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6th Edition

Grant Writing

for
dummies[®]
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ways to get grants

Write compelling applications
for grant funding

Find budgets, sample letters
and more online

**Beverly A. Browning,
MPA, DBA**

Grant writing consultant, coach,
and online instructor



Grant Writing

for **dummies**[®]

A Wiley Brand

6th edition

by Dr. Beverly A. Browning, MPA, DBA

**for
dummies**[®]
A Wiley Brand

Grant Writing For Dummies®, 6th Edition

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Contents at a Glance

Introduction	1
Part 1: Getting Started with Grant Writing	5
CHAPTER 1: Grant-Writing Basics.	7
CHAPTER 2: Preparing for the World of Grant Seeking	23
CHAPTER 3: Understanding What It Takes to Get Funded.	35
Part 2: Digging Up Grant-Funding Opportunities	47
CHAPTER 4: Wading into Public-Sector Grants	49
CHAPTER 5: Navigating the Grants.gov Gateway	63
CHAPTER 6: Researching Potential Private-Sector Funders.	75
CHAPTER 7: Finding What's Available for Individuals and Businesses.	89
CHAPTER 8: Identifying Funds for Nongovernmental Organizations	97
Part 3: Maximizing Your Chances of Winning a Grant Award	103
CHAPTER 9: Finding Federal Grant Opportunities That Fit Your Needs	105
CHAPTER 10: Winning with Peer Reviews	119
CHAPTER 11: Resuscitating Your Writing	135
Part 4: Following the Funder's Guidelines	145
CHAPTER 12: Preparing Preliminary Documents	147
CHAPTER 13: Developing the Organizational Capability Boilerplate Narrative	161
CHAPTER 14: Validating Your Needs with a Compelling Narrative.	173
CHAPTER 15: Using Best Practices to Build the Program Design Narrative	185
CHAPTER 16: Crafting Your Proposed Project Management Team Narrative	209
CHAPTER 17: Creating a Budget That Includes All the Funding You Need	223
Part 5: Triple-Checking Your Application, Submitting, and Following Up	245
CHAPTER 18: Checking Off the Mandatory Requirements	247
CHAPTER 19: Knowing What to Do after Submitting Your Application	261
CHAPTER 20: Winning or Losing: What's Next?	271
CHAPTER 21: Requesting Matching Funds and Other Goodies from Corporate Grant Makers	281

Part 6: The Part of Tens	291
CHAPTER 22: Ten e-Grant Tips	293
CHAPTER 23: Ten Steps to Becoming a Grant-Writing Consultant.....	299
CHAPTER 24: Ten Ways to Continue Building Your Grant-Writing Skills	305
Index	309

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	1
About This Book	1
Foolish Assumptions	2
Icons Used in This Book	2
Beyond the Book	2
Where to Go from Here	3
 PART 1: GETTING STARTED WITH GRANT WRITING	 5
 CHAPTER 1: Grant-Writing Basics	 7
Getting Up to Speed on Grant-Seeking Basics	7
Defining common grant-writing terminology	8
Looking at different types of grants	9
Understanding your eligibility for grants	11
Recognizing the Value of a Funding Development Plan	12
Connecting to Public Sector Grant-Making Agencies	13
Federal funding: Raiding Uncle Sam's stash	14
State and local government funding: Seeking public dollars closer to home	14
Scoping Out Sources of Private Sector Grants	15
Finding foundations that award grants	15
Scoping out corporations that award grants and in-kind donations	16
Understanding Grant Submission Requirements	16
Looking at the components of a grant application	16
Perusing government grant application guidelines	17
Getting your request in the door at foundations and corporations	18
Making a List and Checking It Twice	20
Tracking Your Submission Status	20
Jumping for Joy or Starting All Over?	21
 CHAPTER 2: Preparing for the World of Grant Seeking	 23
Creating a Grant-Funding Plan	24
Looking at the plan components	24
Updating critical information	26
Increasing Your Chances for Success	28
Looking for needles in a haystack	28
Using a letter of inquiry	31
Using a letter of intent	33

