

Chapter 1

Choosing Grant Writing For A Career Path

Philanthropy has never been greater. In 2005, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation gave away \$1.4 billion for charitable work in the United States and abroad. As more people are giving away money for various causes, the job of the grant writer is to secure funds for individuals, nonprofits, businesses, and governments. The grant writer is the vital connecting link between a funder and grant seeker.

STRIKE WHILE THE IRON IS HOT

Skilled grant writers are one of the most in-demand professionals today. They work as independent contractors, full- or part-time development officers, and freelancers. Prompted by the increasing demand to find new sources of funding, nonprofit agencies are always looking for help to identify these sources and take on grant-writing projects. Virtually every nonprofit needs a skilled grant writer, and there are hundreds of thousands of nonprofits currently in operation in the United States alone. Internationally, there are many more. This is a great time to start your own grant-writing business or to become a freelance grant writer.

The majority of grants are given to organizations that have a tax-exempt or nonprofit status. Also known as 501(c)(3) status, these organizations operate as charities and usually offer promise of helping their communities at the local, national, and sometimes international levels. While some of the larger organizations have a grant writer on staff, this isn't the case for the majority of nonprofits currently in operation. Indeed, the career of a grant writer is still in an infant stage, and only a handful of individuals are skilled at the profession.

INCOME POTENTIAL FOR GRANT WRITERS

A grant writer can earn an annual income ranging from \$50,000 to \$300,000. The income potential depends on a variety of factors, including the level of expertise, area of operation, clients, commissions (if any), and type of funders sought. There is no way to estimate what a grant writer can earn. It depends on whether the grant writer is employed full time or freelance; whether he or she is a specialist or generalist writer; the number of projects accepted each year; the writer's geographic location; and myriad other considerations. Freelance grant writers can charge an hourly rate that is supported by the marketplace and nearly always earn more than full time, employed grant writers.

Here are the payment methods commonly accepted by grant writers:

▲ **By hourly rate:** The rates charged by grant writers vary, depending on their main clientele, level of experience, and success in securing grant approvals. The average hourly rate for a competent grant writer is between \$40 and \$80. More experienced and capable grant writers can charge rates of \$100 per hour or more, while there are less established grant writers who charge between \$25 and \$50 per hour. The hourly rate and the resultant total fee will be significantly affected by the amount of experience and track record of each grant writer.

▲ **By project:** Some grant writers prefer to charge on a project basis, after a thorough assessment of the full range and scope of the job. Depending on the length and complexity of the grant document, project fees can range anywhere from \$1,000 to \$10,000. It is up to the grant writer to decide whether to choose different rates based on the source of grant, e.g., a lower rate for grant applications to be submitted to a foundation or corporation, and a higher rate if the applicant is seeking state or federal grants.

▲ **Per diem:** Grant consulting firms offer their services per day. In such cases, they charge a standard daily rate that may vary between \$500 and \$2,000.

▲ **By commission:** Some grant writers are paid based on a certain percentage of the grant that is awarded. In this arrangement, compensation is tied to the grant writer's success in securing the grant and may be between 1 and 5 percent of the total grant awarded.

Stat Fact

The Foundation Center's recent statistics survey reports Aventis Pharmaceuticals Health Care Foundation as the nation's number-one corporate grant giver, with over \$217 million awarded in grants. The Wal-Mart Foundation ranked second, with more than \$155 million awarded.



Smart Tip

Are you unhappy at your current job? Change your job and change your life. Consider grant writing for a career change. It is ripe with opportunities for individuals with a willingness to learn. Grant writing can not only enrich your wallet but also improve your personal life, giving you independence, confidence, and the ability to be your own boss.



