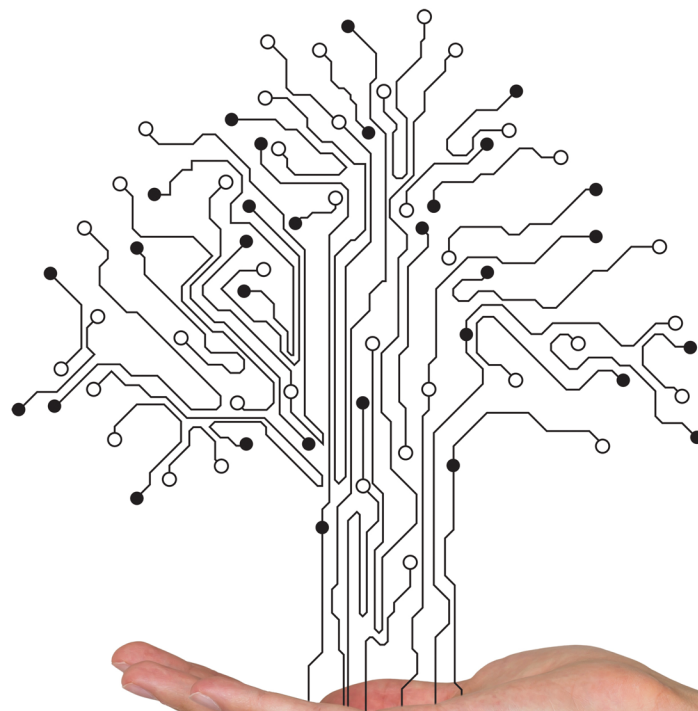


Five Secrets to Winning Grants

A Quick Guide for Educators



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For most K-12 and post-secondary educators, grant writing can seem like a foreign language, with its own lexicon, rules and culture. But with shrinking budgets and growing expectations the new norm for schools, securing grant funds may well be the key to unlocking a world of learning opportunities for students and staff alike.

“Many of the schools we work with have successfully secured grant dollars to help fund programs and activities,” says Kristin Hoffman, Spanish Editor at EMC Publishing, a leading developer of K-12 and post-secondary learning solutions in world languages, language arts and applied learning. “Especially in the area of learning technologies, grant making institutions are clearly interested in funding education initiatives.”

Funding trends bear out Hoffman’s observation. According to Foundation Center, a clearinghouse of information about philanthropy, more than 12,000 grants benefitting primary and secondary education were awarded by foundations in 2012, totaling nearly \$2 billion in funding.

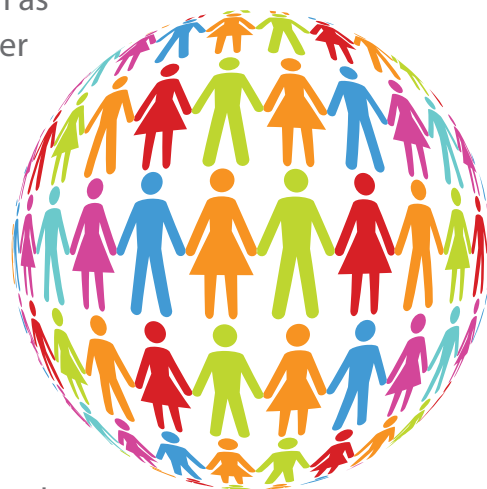
While some schools enlist professional grant writers to go after funding dollars, classroom teachers are arguably better positioned to script winning grant proposals. Grant writing is about articulating a resourceful way to successfully address a demonstrated need. Teachers undoubtedly see today’s most pressing education needs up close. Plus, teachers understand underlying challenges and concerns, and are best-equipped to craft informed and workable solutions. Add data and passion to the mix, and you have the makings of a successful grant proposal.

Outlined below, “Five Secrets to Winning Grants” is part pep talk, part how-to for first-time education grant writers. Now you can do more than imagine that better tomorrow for your students and your colleagues. You can make it happen.

