

# The Elements of a Grant Proposal

Adapted from **Dennis Norris'** work in the 1996 **Pioneering Partners Notebook**.

Dennis is a featured author in **Electronic Learning Magazine** on the topic of Grantwriting

1. **Summary or abstract** - Write this part last. Establish your credibility; state your goal, sample activities, and cost. The summary should be brief, clear, and informative and of very high quality. STAY FOCUSED!
2. **Introduction** - This section highlights your credibility and your school's credibility. Give some background without being philosophical. Include data on the demographics of the population/community to be served and any significant info that will show the funder that you can carry out the grant work proposed.
3. **Needs Assessment** - Address the problem(s) you wish to correct. This should be related to your goals/objectives. Support this information with evidence/data. Do some RESEARCH. State the needs in terms of students, not the problems.
4. **Objectives** - Objectives are "outcomes" that define your activities. Tell *who, what, when, and how*. Make sure that you can assess the objectives.
5. **Activities** - Include justification and make sure that they are clear to any audience. Accompany these with a rationale of why these activities will help you accomplish your goals.
6. **Evaluation** - There are two types of evaluation - *product evaluation* that evaluates your program's results, and *process evaluation* that evaluates the way the program was conducted. Evaluation of a grant is the second most important part, next to the needs assessment. It is a wonderful opportunity to BE CREATIVE.
7. **Future Funding** - How can the program be sustained? Are you planning other fund raising efforts? Will your district assume responsible if the program is successful? The more specific you can be in your proposal regarding future funding, the more confidence it will create in the funding source.
8. **Budget** - This is an ESTIMATE of the cost of the program. Funders will usually provide you with a degree of latitude in the actual spending as long as you do not exceed the total amount of the grant. DO NOT list vague categories like "miscellaneous" without an explanation. Make sure to include in-kind contributions, shared expenses, other funding, etc. This looks great on a proposal even though it is not always required.

# **10 Tips for Grantwriters**

Adapted from *Grants and Grantwriting* by **Nancy Powell** in the **Teachers Guide to Cyberspace**

1. Have a great idea that stretches the minds of students and challenges teachers to extend past their comfort zones. Your program or project needs to be unique, have some sound benefits for students, and be able to be maintained by the district and/or replicated by others.
2. Find a funder and a grant that seems to fit the ideas that you've only dreamed of. Look in your community first and then expand your search.
3. If time permits, make every attempt to gather a team of educational personnel, business people, community members, and parents who are or could become interested in the program.
4. Read the grant application and guidelines very carefully, taking special note of things that seem to be important to the funders.
5. Remember and remind funders who the grant will ultimately benefit - your students!
6. Address each and every question posed in a clear, succinct way. Make sure to use the terminology found in the grant application and stay away from educational and technical jargon.
7. Prepare a budget that anyone can understand. A detailed budget is usually preferred over a general one.
8. Check, check, and triple check to make sure the grant application is complete and that you meet the deadline.
9. Remember that not all applications are awarded funding, but if your project is one you truly want to make happen, you can find a funder. Don't hesitate to call or write to get the reviewers comments if your grant is not funded.
10. Write a thank you note no matter what the outcome.

# Why Proposals Get Rejected

After analyzing hundreds of grant proposals that were rejected, the following list has been put together. It contains the major reasons readers have rejected proposals.

## A. Needs Statement

1. The needs statement is not of sufficient importance, or is unlikely to produce any new useful information.
2. The proposed research is based upon insufficient evidence, is doubtful, or unsound.
3. The problem is more complex than the writer appears to realize.
4. The problem has only local significance or fails to fall within the general field of the granting agency.
5. The proposal is too ambitious, too many elements under simultaneous investigation.
6. The writing is nebulous and diffuse with a clear research aim.

## B. Approach

1. The methods, procedures and evaluations are unsuited to the stated objective(s).
2. The description is lacking in clarity to permit adequate evaluation.
3. The overall design is not carefully thought out.
4. The approach lacks scientific imagination.
5. The material proposed to be used is unsuited to the study's objective.

## C. Personnel

1. Personnel does not have adequate experience or training for this research.
2. Personnel proposes to rely too heavily on insufficiently experienced associates.
3. Personnel needs more liaison with colleagues, s/he is not trying to take into account related fields, etc.