A WORD ABOUT GRANT WRITING VS. FUNDRAISING

Grant writing and fundraising are two different things, although a grant writer can also be a fundraiser and vice versa. A fundraiser is a person on staff who is assigned to general fundraising duties, one of which may be grant writing. Fundraising duties also can include nurturing long-term donors; developing candidates and plans for bequests; planning and executing fundraising events or speaker series; managing a database of donors; developing year-end and midyear letter campaigns; and other similar responsibilities.

Becoming a fundraiser or fundraising consultant enhances your ability to get a job as a grant writer, as these roles cover a larger spectrum of raising funds. The job of a fundraiser generally is created only if an organization is planning a complex project and needs to raise a large amount of money.

Most professional fundraisers work for a nonprofit organization, either on staff or on a consultant basis. They do the bread-and-butter work of raising money from private, corporate, and government sources. Usually, fundraisers who are on the staff of a nonprofit are called “development officers.” An independent fundraiser goes by the professional term “fundraising counsel.”

While many executive directors of nonprofits can and have written grants, they often become too busy with the other requirements of their jobs and grant writing becomes a skill sought from an outside source, such as a professional grant writer. Professional grant writers, as a general rule, work for organizations where there is the biggest potential for income, although some will work for individuals on a for-hire basis.

Professional fundraisers usually maintain a staff of researchers and assistants and are accustomed to conducting funding campaigns from start to finish. Most professional fundraisers work with different types of projects and funders, although there are a few who specialize, for example, in government grants.

Stat Fact

Grant-writing fees vary enormously, from \$20 an hour for less experienced writers to \$150 per hour for experienced ones. Some charge on a contract basis. Typical rates are \$1,250 per diem or \$10,000 per government proposal prepared by consulting firms.



Stat Fact

The Foundation Center survey indicates that the number-one leading U.S. foundation by asset size is The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, with assets totaling \$29.2 billion.



Smart Tip

In addition to the qualities that can make a grant idea attractive to funders, there is one crucial factor that can make or break a funding idea. That factor is you: who you are, what experience or knowledge you possess, how you present yourself, and, perhaps most significantly, how much you care about your idea.



TRAITS OF A GRANT WRITER

To become a professional grant writer, you need to develop skills in writing, storytelling, consulting, research, program planning, evaluation, internet marketing, interviewing, public relations, and budgeting. A good grant writer must have many traits. This section lists some of them.

Resilience

Grant writers need to be adaptable and flexible, shifting direction based on the applicant, the needs of the

community, and the funder. Grant writers also must be able to recover quickly from the inevitable disappointments of the job.

Goal-Setting

One of the best ways to stay motivated is to set goals. You can set different kinds of goals, such as “I am going to meet three clients today” or “I will double my annual income within the next two years.” Goals give you something to aim for. Always aim high.

Research Skills

A savvy grant writer must be able to research for funding sources in an efficient manner. Some directories of funders (see Chapter 4) are thousands of pages long. Browsing through every single page is out of the question and an utter waste of time. A good grant writer must be able to review through the index and find sources that fit a particular need. Research skills also are needed to hunt for statistics for quantifying information.

Internet Savvy

Internet research skills are a must for grant writers. As a grant writer, you surf the web frequently looking for special opportunities for your clients or employer. Part of the work of the grant writer is identifying and select-

Smart Tip

Remember, success is failure turned inside out. It is when you are hardest hit by grant rejections that you must not quit. Resilience is a smart trait to cultivate in life.



Smart Tip

Setting deadlines for your goals is critical. Aim to achieve tomorrow's goals today. Deadlines and time commitments keep you moving forward. Keep one eye on the long-term opportunity while taking care of today. Teach yourself to focus on the important things and to allow the less critical things to take a back seat.



ing appropriate potential donors online. More and more funders are going paperless.

Writing And Speaking Communication Skills

Good writing skills are needed to write a good grant proposal, write high-quality publications that build your reputation, and write excellent follow-up reports once funding has been awarded.

Good speaking skills are necessary to bring your work to the attention of people, make a convincing presenta-

tion during a site visit, deliver grant-writing workshops, and successfully coordinate the different elements needed to complete foundation grant applications.

