2008 Neighborhood Small Grants Program Grant Writing Basics

These grant writing resources are provided with the goal to encourage your organization to incorporate grant writing as one piece of a diversified organizational fundraising strategy. Included are steps to consider for general grant writing purposes. While these are skills applicable to helping you develop a grant proposal for the Neighborhood Small Grant Program this grant program is intended to provide a simple grant application process that does not require professional grant writing skills.

Meaning don't feel like you need to be a pro in order to apply.

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Workshop Goals

Provide overview and answer questions about the Neighborhood Small Grants Program.

Help people understand grants should only be one revenue source in a multi-faceted fundraising strategy.

Familiarize participants with some of the most basic components of a grant proposal.

Overview of Giving in the U.S.

Where is America's charitable giving coming from?

Charitable giving in the US totaled $241,000,000,000 as of 2002.
I bet you'll be surprised how small of a percentage foundation grant support is of that total amount.

❑ Bequests 7.5%
❑ Corporations 5.1%
❑ Foundations 11.2%
❑ Individuals 76.3%

Who is receiving America's charitable giving?

I bet you'll be surprised how small a percentage of giving goes towards the types of grants typical of neighborhood and community development work (public/society benefit in this list). Roughly 70% of all charitable giving goes towards religion, education, human services and health care.

❑ Religion 35.0%
❑ Education 13.1%
❑ Unallocated 12.6%
❑ Foundations 9.1%
❑ Human services 7.7%
❑ Health 7.8%
❑ Arts, culture & humanities 5.1%
❑ Public/society benefit 4.8%
❑ Environment/animals 2.7%
❑ International 1.9%.

Source (AAFRC, 2002)

Lesson to learn from this:

You already know the people who are most likely to donate money to your organization. Your members, neighbors, constituents who get your communications, family, friends and co-workers.

Thinking beyond grants

If your organization is like most, you need to be cultivating new financial sources constantly to meet your budget.   Many foundations and major donors are still slowing their giving due to the poor economic climate of the past few years. This means that a diversified funding strategy is more important than ever. A diversified fundraising strategy will broaden your base of financial support, build your base of members who feel connected to the group, and show foundations you're not going to be dependent on them.

Integrate fund raising as a part of all your program work

Are you doing a donation pitch at your meetings and events? Asking people to contribute a dollar or some amount at your educational forums? How closely do your core volunteers and your core donors match? If you answer NO to all three of these items, then it's time to evaluate what assumptions you are making about your own base that prevent you from asking them for money.

Ask early and often

Fundraising is often a number game, the more people you ask, the more likely you are to get a yes. Don't project your fears about asking on to the people who might give money. It's your job to ask and their job to make a decision about whether or not they can give you money.

Set benchmarks for donor outreach just as you do for any program outreach

If you chose a strategy, set financial goals along with the numeric so you can evaluate what strategies work best for your organization. For some groups, direct mail might net enough income while also serving as a contact point for a broad number of constituents.

Thinking beyond grants

Create and/or expand your small donor program

Many groups unintentionally separate the role of donors and active volunteers. Make sure you have a path for inactive volunteers to engage financially, it may be the only thing a support of your work can offer at this point in their life. Monthly or quarterly sustainer programs are a great way to see how small contributions can add up over time.

Move up small and medium donors to be major donors

If someone in your group has given you the same amount consistently for over a year, they may be ready to move into a more significant category. The term major donor is relative. You can define it whatever way you want, but create the categories and stick to them so you can explain to your prospective donors where you need them to fit in to accomplish the work you both value.

Set realistic income goals for events

Events can be great ways to raise money, but it often takes more resources than an equal amount of energy used for direct asks would produce. If you have a combined program goal and financial goal, set realistic goals for each and then ask yourself if that is the most productive means of achieving both goals. Events are often long-term development strategies too. Once you set up a method, it will be easier to repeat (and slightly more profitable) each time you repeat it.

