

Nonprofit News

8 Grant Proposal Writing Tips

From Confused to Focused

by Joanne Fritz, About.com

Writing a grant proposal can be daunting, and the information that you've gathered can look overwhelming. But there are some tried and true guidelines to keep in mind as you prepare for and write that proposal. When confusion sets in, revisit these tips to get your bearings again.

1. **Stop, think, and organize your ideas.**

After you've gathered all the information you think you will need, go back and reread the funder's guidelines so that you are writing exactly what the funder wants. Then identify the main point, concept or theme of your proposal. All of the points that come after will follow logically from that central idea. Write down those broad concepts first.

2. Take the time to write an outline of your proposal. For some writing projects, writing whatever comes to mind first works, but, for a grant proposal, you will save time by carefully outlining what you will write and in the order that you will write it. Then it is a matter of filling in that outline. The outline can change, but it is rewarding to check off sections of the outline as you finish them.

3. When confused, refocus on the outline. If you get stuck somewhere, just move on to another part of the outline. You can circle back and usually will find that what was confusing earlier now becomes clear. Having an outline can help assuage the fear that you might be going in circles or alleviate that feeling of being overwhelmed by too much information.

4. Ax the jargon. Use language that anyone can understand, not just specialists in your field or people who work at your agency. Jargon is irritating to readers and often seems pretentious. Winston Churchill said, "Broadly speaking, the short words are the best, and the old words best of all." So use those old short words instead of fancy new long ones.

5. Include human interest. People, even institutional funders, want to give to other people. Even though you must include plenty of facts, make sure that stories about real people illustrate the issues you are writing about. Stories backed up with data are likely the best way to reach the hearts and the minds of your readers.

6. Don't exaggerate. Keep the problem and the solutions realistic. Don't let your passion for your cause drive you to hyperbole. Describe manageable problems and propose doable solutions. Don't promise more than you can deliver and carefully match need and solution with plenty of programmatic specifics.

7. Simplify. The length and complexity of your proposal does not affect the amount of money you receive. Stick to the main points, eliminate wordiness, and present your ideas as concisely as possible. Don't try the patience of your readers. Short and succinct will win them over.

8. Revise, edit and clarify. After writing the best draft you can, put it aside and let it "cool" as long as possible. Then go back and reread the document. Does it make sense? Are there gaps? Are the word choices appropriate and the grammar pristine? Have one or two other people, who are willing to give you honest feedback, read the proposal. Have them put question marks in the margins wherever they get hung up or don't understand.

Try reading the proposal out loud to someone. Sometimes reading aloud will tell us where the wording is awkward, and certainly if the listener says "huh?" a lot, you know you have work to do.

Go back and read the funder's guidelines again. Have you done what they asked?

Spring
2014

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Nonprofit University

June 9, 2014—Bucks County Community College, Newtown, PA

8:00-4:00 pm cost: \$30 pp staff & board members; \$100 pp for professionals serving the sector

The powerful presentations and panel discussions at Nonprofit University 2014 will provide knowledge, tools and strategies within three main tracks: **grantsmanship, leadership & sustainability**. This full day conference is designed for nonprofit managers and executives of all levels interested in building and sustaining high performing organizations.

GRANTSMANSHIP

LEADERSHIP

SUSTAINABILITY

8:00-8:30 am **Registration and Breakfast**

8:30-10:00

The Generosity Marketplace

Join with colleagues to discuss a need your organizations has, share resources you have to offer, and explore the potential for collaboration. The Generosity Marketplace will be available to make connections through out the day.

10:15-11:45

SESSION I

1. Grantsmanship: Roundtable with the Experts

Meet with experts and discuss four key grant areas: building the case for support; the power of language in your grant, budgeting & financials, and outcomes measurement

Kate Moore, Executive Director, Corporate and Foundation Relations Temple University

Erika Almiron, Executive Director Juntos

Jennifer Pedroni, North Penn Community Health Foundation

Kristine Parkes, MA, CFRE, cultivate

2. The Power of Values Based Leadership

Why does who you are and how you do things trump what you do? The Values-based Leadership philosophy focuses on who we are and how we behave rather than what positional power we hold. True leadership is about earning authority through our example and actions so that people choose to follow us. Leadership is not about positional power or the ability to make people do our will.

Davis Taylor, TAI Incorporated

3. Gift Planning in a Capital Campaign

This session will highlight the issues and strategies for effectively incorporating gift planning into your development program including gift acceptance, counting and recognition, fostering donor participation and collaboration among colleagues.

