

Ten Tips for Successful Grant Writing
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If you have created a product, program, or project that meets a significant need, you may consider applying for a grant. There are different grant options for nonprofits and for profit companies.

1. Research different grant opportunities: There are federal, state, and local government grants, as well as non-governmental, private sector grants available. Money is tight, and grant writing is usually a very competitive process. In general, successful grant applicants put a great deal of effort into their applications. Do your research carefully to make sure that you qualify for the type of grant you are seeking.

2. Try to get copies of previously successful applications: The Freedom of Information Act allows people to get information about previously awarded government grants. If you cannot obtain information this way, the grant websites themselves often point to past recipients. Read all you can about the successful applications. Does your program/product/project fit into what is generally awarded for that specific type of grant?

3. Pick up the phone: Some past grant recipients may be willing to speak to you. Do some investigating on line to see if you can find their contact information. If so, reach out to as many past recipients as you can. See who might be willing to answer questions, give you insight into the process, and/or provide valuable advice.

4. Research your potential competition: Explore the other products/programs/projects out there that claim to solve the same problem that you are trying to solve. Make a comparison chart. Be clear about the ways your product/program/project would be more effective than those that already exist.

5. Don't procrastinate: Some grants are offered every year and the Request for Proposals (RFP) do not change significantly from one year to the next. Try to gather as much information as you can about the grant application process *before* the RFP even comes out. As you work on a grant application, you will undoubtedly come up with questions. You want to make sure that you have plenty of time to research those answers.

6. Participate in all online assistance provided by the company giving the grant: Many grantors give webinars or live presentations about the application process early in the grant writing period. Some organizations have archived webinars for you to view. If you attend a live presentation (or a live webinar) try to get your questions answered.

7. Read all directions carefully: The RFPs for grants are usually *very clear* about their expectations. They often have prerequisites you need to consider, limited time periods in which they will answer specific questions, and they often specify additional documents that need to be part of the grant application itself. Give yourself plenty of time so you can make sure you cross all T's and dot all I's!

8. Problem/Significance Statement: There will almost always be a section where you need to prove how your program/product/project is designed to solve a significant problem. Think about your core mission and the research behind its potential (or actual) efficacy. How does the features of your offering make it uniquely (or at least better) able to solve the problem than what is already out there?

9. Determine the funding you need and why you need it: Decide how you need to spend the grant money to meet your goals, and why the funding is essential. Fill out the budget section very carefully. Check it over many times. Be as exact as you can about the expenses and make sure it all adds up!

10. Write clearly: Make sure your work is edited and that everything you say is crystal clear. Evaluators usually have many grants to read. If what you say is confusing, they will not have the time or patience to try to figure out what you meant. It may be helpful to ask someone who is *not* connected to your organization to read what you wrote, to see what needs to be clarified.



Harriet Isecke is a successful grant writer. As the former Curriculum Director of the Hackensack Public School system she wrote and managed millions of dollars in grant funding from government agencies. Her company, *Readorium*, was funded by three Small Business Innovative Research Grants from the US Department of Education.