Benefits of Grants

- ❑ **Forces you to be organized**

- ❑ **Provides credibility**

- ❑ **Come in large amounts**

- ❑ **Provides seed money**

- ❑ **Helps to diversify funding base**

- ❑ **Good preparation for a major donor campaign**

- ❑ **Provides leverage**

- ❑ **Lots of options and opportunities**

- ❑ **Guilt free**

- ❑ **Provides a learning experience**

Downside of Grants

- ❑ **Long waits**

- ❑ **Low odds**

- ❑ **Rejection**

- ❑ **Restricted money for specific projects – not general support**

- ❑ **Grants don't empower group – power shifts to funder**

- ❑ **Too few people involved in the process**

- ❑ **Your work can get distorted**

- ❑ **Dirty money syndrome**

- ❑ **Opportunity cost**

Future of Giving from Foundations

Broad changes taking place in the foundation world indicate their giving is moving towards:

Collaborations: Increasing expectations for organizations to partner with other non-profits to combine resources ensuring more efficient and effective use of scarce dollars.

Greater control: Increasing involvement from foundations to influence how their dollars are used. Increasing influence of religious foundations ensuring grantees abide by their faith-based value systems.

Use of technology: Influence of new wealth from the 90's boom, (hi-tech), encouraging investments in new technologies for non-profits and e-government.

Venture Philantropy: Also, influence of new wealth from the 90's boom, (hi-tech), focusing money on narrow mega- projects. i.e. Gates Foundation massive investments in new schools and global health care.

Effective change: Increasing accountability and evaluation expectations upon grantees. Corporate wealth expecting non-profits to act more like businesses and prove the grant dollars are being used effectively.

The Grant Proposal as Organizing Plan
Or why you need to have a diverse fundraising strategy

Writing a proposal may be the first time your organization has considered putting a workplan or community organizing strategy plan on paper. Taking the time to think through the mission and goals of your organization, and designing your program or projects will provide benefits beyond a one-time grant proposal. Before submitting a proposal make sure there is some sort of group consensus within your group about how you define the need and your long-range goals for addressing the need.

Benefits of developing a workplan

1. **The discipline of putting details on paper – goals, objectives, deadlines, and expenses**

    Will focus your board's thinking about what direction the organization is heading. Your project will be more successful and you'll have a bigger impact.

2. **The planning process provides an opportunity to engage your constituency in choosing the future of your organization**

    Foundations can tell which proposals come from the communities most affected by a problem or issue. Solutions designed by the community are often most successful.

3. **You are more likely to get the grant, since you'll be organized and professional.**

    Foundations are not going to fund projects that are simply a list of activities you promise to complete. They need to be components of an organizing strategy.

Building the Case for Support

Before you submit an application consider developing a set of background materials describing why your organization exists, defining the problem you're trying to solve, describing your plan for solving it, and confirming your ability to do the work. The mission, goals, objectives, history, and structure should take no more than two pages. The strengths and weaknesses of the proposal are easier to see and anyone can read two pages.

What goes into a Case Statement

1.   A statement of mission

Tells the world *why* the group exists.

2.   A description of goals

Tells *what* the organization hopes to accomplish over the long term or what the organization intends to do about why it exists

3.   A list of objectives

Specific, measurable, and time-limited – tells *how* the goals will be met

4.   A summary of the organization's history

Shows the organization is competent and can accomplish its goals

5.   A description of the structure of the organization

Describe board, volunteer and staff roles - what kind of people are involved in the group

6.   A fundraising plan

Ideally a multi-faceted strategy – grants should only be one piece of your strategy

7.   A financial statement

Previous fiscal year and budget for current fiscal year

Designing Fundable Projects

Consider bouncing your ideas for a proposal off other neighborhood and community organizers, staff at District Coalitions or other non-profits, and foundation or government offices.