Lynne Ierardi, Esq., Director of Gift Planning, University of Pennsylvania

12:45-2:15

SESSION II

1. Nonprofit Resource Center: Your Source for Grants

Looking to energize your fundraising efforts? Join us as we take a guided tour of Foundation Directory Online, the premier grantseeking database. Learn how to create customized searches to develop targeted lists of foundations that will match your organization's funding needs.

Kevin Farley, Grantwriting & Instruction Librarian, Grundy Library

2. The Charity Watchdogs are Watching you! Are you watching them?

So called Charity Watchdogs are rating nonprofit organizations and making these ratings public. They are rating you now, or will be soon, and your donors are looking. Learn who these watchdogs are, know what they are looking at, and learn what you should do to protect your organization.

Patti Withington, Your Part-Time Controller, LLC

3. Go See People

Fundraising is like sales. We need to spend as much time as we can every day, speaking with donors (face to face or on the phone). Working with a process helps us avoid distractions and do the behavior that brings in gifts. Making visits is easy when you call the right people and stick to your process.

Joe Tumolo, Fundraise on Purpose

2:30-4:00 SESSION III

1. Meet the Funders

Join local funders representing seven foundations as they share best practices, provide their insight to trends in the sector and offer suggestions to increase your organization's competitiveness.

- Diana Doherty**, Seybert Foundation and Fourjay Foundation (facilitator)
- Linda Goodwin**, Bucks County Foundation
- Jennifer Leith**, Douty Foundation and Women's Way
- Laura McKenna**, Patricia Kind Foundation
- David Gould**, William Penn Foundation

2. Using Dashboards and Key Performance Indicators to Spur your Organization Forward

Just like the dashboard on your car provides you with vital information when you drive, a financial dashboard can communicate to you and your Board the financial condition of your nonprofit by highlighting key performance areas where you are successful as well as areas that need attention.

Cindy Bergvall, CPA-Bee, Bergvall & Co./Catalyst Center Nonprofit Management

3. Planned Giving: Marketing vs. Mechanics

The details of Planned Giving can sometimes feel overwhelming, but the real success comes from getting out there and connecting with your donors – marketing your Planned Giving program. This workshop will present cases illustrating the applicability of the various tools of Planned Giving, sharing stories of how to cultivate donors and move them from regular annual donors to committed members of your Heritage Society. This team effort will be discussed; the roles of the various team members and the internal support necessary to make a winning team with a cheering donor section.

Susan Fisher, CFP, CGPA, First Savings Charitable Foundation

REGISTRATION

Questions?

Contact Liz Vibber at 215-343-2727 lvibber@bbco-cpa.com

Thanks to our sponsors, we have once again been able to keep the registration fee to a minimum. Registration includes the full-day conference, breakfast and lunch.

Cost: \$30 pp for staff and board members of not-for-profit organizations
\$100 pp for professionals serving the not-for-profit sector

Register via our website at: www.catalystnonprofit.com/training or by faxing/emailing the following information to 215-343-8080 or lvibber@bbco-cpa.com Checks should be payable to: Bee, Bergvall & Co. and mailed to PO Box 754, Warrington PA 18976

Name: _____ Title: _____

Organization: _____

Phone: _____ e-mail: _____

Session I

- Roundtable
- Values-based Leadership
- Gift Planning

Session II

- NP Resource Center
- Charity Watch Dogs
- Go See People

Session III

- Meet the Funders
- Dashboard/KPIs
- Planned Giving

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• 2013 •
Charitable Giving
• REPORT •



2013 Charitable Giving Report

According to the [2013 Charitable Giving Report](#), last year marked the largest year-over-year increase in charitable giving since the recession – overall giving increased 4.9 percent and online giving grew 13.5 percent in 2013 compared to 2012. The report is derived from The Blackbaud Index and includes 24 months of overall giving data from 4,129 nonprofit organizations representing more than \$12.5 billion in total fundraising. The report also includes online giving data from 3,359 nonprofits representing \$1.7 billion in online fundraising — the largest analysis of actual

overall and online giving data in the nonprofit sector. It can bring you valuable fundraising insights to help you create a successful 2014.

Key findings from the report:

1. Overall charitable giving grew 4.9% in 2013, while online giving grew 13.5%.
2. Online giving accounted for 6.4% of all charitable giving in 2013.
3. Large organizations had the greatest increase in overall charitable giving in 2013, while small organizations had the greatest increase in online giving during 2013.
4. International affairs organizations had the greatest increase in overall charitable giving in 2013 (13.2%), while faith-based organizations had the greatest increase in online giving in 2013 (18.1%).
5. More than one-third (33.6%) of overall charitable giving happens in the last three months of the year, with the highest percentage (17.5%) coming in December.

For the full report or infographic, visit <https://www.blackbaud.com/nonprofit-resources/charitablegiving-infographic>

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