A Birds Eye View of Successful Grant Writing

with Nico Wood Kos

TUESDAY, DEC 7
NOON - 1:00 PM
-- offered via Zoom --
I'm credible!

Dr. Nico Wood Kos

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(But I didn’t learn grant writing in school)

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Grant writing involves:
• Analysis
• Storytelling
• Persuasion
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“Funding a Future”
autodidact

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“Funding a Future”

North Yellowstone Education Foundation

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A Birds Eye View of Successful Grant Writing
What's in this presentation?
A broad overview of grant writing

The primary goal?
To demystify the grant writing process & empower you to write grants
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To demystify the grant writing process & empower you to write grants

Geared towards beginners & focused on nonprofit funding

Our approach will be quick & dirty
What's in this presentation? A broad overview of grant writing

What is a grant?
“A grant is an award of money that allows you to do very specific things, usually according to very specific guidelines that are spelled out in painstaking detail and to which you must respond very clearly in your grant proposal.”

-- Ellen Karsh & Arlen Sue Fox
The Only Grant-Writing Book You’ll Ever Need
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“Free Money”

• Create a proposal
• Carry out a proposed project
• Document the project
• Submit a final report

Everyone wants free money.

Not everyone actually wants to carry out a project.

No one ever wants to submit a final report.

Who are the funders?
Who are the funders?

Anyone who has money that they want to give away.

- Federal government
- State governments
- Local governments
- Community foundations
- Corporate foundations
- Resort tax areas
- Small businesses
- Private parties

Granting is a mutually beneficial process
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- Funders have given a lot of thought to their goals
- They need projects to fulfill their mission
- They need to be accountable to their supporters
- You are playing a crucial role in the philanthropic cycle
- Let go of any guilt
- “Grow your grant writing ego” – Julia Cwikla

Figuring Out Your Project

Find grant opportunities that fit your projects rather than dreaming up projects to fit opportunities.

Is your project fundable?
- Is it feasible?
- Is it something your community needs?
- Will it have “measurable impacts” that you can track?
- Is it “photogenic”?
- Does it have a clear beginning and end?
- Will this project be sustainable?
What about General Operating Support?

Think about all the work your organization does as one big “project.”

Is your organization fundable?
• Are your programs feasible?
• Are you responding to community needs?
• Will your programs have “measurable impacts” that you can track?
• Are your programs “photogenic”?
• Do they have clear beginnings and endings?
• Will this project be sustainable?
Preparing your grant packet

Start gathering everything you will need to apply for grants.

This will involve:
- Some writing
- Some research
- Some gathering of documents
The Writing Part

Brainstorm the following:

**Project Description**
A simple, concise explanation of your project

**Goals & Objectives**
What your project will accomplish in broad ways (goals) and specific ways (objectives)

**Statement of Need**
What problem is your project addressing?

**Statement of Impact**
What influence will this have on your community?
The Writing Part

Brainstorm the following:

Project Description
A simple, concise explanation of your project

Goals & Objectives
What your project will accomplish in broad ways (goals) and specific ways (objectives)

Statement of Need
What problem is your project addressing?

Statement of Impact
What influence will this have on your community?

*Don’t worry! We will dig deeper into these writing areas later*
The Research Part

Gather any data or statistics you can find to support your claims.

Things like:
• Demographic info
• Median income
• # of people below the poverty line
• Anything relevant to your work
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“Using Data to Tell Your Best Story” Presentation by Maclaren Latta

The Gathering Documents Part
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Every grant application will ask for a list of attachments.

Gathering these can take a long time.

Start gathering relevant documents right away.