Sound Administrative Skills

Sound administrative skills are needed to handle the application process. From calling a funder to talk about a possible corporation grant to billing a client for completing a 50-page grant proposal, administrative skills are needed to ensure that the job gets done properly.

Human Relations Skills

The grant decisions are ultimately made by humans about humans. The person reading the application is a human being, not a robot. Your ability to interact with human beings comes into effect during several phases of the grant application process. Calling funders, on-site visits, and delivering presentations to funders are a few examples where good human relations come into play. With some applications, there may not be a need to interact with a human being at a tangible level, while with others, such interactions may be necessary.

Relationships are crucial to success. An effective grant writer needs to be con-

Beware!

Remember, you are the company you keep. Improving your career as a freelance grant writer may require you to establish healthy associations. Associate with people who affirm your goodness and share your ambitions—not those who may cause you to lose focus and fall by the wayside.



fidient enough to feel comfortable initiating interactions with strangers.

Passion

Believing strongly in your organization's mission can be a contributing factor to your success as a grant writer. Pick a nonprofit with a mission that speaks to both your heart and mind. Not only will your work be more fulfilling, but enthusiasm will spread to those around you. For example, if you feel strongly about addiction recovery, then work with nonprofit counseling centers and detox facilities. Your enthusiasm for sober living will translate into the proposal you are crafting.

Smart Tip

Situational factors are all-important to business success. But their importance is dwarfed in comparison to the burning desire that you must have to make your business venture succeed. You can always make changes to your business once you start, but you can't buy burning desire. If it is not there from the start, you are at a severe disadvantage.



Trustworthiness

People want to know they can depend on you before they commit to a lasting relationship, especially one where resources or money is exchanged. Grant writers who use manipulative techniques to secure gifts and grants are not seen as having integrity. Credibility is something you earn over time. It takes time, effort, and situational need to build trust between a grant writer and a client/funder.

Beware!

Working with clients who may misuse grant funds may cost you your job. If you feel suspicious about a particular individual or organization misusing funds, notify the FBI, the IRS or the county government.



Persistence

It takes thick skin to accept rejection as a matter of course and continue advocating for a cause. Grant writers need to be dogged in their efforts and feel challenged, not defeated, by obstacles. If you are timid, in order to

be a successful grant writer, you must transform yourself to move forward amid obstacles. This ability affects your grant-writing career and other areas of your life.

Ability To Lead And Follow

A good grant writer must nurture the ability to lead and follow at the same time. When working with a non-profit that needs funds raised, you set the direction in which the grant-seeking process is going to take. You guide the process, orchestrate the players, and motivate the team to move forward. In this role, there is no room for ego. A good grant writer must be able to bridge relationships with many individuals and organizations.

Simultaneously, a good grant writer must be able to follow guidelines set forth by a funder, obey the requirements made by the director of a nonprofit, and follow the current trends in grant seeking.

Smart Tip

Good grant writers must be able to take rejection with their chins up. A grant writer shows resiliency when a funder gives a negative response to a project idea, and the grant writer overcomes the objection or shifts focus to another initiative without missing a beat.



Confidence

As a grant writer, confidence is key to convincing a funder of your ability to successfully carry out the project. If you are knowledgeable about your field, know your organization and its programs well, and prepare for interactions with prospective donors, your confidence grows significantly. A confident person is not embarrassed by what she does not know and freely admits it. She is aware of her own shortcomings but maintains a sense of purpose. Allow your organization to stand on its own feet without bringing someone else down.

Multitasker

In order to complete the multiple tasks and responsibilities of a grant writer, you need to juggle many things at once without coming unglued. One of the main measures of successful grant writers is their ability to follow through with peers at the nonprofit as well as with funders and other partners. You must have a continual focus on the overall goal, while attending to the details that allow the project to be successfully developed and implemented.

Beware!

