

101 Ways to Win.....

The Grant Writing Game

by

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Introduction

In this brief ebook, Dr. Steve Price and Stephen Price share 101 strategies for successful grant writing – revealing the very methods they have used over the past nine years to secure over 100 million dollars of grant funding for their clients – including over 14 million dollars for a single school district during 2007.

The strategies in this ebook are organized into easily-referenced sections, which may be used as checklists while writing each part of your proposal.

Though you may not be able to apply every strategy in every proposal, this ebook contains a wealth of information to help you succeed in grant writing.

For more detailed information on the strategies in this ebook, be sure to sign up for Dr. Price's "Unfair Advantage" newsletter at:

www.GrantWritingStrategies.com

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Section 1.

Before you start writing....

1. Make sure the focus of your project directly serves the interests of the funding agency.
2. Gather information about the needs of the population your project will serve. You might use results from surveys, focus groups, interviews, or demographic data.
3. Determine what measurable change you expect the project to make within the population served.
4. Hold a meeting with key individuals to plan the proposed activities for the project and take detailed notes.
5. Hold a planning meeting with potential collaborative partners and take notes on what each partner will contribute to the project (staff, facilities, materials and supplies, or funding).
6. Make a list of key contacts to call for additional information during the writing process.
7. Read the RFP (Request for Proposal) carefully to determine who you will need resumes, MOUs (Memorandum of Understanding) letters of support, or signatures from – and make arrangements to get these items ahead of time.
8. If the organization you are writing for has a board of directors, make sure you can get board approval prior to the grant submission deadline.
9. Outline the entire proposal so you can see how each piece of the proposal logically flows together to form a convincing case for funding.
10. Divide the job of narrative writing into a series of shorter deadlines. This will keep you from being overwhelmed and prevent procrastination.

Section 2.

To write a high quality grant narrative...

11. Include most or all the following elements, no matter what questions the funding agency or RFP asks:

- Executive Summary of the Proposal
- Introduction
- Statement of the Need or Problem to be Addressed
- Goals and Measurable Objectives
- Activities or Methods
- Management Plan and Key Personnel
- Description of Collaborative Partnerships
- Project Evaluation
- Plan for Sustainability After Grant Funding Ends
- Budget and Budget Narrative

12. Answer the questions in the RFP in the same order they were asked to make it easy for a grant reader to apply a scoring rubric.
13. Turn the questions in the RFP into statements to use as headings in your grant narrative.
14. Answer each question in the RFP separately instead of weaving several questions together.
15. Use words and phrases from the questions in the RFP when expressing your answers to make it clear to the reader which question you are answering.
16. Keep the length of each section in proportion with the number of points you can score for that section.
17. Write clear, direct statements using as few words as possible to conserve space.
18. Keep your narrative free of jargon, acronyms, and big vocabulary words. Making the reader work to understand what you are saying will hurt more than it will help.
19. Break up the text using charts, graphs, diagrams, bullet points, bold type or italics when you can to make it easy on the reader.
20. Write in the active voice as much as possible to make stronger, confidence-inspiring statements.

21. When describing activities or outcomes, use the verb “will” instead of less certain phrases like “hope to” or “plan to.” This will help inspire confidence in the reader’s mind.
22. Avoid generalizations, statements of opinion, and adjectives that imply judgments of value or quality. Just give the facts and let the reader form his or her own conclusions.
23. Prioritize clarity over word variation. Use consistent wording for goals, objectives, and activities throughout the narrative – even if it feels redundant.
24. Avoid the use of literary devices or flowery language. Do not use metaphorical language, simile, hyperbole, poetic language, alliteration. Grant proposals are technical writing not creative writing and you will be scored based on whether or not you provide the correct information in the correct places in the clearest possible way.
25. Write in the third person. This keeps the writing formal and keeps your proposal from sounding like a personal letter or plea.

Section 3.

To write a well-organized, concise executive summary that frames your project...

26. Introduce the organization applying for the grant and make statements to establish the applicant’s credibility. Also mention any collaborative partners.
27. Briefly (in 1 paragraph) describe the problem your organization is requesting funding to address.
28. List the desired outcomes to be accomplished as a result of the requested funding.
29. Disclose the total cost of the project - the funds already committed by other sources, and the amount of funds being requested in the grant proposal. Make sure the total cost of the project is larger than the amount you are requesting from the funding agency.
30. Although the summary may be read first, don’t write it until you have finished the entire proposal. After writing the complete proposal, you will be much more familiar with your project and find it easier to decide what should be included in the summary.

Section 4.

To write a strong introduction that establishes your organization's capacity and purpose...