When evaluating the fundability of your work ask:

1.   Does your project fill a real need?

Are you creating a problem and trying to solve it because you think there's money available, or did the problem exist beforehand?

2.   Is anyone else working on a similar project?

Is the niche filled? This might be an opportunity to build a coalition with other groups working on similar issues. With increasing community needs funders are favorable to collaborative projects.

3.   Have foundations funded similar projects?

Do your research. Go to the library. Talk with other organizations. Call foundation offices and ask. Consider how your project stacks up against others in the eyes of foundation officers.

4.   How controversial is it?

As the controversy factor increases, fundability decreases. Words like "risk" and "innovation" may appeal to foundations. "Revolutionary" won't sell with most foundation.

5.   Will your program grab people's attention?

Distinguish yourself. You need to find a unique "hook", or something visual and compelling about your story.

6.   Do you have the skills to run the project effectively?

Think big, but don't ask for more work or money than you can handle.

Overview of Foundation World in Oregon

Types of Foundations in Oregon

Most Oregon foundations are independent, with trustees often appointed for life. They represent a broad range of purposes. Relatively few are Public Foundations, where Boards of Directors serve for short periods, monies are pooled from a variety of sources. Corporate foundations have increased significantly with many companies giving support without establishing a foundation. Few operating foundations that operate their own programs like gardens.

How they operate

Foundations must "pay out" about 5% of their assets annually. Few Oregon Foundations have paid staff. Most are run by volunteers, often family members. Most Oregon Foundations award grants within Oregon or smaller region within state such as Portland metro area.

The numbers

- Number of Foundations in US: 61,810 in 2001
  (Foundation Center, Foundation Yearbook 2003)
- Number of Foundations in OR: about 1,188
- Number of Nonprofits in OR: 20,000
- Revenue of Oregon nonprofits: $16 Billion
- Assets of Oregon nonprofits: $24 billion
- Revenue of Oregon Foundations: about $2 Billion
- Assets of Oregon Foundations: about $3 Billion
- Number of Oregon Foundations with assets ≥ $500,000: 350
- Number of Oregon Foundations assets ≥$1 million: 214
- Number of Oregon Foundations assets ≥ $10 million: 41
- Number of Oregon Foundations assets ≥ $100 million: 5

Building a relationship with Grantmakers

Grantmakers are people too

Remember, all **grantmakers are people with unique interests**, priorities, peculiarities and relative degrees of power over grantmaking decisions.

Develop peer-to-peer relationships

Your task is to develop strong, **peer-to-peer relationships** with the decision makers. This can be difficult given the basic power inequities in the relationship, especially for people who are developing proposals for the first time. The old fundraiser's cliché, "People give money to people, not organizations," is also relevant to the grantmaking world.

You are human, so admit it

It's important to tell the truth about your organizations errors and obstacles you face.

Be professional

And **be professional** by proofreading your letters and proposals, spelling names correctly, keeping track of who works at which foundations, and so forth.

Building a relationship with Grantmakers

Do your homework!

When you consider that only 10% - 15% of all proposals get funded you would think careful grants research should be the norm, but it's not. The more thoroughly you conduct your research, ask good questions, and cultivate foundation contacts, the more your organization will stand out from the crowd.

Ask questions a grant detective might consider

1. **Who funds your peers?**

   How are similar organizations raising money? Keep track of other non-profits in your geographic area with programs that resemble yours. A majority of foundations restrict their giving by geography and tend to focus their funding on certain subjects and constituencies.

2. **How can you present or "package" your work to interest the widest range of potential funders?**

   Your success will be based, in part, on your ability to divide your work into separate programs and projects that will appeal to a wide variety of foundations. Think of your work in terms of categories and constituencies, issues, who you're trying to reach and serve, or geographies you work in. How many fundraising "handles" can you create?

3. **What relationships can you call upon to help raise money?**

   Who do you know in the philanthropic world? Funding decisions are often based on the relationship between grantseeker and grantmaker. Everyone in your organization should be involved with identifying and cultivating prospective donors and foundation officers.

