



Tips for Grant Writing

1. Know your request

- Identify your need and then search for a funder
 - Don't create a project/initiative in response to a grant proposal
- Collaborate with all relevant staff to develop project, timeline, budget, evaluation methods, etc.

2. Find funders

- Your local library may have resources, access to reference databases, and staff to help research
- Local businesses and organizations are also good fundraising leads. Oftentimes, they are more willing to support a local nonprofit. Ask for guidelines, fundraising priorities and deadlines
- Be aware of local foundations or those who give specifically to your community. Check the local newspaper, business journals, social media posts, etc. for leads
- If a local university has nonprofit or grant writing classes, students may be willing to draft proposals
- A simple Google search can help (key words: food pantry, hunger-relief, food insecurity)

3. Be aware of deadlines

- Oftentimes, funders have only one or two cycles annually. Keep track of dates on a calendar and make sure you don't miss the deadline
- Plan ahead to submit early. You never know what might delay your submission

4. Follow directions; read the entire *Request for Proposal (RFP)* carefully

- Make sure your request fits the funder's guidelines
 - If you have questions, call or email the grants contact listed before you write a proposal
- Look to guidelines for an appropriate ask amount
 - Hint: If none are listed, pull their latest 990, or call or email the grant contact
- Follow all character limits and page restrictions
- Many funders require online submission of grant requests
 - It is common to take an eligibility quiz and create a username/password
- If you cannot find guidelines or an application, you can usually send a *Letter of Inquiry (LOI)* to introduce yourself, the project/initiative and request further information

5. Answer each part of every question

- Make sure you answer them clearly, directly and according to directions
- Be concise and specific. Avoid including excessive information not related to the request
- Remember, those reviewing your grant will be comparing your answer to other nonprofits

6. Avoid industry terminology and "jargon"

- Always explain any acronyms and industry-specific terms
- Don't make your reader work hard to understand your program/initiative and request

Transform Hunger into Hope™ at ozarksfoodharvest.org

7. Be ready to answer common questions

- Mission statement and current activity
 - This should be brief, clear, and describe the impact of your organization
 - *Make sure it provides evidence that your organization is capable of achieving goals*
- Community Need
 - Use data to describe the need (food insecurity rates, average household income, ethnicity)
 - Cite your statistics and research (Map the Meal Gap, U.S. Census Bureau, USDA)
 - Use local statistics if available (vs. state or national statistics)
 - Use testimonials to evoke empathy
- Program Description
 - Tell a complete, clear and compelling “story”
 - What will you do with the grant funding? What are your expected benefits?
 - Who is involved? Where will this take place? When?
 - Why is this needed? Why are you the best to carry out this project?
 - How will the program address needs?
 - *Demonstrate alignment between the funder’s giving interests and your program*
- Metrics/Outcomes
 - How will you measure outcomes? (Number of pounds/meals provided, clients served, etc.)
 - How will you determine success?
 - *Be optimistic but realistic with projections. It is better to under-promise and over-deliver*
- Sustainability
 - How will you sustain this program beyond the grant period?

8. Proofread your work! Details are important

- Print cover letters on letterhead and number your narrative pages; do not print double-sided
- Make sure numbers and statistics cited are consistent throughout
- Ask someone unfamiliar to read the final draft to identify typos and areas in need of clarification
- If submitting a proposal electronically, copy and paste your answers in a Word document to help proofread, check character limits, save a copy of your work, etc.
- *Applications full of typos reduce a funder’s confidence in your ability to successfully administer your program and use their funds responsibly*

9. Include all requested attachments

- List of Board of Directors, their positions and affiliations
- Financials (most recent audited financials and 990, if applicable)
- Organizational Budget
- Project Budget (Should be realistic, detailed and reflect what was proposed in the narrative)
- Latest annual report or newsletter

10. Submit your proposal

- Keep a copy for your files
- *Follow all packaging directions!* If requested, make sure to submit extra copies of your proposal
- Check the RFP for a decision timeline. If none specified, make a follow-up call after a few weeks
- If could take months for a decision to be reached; don’t check back too soon or too often

11. Maintain a good relationship with funder

- If awarded, make sure to send a thank you letter asap
 - Include a signed *grant agreement* if requested
- Unless the funder is anonymous, acknowledge them publically (newsletter, social media, website)
- Keep funders informed by sending progress report(s) (how grant funds were used and their impact)
- *Good relationships could lead to a long-term funder*