Learn how to edit, combine, and compress PDF documents. (PDF Sam is a free program)

"Grant Readiness for Funding Success" by The Dotted-I
Identifying Grant Opportunities - In Four Easy Steps

1. **Grant Readiness Checklist**
   - This list is intended to guide you in gathering all of the information you need to determine if you and your organization are the right fit for your desired funding. Many nonprofit leaders recognize that grants are not easy to secure and require a lot of time and energy. In the future, when you are applying for grants:
     - **Tax Status Letter (Or Copy)**: obtain a letter from the government that proves you have nonprofit status.
     - **Budget Narrative**: include any necessary language to inform the organization of your long-term goals.
     - **Financial Statements**: past two years.
     - **Board Minutes**: current year.
     - **Annual Operating Budget**: review all current year and expected expenses for the previous year as well as the projections for the upcoming year.
     - **Special Project Budget**: This section should be included for any planned use of the annual budget. A project budget is helpful to show how you are applying for a grant that will specifically fund a particular project.
     - **Timeline for your project**: Developing project timelines you will need and when. Larger projects can be broken down into phases.
     - **List of Board Members and Staff**: Make sure that you have a list of board members that includes their name, profession, board title, term limits, and contact information.
     - **Evaluation Plan**: It is important to have reasonable outcomes for your project or show leaders the impact your project will have within the community.
     - **List of other funding sources**: If you are working with The Dotted i, this is tracked in your Funding Plan and should be easily accessible for any grant. Having this information is a great way to prove to funders that you have additional financial support for your project/organization.

2. **Occasionally Repeated**
   - **Budget Narrative**: This is a “must have” in any grant, but it is only occasionally requested from funders. It is a great way to clearly articulate what each of your budget line items are intended for.
   - **By-Laws**:
   - **Board Meeting Agenda and Minutes**:
   - **Articles of Incorporation**:
   - **Proof of Nonprofit Status**: A letter or written agreement that proves receiving funds are available for your organization.
   - **Records of Board and Staff Meetings**: Include any meeting notes that you will need to have for the next fiscal year.
   - **Financial Statements**: Include a list of financial information and when these reports are submitted by your organization.

3. **Basic Document Requirements**
   - **Budget Narrative**: This is a “must have” in any grant, but it is only occasionally requested from funders. It is a great way to clearly articulate what each of your budget line items are intended for.
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   - **Financial Statements**: Include a list of financial information and when these reports are submitted by your organization.
1. Start with Google
   - Make a list of 10 key words or phrases that describe your project and/or organization.
   - Plug these words into the search bar with the words “funding” or “grants”
   - Try limiting it by geography. Add the word Montana or Wyoming or the name of your city or county.
   - Quickly scan each organization or opportunity, and if it seems viable at first glance, put it on a list to come back to later.

2. Research Similar Organizations
   - Come up with a list of organizations that have similar missions or goals
   - See if you can find their Annual Reports or dig through their website
   - It can be helpful to reach out to these organizations and inquire about their funding sources.
   - Add any potential funders to your ongoing list
Identifying Grant Opportunities - In Four Easy Steps

3. Use Grant Databases
   • Examples include GrantStation, Grant Watch, Instrumentl (these often require a fee)
   • The truth is that I often find grant databases cumbersome and not intuitive to use
   • Grants.gov (which is free) requires a lot of patience
   • There are really two tricks to use databases in an effective way:
     • Using really specific search terms
     • Understanding that the process involves a lot of combing through opportunities that are not a good fit

4. Research specific opportunities
   • Read over the list you have generated
   • Spend some time looking deeply at each one
   • Study mission statements
     • What types of project do they typically fund?
     • What geographical region?
     • What size grants?
     • Look them up on Candid to view 990.
     • Reach out with a question.
Reading Requests for Proposals (RFPs)

- Reconnaissance work
- Sometimes spelled out very clearly, other times you have to dig
- Read with a highlighter and hunt for “buzzwords”
- Save this in a document for later

Federal Emergency Management Agency’s (FEMA’s) focus on enhancing the safety of the public and firefighters with respect to fire and fire-related hazards. The AFG Program provides financial assistance directly to eligible fire departments, nonaffiliated emergency medical service (EMS) organizations, and State Fire Training Academies (SFTAs) for critical training and equipment. The AFG Program has awarded approximately $7.7 billion in grant funding to provide critically needed resources that equip and train emergency personnel to recognized standards, enhance operational efficiencies, foster interoperability, and support community resilience.
Now you are ready to write your grant!