CHAPTER 3:	Understanding What It Takes to Get Funded	35
	Delivering the Information Funders Ask For	35
	Providing the facts about your organization	36
	Writing about the project in need of funding	39
	Telling your project's story	41
	Providing the Required Documents	45
	 PART 2: DIGGING UP GRANT-FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES	 47
CHAPTER 4:	Wading into Public-Sector Grants	49
	Researching Local Funding First	49
	Finding out where the money is in your state	50
	Looking for pass-through funding	52
	Analyzing the Types of Federal Funding Available	52
	Discovering direct grants	53
	Using the eligible applicant criteria to track the funding stream	54
	Knowing the difference between competitive and formula grants	55
	Scanning the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Correctly	56
	Understanding static information and its use	56
	Recognizing what's missing and where to find it	59
	Orienting Yourself to Grants.gov	59
	Enlisting Political Advocates	60
CHAPTER 5:	Navigating the Grants.gov Gateway	63
	Navigating the Grants.gov Website	64
	Understanding Grant Applicant Eligibility	65
	Registering on Grants.gov	66
	Registering as an organization	66
	Reviewing how to register as an individual	68
	Downloading and Uploading Application Packages	68
	Reviewing Some of the Mandatory Government Grant Application Forms	70
	Budget information forms: SF-424A and SF 424C	71
	Assurances form: SF-424B and SF-424D	72
	Disclosure of lobbying activity form: SF-LLL	73
	Links for other federal grant application forms	74
CHAPTER 6:	Researching Potential Private-Sector Funders	75
	Finding Foundations and Corporations with Grant-Making Programs	76
	Understanding the time and effort required	76
	Subscribing to helpful funding alert resources	76

	Weighing the Usefulness of Free versus Paid Grant Research Websites	78
	Using the Foundation Center's funding resources.	78
	Using other online grant research databases.	84
	Eyeballing the Funder's Criteria.	85
	Knowing Whom to Contact First	86
CHAPTER 7:	Finding What's Available for Individuals and Businesses	89
	Sorting Through Who Awards Grants to Individuals and for What Purposes.	90
	Locating Credible Grants for Your Startup Business	91
	Competing against others for coveted startup funding	92
	Reviewing research grants from Uncle Sam to fund your work.	92
	Digging for Business Expansion Monies	95
	Looking into research and development funding opportunities.	95
	Tracking down other business expansion funding opportunities.	96
CHAPTER 8:	Identifying Funds for Nongovernmental Organizations	97
	Acquiring NGO Status	98
	Finding Funding Sources for NGOs.	98
	The US government.	98
	The Foundation Center Online	99
	The European Foundation Centre.	100
	Imagine Canada.	100
	Knowing What Non-US Funders Expect	101
	Adapting to submission differences.	101
	Preparing a non-US dollar budget	102
	PART 3: MAXIMIZING YOUR CHANCES OF WINNING A GRANT AWARD	103
CHAPTER 9:	Finding Federal Grant Opportunities That Fit Your Needs	105
	Reading the Notice of Funding Availability (Over and Over Again).	106
	Figuring out who can apply	107
	Using a checklist to determine whether you should apply for a grant	109
	Scanning for standard terms.	112
	Embracing the Review Criteria	115
	Finding the Right Partners	115
	Identifying the right implementation partners.	116
	Getting commitments from partners.	118

CHAPTER 10: Winning with Peer Reviews	119
Complying with the Technical Review Requirements	120
Mapping Out the Peer Review Process	122
Knowing how much to write in your narrative sections	122
Jumping high to meet the scoring process	124
Writing to the Peer Review Requirements	125
Writing and validating a compelling statement of need	125
Presenting your program implementation strategies	126
Demonstrating accountability with an evaluation plan	127
Proving your organization's ability to manage a grant-funded project	128
Developing an expense-drive budget	129
Researching Needs and Best Practices	130
Considering the Use of Third-Party Evaluators	131
Getting Invited to Join a Peer Review Team	132
CHAPTER 11: Resuscitating Your Writing	135
Putting a Heartbeat in Your Writing	136
Step 1: Describe who, what, and where	136
Step 2: Present the need	137
Step 3: Validate the need	140
Racking Up Peer Review Points in the Program Design	140
Starting with the purpose of this request statement	140
Aligning your goals and objectives with the purpose of the funding	141
Closing the deal by focusing on the lasting impact of the funder's investment	143
PART 4: FOLLOWING THE FUNDER'S GUIDELINES	145
CHAPTER 12: Preparing Preliminary Documents	147
Complying with Mandatory Document Requirements	148
Drafting a Cover Letter (If Requested)	148
Shuffling through Common Application Forms	151
Knowing What the Feds Want in a Form (SF-424)	152
Saving the Abstract or Executive Summary for Last	156
Crafting the Table of Contents	158
CHAPTER 13: Developing the Organizational Capability Boilerplate Narrative	161
Adhering to the Funder's Guidelines	162
Creating Organizational Credibility as a Grant Applicant	163
Stating the history, mission, and logistics	164
Presenting key milestones	165
Shifting gears for government grants	165

