

Successful Grant Writing by Mandy Huston



Grant writing is an excellent way to connect local resources with community needs. At Dorcas Carey Public Library, grants play an important role in creating engaging programs and providing accessible technology for our community. Local grant funders like the Wyandot County Community Foundation (WCCF) have been particularly generous in supporting our efforts. However, writing grants can be time consuming and overwhelming. Where do you begin?

The first step for writing a successful proposal is assessing what your needs are and what would benefit the people you serve. Do you have a program you want to start or a problem to solve, but you lack the budget to make it happen? A grant might be a good fit for you.

For example, a couple of years ago we were struggling with failing computer network equipment. Public library funding had been cut when the economy suffered during the COVID shutdown. The unreliable wi-fi affected both library operations and the patrons using it to navigate the increasingly online world brought on by the pandemic. This was an urgent need that the WCCF helped fund, providing much faster and more secure internet access by enabling us to purchase up-to-date equipment.

When you have a defined idea of what project to pursue, you can start writing your proposal. Clearly state your request at the beginning of the application, along with a brief description of your organization. Flesh out exactly what you want to accomplish. Provide evidence for whom your project will help, how it will benefit them, why you need help achieving it, and why you and the grant funder are a good match. Explain how you will execute your plan and how you will publicize the grant. Sometimes including pictures provides a helpful visual to support your request as well.

Overall, be clear. Be concise. Beware of long paragraphs. Follow any guidelines the grantor provides and remember that the committee will have multiple applications to consider with limited time and attention. A page or less is usually sufficient to make a case for a small grant request. Your proposal will stand out if the information is straightforward, easy to read, and well thought out.

Finally, make sure your proposal looks professional. Ask a trusted colleague or friend to proofread your application. Misspelled words or grammar mistakes will distract from the heart and purpose of your project. Whenever possible, type your proposals instead of writing them by hand. Make sure your formatting is consistent and neat. Print a clean copy to mail or save your document as a PDF for email submissions.

In summary, taking the time to break down your grant writing challenge into smaller pieces will help you create a successful proposal. Form a concrete idea of what you want to achieve. Do your research to determine what steps are needed to reach your goal. Write clearly and concisely. Present your work in a visually appealing way that does your project justice. The care you take in preparing your proposal will shine through in your application.

Mandy Huston is an assistant librarian at Dorcas Carey Public Library. Along with writing grants, she creates marketing materials, runs the Crazy Crafters adult craft program, and provides internal IT support for the library.