Proposal-Writing Tips

Do your research on grant-making organizations.
Every grantmaker has different requirements for the grants they accept, and different areas of interest. Developing a list of relevant grantmakers and researching them individually is key to success at finding funding.

Show funders why your project matters.
Every grant sponsor has a different idea of what is important. Based on your research, choose funders who will care about the work that you do. Your proposal should also explicitly describe why your work matters to them in a concise and concrete way.

Make it easy for funders to understand your project.
Keep your writing clear, simple and appealing! If funders have to struggle to understand what you’re trying to communicate, they can’t evaluate your project on its merits. Along the same lines, avoid jargon that the funders may not understand.

Stay focused on the core of your project.
Funders have only so much time to read your proposal, so when you have their attention, you should be taking advantage of it. Avoid literature-review syndrome: keep your proposal concise and focused on what you are actually planning to do and why it matters! Budgets should be focused too. Peripheral, unnecessary expenses could make the difference between a successful and unsuccessful application.

Use personal contact to support your proposal.
Active contact with potential sponsors shows you’re serious about your project – and helps the people making the decisions remember who you are and why your work matters. Phone calls or meetings can also be opportunities to learn how best to present your work for a particular sponsor.

Learn from your rejections.
Not every funder may be the right match. Be persistent! Even if a grant application is rejected, finding out why will help you to revise your grant application to be more appealing – whether as a re-submission to the same sponsor or to other potential funders.

Remember that finding funding is a process.
Even successful applications for funding take time. Start early and budget time for the proposal-writing process. Get feedback from colleagues and friends all the way through the process to help you focus and refine your proposal. Finally, don’t get discouraged!

Resources for Finding Funding

The Foundation Center (http://fdncenter.org/)
A centralized resource for finding grants, whether as an individual or as part of a larger project. They also organize proposal-writing seminars and other classes geared toward helping people find funding.

The Office of Sponsored Projects (http://www.tc.edu/osp/)
This TC resource has grant opportunities as well as much advice on how to write successful proposals.

Government grants and other resources, with a wide variety of education-related funding opportunities.

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