8.

Write your Abstract *after* you compose the other sections of your grant narrative. After all, the Abstract is the summary of your grant. Spend the time necessary to make your Abstract compelling. This is your first (and sometimes *only*) chance to captivate the grant reader.

Step 9.

Create a budget that is accurate, understandable, and directly linked with what you requested in your proposal.

Step 10:

Don't worry if you're not a great writer! Just write using a clear style, with correct grammar and spelling, and avoid education jargon. Ask someone to read your proposal to assess whether you have said what you think you've said.

Step 11:

Revise. Writing is re-writing.

Step 12:

Be sure to meet your funding source's deadline. Send the proposal the way they want. Keep all mailing receipts.

One final word: Don't give up. Even if your grant gets rejected, don't quit. There are a lot of funding sources out there. Keep your hard work on the computer, find another funding source, and modify your work as appropriate. Make sure your good ideas receive a good hearing—and provide resources for your students.