

GrantThrive Free Resource

Grant Writing Guide

A step-by-step guide to writing compelling grant applications that get approved.

Introduction

Securing grant funding is a critical activity for most not-for-profit organisations, community groups, and businesses engaged in research and development. A well-written grant application can be the difference between a groundbreaking project getting off the ground or remaining an idea on a whiteboard. This guide provides a comprehensive, step-by-step approach to crafting compelling applications that stand out to funders and maximise your chances of success.

Step 1: Understand the Funder and the Grant

Before you write a single word, your most important task is to do your homework. Every grant program is created with a specific purpose and a clear set of objectives. Your application must demonstrate a deep understanding of and alignment with these goals.

Read the Grant Guidelines Thoroughly

This is non-negotiable. The guidelines are your rulebook. Pay close attention to eligibility criteria, funding priorities, key dates, and reporting requirements. Highlight key phrases and objectives that the funder uses — you will want to mirror this language in your application.

Research the Funder

Go beyond the guidelines. Explore the funder's website, read their annual reports, and look at their list of previously funded projects. This will give you a clear picture of their values and the types of projects they are passionate about.

Contact the Funder (If Permitted)

Many funders offer information sessions or allow you to contact a program officer to discuss your project. This is an invaluable opportunity to ask clarifying questions, get feedback on your project idea, and build a relationship with the funder.

"Pro Tip: Create a summary sheet for each grant you are targeting. Include key dates, funder objectives, contact person, and a checklist of required documents. This will keep you organised and focused."

Step 2: Develop a Compelling Project Plan

A grant application is not just a request for money; it is a proposal for a specific, well-defined project with clear, measurable outcomes. Your project plan is the heart of your application.

The Problem Statement (The Need)

Clearly and concisely describe the problem or need that your project will address. Use data and evidence to support your claims. Create a sense of urgency — why does this problem need to be addressed now?

Project Goals and Objectives (The Solution)

Goals are the broad, long-term aims of your project (e.g., *"To improve literacy rates among primary school children in our community."*). **Objectives** are the specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) steps you will take to achieve your goals.

Outcomes and Evaluation (The Impact)

How will you measure success? Define the key performance indicators (KPIs) you will track and describe your evaluation methodology. What does success look like? Be specific about the changes or benefits your project will deliver.

Step 3: Write a Clear and Persuasive Narrative

With a solid project plan in place, you can now start writing the application narrative. Your goal is to tell a compelling story that connects your project to the funder's mission. Use clear and simple language, avoiding jargon and acronyms. Be specific and concrete — instead of saying 'We will help many people,' say 'Our program will provide hot meals to 150 homeless individuals every night for one year.' Answer every question in the application form, and proofread your work thoroughly before submitting.

Step 4: Prepare a Realistic Budget

The budget is a critical part of your application and must be meticulously planned. It should tell the same story as your narrative, but in financial terms. Be comprehensive, show your working, distinguish between in-kind and cash costs, and ensure all figures are realistic and well-researched.

Budget Item	Description	Calculation	Cost (AUD)
Project Coordinator	Manages project activities, volunteers, and reporting.	\$45/hr × 15 hrs/wk × 52 wks	\$35,100
Materials & Supplies	Consumables required for program delivery.	Quoted from supplier	\$4,500
Venue Hire	Community hall for weekly sessions.	\$80/session × 48 sessions	\$3,840
Evaluation & Reporting	External evaluator for final program evaluation.	Quote obtained	\$2,500

Step 5: Gather Supporting Documents and Submit

Most grant applications require a range of supporting documents. Do not leave this to the last minute. Common requirements include letters of support from community partners, quotes for major equipment purchases, annual reports and financial statements, CVs of key project personnel, and evidence of your organisation's legal status (e.g., ACNC registration). Submit at least a day or two before the deadline to avoid any last-minute technical issues.

Grant writing is a skill that improves with practice. By following a structured, strategic, and thorough process, you can significantly increase your chances of securing the funding your organisation needs to make a real difference in your community. Good luck, and happy grant seeking!