Building a relationship with Grantmakers

Components of building a relationship with funders

Once you've identified foundations through research maintaining a dialogue is at the core of building successful relationships with funders.   Your role is to build a pattern of communication that progresses through query letters, telephone calls, and site visits.

1.   Add these prospects to your mailing list

2.   Attend grantmaker-sponsored and "Meet the Grantmakers" events

3.   Make an appointment to talk with community foundation staff

4.   Meet them at their foundation office

5.   Some foundations require letters of intent

6.   Invite funders to observe your group in action

7.   Giver your best show and tell

8.   If you need to reschedule the meeting, give your visitors plenty of warning

9.   When the deadline nears, send the proposal to the foundation

10.   If you receive the grant, send thank you letters to both the foundation and the donor (if a donor-advised gift)

Follow the Guidelines

The most important rule in responding to grant opportunities is follow the rules each foundation or government establishes. Most publish guidelines to help you decide if you meet their criteria.

Some typical foundation criteria

When researching foundation and government sources follow criteria they establish for who they will fund. If they say they only fund projects in North Portland, related to youth education, for grants under $10,000 then they're not going to fund a project in outer East Portland for adult education with a request of $15,000.

1. 501 (c) 3 IRS recognized non-profit
2. Geographic restrictions
3. Fields of interest
4. Grant size

Some typical format guidelines (follow even if not required)

Many foundations and government sources will outright reject proposals that do no follow formatting guidelines.

1. Answer the questions they ask

2. Leave lots of white space, minimum 1.25" margins

3. Use 12-point (or larger) type

4. Use running heads or footers, not just page numbers

5. Break up the page

6. Don't justify the text

7. Use graphics sparingly where appropriate

8. Print your proposal on standard 8-1/2 by 11 inch paper

9. Single or double-spaced?

10. Paper clip, don't staple

Basic components of a Grant Proposal

While requirements for content will vary according to the grantmaker, these are sections most often included. If your prospective funder doesn't require a specific format, it's acceptable to combine and rearrange these sections, but make sure all this material is contained somewhere in the proposal.

1. **Cover page and Executive Summary**

2. **Organizational History**

3. **Problem (Needs) Statement**

4. **Program Goals and Objectives**

5. **Strategy and Implementation (Methods)**

6. **Timeline**

7. **Evaluation**

8. **Personnel**

9. **Budgets**

10. **Attachments**

11. **Cover Letter**

Cover page and executive summary

The first page of the proposal is the most important section of the entire document. The cover letter should be on your organization's letterhead and address the funder directly: "A proposal from the Neighborhood Association to the John Q. Public Foundation." The cover page should fit on one page.

Include the following in a cover letter and executive summary:

1. Title of the project

2. Submission date

3. Beginning and ending dates for the project

4. Total project budget

5. Amount requested

6. Contact persons and phone numbers for your organization

7. Executive summary

Executive Summary

The executive summary is your sales pitch to convince the reader of the unique qualifications of the organization to address the problem you've identified with the solution you propose. The summary should not exceed two paragraphs.

Be certain to include:

Problem: Statement of the problem or need your organization has recognized and is prepared to address.

Solution: Description of the project, including what will take place and how many people will benefit from the program, how and where it will operate, for how long.

Organizational Expertise: Description of why your organization is uniquely qualified to solve the problem.

Organizational History

The organizational history provides the primary activities, audiences, and services of the organization. It also covers the history and governing structure of the organization. Ties all of the information about your organization together, cites your agency's expertise, especially as it relates to the subject of your proposal.

For newer organizations without a track record you might want to emphasize the leadership skills of your board members or staff expertise. You could include the personnel section in the organizational history section. It is not necessary to overwhelm the reader with facts about your organization. This information can be conveyed easily by attaching a brochure or other prepared statement.