	Sorting Out Relevant Programs and Activities	166
	Presenting and Validating Your Target Population	168
	Including High-Stakes Partners to Boost Your Credibility	170
CHAPTER 14:	Validating Your Needs with a Compelling Narrative.....	173
	Convincing Funders of Your Need	174
	Researching recent and relevant information	174
	Incorporating real-life information about your target population	176
	Building a strong case study	177
	Using Graphics When Allowed by the Funder.....	180
	Understanding when and how to use informative graphics.....	180
	Dressing up your narrative texts.....	182
CHAPTER 15:	Using Best Practices to Build the Program Design Narrative.....	185
	Reviewing the Components of a Good Program Design Section	185
	Starting with a Purpose Statement.....	186
	Plotting Goals and SMART Objectives	187
	Understanding the difference between types of goals and objectives.....	188
	Following the funder's directions to write the right types of goals.....	189
	Recognizing and writing types of objectives requested by funders	191
	Providing a Comprehensive Implementation Plan.....	195
	Confirming Narrative Content Connectivity in Your Logic Model ..	197
	Writing the Evaluation Plan for Your Program Design.....	200
	Making sense of evaluation plan terminology	200
	Keeping the evaluation process in-house	203
	Taking the third-party evaluation route.....	205
	Writing the evaluation plan	206
CHAPTER 16:	Crafting Your Proposed Project Management Team Narrative.....	209
	Presenting the Project Management Team's Credentials	210
	Articulating Qualifications	212
	The basic profile.....	212
	The profile with page limitations.....	213
	The profile for personnel paid by cash match	214

Connecting Accountability and Responsibility to the Implementation Process	216
Writing the management plan	216
Acknowledging your fiscal responsibility	217
Offering Up Cash and In-Kind Resources for Matching Funds	219
Demonstrating Federal Compliance in Personnel Selection	220
CHAPTER 17: Creating a Budget That Includes All the Funding You Need	223
Reviewing Budget Section Basics	224
Personnel	225
Travel	227
Equipment	229
Supplies	229
Contractual	230
Construction	231
Other	232
Distinguishing between direct and indirect costs	232
Entire budget summary	234
Finding Matching Funds	236
In-kind contributions (soft cash match)	236
Cash match (money on hand allocated for cash matching funds)	237
Plotting Ethical Expenses	239
Gathering accurate cost figures	239
Including all possible program income	239
Managing expenditures to the penny	240
Projecting Multiyear Costs	241
Building Credibility When You're a New Nonprofit	242
PART 5: TRIPLE-CHECKING YOUR APPLICATION, SUBMITTING, AND FOLLOWING UP	245
CHAPTER 18: Checking Off the Mandatory Requirements	247
Double-Checking All Required Components	247
Cover materials	248
Organization history and capability	249
Statement of need	250
Program design	250
Evaluation and dissemination	251
Management plan, assets, and your equity statement	252
Budget summary and narrative detail	252
Avoiding Editing Red Flags	253

Assembling the Proper Attachments in the Right Order	255
Capability-related documents	256
Financial documents	256
Supporting documentation	258
Meeting Submission Requirements	258
Paying attention to submission protocol	258
Uploading applications on time	259
Clicking Submit without panicking	259
CHAPTER 19: Knowing What to Do after Submitting Your Application	261
Keeping Accessible Copies of Electronic Files	261
Staying Connected to Your Stakeholders	262
Providing updates on what's been completed and what to expect next	263
Keeping your partners in the additional-information loop	263
Tracking the Status of Your Submitted Application	264
Requesting elected official tracking for government grant requests	264
Following up on foundation and corporate grant requests	267
CHAPTER 20: Winning or Losing: What's Next?	271
Handling Funding Status Communications from Grant Makers	271
Drafting a resolution	272
Accepting the award	272
Tackling the grant management process	273
Reviewing post-award guidelines for help with financial reporting	274
Handling Multiple Grant Awards	276
Failing to Get a Grant Award	277
Requesting peer review comments when your government application is rejected	277
Acting fast to reuse a failed government request	279
Dealing with failed foundation or corporate funding requests	279
CHAPTER 21: Requesting Matching Funds and Other Goodies from Corporate Grant Makers	281
Recognizing What Corporations Are Willing to Fund	282
Making Initial Contact and Building a Relationship with Funders	283
Building relationships with funders	283
Writing a Corporate Letter Request	284
Following Up with Potential Corporate Funders	289

