

The Big Idea

Writing your first grant proposal can be a daunting task. This workbook was created to get you started on this journey. It outlines basic steps to help you plan for writing a competitive grant proposal.



Common Terms

Before you begin, here are a few common terms you will need to know:

- PD/PI = Project Director/Principal Investigator. This is the primary person responsible for submitting the grant proposal and managing the project.
- Co-PI = Co-Principal Investigator.
- Reviewer = Funding agency personnel responsible for reading proposals and prioritizing which ones should be funded.
- RFP = Request for Proposals
- RFA = Request for Applications
- FOA = Funding Opportunity Announcement
- NOFO = Notice of Funding Opportunity
- Funding Agency = Refers to the entity sponsoring the grant opportunity.
- Foundation = Refers specifically to funding agency that is not part of government operations (e.g. a corporate or nonprofit foundation)

Funding agencies use a number of terms to describe grant announcements. To avoid confusion, these announcements will be referred to as guidelines in this document.

General Tips

- Set aside ample time to work on your project plan.
- Identify and assess the resources available to help you: colleagues, community connections, students, facilities, equipment, etc.
- Use these writing prompts to develop a basic outline that can be replicated for various funding sources.
- Be creative with your ideas! Funding agencies are seeking innovative approaches to solving community issues.
- Color inside the lines with the proposal. Grant proposal guidelines are designed to help you give the funding agency what it needs to properly evaluate your proposal. These guidelines should be followed exactly as prescribed to increase the likelihood of receiving a grant award.
- Keep trying. Most people do not get the first grant they write. Learn what you can from the reviewers, make the necessary adjustments, and apply again.

Notes:

Plan and Organize

The first step in the grant writing process is the planning stage. Successful grant writing starts with a great idea. Use that idea to develop your project goals, and devote ample time to planning your project. Why? Clear goals will help you define the project and determine what resources are needed to conduct the research effectively. Knowing your goals and resource needs will focus your search for funding. The better the fit between your goals and the funding agency's priorities, the more likely your proposal will be funded.



Develop an Idea

Your idea may be the solution to the tough issues currently affecting your community or society as a whole. What impact do you want to make?

- Solve a specific problem
- Challenge an existing paradigm
- Address a barrier to progress
- Develop a new program
- Other: _____

What type of product(s) would you like to develop as a result of this project?

- Journal article
- Book
- Presentation
- Seminar
- Other: _____

Define the Project

These six questions offer a starting point to help define the project. Equipped with this information, you can develop your project goals.

What do you want to accomplish?

Why is this relevant to you, the local community, society, etc.?

Who can help you do the work?

Colleagues:
Students:
Community Contacts:

How will you do the work (methods) and how will you measure results (evaluation)?

Methods:

Evaluation:

Where will you do the work?

When will you do the work? Be sure to check guidelines for start/end requirements.

Estimated Start Date:

Estimated End Date:

Goal Definition

A goal is a broad statement defining what you want to accomplish. Use your planning information to develop a project goal. Your goal can serve as a guide when you start writing your proposal.

The goal of my project is . . .

Objectives provide measurable steps towards achieving the overall goal. You should create a few objectives that delineate the specific tasks necessary to achieve the goal. Example:

- “By the end of Fall 2025, offer 3 one-hour peer tutoring sessions to 125 freshman students.”

Objectives

Literature Review

The literature review provides an important perspective on the project you do. Though not always required for grant proposals, this section can help:

- Determine where this project fits within your field
- Identify current problems, hypotheses, and opportunities
- Review the program designs of experts in the field
- Find support to show why your project plan should work

TIP: Consider using Endnote to catalog your literature. Also, format the references correctly as you find them. That way, you will have less editing to do at the end of the process.

Determine Project Needs

Once you have established project goals, it's time to decide what resources are needed to complete the project. Knowing what resources are needed will help you find the funding sources best suited for your project.

People: How much personnel time will be needed to complete the project? Are you working alone or do you need assistance from others?

Supplies: What supplies (beyond basic office supplies) do you need?

Equipment: Do you need specialized equipment to complete the work?

Space: What kind of facilities do you need? Are the facilities available to you adequate to perform the tasks of the project?

Travel: A good cost projection for travel includes mileage, airfare, ground transportation, lodging, meals, conference registration fees, and other incidentals as applicable.

Other: If working with another organization, do you need a separate set of resources?

Find Funding Sources

Finding the needed funds can be challenging. A variety of agencies and organizations provide grant opportunities throughout the year.

