How do I develop an impressive grant proposal?

Are you considering approaching a foundation or community organization about a grant for your club project? These tips will get you set for success!

1 **Do your research.** There are a ton of philanthropic organizations out there — but most of them prefer to fund projects that support specific causes, such as childhood literacy, nutrition or leadership development. Some also limit their funding to a geographic area.

   Before beginning the grant application process, research the organization and the causes it supports to make sure your project qualifies.

   >> HERE’S A PRO TIP: Get organized. As you’re researching, make notes of submission deadlines, application requirements and other grant guidelines. And if you have questions, reach out to the funder.

2 **Build relationships.** Start off on the right foot by introducing yourself to the funder. This is a great opportunity to ask questions about the organization’s priorities and offer a brief overview of your project. But do your research, as mentioned above.

   Your goal is to determine whether your project is a good fit for the organization. Even if it’s not, the funder may refer you to another organization.

3 **Tell a story.** Think of your proposal as a narrative. The characters include your club, the population you’re serving and your partners. Your story should begin with the need in your community, and it should end with how your club addresses that need. Your goal is to inspire participation in your story.

   Along the way, explain why this need is important to your community and why your club is best suited to address it. Don’t forget to explain your club’s vision of the future, by sharing the goals and expected outcomes of your project.
Know your nonprofit lingo. Make sure you’re using these common terms appropriately:

- **Impact:** This refers to the change you intend to make by achieving your goals.
- **Partner:** This is the group, organization or person outside of your club with whom you will work to complete your project.
- **In-kind donations:** These are gifts of goods or services rather than money.
- **Sustainability:** This refers to your club’s ability to continue your project, even without future grant funding. Funders will want to know how you will attract donors and partners to sustain and grow your project.

>> HERE’S A PRO TIP: Mimic language that the funder uses on its website. This will show that you recognize its values and vision.

Provide a balanced and effective budget. Your budget should not be an afterthought — for many funders, it’s the first thing they look at! First and foremost, make sure your budget is balanced. Your revenue and your expenses should match to the penny.

Everything mentioned in your budget should be reflected in your narrative, and vice versa. After reading the two together, the funder should have a clear picture of how their donation would be spent.

Triple-check your work. Typos and mistakes are easy reasons to deny a grant application. Make sure that your final proposal is error-free, professional and readable — and that all requirements are accounted for.

Review and report. If you receive a grant, you’ll be asked to complete a grant report evaluating your project. Make sure to submit it by the deadline! And if your project doesn’t receive funding, ask why not. In some cases, the organization may have lacked grant funding to support your project. In that situation, consider applying again in a future grant cycle. And if your project wasn’t a good fit, keep the funder in mind for your other club projects.

These tips should help set you up for success with your next grant application! Learn more about the Children’s Fund grant program at kiwanis.org/clubgrants.

Note: Most grant programs require applicants to have 501(c)(3) nonprofit standing, meaning only Kiwanis club foundations qualify.

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