



A Foundation for Grants Success
Best Practices and Common Pitfalls

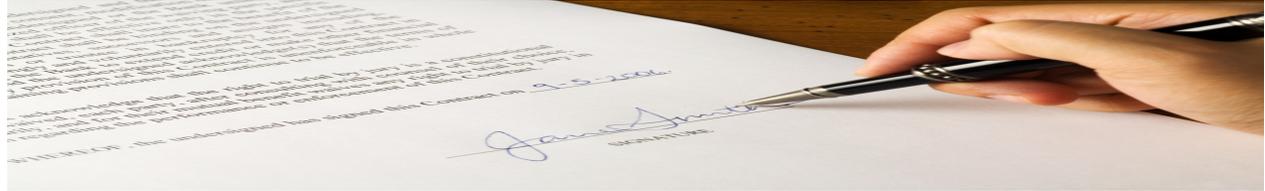
Corey A. Coll
Enterprise Account Executive, eCivis Inc.

The Grants Lifecycle



- 1) **Project Definition** – Begin by defining the project you wish to fund
- 2) **Research Grants** – Identify appropriate funding opportunities using the tools available within Grants Network: Research
- 3) **Intent to Apply** – Submit Letter of Intent (LOI) if required and keep your project team and your organization informed of your intent to apply
- 4) **Application Submission** – While awaiting notification of award, create a central repository for your grant related documents
- 5) **Grant Award** – Complete all award contract documents and return to funder
- 6) **Implementation & Reporting** – Submit required reports, in addition to keeping track of performance periods and reimbursement requests.
- 7) **Close Out** – Once all of the grant program requirements have been completed, the grant can be formally closed out

Attributes of a Fundable Project



- **Public Need** – Ensure your project addresses a real pressing community, state or national issue
- **Link to Organization Priority** – Define how the public need is linked to your organization's priorities
- **Resources** – Funding, staff, volunteers and equipment
- **Collaboration** – Establishing partnerships proactively will make it much easier to determine how partnering individuals/groups will work together once funding is available
- **Measure of Success** – Identify clear goals and measureable objectives
- **Sustainability** – Knowing that there is more to come after the award will improve your chances of continued grant success

Create a Boilerplate Application

- Boilerplates should include:
 - A description of your organization
 - A description of your target audience
 - And highlight resources you will contribute
- Resources to consider when creating a boilerplate include:
 - Mission statement
 - Organization by-laws
 - Recent audit report
 - Organizational chart
 - Key staff resumes
 - Current budget
 - Profile of customers and clients
 - Brochures



Strategies for Successful Program Evaluation



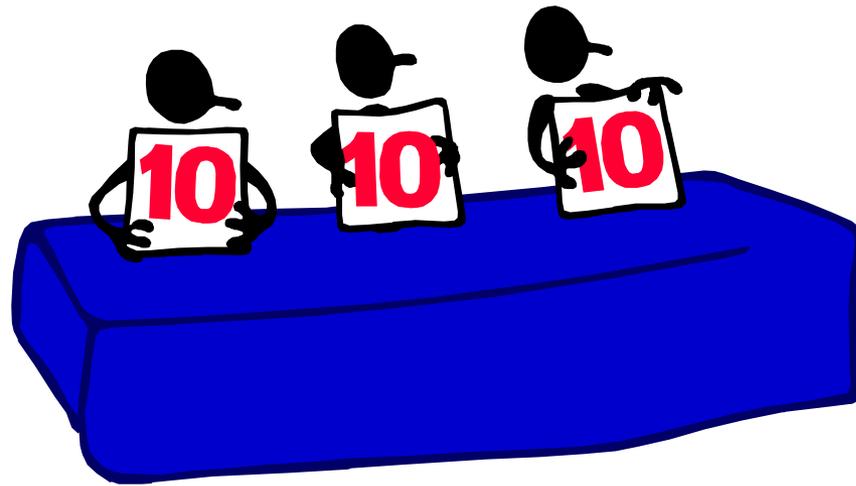
- **Be Proactive: Think Like your Funder** – Continually assess how your program efforts align with your goals
- **Select Proper Metrics** – Identify evaluation measures prior to beginning your program
- **Know Reporting Requirements** – Having obligations in mind throughout the program will set your staff up for success
- **Ensure Fiscal Responsibility** – By keeping track of ongoing expenses you can ensure your program will not exhaust funds prematurely
- **Stick to Timeline** – Regular status reports by program partners and stakeholders allow program managers to keep the project on target for a timely completion
- **Stress Outcomes During Close Out** – Short term successes set the stage for future impact. Gaining input both internally and externally regarding your program will assist your funder in their evaluation of your program



Avoid Common Application Pitfalls



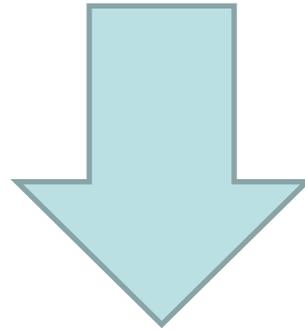
- **Avoid Disqualification: Mind the Details** – Note specific formatting requirements regarding font type and size, margin restrictions or document presentation style (Typical size 10 to 12 font with 1inch margins), avoid careless mistakes, complete all application documents
- **Submission Deadlines and Requirements** – Date and time, electronic or hard copy
- **Budget**– Submit an accurate and reasonable budget breakdown for your funding request is essential



UNDERSTANDING HOW PROGRAM OFFICERS AND PEER REVIEWERS SCORE GRANT APPLICATIONS

Two-Level Application Review

Technical Review



Peer Review



The Technical Review

- Review Level: Funding Program Staff
- Outcome: Grant Application is Eliminated Prior to Peer Review Process!