PART 6: THE PART OF TENS	291
CHAPTER 22: Ten e-Grant Tips	293
Log In and Set Up a Password Immediately	293
Fill In Routine Organizational Information.....	294
Review the Entire Online Application Template	294
Copy and Re-Create the Template in a Word Processing Program	295
Determine If You're Counting Characters or Characters and Spaces	295
Live without Traditional Graphics	296
Live without Traditional Formatting	296
Recheck the Funder's Website Daily for Modifications to the Guidelines	296
Confirm the Due Date Time and Time Zone	297
Hit Submit.....	297
CHAPTER 23: Ten Steps to Becoming a Grant-Writing Consultant	299
Getting Trained	299
Collecting and Reading Resource Materials	300
Joining a Professional Association	300
Writing without Errors	301
Subscribing to Grant Research Databases and Directories	301
Keeping Track of Your Wins and Losses.....	302
Asking to Join a Grant-Writing Team.....	302
Getting a Consulting Coach	303
Branding Your Business	303
Networking Like a Pro.....	304
CHAPTER 24: Ten Ways to Continue Building Your Grant-Writing Skills	305
Take on New Challenges	305
Become a Grant Research Specialist	306
Volunteer Your Services	306
Become a Peer Reviewer	306
Do Copyediting for Other Grant Writers	306
Work with an Experienced Grant Writer	307
Attend National Professional Development Training	307
Review Successful Grant Applications Online	307
Write and Publish Articles That Require Extensive Research	308
Continue Your Formal Education	308
INDEX	309

Introduction

When I wrote the first edition of *Grant Writing For Dummies* in 2001, a lot of my grant professional colleagues thought I was giving away “our” secrets. However, I didn’t feel that way. I just wanted everyone who had an interest in finding grant-funding opportunities and writing grant proposals to have access to a handy reference tool filled with expert-driven insight and information. (After all, if I didn’t know anything about this process, I would certainly look to a leading reference tool to teach me.) With each new edition of this book, I work diligently to provide fresh perspectives and updated information on grant writing.

By using this book daily, you can achieve your highest goals, which probably include winning almost everything you submit for funding or award consideration. You can even build your funding success rate. And, if you want to dive even further into grant writing with me, you may want to consider enrolling in one of my online classes or sponsoring one of my two-day Grant Writing Boot Camps.

About This Book

The structure of *Grant Writing For Dummies*, 6th Edition, is designed to help you get in and get out of the text with just the information you were looking for. Consider this book your ultimate grant-writing reference tool. Read it in any order you want and bookmark sections you expect to return to again and again.

You don’t need to read the sidebars sprinkled throughout the text. You can identify them by their gray-shaded boxes. They’re simply extra tidbits of information that are interesting but not critical to your understanding of grant writing.

Foolish Assumptions

As I wrote this book, I assumed it would serve as a desktop and online reference for

- » Individuals seeking research and education on grant-writing sources and approaches
- » New grant writers looking to be guided through every step of the process, from understanding the definition of a grant to planning, researching, writing, and submitting
- » Veteran grant writers seeking to increase their funding success rates

Note: Although I address grant opportunities for individuals, the majority of this book focuses on winning grants on behalf of nonprofit organizations, government agencies, and other eligible applicants in the eyes and minds of the funders.

Icons Used in This Book

The little pictures in the margins throughout this book are designed to highlight information that's special and important for one reason or another. *Grant Writing For Dummies*, 6th Edition, uses the following icons:



REMEMBER

This icon points to pieces of information you shouldn't forget.



TIP

Wherever you see this icon, you're sure to find a good idea, trick, or shortcut that can save you time and trouble.



WARNING

Make sure to read the paragraphs marked with this icon; it indicates information that can help you avoid disasters.

