MASTERING GRANT WRITING

11 Tips for Success

1 Embrace the guidelines

Grants from the ALA Public Programs Office (and most other funders) have set guidelines that explain project goals, eligibility, deadlines, and other important information. Skipping over a thorough read of guidelines risks missing vital information needed to craft competitive proposals.

2 Start early

Never wait until the last minute to start working on your application. Start your application well in advance to alleviate stress and ensure thoroughness. Early starts will give you ample time to collect additional elements like support letters and data.

3 Attend pre-application webinars (when applicable)

Pre-application webinars for Public Programs Office grant opportunities are typically hosted within the first month of applications. These webinars give applicants the opportunity to hear directly from staff about the grant goals and requirements and provide an in-depth walkthrough of the application. If you miss the live webinar, the recordings are always made available.

4 Take advantage of office hours

Seek feedback and guidance from grant office hours or arrange personal meetings with staff to refine your proposal.

5 Give comprehensive responses

Answer all questions thoroughly, avoiding overlooking prompts, and ensure descriptive, detailed responses for a robust proposal.

6 Tell your library and community's story

This is the fun part! You know your library and community best. Write with the assumption that the person reading your proposal has no other means to learn about your community besides what you present.

As you draft this section of an application, don't rely on standard boilerplate language. Craft narratives tailored to showcase your library and community, emphasizing their relevance to the grant's objectives.

7 Back claims with data

Strengthen your proposal with references from reputable sources like census data or government reports to support your narrative.

8 Involve local partners

While not required for every grant, involving local partners is a great way to strengthen your application as it shows community buy-in. Partners can be involved in a multitude of ways, anything from co-hosting a program to helping to promote your project.

If you include a partner in your proposal, include a letter of support in your application.

9 Have someone proofread

Have colleagues proofread your application for clarity and correctness, enhancing its quality before submission. And when you're done writing, try reading the entire application out loud. This is a great way to help with narrative flow.

10 Make sure your budget adds up

As you are finalizing your proposal, double-check the numbers in your budget. Ensure your budget aligns precisely with the grant amount and justifies all proposed expenses logically.

11 Volunteer to be a peer reviewer

Gain insights into successful proposals by volunteering as a peer reviewer, offering valuable experience for future applications.

ALA PUBLIC PROGRAMS OFFICE