

Texas Recycling Summit

The Do's and Don'ts of Grant Writing



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TEXAS CENTER FOR GRANTS DEVELOPMENT

Session Covers



- Habits of better grant writers
- Mistakes inexperienced grant writers often make
- Do's and don'ts of grant writing
- Appropriate proposal formatting
- What reviewers like and dislike
- General proposal tips

**You can fool
some of the people
all of the time,
and all of the people
some of the time,
but you can't fool all
of the people all of
the time.**

-ABRAHAM LINCOLN



What is a "Better" Grant Writer?



"Better" Writers:

- Write like they mean it
- Are direct and concise
- Use action verbs
- Avoid jargon
- Use grammar and punctuation correctly
- Describe experiences that reviewers can relate to
- Create text that 5th - 6th grade students can read

What is an “Inexperienced” Grant Writer?



“Inexperienced” Writers:

- Have spelling mistakes such as “effect” for “affect”
- Use incorrect grammar and punctuation such as poor subject verb agreement, too many commas or run-on sentences
- Redundancies and repetitions such as “absolutely correct” and “joint partnership”
- Jargon such as “client-focused” or “cutting edge”
- Inflated words and phrases such as “overwhelmingly” and “due to the fact that”
- Passive voice such as “will be”

Do These to Improve Your Grant Writing



- ✓ Reduce/eliminate “will be” from your writing
- ✓ Don't use words/terms such as appreciate, have faith in, know, learn, understand and believe. These words are not measurable
- ✓ Do use words such as describe, list, compare, locate, demonstrate and apply. These words are measurable

Formatting Really Matters



Good formatting not only helps you organize your proposal, it helps the reviewer follow your proposal.

Do:

- ✓ Use Bold, Underline and Italics to help define text
- ✓ Use 1.5 inch or 2 inch spacing to give the page white space that comforts the reviewer's eyes
- ✓ Use 1 inch margins
- ✓ Use Times New Roman, no less than 12-point font
- ✓ Use tables only as "Wow" statements in text in 10-point font

These Won't Improve Your Grant Writing



- Don't—

- ☒ Use acronyms without stating what they represent
- ☒ Overstate the obvious
- ☒ Write in long sentences
- ☒ Use big words to sound knowledgeable
- ☒ Use unnecessary words
- ☒ Use trendy words or clichés
- ☒ Confuse affect and effect; accept and except; and among and between
- ☒ Use verbs such as appreciate, know, learn, understand and believe

Don't Use These Words



❌ Business words: interface, kudos, paradigm, monies, parameter, synergy, empower, cutting edge, seamless, client-focused, change agent, buy-in, downsize, outsource

❌ Education words: align, dialogue, best practice, frictionless, win-win, impact, out of pocket, deliverable, game plan, results-driven, team player, stakeholder, proactive

The Reviewer: Helpful Friend or Scary Enemy?



A typical reviewer is a 40-something full professor or professional faced with his/her own grants, teaching, committees, editorial responsibilities, graduate students, mortgage payments, rebellious teenagers, aging parents, mildewed roses, etc. etc. This person typically is busy, over committed, unable to say "no", and also is very frustrated by the too many grants-too little money syndrome.

*Janet S. Rasey, Ph.D.
Director, Research Funding Service
University of Washington

Reviewer Likes



Typically reviewers like:

- Proposals that use current research (data), proven methods and best practices
- Proposals that describe methods in detail
- Proposals that have a research plan
- To look competent in front of the review committee and agency employees

Reviewer Dislikes



Typically reviewers dislike:

- Not following instructions
- Cramming too much information into the allowed page limit
- Misrepresenting collaborators, in-kind or cash match
- Too large budgets with little or no justification
- Putting items in attachments that belong in the proposal
- Looking incompetent in front of the review committee by misinterpreting your plans or ideas because of unclear writing

General Tips for Grant Applications



- Read the RFP at least five times
- Follow all RFP directions
- Don't assume you're the only person needed to write the grant
- Planning is essential – a grant proposal is a written version of your planning process
- Don't chase the money; you may hurt your reputation with a funder if you can't implement successfully

General Tips Continued



- Make sure your budget and budget narrative are correct; justify each expense
- Don't misrepresent collaborators, in-kind or cash match
- Cite quotes and paraphrased sources
- Edit, review, edit and review again and again



Thank you for participating!

If you have questions or would like
more information on the
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or to attend a September Workshop
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