What to cover in an organizational history

1.   **When the group was formed**

     And how long you've been working on the issue

2.   **Governing structure**

     Discuss the size of the board, how board members are recruited, and their level of participation.

3.   **The size of your membership**

     If your organization is composed of volunteers or has an active volunteer group, describe the function that the volunteers fill.

4.   **Where you fit within any larger movement**

     what's your niche within a community of similar organizations working on the same issues.

5.   **What you've accomplished in specific, measurable terms**

     Describe the breadth of your past programs or projects stating how many people served, community development or policy changes you're responsible for organizing, how many people you organized.

Problem Statement
(Or Needs Statement)

If the grantmaker reads beyond the executive summary, you have successfully piqued their interest. Your next task is to build on this initial interest in your project by helping them understand how your solution will remedy the problem.

The primary objective in the Statement of Need is to answer: *Why this project is necessary.*

Components of the Problem Statement

1. **The problem is clearly defined**

    Establishes that your organization understands the problem and can reasonably address them.

2. **The issue comes alive through the use of stories**

    If it's truly a community problem no one can describe its impact better than your members you deal with the situation firsthand.

3. **The problem is broken down into issues**

    Provide details that enables the reader to learn more about the issues, suggests a range of strategies and possible targets.

4. **Provide a variety of facts and data**

    Provide accurate view of evidence that support the need for the project. Source should be from authorities in the field, and your organization's own experience. Don't overwhelm with facts.

5. **Give the reader hope**

    The picture you paint should not be so grim that the solution appears hopeless.   But don't be overly dramatic or emotional.

6. **Demonstrate you organization's unique response to this problem**

    How does your organization address the need differently, or better than other projects that preceded it. Don't be critical of competitors.

Program Goals, Objectives and Methods

Now is your opportunity to describe what you hope to achieve with your project. Without clear goals, definite, measurable objectives, and realistic methods to accomplish those objectives, you will have a much harder time winning grants (and knowing when your organization has achieved success.)

The best proposals serve as road maps to help you get from here (your problem) to there (your solution.)

Goals: Goals restate the need your group seeks to address. The goal is your destination.

Objectives: Objectives are outcomes that can be measured. Objectives serve as mileage signs you pass along the way to help measure your progress.

Methods: Methods are how you will meet these objectives. Methods are your modes of travel.

Goals and Objectives

What are goals?

Answers what do you want. Broad statements which describe what a person or group wants to do and when to do it.

- ❑ State a desired outcome, general intent or target.

- ❑ What will be different at the end of the year?

- ❑ What will the community look and feel like once the problem is solved?

- ❑ What constitutes success or victory?

What are objectives?

Objectives are specific statements which describe steps to achieving a goal. They are measurable and quantifiable actions. Objectives define your methods and must be tangible, specific, concrete, and achievable in a specified time period. Grant seekers (and funders) often confuse objectives with goals, which are conceptual and more abstract.

- ❑ Where do we want to be in "x" number of months/years down the road?

- ❑ What are measurable differences before and after the project is over?

- ❑ What are the goalposts (monthly, quarterly) by which you measure progress?

- ❑ How will you know if you succeed?

Methods
(or Strategies and implementation)

Methods are the specific tasks and activities you will undertake to reach your goals. Methods enable the reader to visualize the implementation of the project. This section should convince the reader that your organization knows what it is doing, thereby establishing its credibility. You will describe the specific activities, when they begin, and when they end, that will take place to achieve the objectives.

How, When and Why:

It is easiest and best to divide methods into the following:

How: This is the detailed description of what will occur from the time the project begins until it is completed.

When: The methods section should present the order and timing for the tasks.

Why: You may need to defend your chosen methods, especially if they are new or unorthodox. Why will the planned work lead to the outcomes you anticipate?

Examples of Goals, Objectives and Methods

Example   **Street tree planting trainings**

Goal   Teach a new generation of youth the importance of planting street trees.