Beyond the Book

In addition to the material in the print or e-book you're reading right now, this product also comes with some access-anywhere goodies on the web. Check out the free Cheat Sheet for tips on writing effective grant proposals, where to look for

grant funding, and grant research websites worth your time. To get this Cheat Sheet, simply go to www.dummies.com and type **Grant Writing For Dummies Cheat Sheet** in the Search box.

You can also go to www.dummies.com/go/grantwritingfd6e for templates you can use to make your next grant-writing experience a little easier.

Where to Go from Here

Where you start reading this latest edition of *Grant Writing For Dummies* is up to you. You can begin by perusing the table of contents and then hitting sections of interest. Or you can head to the chapter that addresses an area of grant writing you're currently struggling with. If, however, you're brand-new to the grant research and writing game, I suggest you begin with Chapter 1, which gives you an overview of this book's tips and strategies for finding grant-funding opportunities and winning grant awards.

1

Getting Started with Grant Writing

IN THIS PART . . .

Distinguish between the two main types of funders that provide grant monies: public-sector funders (federal, state, city, and local governments) and private-sector funders (foundations and corporations).

Become acquainted with the basic elements of the typical grant application.

Create a strategic plan to drive your organization's decision-making process for now and in the future.

Get familiar with the basics funders expect to see in a grant request — and numerous ways to give your application an edge over the competition.

IN THIS CHAPTER

Getting onboard with key terms in the world of grant writing

Applying for the right type of funding

Meeting all the requirements of a grant application

Keeping an eye on the progress of your application

Bracing yourself for the funder's decision

Chapter 1

Grant-Writing Basics

If I had a dollar for every call and email I've received from everyone and every organization wanting to pursue grant funding, I'd be super rich. I can actually recite the response that I regretfully have to give most inquirers.

In this chapter, I guide you through all the essentials of grant-writing basics. I flush out the whats, hows, whys, whens, and ifs to help new grant writers, new nonprofits, and grant professionals returning to active grant seeking and grant writing. Let's get started!

Getting Up to Speed on Grant-Seeking Basics

In order to hone your “find a grant now” skill set, you need a lot of basic information. First things first: what a grant is *not*. A grant is *not* a way to pay off your debts, like mortgages, student loans, government loans, or utility bills. A grant also is *not* a way to get a free vacation. You won't be able to find a grant funder that will send you on an trip where you propose to take photographs of historical sites when you're not at the local bar celebrating happy hour.

In this section, I explain common terms and lay out the basic information you need to know before you toss your hat (and hopes) into the grant-seeking arena.

Defining common grant-writing terminology

Basically speaking, a *grant* (sometimes labeled a *cooperative agreement* by government funding agencies) is a monetary award of financial assistance. The principal purpose of the grant is to transfer dollars from a funding agency or entity (*grantor*) to a recipient (*grantee*) who undertakes to carry out the proposed objectives (your written implementation plans in the grant application narrative) that you committed to when you submitted your grant application. Here are some common grant-writing terms and their definitions:



» **Grant/cooperative agreement:** The distinguishing factor between a grant and a cooperative agreement is the degree of government (state, federal, or local) participation or involvement during the grantee's actual startup and implementation of the proposed activities.

A grant award is made via a contract or agreement between the funding agency (the *grantor*) and the recipient (the *grantee*), with the grant supporting the activities and deliverables (implementation strategies and measurable time-bound objectives or benchmarks) detailed in the proposal/application (and finalized during the process of confirming the grant award). Reading the grant application's guidelines thoroughly (and multiple times) is critical to being funded. (Refer to Part 2 for tips on finding grant-funding opportunities.)

» **Grantor:** A *grantor* (also known as a *grant maker* or *funder*) is the organization or agency that receives your funding request and decides to fund it or reject it. Grantors include the grant-making agencies of the federal government, tons of state and local government agencies (including in the US territories), and more than 100,000 foundations and corporate grant makers. Two categories of grantors exist:

- **Public sector funder:** Any government grant maker (federal, state, county, or local unit of government) that awards grants with money that comes from congressional allocations, federal pass-through dollars to states and municipalities, or taxpayer dollars — the public sector.
- **Private sector funder:** A foundation or corporate grant maker (independent of private foundation, operating foundations, corporate foundations, and community foundations) that uses funds from private sources — investments, contributions, donations, or grants — to fund eligible grant applicants.