- Federal Departments and Agencies
- State and Local Governments
- Corporate Foundations
- Nonprofit Foundations
- Professional Organizations

Several grants search engines provide information about grants from various sources. Good key words related to your project will help narrow your search to sources suitable for you.

My project key words:

TIP: Most corporate foundations can be found by accessing the corporation's public website. A link to the foundation usually can be found at the bottom of the homepage or on the site map. It may be identified as "corporate giving", "corporate responsibility", or "philanthropy".

Try to find at least two potential grant opportunities.

Agency Name	Grant/Program Name	Grant Amount	Due Date

TIP: Don't forget to consult with your personal or professional contacts! Some foundations still offer funds to projects they learn of by word of mouth.

Understand the Proposal Guidelines

Once you identify a potential funding source, read the guidelines carefully to make sure your project goals align with the funding priorities of the funding agency. The guidelines will inform you about eligibility and submission requirements, including: deadlines, proposal format, budget limits, and the grant review process. Key points to remember:

→ Submission deadlines are firm. Be sure to plan out the writing process so that you can submit your proposal before the deadline date and time. Due to

the volume of proposals to review, most agencies will automatically reject a late proposal.

- If review criteria are provided, be sure to study them. This will give you guidance on how to tailor your proposal to the funding agency's requirements.
- If a program officer or grant coordinator is listed, contact that person to clarify any questions you have about the guidelines or grants review process. Keep in mind that with many funding agencies, the program officer or grant coordinator has the final say in which proposals are funded.
- Specific information to look for in the guidelines include:
 - Eligibility requirements
 - Application deadline
 - Submission process. Understand what type of response is needed (see below) and how it should be submitted (online, mail, or email). Online submissions may require prior registration. You will need to complete the proposal in a shorter amount of time if it must be mailed.

Read the guidelines to determine what type of response is required by the agency.

- A letter of inquiry is a brief presentation of your project idea. The funding agency may use this letter to determine whether they are interested in receiving a full proposal related to your project.
- The application may include an actual form with specific questions about the background of your project and the institution. These are usually completed in an online system.
- A pre-proposal or concept paper provides a synopsis of the grant proposal. The agency uses the pre-proposals as an initial screening. A portion of applicants will be invited to submit a full proposal in the second stage of the grant competition.

Notes:

Budget

A solid budget demonstrates a realistic understanding of the resources necessary to complete the project. The expenses must comply with the funding agency's guidelines and local, state, and federal regulations. In cases where regulations vary, the most restrictive apply. Below are common expenses found in grant budgets.

Salary: The amount of salary charged should correspond directly with the amount of time spent on the project.

Fringe Benefits: Fringe benefits include the taxes and benefits (medical insurance, sick leave, etc.) that the employer pays for an employee. It is represented by a percentage of the employee's grant salary. The rate is 32% for academic year salary, 15.5% for faculty summer salary, and 9% for students or part-time employees.

Travel: Depending on the funding agency's guidelines, travel can encompass all expenses incurred while facilitating project activities away from the primary site. This may include transportation, meals, lodging, and registration fees.

Contractual: This category includes all services contracted for the project, such as consultants and external evaluators. Consult with the guidelines for limitations on daily or hourly consulting rates.

Capital Equipment: This category is typically defined as equipment valued at greater than \$5,000 per unit with a useful life of more than one year. Consult with the guidelines to ensure they do not use a different definition for equipment.

Materials and Supplies: This category includes consumable goods needed specifically for the project beyond basic office supplies. Some examples include: books, personal computers or laptops, software, evaluation materials, etc. Check with the guidelines to verify which expenses are allowed for this category.

Participant Support Costs: This category includes expenses that support participation in the project/program such as stipends, tuition, and fees as allowed by the agency. This is not the same as incentives given to human subjects for their participation in a project or experiment. If allowed, incentives are categorized as "Other".

Matching Funds/Cost Sharing: A cost share or matching funds represents a contribution of additional funds to the project for a specific portion of the total project budget. The funding agency will specify exactly how much is required and in what form the cost share can take (cash, in-kind goods, etc.). Do not voluntarily offer a cost share or matching funds if not required.

Indirect Costs (IDC): IDC covers the institution's expenses incurred by the project but not directly charged to the project such as utilities, rent, etc. UHCL has a federally negotiated rate that must be used unless the agency limits IDC to a specific amount. UHCL's rates are 22% for off-campus and 48% for on-campus projects.

