

Grant Writing Tips

Our grant programs are highly competitive and the number of grants we can fund is always much lower than the number of applications worthy of funding. To help your program shine, in this article we share a few tips to help you prepare your grant application.

We search for applicant programs that are:

1. Led by enthusiastic, professional team members who have carefully crafted their plans to meet specific needs and who will appreciate the funds and use the grant money wisely and responsibly.
2. Supported by their community and demonstrating the organizational structure to be sustainable beyond the grant funding, making an award an investment in the future.

As you are writing, remember to:

- **Plan thoughtfully.** Take time to gather support and develop solid goals and a plan of action. Consider questions such as, Who is your garden for and what are their needs? What do you want to accomplish with your garden program? How are you going to accomplish your goals and what supplies will you need to obtain? How will you ensure the program is sustainable?
- **Involve your community during the planning phase.** The connections you make during this phase may be key to helping you find the funding that makes the garden a reality. Ask your supporters for enthusiastic letters of recommendation to add to your application. Don't underestimate the power of a glowing letter of recommendation to help push your application to the top of the stack, or the converse impact of a mediocre letter.
- **Match goals.** Carefully research each grant opportunity we offer before investing time in completing an application. We always post eligibility guidelines on the grant landing pages. Also check out postings about previous Grant Winners. Only apply for grants whose funding objectives match your program goals and whose awards meet your needs.
- **Follow directions.** It may be helpful to create a generic document that includes basic information frequently requested on grant applications (goals, objectives, needs statement, project description, evaluation plans, and budget), however, you must then tailor the information to fit the specific requirements of each application. Generic responses to specific questions will not gain favorable attention for your program. Be sure you comply with deadlines and all attachment requests.
- **Write carefully.** As you fill out an application, remember your C's: make sure your thinking is clear, concise, creative, competent, consistent, compelling, follows the criteria, and demonstrates collaboration. A good application effectively communicates the many qualities and benefits of your program in concise, descriptive language. Your proposal should convey enthusiasm, and stress the excellent organization and leadership fueling your garden program. Emphasize reasons why your project is unique and worthy of funding. Create a vivid image by describing what teachers and students will actually be doing, and detailing the outcomes for students, teachers, and/or the community.
- **Have someone proofread your finished application.** Ideally, ask someone who hasn't been involved with the planning process and invite him or her to be tough. Someone unfamiliar with your program can offer a fresh perspective and may identify areas that need clarification or elaboration.
- **Keep trying.** Don't let unsuccessful grant results deter your implementation of the garden program. As stated above, the number of highly qualified applications is always greater than the number of grants available. Do not translate funding rejection into a statement about the viability and value of your program. Continue to seek and apply for other grant opportunities and meanwhile, diversify your support by asking for donations within your community.