- » **Grantee:** The eligible grant applicant designated to receive a grant award. All grants require the grantee to use the funds as written (and promised) in the grant application. The required grant award paperwork is considered a contract between the grantor and the grantee. Up until you're awarded the grant, you're a *grant applicant*; you become a grantee only if you are approved for funding and agree to accept the award.



REMEMBER

Be certain you are an eligible grantee before applying for the grant.

So, how do you get a grantor to give you a grant and make you a grantee? After you've reviewed the guidelines (at least three times) for submitting an application and made initial contact with the potential funder, you're ready to research, write, and submit your *grant application* or *proposal* (also known as a *funding request*). I fill you in on the pieces or sections of a grant application/proposal in the section "Looking at the components of a grant application," later in this chapter.

Looking at different types of grants

Almost every grant-funding agency publishes specific types of funding it awards to prospective grant seekers. When you know what you want to use grant monies for, you can evaluate whether your request fits with the type of funding the grantor has available. For example, if you want money for architectural fees related to a historical preservation project, you can skip applying to a grantor that's only accepting grant requests for small technology-related equipment.

Look long and hard at the different categories of funding offered:

- » **Annual campaigns:** Grants to support annual operating expenses, infrastructure improvements, program expansion, and, in some cases, one-time-only expenses (such as a cooling-system replacement).
- » **Building/renovation funds:** Grants to build a new facility or renovate an existing facility. These projects are often referred to as *bricks-and-mortar projects*. Building funds are the most difficult to secure; only a small percentage of foundations and corporations award grants for this type of project.
- » **Capital support:** Grants for equipment, buildings, construction, and endowments. This type of request is a major undertaking by the applicant organization because this type of large-scale project isn't quickly funded. An organization often needs two to three years to secure total funding for such a project.
- » **Challenge monies:** Grants that act as leverage to secure additional grants from foundations and corporations. They're awarded by grant makers that specifically include *challenge grants* or *challenge funds* in their grant-making priorities.

These grants are contingent upon you raising additional funds from other sources. Typically, a challenge grant award letter directs you to raise the remaining funding from other grantors; however, that typically excludes government grants.

- » **Conferences/seminars:** Grants to cover the cost of attending, planning, and/or hosting conferences and seminars. You can use the funding to pay for all the conference expenses, including securing a keynote speaker, traveling, printing, advertising, and taking care of facility expenses such as meals.
- » **Consulting services:** Grants to strengthen an organization's capacity can be used to retain the services of a consultant or consulting firm. For example, if you bring in a consultant to do a long-range strategic plan or an architect to develop plans for a historical preservation project, you can apply for a grant to cover these types of expenses.
- » **Continuing support/continuation:** Grants additional funds to your organization after you've already received an initial grant award from that same grantor. These monies are intended to continue the program or project initially funded.
- » **Endowments:** Grants to develop long-term, permanent investment income to ensure the continuing presence and financial stability of your nonprofit organization. If your organization is always operating in crisis-management mode, one of your goals should be to develop an endowment fund for long-term viability.
- » **Fellowships:** Grants to support graduate and postgraduate students in specific fields. These funds are typically awarded to institutions and not directly to individuals, with the exception of some international fellowship funders.
- » **General/operating expenses:** Grants for general line-item budget expenses. You may use these funds for salaries, fringe benefits, travel, consultants, utilities, equipment, and other expenses necessary to support agency operations.
- » **Matching funds:** Grants awarded with the requirement that you must match the grant award with your own monies or with in-kind contributions.
- » **Program development:** Grants to pay for expenses related to the expansion of existing programs or the development of new programs.
- » **Research:** Grants to support medical and educational research. Monies are usually awarded to the institutions that employ the individuals conducting the research.
- » **Scholarship funds:** Grants to eligible organizations seeking to award scholarships to eligible individuals. Remember that when funds are awarded

directly to an individual, they're considered taxable income (that is, the recipient owes taxes on them).

- » **Seed money:** Grants awarded for a pilot program not yet in full-scale operation. Seed money gets a program underway, but other monies are necessary to continue the program in its expansion phase.
- » **Technical (consulting) assistance:** Grants to improve your internal program operations as a whole (versus consulting on one specific program). Often, this type of grant is awarded to hire an individual or firm that can provide the needed technical assistance.