31. Create a lead sentence that tells what organization is applying for funds, what other organizations are involved in the partnership, and what the partnership will accomplish together.
32. State how your organization's purpose aligns with the goals of the funding agency.
33. Tell how long your organization has existed.
34. Write a few lines describing your organization's current activities, programs, or recent accomplishments.
35. Describe the population your organization serves.

Section 5.

To write a problem or needs statement that demonstrates the relevance of your project...

36. Explain how the need or problem your proposal addresses relates to the purpose of the funding agency.
37. Focus on a need or problem you can reasonably do something about.
38. Describe the problem to be addressed by the proposal in terms of the target population's needs, not the needs of your organization.
39. Document the need or problem with statistics.
40. Support the need or problem with quotes from experts.
41. Demonstrate input on the needs assessment from members of the population to be served.
42. Be sure to describe the needs in terms of the local population – not national statistics.

43. Avoid circular reasoning when describing your need. For example, not having a library doesn't justify the need for a library. The need for a library is justified by an illiterate population without access to books.
44. Conclude the needs assessment/problem statement with a sentence that leads into the goals and objectives. For example, "To address the needs of the target population, the partnership proposes an initiative that will...."

Section 6.

To write clear goals and objectives that address the needs of the population to be served...

45. Use consistent terminology when referring to goals, objectives, and outcomes. Don't use these terms interchangeably. Unless the RFP states otherwise, go with these definitions:

Goal: A general statement of how the project is expected to impact the target population.

Example:

"Improve the academic achievement of students."

Objective: A measure of success for one aspect of a goal. Each goal should have several objectives to measure success.

Examples:

"75% of 10th grade students will score at grade level or higher on the state standardized math test by June, 2008."

"75% of 10th grade students will pass the high school exit exam by June 2008."

Outcome: The actual results found when the target population is measured.

Examples:

78% of 10th grade students scored at grade level or higher in math on the state standardized math test given in June 2008.

81% of 10th grade students passed the math portion of the high school exit exam by June 2008.

46. Begin this section with a paragraph telling how the goals align with the purpose of the funding agency.
47. Include one goal to address each area of need in the problem statement.
48. Create multiple objectives to measure each goal.
49. Make sure each need mentioned in the problem statement is measured by at least one objective.
50. Write SMART objective statements. Make your objectives Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-Bound.
51. Include both “outcome” objectives and “process” objectives and distinguish between them.

Outcome Objective (measures end results):

100 children will be able to read on grade level by the end of one year.

Process Objective (quantifies the method used to obtain results):

100 children will be matched with reading tutors in September of 2008.

52. Do not confuse objectives with activities! Activities refer to action that will take place to achieve the objectives.

Section 7.

To describe activities or methods designed to achieve the stated objectives...

53. Only include activities that support at least one of the project’s objectives.
54. When possible, state which objective(s) an activity is designed to achieve.
55. Tell why you selected a certain activity or method over similar activities and methods.
56. If your methods are research-based, include citations.
57. Describe each activity in enough detail for the reader to be able to see it. Include the who, what, when, why, and where.

58. Describe activities in chronological order. For example, if selecting participants will be done first, then describe it first.
59. Unless your project has the capacity to serve everyone in your target population, share your methods for selecting participants who are most in need of the project.
60. Make the scope of project activities reasonable for the amount of funds you are requesting. Don't promise to do more than you can afford to do just to impress a reader.
61. Show activities on a timeline if space allows.
62. Be sure to clarify the relationship between proposed activities and activities or programs already in existence. Tell how your project will supplement and not supplant existing services available to your target population.

Section 8.

To describe your management plan and key personnel...

63. Describe the capacity of your organization to carry out the proposed project. Mention individuals' or the organization's experience in operating projects of similar size and scope.
64. Describe how your project fits within the current administrative structure of your organization. If there is a project director – tell who in your organization the project director will report to.
65. Describe the responsibilities *and* qualifications of each key staff person involved in the project.
66. Spend the most space describing the responsibilities and qualifications of the project director, or the person who will oversee the project.
67. When describing someone's qualifications, mention the highest degree they have obtained, any relevant certifications, training and related job experience. Keep descriptions of personnel brief and to the point. Quantify anything you can as a general rule (example: "Dr. Matthews served as professor of biological sciences for 15 years...")
68. If the person filling a position is unknown, make the qualifications generic – the information you would post in a job description).

69. If a person filling a position is known – consider including their resume in the appendix (if the grant allows). Some RFPs request the resumes of key personnel.
70. State the time commitment of each key staff person for the proposed project (this could be expressed in terms of FTEs – full-time equivalents).
71. Tell who each key staff person will report to.
72. Make sure the responsibilities of each staff person relate directly to the activities and methods previously described.
73. Explain the process by which project staff will be recruited, screened, and hired.
74. Be sure to describe a plan for non-discriminatory hiring practices. This appears as a question to be scored in many grant proposals.
75. If you are using an external evaluator for the project – don't use space to describe the evaluator in the personnel section. You can save space by describing the evaluator one time in the Project Evaluation section.

