



Grant Writing Guide: 7 Prep Tips

1. Conversations

Share your project/program ideas with others. Who else might care about the project or program? Meet with people (in person) to brainstorm and determine possibilities and roles (who is the best suited to row, who is best suited to steer?). Determine who would be the most strategic and eligible applicant and brainstorm all potential funding sources.

2. White Papers

White papers help form the project or program and tell your story – a tool to share with partners. Much or all of what is written in a white paper is used in grant proposals, thus a good use of time.

Limit to a 4-page maximum & include the following:

A) Issue or need – Why is this needed and how did you determine the need (use data & testimony)? Who/what benefits from addressing this need? Does your project or program have a goal? Truthfully customize the value proposition of why this is an important issue. Limit to 1 page.

B) Approach or Capacity

What will you/partners DO? What are your strategies? What geographic area will you serve? Who will lead action steps (define roles in one sentence per agency/partner)? Be intentional about the steps necessary to achieve the overall goal. Is replication possible? The “eligible applicant” requirement is a hurdle easily overcome through partnerships. Limit to 1 page.

C) Timeline – What is the term of the project or program? Example: “18 months after securing investment partner(s)...”. Limit ¼ page.

D) Budget – How much is needed; how will the funds be spent? Limit to 1 page.

3. Research funding opportunities

Look for a match of your project or program goals with funder priorities. How does the project or program help the funder invest in what they want to achieve? Consider non-traditional funders.

Search for funding partners through:

- Ask grants officers and economic development organizations to forward any aligned opportunities from their organizations or from others they come across.
- Sign up for newsletter List Serves from foundations, state & federal organizations applicable to your specific area – USDA Good Greens, National Association of Development Orgs, Economic Development Administration & more.



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4. Determine your Economic, Environmental or Social Good

Investments typically require an economic, environmental or social good. What is your “E/E/S good”?

What is your value proposition? Examples are:

ECONOMIC GOOD:

- Foundations – helping low income residents gain access to healthy, locally grown foods from low income growers
- Art Agencies – when integration of artists in design & construction projects or programs that engage artists and community
- MDA – Good Food Access Program (GFAP) – access to healthy locally grown food that creates long term behavioral changes (Also, INDIVIDUAL GOOD)
- USDA - MDA – VAPG new market opportunities for growers

ECONOMIC & SOCIAL GOOD

- Hospitals- health & wellness for targeted areas of high levels of residents with chronic illnesses

SOCIAL GOOD:

- Blue Cross Blue Shield – social connectedness at markets = mental and physical health benefits

5. Connect

Call or visit to speak with potential funding partner whose investments align with your project or program. Program officers are the first point of contact unless you or a local partner have other advice and relationships.

Potential funding partners should have an alignment with your value propositions. Funding partners update their funding focus/priorities and some opportunities are by invite only. Check in with program officers once you have an idea and determine how your work might align.

6. Consider time and expenses

Be sure to cover grant writing time and expenses. Funding partners do not typically fund grant writing or any needed documents to submit the proposals. Be aware of the potential up-front costs before starting. Grant funds are only used during the term of a grant award, not before, not after.

7. Concurrent action to writing applications

A) Make a list of all the potential supporters or those who may offer letters of support or commitment. Draft an email requesting letters and send with a template letter of support or commitment.

B) Draft resolutions if needed and start the internal approval process.



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