Coating yourself in denial or fake optimism should not be confused with confidence.



Organizational skills are important for successful multitasking. You must be organized so you can manage all the required tasks and responsibili-

ties. A grant writer must be able to keep track of grant application deadlines and follow up on submitted applications. It is also essential to keep track of trends in the field as well as be aware of changes in the priorities of funding institutions and new funding sources that come onto the scene.

GRANT WRITER'S TOOLKIT

Grant writing is a craft that can be cultivated and mastered in time. Knowing how to use the tools of the trade is key to winning funding. Although there isn't a set procedure for becoming a successful grant writer, some standard rules apply.

Approaching Funders

There are a number of methods of approaching funders:

- ▲ Grant proposal
- ▲ Personal visit
- ▲ Telephone call
- ▲ E-mail or fax

The best method of approaching a funder depends on how much money is sought, the grantmaking organization, and the project idea, among other factors. The most common method of approaching funders is through a grant proposal.

The Grant Proposal In A Nutshell

The grant proposal is the umbilical cord connecting a grant writer with potential funders. Through the grant proposal, applicants have the opportunity to persuade the funder to give money.

Learning how to write persuasive grant proposals is key to winning funding. A well-written, cohesive proposal can bring in money and, in some cases, donated goods and services. The chart on page TK shows the main elements of a grant proposal and what information should be included. Chapter 6 discusses grant proposals in detail.

Smart Tip

The grant proposal demands a different genre of writing. It is not an academic paper, a report, a novel, or a newspaper article. It is a document of persuasion.



Researching Funders

Knowing where to look for grant funders is key. Researching funders who are likely to provide financial support for your work requires time, patience, and perseverance. Always remember to look at the funder's current guidelines. Grant profiles, contact information, and funding criteria change frequently. The internet is an excellent source to look for funders. You are likely to

find the most current information available online, simply because websites are easier to update than print publications. Chapter 4 fleshes out prospect research in extensive detail.

Identify The Problem, Propose A Solution

Because funders want their money to make a positive difference in society, they want to see applications that solve a problem or address a need—locally, nationally, or internationally. But the funder also has legitimate business considerations to weigh. Put yourself in the funder's shoes and answer the question, "What's in it for me?" All funders want to know both how your project helps them meet their goals and how it adds value to the well-being of the community. Use your grant proposal to show, in plain terms, what positive differences your idea has on society and to provide a glimpse of what the situation would look like if your project is not funded. By identifying a pressing problem and proposing a solution, show how an investment in your project has positive effects—for the funder and for society.

Focus on results. Show how your idea can improve the conditions of people or, in some cases, animals and the environment; make your idea convincing, important, and immediate. Funders look for projects that produce a clear outcome and lasting benefits. Using data to define needs and track progress toward outcomes is a good way to show the funder you are serious about results.

Smart Tip

A beginning grant writer is strongly advised to start with private foundation and not federal grant proposals. Because the federal government offers large sums of money, proposals for these grants are much more competitive than those grants issued by private foundations. In addition, most foundation proposals are fairly easy and straightforward to write.



Main Elements Of A Grant Proposal

Category	Information to Include
Proposal Summary	Briefly state how the project will be implemented and the expected results include your total budget, timeline, and the amount of your request.
Statement Of Problem Or Need	Explain the problems you are going to address; outline current resources that address this problem and identify gaps in those resources; identify how your proposal fills these gaps.
Project Goals And Objectives	Identify the specific goals you are trying to achieve and the measurable milestones you will reach to meet those goals
Methodology	Describe the actions you will take to achieve your goals, the steps that must be taken to achieve success, as well as when and where the actions will take place.
Evaluation	Explain how you will determine whether you achieved your goals, any measures in place to evaluate your progress, as well as any records and information that will be used in the evaluation.
Budget	Include the amount of money you are requesting, any calculations for specific items for which funds are being requested, and the time line during which funds will be used.