Section 9.

To design a quality evaluation plan that will provide accountability and lead to program improvement...

76. Describe who will be doing the evaluation and states their qualifications.
77. If you are applying for a larger amount of money (more than \$100,000 per year) – propose the use of an external evaluator to demonstrate a willingness to be accountable to a third party.
78. If you are using an external evaluator, ask the evaluator to design – or help design - the evaluation plan.
79. Include a plan to evaluate the activities *and* the outcomes.
80. Tell how success will be evaluated for each objective.
81. Describe how data will be collected and who will be responsible for collecting each type of data.
82. Include the use of qualitative data (results from focus groups, surveys, interviews, and observations) in addition to quantitative data.

83. Explain any test instruments, questionnaires, or surveys to be used.
84. Describe how data will be analyzed.
85. Describe the evaluation reports that will be produced.
86. Tell how the evaluation process will be used to improve the program.
87. Include a plan to disseminate the successes of the project.

Section 10.

To make a case for the sustainability of your project...

88. Briefly describe all partnering agencies, mentioning their mission and capacity.
Collaborative partners (with short descriptions) can be listed using bullet points.
89. Spell out the specific contributions of each partnering agency in terms of personnel, materials, funds, etc.
90. State the long-term commitments (to the project) of partnering agencies that will continue after grant funding ends.
91. Include MOUs or letters of support in the appendices (if allowed) to substantiate the contributions and commitments of partnering agencies.
92. Describe existing resources that can be used or leveraged to support the project.
93. Mention other funding sources for the project.
94. Emphasize any benefits of the project that will outlast funding such as training received, new programs or curriculum that is implemented or improved, new relationships formed between partnering agencies, etc.

Section 11.

To write a budget and budget narrative that gives the funding agency the confidence to trust your organization with their money...

95. Itemize your budget in as much detail as possible to give the funding agency a clear picture of how their money is being used.
96. Familiarize yourself with “allowable expenses” by reading the RFP very carefully – and do not violate these guidelines.
97. Make sure all budget items are either mentioned or directly relate to the activities described in the narrative. No items should be mentioned for the first time in the budget.
98. Demonstrate matching funds by listing all items donated or paid for by other sources, including personnel from partnering agencies or volunteers who provide services at no cost to the grant. This will assure the funding agency that they are not going to be responsible for 100% of the costs of the project.
99. Use the budget narrative to elaborate on how each budget item related to the activity described in the proposal.
100. Do not include a miscellaneous category in your budget or leave any funds unaccounted for.
101. Keep indirect or administrative costs at or below 5% (or in keeping with the guidelines of the grant).



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To receive more detailed information on the grant writing strategies in this ebook, sign-up for Dr. Price and Stephen’s monthly “Unfair Advantage” e-newsletter.

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In 2009, Dr. Price and Stephen will launch a brand new web site, The Grant Writing Center, to share over 40 years of collective grant writing expertise. The site will be located at:

The site is currently under construction. But when its completed, the Grant Writing Center website will offer you the most exhaustive collection of resources for grant writing success found anywhere on the Internet.

A membership at the online Grant Writing Center will include:

- Monthly “Unfair Advantage” e-newsletter
- Live discussion forums
- Live telephone seminars
- An exclusive grant mentoring program
- Over 100 downloadable resources in the form of pdf and mp3 files – that will provide more detailed information on all of the grant writing strategies in this ebook and much, much, more.

About the Authors

Dr. Steve Price and his son, Stephen Price, are the owners of Educational Resource Consultants, a company based in Fresno, California that specializes in writing grant proposals and evaluating grant funded programs for K-12 school districts, colleges, universities and non-profit organizations.

Dr. Steve Price holds a Doctorate in Educational Psychology, and is the former Director of the Center for Educational Research and Services at California State University, Fresno. Dr. Price's career in grant writing began in 1985, serving as Administrator for Resource Development in a K-12 school district, where he led the district's competitive grants program and the Foundation for ten years.

Stephen Price is a graduate of UC Davis with honors in Psychology, holds a Masters Degree in Research Psychology, and a Master of Divinity degree from Golden Gate Seminary in Mill Valley, CA. Over the past nine years, Stephen has written successfully funded grant proposals in a variety of areas including professional development, school improvement, service-learning, after school, mentoring, school technology, family literacy, youth fitness, violence prevention, and college access programs.