Objective   A manual will be developed on organizing neighborhood street tree planting events and 4 quarterly workshops will be organized to train 100 high school students to lead planting events.

Method   A committee of students will meet monthly in the next six months with staff support from the tree planting coordinator. Workshops will be organized in conjunction with school environmental groups. Students will be recruited with presentations at 15 enviro-clubs, distribution of 5000 fliers through Friday school notices to parents.

Example   **Neighborhood Association membership drive**

Goal   Rebuild the neighborhood association membership and leadership by organizing an annual meeting and social event.

Objective   Organize an annual meeting to be attended by 100 neighbors in six months to establish three top priorities for the association's workplan for the next year and elect a new board. Organize an ice cream social to follow the meeting to entice 35 new members and families to attend for the first time.

Method   Establish an organizing committee of 5 board and general members to meet monthly. Delegate duties for program logistics, site logistics, publicity, and nominee recruitments. Solicit donations for 10 gallons of ice cream. Organize a team of 25 volunteers to distribute 50 fliers each door-to-door in the neighborhood to reach 1,250 houses.

Timeline

A timeline indicates when your objectives will be met.   Timelines are not always necessary if dates are described in your objectives and methods. However, a straightforward calendar list of deadlines or benchmarks will also give you an easy way to measure your progress once you begin the project.

The calendar should be built around the needs and availability of the group's constituents. Your calendar should reflect common sense yearly cycles such as:

❑ Neighborhood Associations might slow down in the summer or during winter holidays.
❑ When are your organization's big events throughout the year.
❑ School year calendars when engaging youth.
❑ Matching the decision-making cycle of government agencies addressing your issues.
❑ Seasonal cycles that might affect participation or logistics, i.e. don't plant trees in summer, don't have an outdoor event in January.

Evaluation

The evaluation answers how you will know if you have succeeded by measuring your success or failure. This is an opportunity to describe how you will use what you've learned to build your organization's leadership and capacity to do things differently in the future. You should also have a plan for how the evaluation and its results will be reported and the audience to which it will be directed.

There are two types of formal evaluation: one that measures the product and the other analyzes the process. Either or both might be appropriate to your project. The approach you choose will depend on the nature of the project and its objectives. For either type, you will need to describe the manner in which evaluation information will be collected and how the data will be analyzed.

Your proposal should be designed to generate some numbers when the grant period is over such as: number of people served, increases in membership, performances staged, number of street trees planted, number of newsletters distributed – whatever relates to your program goals. Find a way to quantify the results of your work.

Personnel

Provides the "Who" of your proposal. Who is going to get the job done. Personnel can be used in the broadest sense and refer to volunteers, work study students, consultants, as well as to paid agency or organization staff. Not all grantmakers require this section, especially for many small grant applications. Sometimes staff and board leadership descriptions can be incorporated into the organizational history section.

Highlights to emphasize in personnel descriptions:

❑ A strong, experienced, and knowledgeable project director – paid or volunteer - is one of the strongest factors that can help influence a grant decision.

❑ Provide brief profiles highlighting the expertise and qualifications of your staff, board members and or key volunteers. If staff will need to be recruited specifically for the project summarize skill sets you'll be looking for.

❑ Summarizing tasks volunteers undertake helps to underscores the value added by the volunteers as well as the cost-effectiveness of the project.

❑ Be certain to describe whether staff are full time or part time on the project. Also acknowledge volunteers interns working full time or part time.

❑ You may have to address your organizational capacity and how you will rearrange the work priorities for already maxed out staff or board members.

❑ If your organization does not possess an individual with a strong project management background, you may have to recruit, show a collaborative relationship, or use an advisory group structure to support the lack of project management experience.

Budgets: How much money do we ask for?

Ask for as much as you need. Consider past expense records to calculate future costs. You may need to seek outside assistance to estimate typical costs for some items you're not familiar with.