Applicant Does Not Comply with Mandatory Formatting Requirements

- Wrong font size
- Incorrect margin settings
- Missing mandatory pre- or post-forms and attachments
- Missing pagination
- Missing signatures
- Missing Table of Contents
- Missing Abstract, Summary, or Executive Summary
- Appendices not in proper electronic file format and/or not paginated as instructed
- Line spacing is incorrect
- Table spacing is incorrect



Applicant Fails to Meet Funding Priorities

Under 34 CFR 75.105(c)(3), the Secretary gives an absolute preference to applications that meet the following priority. The Secretary will fund under this program only applications that meet this absolute priority...



Applicant Misses the Submission Deadline



Upload to Grants.gov 72 hours before deadline!



Common Reasons Grant Applications Are Rejected

- Guidelines for proposal content, outline, and length were not followed exactly.
- Proposals are not organized so that their distinct sections can be easily matched against the RFP evaluation criteria.
- The study or project, although meritorious, was not a priority topic to the sponsoring agency.
- The proposed project offered nothing unusual, intriguing, or clever or it seemed to lack significance.



More...

- Proposal was not clear or complete in describing one or more elements.
- In literature review or background section, the proposal writer showed he or she did not know the area of his or her subject matter. For example, sources cited were out of date.
- Proposed project appeared beyond the capacity of the grant applicant to carry out.
- Method for implementing the project was not clear.
- Budget was too high or too low.



Yes, More...

- Costs appeared greater than the benefits, or it was unclear who would benefit.
- Rationale for choosing a particular approach as the best solution to a problem was missing or not very well thought out.
- Constraints most likely to be encountered in carrying out the implementation were not considered.
- Lessons learned from previous projects are not shown or are not made relevant to the proposed project.
- Proposed beneficiaries of the project had no role in identifying problems and solutions.



Finally...

- Work plans are too vague. They lack specifics on what activities are to be done, why, how, when, in what sequence, and by whom.
- Detailed monthly or quarterly schedules are missing, and timetables for accomplishing work are too optimistic.
- Management responsibility and capability are not clearly demonstrated in terms of planning activities, budgeting funds, providing commodities, keeping records, and writing reports.
- The quality of the writing is poor.
- Proposal contains an unreasonable number of mechanical errors (e.g., typos, pages upside down or out of place), showing an inattention to detail and quality of work.

Funders Want to Read a Proposal That Is:

- Comprehensive
- Justified
- Reasonable
- Documented
- Appropriate
- Detail-filled
- Exhaustive
- Adequate
- Thorough
- Focused
- Complete
- Specific

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- Unique
- Extensive
- Evidence-based
- Innovative
- Sound
- Qualified
- Strong
- Experience-backed
- Ability-driven
- Need-based
- Feasible
- Demographics-supported



Funders Don't Want to Read a Proposal That Is:

- Partial
- Unjustified
- Unreasonable
- Undocumented
- Inappropriate
- Broad
- Limited
- Inadequate
- Careless
- Unfocused
- Incomplete

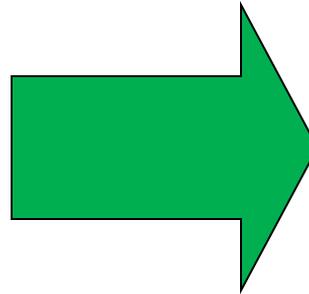
UNCOMMON VIZION

- Common
- Narrow
- Evidence-lacking
- Unsound
- Unqualified
- Weak
- Experience-deficient
- Concealing
- Vague
- Impossible
- Undemonstrated
- Unspecific



Suggest How to Turn Weaknesses into Strengths

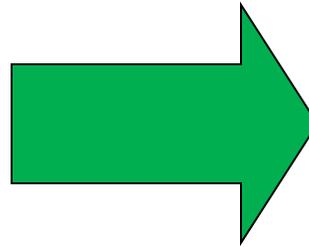
1. Partial
2. Unjustified
3. Unreasonable
4. Undocumented
5. Inappropriate
6. Broad
7. Limited
8. Inadequate
9. Careless
10. Unfocused
11. Incomplete



1. Fill in the details
2. Justify
3. Reduce tasks
4. Validate
5. Use best practices
6. Narrow your focus
7. Widen your focus
8. Demonstrate capacity
9. Be error-free
10. Focus
11. Complete details

Weaknesses to Strengths – Part 2

1. Common
2. Narrow
3. Lacks evidence
4. Unsound
5. Unqualified
6. Weak
7. Inexperienced
8. Conceals
9. Fails to describe
10. Impossible
11. Fails to present
12. Unspecific



1. Unique
2. Broad
3. Validated
4. Recent best practices
5. Quality applicant
6. Incorporate case studies
7. Show capacity
8. Be truthful
9. Be descriptive
10. Propose the possible
11. Present situations and solutions
12. Specify



eCIVIS

Your tools for grants success.