Understanding your eligibility for grants

The types of organizations or entities eligible to apply for a grant vary from grantor to grantor. Each type of grantor — government (public) or foundation (private) — always includes clear, published grant-making guidelines that indicate who or what type of entity is eligible to apply for those specific grant funds. To access these grant-making guidelines, simply visit the grantor's website.

Funders typically include one or more of the following types of grant applicants in their *eligible applicant* language:

- » State government
- » County government
- » City or township government
- » Federally recognized Native American tribal governments
- » Independent school districts
- » Nonprofits with and without Internal Revenue Service (IRS) 501(c)(3) (non-profit) status
- » Private, public, and state-controlled institutions of higher education
- » Public and Native American housing authorities
- » For-profit businesses
- » For-profit organizations other than businesses
- » International nonprofits (called *nongovernmental organizations* or NGOs)
- » Individuals



TIP

Always check with the funder in advance to make sure that the entity that you're applying for is an eligible grant applicant. For example, funders view a nonprofit as an IRS-approved 501(c)(3) designated tax-exempt organization. Just being incorporated as a nonprofit in your state (for US-based grant makers) is not going to qualify you to apply for funds. You'll definitely need IRS approval in writing.



REMEMBER

Familiarize yourself with Grants.gov before you actually have plan on applying for funding. All federal grant applicants have to do a lot of upfront work before they can submit an application for funding consideration.

Grants are awarded to organizations that have applied to the IRS for nonprofit status and have received the 501(c)(3) designation as well as to units of government (state agencies, counties, cities, towns, and villages) and government agencies, including state colleges and universities. Foundation and corporate grantors focus predominantly on nonprofit organizations and aren't inclined to fund for-profits. However, a few grants are given to individuals (see Chapter 7 for details).

In some instances, government agencies have set up separate 501(c)(3) nonprofit structures in order to scoop up more private sector (foundation and corporate) grant awards.

Recognizing the Value of a Funding Development Plan



REMEMBER

If you're looking for funding to support an entire organization or a specific program, the first rule in grant seeking is that you don't write a grant request without first completing a comprehensive planning process that involves the grant applicant organization's key stakeholders: *target population* members (the people your organization serves), administrative staff, and the board of directors.

Without key stakeholder input on what your target population needs and the plan for closing the gap on these needs, you're fishing without the right bait. You must have an organized *funding development plan* to guide your organization in adopting priority programs and services and then identifying all potential grantors you plan to approach with grant requests. A funding development plan answers questions such as the following:

- » What programs are strong and already have regular funding to keep them going and are they likely to be refunded?

- » What community needs aren't being addressed by our organization or other organizations providing similar services?
- » What new programs need funding and is there evidence of the needs?
- » What opportunities exist to find new funding partners and who will be responsible for making the initial contact with each funder?
- » What existing grants expire soon and can we reapply or will we have to find new funding?

When you answer these questions, you can begin to look at the multitude of areas where grants are awarded and start prioritizing the type of funding you need. (For more information on funding development plans, see Chapter 2.)

Connecting to Public Sector Grant-Making Agencies

I receive dozens of emails every week asking about grants. Everyone wants grants! If you're feeling clueless as to how to find potential funding for your organization, you simply need to use the Internet. You can search for potential sources interested in what your organization needs in the way of goods and services. Fire up your computer and start searching for the monies that may be waiting for your organization. While you're at it, why not start with the nation's wealthiest relative, Uncle Sam?

Did you know that the US government is one of the largest grant-making entities? If you want to score big in grant awards, you may want to consider targeting federal grant-making agencies.



REMEMBER

Two types of government grant awards exist:

- » A *competitive grant* is one where applicants compete against each other for a limited amount of funding.
- » A *formula grant* is awarded based on a predetermined formula (a set amount of money per person) established by the funding agency. Formula grants aren't considered competitive. For example, community action agencies are funded formula grants, in part, through the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) program. These grants are awarded on a service-population-based formula. The agencies receive these funds year after year by merely updating the previous year's application and resubmitting.

In the following sections, I help you understand what type of public sector grant money (or grantor) will pay you to implement your idea, project, or program.

Federal funding: Raiding Uncle Sam's stash

The first place to look for big pots of money is in Uncle Sam's closet of federal funding agencies. In Chapters 4 and 5, I explain public sector grants and wade through the main federal e-grant portal, Grants.gov.