Standard checklist for most project budgets

1. **How much money will you need to do the job right?**

   > Don't guess – call the printer or mailing house and get bids. If staff are involved consider what percentage of their time will be dedicated to this project and only ask for an appropriate percentage of their FTE (full-time equivalency.)

2. **How much overhead can be included in the budget?**

   > Few foundations fund general support or unrestricted budgets. Divide up your overhead – rent, phone line, internet account, staff - and include a fraction in each project proposal. Typically, limit your indirect administrative costs to 15% or less.

3. **Who is likely to fund your project, and how much are they likely to give?**

   > Pay attention to the interests of prospective foundations and the typical range of their grants. You may need to seek several smaller grants to fully fund a project. First time requests should be in the low end of a range.

4. **How will you manage the difference between the amount you need and the amount you think you can raise?**

   > Your fantasies of what you hope to accomplish will need to be measured against reality. When that happens scale back and reduce budgets, use special appeals to members, etc.

5. **How much uncertainty can you handle?**

   > Writing a budget is a guessing game. If the proposed budget turns out to be significantly different from your actual income and expenses be sure to communicate changes with project funders.

What goes into a budget

A budget will need to include both:

Expenses: How much money will be needed to complete the project

Not every project will require all these items, and many project budgets will include expenses not covered here – but this list is a good place to start.

Revenues: How do you plan to raise the money. List all prospective sources – individuals, foundations, government agencies, program fees, benefit events, etc.

Typical expenses and revenues to consider:

- ❑   Printing and photocopying

- ❑   Postage and shipping

- ❑   Long-distance telephone

- ❑   Internet Service Provider and Online fees

- ❑   Materials and supplies

- ❑   Mileage and travel

- ❑   Salary (organizers, support staff)

- ❑   Benefits (social security, payroll taxes, worker's compensation, health insurance)

- ❑   Outside services and non-support staff

- ❑   Equipment rentals

- ❑   Infrastructure costs (new playground equipment, signage, benches, etc.)

Attachments

Grant makers may request additional items to support your proposal. The key word is "requested." Include only what they ask for, because grant makers hate to receive big piles of unsolicited paper. Occasionally you will be given the option of enclosing whatever you think is most relevant. Be judicious.

Most commonly requested attachments are:

❑ Copy of your Internal Revenue Service tax-exemption letter.

❑ A list of your board members and/or brief biographical notes about your board (If not requested in a Personnel section.)

❑ A current brochure or newsletter. Only one issue, ideally covering the issue your proposal addresses.

❑ Letters of support from your constituents or other organizations showing evidence of community support, collaboration, or your ability to draw on resources outside of your own organization.

Cover Letter

The cover letter is the first thing that emerges from the envelope, but the last thing you write. Its purpose is only as a friendly introduction and helps to establish rapport between you and your foundation contact.

1. Remind the reader of any previous communication or relationship

2. State how much money you're requesting

3. Describe – briefly – the mission of your organization

4. Explain how your proposal meets the foundation's guidelines and interests

5. Offer to provide additional information

Sustainability

It stands to reason that most grantmakers will not want to take on a permanent funding commitment to a particular organization. Rather, foundations will want you to prove:

❑   That your project is finite (with start-up and ending dates).

❑   That it is capacity-building (that it will contribute to the future self-sufficiency of your organization and/or enable it to expand services that might be revenue generating).

❑   Or that it will make your organization attractive to other funding sources in the future.

Be very specific about current and projected funding streams, both earned income and fundraised, and about the base of financial support for your nonprofit.   Have backup figures and future revenue projections available, in case a prospective funding source asks for these, even though you are unlikely to include this information in the actual grant proposal.

Some grantmakers will want to know who else will be receiving a copy of this same proposal.   Do not be shy about sharing this with the grantmaker. In some cases the grantmaker may want to suggest collaboration with other non-profits as a condition or suggest relationships they have with other foundations to support your funding request.