

## Grant Writing Tips

There are several important things to remember when filling out grant applications. If it is a Conference Grant, the reviewing group will check to see if your church has paid their full Shares of Ministry – especially because some of the funds come from Shares of Ministry, and they have a hard time justifying giving a church Shares of Ministry funds if that church hasn't contributed toward Shares of Ministry.

Before you start, put together a team of persons to help with the grant writing project. First, you need the idea person or persons – those passionate about it who will drive the entire project. Include someone who is a good researcher or who has access to statistical information about your area. They can be helpful to clarify the needs in your area. You need someone who knows how to write a budget and can figure out how much things cost. You need an excellent writer who knows everything about the project and who can write passionately. Then be sure to have one or two person proof it before it is submitted.

Several rules of thumb apply when writing a grant. The most obvious is: answer all the questions! In fact, answer the questions as completely as you can, including as much detail as you can.

Start with a concise sentence that gives an overview of what you plan to do with the funds. We call that a Purpose Statement – it should include the “who, what, where, when, why and how” of your project – in one sentence! Or maybe two at the most. Then continue and explain your request– tell a story of what has motivated you to create or continue the project for which you request funding. Include some statistics that support why the project is needed. The why is critical information and helps you to gain sympathy for your project or for the people you hope to assist. Detail what you are doing or planning to do, who will benefit and who is helping to make it happen, where and when it will happen, how often, and how much funding you need and on what will you spend the funds.

Don't just request a grand total of how much money you want – break it down to show the cost per item, so the reviewing group knows that you have done your homework. It shows that you have researched the costs and have a realistic expectation of what your project's costs will be. And don't include a request for “miscellaneous” or “other” funds – always be specific.

The Who is also a really big part of your grant. Not only who will your project serve, but who else is working with you? Collaboration is a word any grant writer should know and use. Grantors want to see that you are serving the community around you and they want you to build bridges with other groups. Don't start something that already exists – don't duplicate services – figure out what the unmet needs are in your community and gather those who have expertise and work together. This could include working with other churches, or with the public school system, other social service agencies, local businesses – even a nearby prison. Another part of Who is who else will be supporting you financially? Part of collaboration is sharing the costs. Speaking of the costs, what other income do you have? If this is a project supported by your church, be sure to include how much they are putting toward it. In fact, don't ask for money for a project that your church is not planning to support. Don't forget to ask people of influence within your own congregation to contribute a sizeable amount – this requires personal asking, not just a general “there's an offering plate out for your donations.”

Speaking of influence, it's best to have any formal application signed by the person with the most influence that can be connected to it. The signature sheet can be expanded to include as many as you wish – the writer, the sponsor, the pastor – if the grant is going to the general church or a foundation/corporation, include a letter of support from your district superintendent and in some cases, the Bishop.

Pay attention to the deadlines. Know your target date, and get the application in early! Many grantors date applications as they arrive, and may review them in that order, so apply early.

If you have questions, feel free to contact me, Lisa Bender, at [lbender@susumc.org](mailto:lbender@susumc.org). Blessings to you as you make disciples of Jesus Christ and transform the world through projects that provide for your community's needs by working collaboratively with others.