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“Lower your standards and keep lowering them until the flow begins. Those nasty judges in our heads don’t belong there until the very end when it’s time to edit and rewrite.”
-- Tina Welling

• Assume your audience knows nothing
• Be specific and concrete
• Write so your mother can understand it
Take out what you brainstormed before & let’s make it more specific

Project Description
• What exactly do you plan to do?
• When do you plan to do it?
• Be as detailed and concrete as you can.
• It is better to modify a proposal later than to come up like you are unsure.

Statement of Need (sometimes called Statement of Problem)
• What is the problem that your project seeks to address?
• Why is the project needed?
• Why is this need urgent?
• Why is your organization suited to tackle this problem?
• What would happen if this problem is not addressed?
• Why is this grant funding from this organization the way to get it done?
Determining Your Goals & Objectives

Goals are:
• General intentions
• Intangible
• Abstract
• Cannot necessarily be validated
• Define the ultimate purpose of the project
• Words associated with goals include:
  To know
  To understand
  To gain
  To appreciate
  To gain confidence
### Determining Your Goals & Objectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goals are:</th>
<th>Objectives are:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| - General intentions  
- Intangible  
- Abstract  
- Cannot necessarily be validated  
- Define the ultimate purpose of the project  
- Words associated with goals include: To know, To understand, To gain, To appreciate, To gain confidence | - Precise intentions  
- Tangible  
- Concrete  
- Can be evaluated or measured  
- Use specific action verbs  
- Words associated with objectives include: Define, Recognize, Identify, Illustrate, Develop, Synthesize |

*Each goal should have a corresponding objective*
Goals & Objectives Example

This comes from an application I wrote last year for General Operating Support for North Yellowstone Education Foundation and submitted to the PCCF grant cycle for 2021.

GOALS
(1) To solidify Connect! Grants as a community driven, community funded, and community evaluated program.
(2) To make affordable teacher housing a reality in Gardiner.
(3) To expand the reach of behavioral health services in rural Park County Schools.

OBJECTIVES
(1) To provide $20,000 in Connect! Grant funding, supporting 6-10 diverse projects.
(2) To facilitate the renovation of our property, crystalize all administrative details (such as rental agreements), and move two teachers into housing units by August 2021.
(3) To establish a cohort of community therapists on retainer for referrals via PCRS360.
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You can see how each Goal had a corresponding Objective.

These goals and objectives are designed to work with the Gardiner community to build sustainable support for Gardiner Public Schools, thus enhancing educational and wellness opportunities, and furthering NYEF’s mission.
Take out what you brainstormed before & let's make it more specific

Statement of Impact
Now you'll want to use the Goals and Objectives you've created to determine your impact.
You might ask:
• What positive change will your project create?
• How will you know if your project has succeeded?
• What “measurable outcomes” can you collect to be sure that you’re on the right track?

Infuse your writing with buzzwords
Infuse your writing with buzzwords

- Pull out your list of buzzwords
- Review the Request for Proposals and the organization’s website if you want to find more
- Find ways to insert the buzzwords into what you have written

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Phrases like “operational efficiencies” and “operational performance” appear 3 times.

The word “safety” appears 17 times in the application.

“Train” appears 5 times.

“Equipment” appears 15 times.

“Interoperability” appears twice.
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Phrases like “operational efficiencies” and “operational performance” appear 3 times

“Interoperability” appears twice

“Community” appears 19 times

“The word “safety” appears 17 times in the application

“Train” appears 5 times.
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Save your “Short Project Description” for last
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- This is your elevator pitch
- This may be the only thing a potential funder reads.
- It should be potent and meticulously crafted.
- Conjure up 3-5 sentences that deeply and accurately depict your project

Project Budget - Think Big Picture

**Expenses**
- Everything it will cost to make your project happen
- Be sure to consider the administrative costs of your program

**Income**
- All sources of income related to the project
- This could be grants, donations, event revenue, etc.
- Consider what in-kind donations you may be receiving
- Include other pending sources of funding

You want your budget to be:
- Realistic
- Reasonable
- Within the appropriate range for the grantor
- Organized
Nico’s Tips For Successful Grant Writing

1. Never compose in the online form
Nico’s Tips For Successful Grant Writing

1. Never compose in the online form

Do not write your grant directly into the portal!
Access the grant questions and copy and paste them into a Google Doc or Word document.

