



Boules Consulting: Master Narrative Checklist

Introduction: What is a Master Narrative?

A Master Narrative is an internal, living document that a nonprofit organization needs to drastically streamline its grant application process and save hundreds of hours' worth of time. It is used as a content library from which grant writers, development directors, and executive directors can pull from and adapt its language for grant proposals, marketing materials, websites, and other communications.

Who Needs a Master Narrative?

If you are an organization who intends for a primary source of its revenue to come from grants, government contracts, and other funding opportunities where you expect to submit proposals, then you will definitely need a Master Narrative. That way, instead of having to start from scratch every time you start a new proposal, you can rely on a template that has the most important, core information about your nonprofit at your fingertips.

Where are they used?

First and foremost, Master Narratives are used mainly for submitting grant applications. Grants are sums of money that private family foundations, companies, and government agencies give to nonprofits to help them achieve their mission. An effective nonprofit leader knows how to find and go after the right grant opportunities for their organization, and an effective grant writer knows how to convince the grant reviewers on the other side to invest in their mission.

What are the key components of a Master Narrative?

The more grants you apply to, the more you realize that most grants ask the same type of question over and over again. These are the questions that you should have answered in your master narrative.

Below is a check list of the key, most important components every master narrative should include in its first iteration:

Master Narrative Core Components

1. Vital Information

This has all of your organization's pertinent information such as EIN number, incorporation date, legal and mailing address, project budget, program budget, etc.

2. Mission statement

Your mission statement should be about the problem you are trying to solve

3. Vision statement

You vision statement should be about what the world would look like as the result of your mission

4. History of the organization

Who founded the organization and why?

5. Executive Summary

The Executive Summary should be a synopsis of your mission statement along with a bird's eye view of your programs.

6. Geographic area served

Where are you currently located, and what are the geographical boundaries of your service area?

7. Population served description

Who are you trying to reach with your mission statement? (i.e., Low Income Single Mothers living in Phoenix, Arizona).

8. Staff/volunteer info

How many staff do you have, how many volunteers do you have, and how many hours do your volunteers often contribute on a yearly basis?

9. Need

Why are you doing the work that you're doing? Who are you trying to help? Why do they need help?

10. Program description

Describe what your program looks like from the point of view of a person you're helping. How are they helped from beginning to end?

11. Program goals and objectives

What are your S.M.A.R.T goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Timeline) for this project? List at least three.

12. Program evaluation

It's not enough to have goals; how will you measure them?

13. Financial sustainability

What are you doing to ensure that the program will be able to continue on even after the grant money from a particular funder has dried up?

14. Partnerships and collaborations

Do you have any organizational partnerships such as faith-based organizations, schools, government agencies, or nonprofit organizations? List each of them and the nature of each relationship here.

15. Recognition

If awarded, how will you thank the funder?

16. Staff bios

Create 3-5 sentence bios of each executive staff member and/or program director here

17. Testimonials

Keep a running list of all of your testimonials here

18. Pending/received grants

Keep a running list of all of the grants you are applying for in your current fiscal year here, and be sure to mark when they have been awarded.

Going Forward:

Depending on your niche, you might find other questions being asked of you again and again; if that is the case, then it's best to add another section in your master narrative to answer that question. As your program evolves and changes, so should your master narrative change as well. This is why your master narrative is considered a living document; because it grows as your nonprofit grows, and with it, the sky's the limit!

Do you want to learn more? Boules Consulting's team of nonprofit management professionals provide free, half-hour consulting sessions for your nonprofit. [Just click here](#) to get your consultant started!