TIP

Many newly established nonprofit organizations think that they should apply for government grants before raising seed funding from local foundations and corporations. Your organization needs to have established a credible track record for implementing, evaluating, and prudently managing funding from smaller fish in the sea before jumping into the federal grant application process.



TIP

If you're interested in looking at what the feds have to offer, take some time to browse the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA), which you can find at www.cfda.gov. The CFDA is the directory of grant-funding programs. Although it doesn't tell you about open grant competitions you can apply for at a particular time, the CFDA does give you an overview of grant programs. To find active or current grant-funding opportunities from Uncle Sam, go to www.grants.gov, which gives you daily funding announcements on money you can apply for *now*, providing your organization is an eligible grant applicant.

State and local government funding: Seeking public dollars closer to home

Each state receives grant monies from the feds and from tax revenues that are funneled into and out of the state's general funds. After taking their fair (or unfair) share for administrative overhead, states re-grant the money to eligible agencies and organizations in the form of competitive grants or formula grants.

You can search the Internet to find state agencies that award grants. Examples of some of the state agencies that re-grant federal monies are agriculture, commerce, education, health, housing development, natural resources, and transportation. You can also contact your state legislator's local office for assistance in identifying grant opportunities within your state.



TIP

There's a wide variation in state grant making. It's always best to meet with your state-level elected officials and funding agency representatives to pave the way for successful grant seeking.

Scoping Out Sources of Private Sector Grants

Foundation and corporate grant makers are private sector funders. The rainfall of private-sector grant money continues to be conservative, but it's also continuously available to grant seekers who meet this type of grantor's area of interest.

Where can you find out more about these grants? You can locate sources by visiting a Foundation Center Cooperating Collections site (usually at a state university library, community foundation, or other nonprofit information center). These sites are the only places where you can access the Foundation Center's *Foundation Directory Online* for free. Otherwise, you need to subscribe at one of the levels that best fits your grant research needs. (To find a Cooperating Collections site, visit www.foundationcenter.org.)



TIP

If you're targeting private sector funders, start with local organizations first to improve your odds of receiving funds.

Finding foundations that award grants

Private foundations typically get their monies from a single-donor source, such as an individual, a family, or a corporation. Others raise funds from a variety of donor sources. You can find hundreds of private foundations in the Foundation Center's *Foundation Directory Online* or by typing "list of private foundations" or "private foundations" plus your state's name into your favorite search engine.

Public foundations, on the other hand, are supported primarily through donations from the general public. That's a no-brainer, right? Public foundations also receive funding from foundation and corporate grants, as well as individual donors. Again, the Foundation Center's website can give you loads of information on these types of foundations.



REMEMBER

The grant-seeking and grant-making processes may differ for public and private foundations. Always contact potential foundation funders to introduce your organization, start to build a communications bridge, and inquire about their grant-making processes.

Scoping out corporations that award grants and in-kind donations

Did you know that many of the biggest businesses in the nation set 5 percent or more of their profits aside for grants? Why is that, you ask? The reason is *corporate social responsibility* and *community engagement* — which are the approaches that successful businesses take when they decide to make a financial commitment to the community where they're headquartered or where they have operating locations.

Corporations that award grants usually have a website link labeled Community, Community Relations, Social Responsibility, Local Initiatives, Grants, or Corporate Giving. Use the *Foundation Directory Online* to view corporations with giving programs.

Understanding Grant Submission Requirements

One of the biggest keys in grant writing is recognizing the different application formats that funders require you to submit. Some grantors require more information than others. Today, at least 50 percent of funders with websites require online e-grant applications. Others require traditional paper-written narratives, forms, budgets, and mandatory attachments. In Chapter 22, I cover e-grant tips.



REMEMBER

Determine the writing format for each funding source you identify. Carefully view each private sector funder's website, and if you're still not sure about what to write or how to write it, make a quick call or send an email to the listed contact person. Governmental agencies have their own application kits, and you can submit applications for these agencies only at certain times in the year when there is a specific funding deadline published.

Looking at the components of a grant application

A *government grant* or *cooperative agreement application* is a written funding request you use to ask for money from a government agency. Government grant applications are specific to each of the federal grant-making agencies. Even state agency grant applications that are funded with federal pass-through dollars closely mirror federal grant application guidelines and grantee requirements. Each federal