1 Get it together, for good.

Too often, grant writing is an isolated endeavor, conducted at the eleventh hour by a lone teacher seeking to fund a specific project. The proverbial wheel needs to be re-invented with each go. Picture, instead, drawing from a repository of ready-to-use information about your school, students and staff—data that grant makers typically require. Consider creating a collaborative, easily updatable grant-writing file to share with colleagues in your school or district. It could include:

- Demographic data culled from NCES.ed.gov, such as your school's enrollment figures per grade, teacher to student ratio, ethnicity/race of student body, and free- and reduced-lunch program eligibility
- Brief **bios** of faculty members—100 words, max—highlighting areas of interest and underscoring expertise and credibility
- An official and **approved description** of your school, likely pulled from your district website or other district communications
- Reliable sources for **letters of support**, such as local business owners, the Chamber of Commerce, or PTA members
- A list of past and potential **donors**, matching fund sources and volunteers, including types of projects supported and form of support (financial, in-kind)
- Copies of your school or district's **winning grant proposals**, with information that can be updated and re-purposed for new proposals

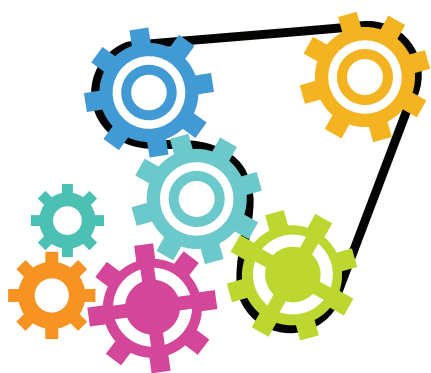


2 Always be on the lookout.

While mega grant awards tend to catch everyone's attention, competition can be less intense for hundreds if not thousands of smaller funding opportunities. Check out the no-cost, no-strings-attached **GetEdFunding.com** website for opportunities that match your school's needs. The database is highly searchable and updated daily with thousands of local, state and federal grant opportunities. For example, you can search the site by target population to be served, such as Advanced Placement students, or by content area, such as world languages. An "add to my wish list" feature lets you save promising opportunities for further investigation or to share with colleagues.

3 Read the fine print.

It doesn't matter how worthy your cause or well-crafted your grant proposal is if your application doesn't fit within the grant maker's rules and parameters. For example, does your funding request exceed the maximum dollar amount to be awarded? Are matching funds required? Do you need to submit letters of support? Does your request include funding for items that are not allowed, such as capital improvements or meals? If you have questions about the eligibility of your proposal, consider contacting the foundation's grant officer. Within a five- or ten-minute conversation, you can not only resolve questions about your eligibility or the grant process, but also gauge the organization's level of interest in your proposal.



4 Make it a team effort.

Consider recruiting a team of colleagues at your school to proactively seek grant funding opportunities, update your school's grant writing repository, reach out to others for grant writing support and assistance, and buff and polish grant proposals. You may not need in-person meetings, just a commitment from each member to step in with his or her expertise when appropriate. For example, recruit a math teacher to review proposed budgets, and enlist

an English teacher to proofread proposals. Your principal, superintendent or other lead administrator will be an important fact-checker, ensuring your school profile information is up to date and aligns with facts and figures published elsewhere.

5 Paint a picture with words.

While data drives winning grant applications, a compelling vision statement will bring your proposal to life for grant makers. Use vivid, from-the-heart language to paint a picture of the "better tomorrow" you envision. Describe the immediate and lasting impact of your proposal. How will your program or project make a difference in the lives of students, families or your community? Consider the emotional tug of the following goal statements:

- To purchase six new computers for our school media center for an after-school enrichment program
- To re-spark a love of learning and advance essential technology skills among our most at-risk seventh grade students

One is a shopping list; the other is a life-changing investment. Win hearts and dollars by building your case with specific, descriptive and emotive language.

As most novice grant writers discover, success often begets success. Your winning proposals can be successfully updated and re-purposed for subsequent opportunities—granting untold possibilities for your students, your colleagues and your community.

EMC Publishing, a division of New Mountain Learning, is one of the nation's leading producers and marketers of textbooks and supporting multimedia programs for K-12 and post-secondary schools throughout the country. Learn more at EMCP.com.

Key resources used in developing this quick guide include edweb.net (specifically, grant writing webinars by Rita Oates, PhD), GetEdFunding.com, NCES.ed.gov and foundationcenter.org.

Your Printable Checklist



Before you push the “submit” button

- ☐ Is your proposal specific to the grant opportunity?
- ☐ Is your goal sufficiently supported by data?
- ☐ Are your outcomes measurable?
- ☐ Is your budget realistic?
- ☐ Is your messaging compelling, concise and understandable?
- ☐ Do all of your embedded photos or links work?
- ☐ Did you proofread your final proposal?