



7 Steps to Grant Success!

How to be 100% Ready to Apply for Grant Funding

By Margit Brazda Poirier, Grants4Good LLC

Welcome!

I'm so glad you're here!
Thank you for taking the
time to download this
document and for wanting
to learn more about how
YOU can succeed in
obtaining grant funding for
your work.



I wrote my first grant application in the early 1990's (back when everything was paper!) and have written hundreds of applications since then, resulting in over 20 million in funding for my clients. But it took lots of time to learn the “art and science” of grant writing and I want to save you the time and effort of having to learn on the job for the decades it took me.

That is why I created this quick guide to help you get started with finding and getting grants for your work. **If you follow each of the 7 Steps, you will be well on your way to being 100% ready to apply for grant funding.**

All too often I have seen people skip the most important tasks that need to be done before they ever apply for grants. The result? Frustration...at not getting the funding AND having taken up tons of time that could have been used more effectively elsewhere (like on another project, or on the beach!).

So please enjoy this quick guide, follow the steps, and have fun! The rewards of your hard work WILL pay off...

Happy grant seeking,

Margit Brazda Poirier, Founder and Owner, Grants4Good LLC

STEP #1: Are you Eligible for Grant Funding?

First and foremost, is your organization eligible to apply for, and receive grant funding? This is a critical question that is often overlooked.

- For **NONPROFIT** (or not-for-profit) organizations, you will need proof of your nonprofit status. That means having your 501(c)3 IRS Determination Letter on hand to provide with your application. Most foundations can only issue grants to organizations that have this IRS designation.
- For **BUSINESSES** (or for-profit) ventures, you will need written documentation of your company's legal structure (e.g. LLC) and a Tax Identification Number (or EIN).

There are 1,000+ government grant opportunities and over 87,000 grant making foundations in the U.S. All have different eligibility requirements, which you can discover during your grant research. For example, there are lots of grants for municipalities (towns, villages, counties), colleges and universities, K-12 school, Native American Tribes, and other entities.

The KEY thing to remember is:

There are thousands of grant opportunities available every year...some are perfect for your organization!

STEP #2: Identify a Program that Needs Grant Funding

To begin, identify ONE program in your organization that needs of funding, such as a youth mentoring program. Or pick one major task, such as a building expansion or equipment purchase that needs funding to expand company operations.

“But what if ALL our programs are a high priority and need grant funding?”

This is a common question. You will eventually be applying for many grants to fund multiple programs and priorities. But to get started, I recommend focusing only on one or two programs or projects that need funding.

To help you do this:

- Review your budget and strategic/business plan to identify upcoming projects.
- Decide which programs need grant funding, for what, and how much?
- Are you creating a new program?
- Funding an existing program?
- Which programs are most critical to solving a major problem?
- Which ones are ready to start/expand/continue NOW?

Rookie Mistake: Getting stuck on which program to select for grant funding. By starting with ONE, you lay the groundwork for all the other grant applications you will write. Trust me... it gets much easier!

STEP #3: Gather your Team

You can't do this alone. Be sure to gather your support team as early as possible and BEFORE you begin the grant seeking process.

Who should be on your team? You may want to include your:

- Executive Director
- Chief Financial Officer
- Development Director
- Marketing Staff
- Program Staff, or someone who will be in charge of delivering the program for which you seek funding.

These are the people that can get you the data you need when it comes time to write the grant application and provide critical budget figures. They may not write the grant, but they can offer valuable feedback before you submit it to the funder.

Most importantly, your team can help you plan out all the program details from start to finish, making your job of writing the grant that much easier!

STEP #4: Your Essential Documents

While each grant application is a little bit different, they tend to require similar documents, that you can gather NOW before a grant deadline. This way you won't spend precious time developing or finding these essential materials.

NONPROFITS:

- IRS Letter of Determination (as proof of nonprofit status)
- Board of Directors List (names and their affiliations)
- IRS 990 Tax Return
- Audited Financial Statements or an Audit Review (if you have them)
- Operating Budget (for your current fiscal year)
- Year-end Financial Statement or Budget to Actuals (that compares your actual budget figures to your projected budget for that year)

BUSINESSES:

- Articles of Incorporation
- Board of Directors List
- Financial Statements
- Business Plan

For both nonprofits and businesses...You may want to assemble the following as funders sometimes require them, or allow you to submit “optional” materials: Annual Report, Strategic Plan, Organization Chart, Letters of Support, Staff Resumes and/or Bios of Key Personnel, Memorandum of Understanding (if partnering with other organizations), Cost Estimates and/or Vendor Quotes.