2. Break questions down into sub-questions
Nico’s Tips For Successful Grant Writing

1. Never compose in the online form
2. Break questions down into sub-questions
3. Be meticulous with your file names

In the application, the question appeared like this:
(2) Project Summary* Character Limit: 2000
Describe what you hope to learn or accomplish with this project or program. Include a concise description of the project/request including goals and expected outcomes. Describe also how it fits with your organizational mission and other programming.

In my working version of the application, the question appeared like this:
(2) Project Summary* Character Limit: 2000
(a) Describe what you hope to learn or accomplish with this project or program.

(b) Include a concise description of the project/request including goals and expected outcomes.

(c) Describe also how it fits with your organizational mission and other programming.
Nico’s Tips For Successful Grant Writing

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2. Break questions down into sub-questions
3. Be meticulous with your file names

Put your name first!
NWK_ProjectBudget.pdf
EPAC_ProjectBudget.pdf

Keep everything the same!
NWK_WorkSample.pdf
NWK_Resume2020.pdf

Know the correct name of your project and always use it the same way!
Projector for Theatrical Performance

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4. Use a thesaurus
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Avoid using the same words over and over. It’s boring to read. Use a thesaurus to make your writing sound more interesting. I love thesaurus.com

Instead of saying “support” repeatedly, try using:
- Bolster
- Reinforce
- Uphold
- Be a foundation for

5. Lie about deadlines
Nico’s Tips For Successful Grant Writing

1. Never compose in the online form
2. Break questions down into sub-questions
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4. Use a thesaurus
5. Lie about deadlines

Never wait until the last minute to submit because something always goes wrong!

Push the deadline back on your own calendar and push if back even further for anyone sending you materials.

6. Save “easy” tasks for when you don’t have the brain power to write
Nico’s Tips For Successful Grant Writing

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Writing takes a certain level of mental energy.
Formatting PDFs does not.

7. Start your Final Report on Day 1
Getting the grant is just the beginning.

Once you have the funding, you actually have to
• Carry out the project
• Document and track everything

Nice final reports make happy funders. Happy funders are more likely to fund you again.

Things to Track For Your Final Report:
• How the money was spent (save all invoices & receipts)
• Number of people impacted by your project
• Types of people impacted by your project (demographics)
• Photographs of your project in action
• Photo release forms for anyone in the photos
• An “impact story” from a participant
• A quote about how your program helped someone
• Final Budget
In Conclusion …

Grant writing is a mutually beneficial process where grant-seekers help funders fulfill their missions.

Grant writing involves reading very closely and choosing your words carefully.

If you are passionate, patient, and fastidious: grant writing might be for you.

Dr. Nico Wood Kos
Professional grant writer and non-profit consultant
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406-529-9414
Additional Resources

- Grant Readiness Workshop & Checklist
- Using Data to Tell Your Best Story
- Pitching Your Project: Ethos, Pathos, Logos
- We Will Park County

Helpful Websites
- https://www.grants.gov/ - Federal Grants
- https://mtcf.org/ - Montana Community Foundation
- https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/funding - Rural Health Information Hub
- https://candid.org/ - Candid (formerly The Foundation Center)

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Works Cited

The Only Grant Writing Book You'll Ever Need by Ellen Karsh & Arlen Sue Fox

Good to Great Grant Writing: Secrets to Success by Julie Cwikla

“Finding Great Grants Checklist” by The Dotted-I (free when you subscribe via email)