Tips for Submitting a Grant Proposal or Funding Request

Before you send a funding request, be sure you have compiled all the information required by the funder, as well as a compelling statement about why your project is important and who will benefit from it. Some foundations and other funding entities have very specific requirements for the content and format of grant proposals. Be sure to ask for and thoroughly review funding guidelines to verify your eligibility to apply and all proposal requirements. It is also a good idea to speak to an organization directly, if possible, before submitting an application to clarify guidelines and requirements and to gain an understanding of preferences and current priorities. All foundations and most funding programs are required to give their funding to organizations designated as non-profit by the IRS. Be sure your organization's tax status meets the requirements of the funding program.

It is always a good idea to have one or two people read your proposal before you submit it, checking for clarity and to proof-read for any mistakes that might have been overlooked.

A typical grant proposal will generally include the following components:

- Cover Letter- Use a standard business letter format. Get the funder's attention with a story and/or interesting language. Share relevant details including any contacts you have with the organization, the amount of money you are requesting and why the project is important.

- Executive Summary- a one page captivating summary of who you are, the amount of money you are requesting and how you plan to use the money to make an impact for children and families.

- Proposal Narrative (See sample template)
    1. Request
    2. Statement of Need
    3. Project Description
    4. Objectives and Timeline
    5. Impact
    6. Evaluation Plan
    7. Key Personnel
    8. Budget
    9. Applicant Organization
    10. Summary

- Budget- Identify a total budget for the project, including all line-item expenses and other sources of income. Some funders also might request specific financial information about your organization, such as your most recent audited financial statement, most recent Form 990 tax return or the organization budget for the current year, including income and expenses.

- Organization Information- Describe your organization's history and major accomplishments. Include details that demonstrate your track record and ability to implement your proposed plan.

- Attachments include materials which will support your proposal. These might include a flyer describing your project, resumes or CV's of organizational and/or project leadership, design concept or building plan. Also include the IRS statement confirming your nonprofit status. Provide an outline of attachments so that information can be easily accessed.

When you receive donations to your project, always send a thank you letter as soon as possible (within 24-48 hours is best). The letter should confirm the amount of money received and express your gratitude for their investment in your project. Some foundations will also require reports on the progress of the project and/or expenditure of grant funds. Make sure that your accounting methods can accommodate expenditure reporting requirements, if any. Keep close track of deadlines and other reporting requirements.

Foundation representatives or other funders often welcome opportunities to be informed about the project. Invite donors to your grand opening, or offer them a special preview of your site to see the work in progress and the final product.

At the conclusion of your project, thank donors once again to let them know that their investment in the lives of children is truly appreciated and is making a difference.