STEP #5: What About Government Grants?

Government grants are typically more effort to write than foundation grants, BUT they can also yield far greater revenue.

To apply for government grant opportunities, whether federal or state grants, you need to do a few critical registrations if you haven't already. And remember, although it may not take YOU long to submit these registrations, you may have to wait days, weeks or months to get confirmation from the government agency. *So...start these EARLY!*

You will need a DUNS (Data Universal Numbering System) number and SAM (System for Award Management) registration if you intend to apply for federal (U.S. government) grants. Registration is free, so beware of email scams that ask you to pay hundreds of dollars to set up or renew your SAM registration. I get these on a regular basis and want to be sure you are warned.

First: Get a DUNS number (free) by going to: <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>. It may take a few business days to receive your assigned DUNS number. You need this number to apply for federal grants.

Second: Register in SAM (free) at www.sam.gov. The System for Award Management is how you get paid by the federal government once you are awarded a grant. Create a personal account and log in. Then click "Register a new entity" and follow the prompts. I did this for my business and it took about 30 minutes or so.

Deal-breaker Mistake:

Waiting too long to get all the registrations done. And then missing a critical once-a-year grant deadline because you didn't have the preliminaries complete.

Third: Register on grants.gov using your DUNS and SAM numbers. Grants.gov is the electronic portal you will use to apply for federal grants. No more paper applications like in the “old days” when I started grant writing.

Lastly, if you want to apply to your state agencies for grants, you need to register for those as well. Check your local state web sites to learn more.

STEP #6: Your Perfect Funder

As you already know, there are LOTS of foundations, corporations and government grant opportunities. So how do you choose which ones are the most likely to fund YOU and your important program(s)?

The #1 Key is to be sure the funder’s mission or purpose aligns directly with YOUR organization or program’s mission/purpose. Their mission could be as general as

Remember: Funders *want and need* to put their money behind programs and organizations that are going to deliver important outcomes. They need you as much as you need them!

“improving the quality of life for seniors” or as specific as “high school track scholarships for kids living in poverty”. Either way, do your research so you don’t waste time applying to funders who aren’t likely to award you with grants.

For government grant opportunities, the best and most legitimate listing of opportunities is grants.gov. There are 26 grant making agencies in the U.S. government (with over 900

grant opportunities). Be sure to subscribe to their free email lists to get up-to-date grant application notifications.

Foundation and corporate grants are a bit trickier, but there are lots of databases out there to choose from to begin your search. Some are free, some are not. Check with your local library for some free online and print resources to get you started.

And **always** contact the funder AFTER you have researched them, even if just to introduce your organization and let them know of your intention to apply for a grant.

STEP #7: Perfect Project Planning

Let's say you have identified 5 or 10 perfect funders to apply to AND you have identified your perfect program...are you ready to begin developing the grant proposal? *Not quite yet...*

Writing a grant proposal is so much easier if you have done all the planning work in advance. Consider answering the following questions (with your team, of course):

- Is this a new or existing program?
Either one is fine.
- Who will benefit from your program or effort? In other words, who is your specific target audience? (e.g. veterans living in low-income rural communities, Native American youth with high rates of school drop-out, etc...).

Rookie Mistake: Moving ahead with the grant application BEFORE taking the time to think through the program and its outcomes. Remember, funders are interested in knowing their grant dollars have resulted in positive change for a community and its people (animals, and/or environment).

- What ultimately changes for your target audience once you have all the funding you need? Or, how are their lives better because of your work? **HINT:** This is the start of developing your program **OUTCOMES**...the very thing that funders want to fund!

Now, you can begin to work on your grant proposal and program budget.

One Last Thing...

I hope this overview of the 7 Steps to Being 100% Ready for Grant Success has provided you with some ideas, structure and enthusiasm for getting the funding you need NOW! Just follow the steps one-by-one and you will be well on your way.

“But what about actually writing the grant applications? How long will THAT take and how do I get started?”

Good questions...stay tuned, I'll be back with more great tips and strategies to help you succeed and get the funding you need!

