

# Grant Writing Success Guide Funding Programs and Your Bridges Product

# Funding Programs and Your Bridges Products

#### **About the Guide**

Bridges products are used to achieve many education outcomes. Funding is available through a variety of sources to help districts, schools and other local education agencies create and equip their programs — in many cases, this funding can be used to pay for essential products and professional development services from Bridges.

To help you complete your grant applications, we have described how our products meet requirements of several major funding programs.

You may be able to take text directly from these PDF files and use it in your application form as-is or with changes to suit your exact situation. In each of these documents, the text most suitable for "cutting and pasting" is indicated by a box with a dashed border.

This guide is provided as a set of separate documents, with an online index to assist you in finding the product-based information you need for the funding source you are pursuing.

#### **Finding Funding**

Funding doesn't have to stand in the way of your students' educational and career development. Although many schools and districts have faced funding cutbacks in recent years, the good news is that education money is available through federal, state, private foundation and corporate grants.

Many of these funding sources are great resources for purchasing Bridges products – the trick is knowing what's out there and how to put together a winning application package.

For a successful application, you'll want to explain as clearly as possible the relationship between our career development products and the grant requirements. This booklet is designed to help you make that connection. We'll take a look at the purpose, background and requirements for each funding source, and identify the correlation between those requirements and our products.

Many grants are competitive grants, which means they require applications or proposals. Your success could depend on the quality of your application. Applying for these grants is sometimes overwhelming, but, just like writing a resume or a term paper, there are some things you can do to stand out from the pack. We've put together some tips on applying for funding to make the process a bit easier.



### **Getting Started on an Application**

Before you start working on your application, you'll want to make sure the grant is right for you. Grant applications can be time consuming, so you don't want to waste time on an application that isn't a good fit.

As much as possible, your program goals should be your first consideration. You don't want to change your goals to meet the grant requirements; instead, you want to find the grant that will make your program happen. Otherwise, your program could be watered down, which will lower your chances of success. Before you start, make sure your program goals are clear. It may help to meet to brainstorm ideas with others in your organization.

Once you have found the grant, it's time to start planning. Make a schedule for completion, keeping the deadline in mind. You'll want to allow at least four to six weeks when possible. Don't forget to allow for delivery time.

Gather all the information you'll need, using the request for proposal (RFP) or a request for applications (RFA) as a guide. Depending on the requirements, you may need academic achievement records and demographic data for your area.

If you can back up your proposal with studies, find the research that emphasizes how effective your program can be. Give specific examples when possible.

## **Style Tips**

Once you're armed with the application requirements and your information, it's time to tackle the application!

The "needs statement" will shape your application just as a thesis statement shapes an academic essay, so be sure to clearly identify the needs of your program. Whenever possible, back up your needs statement with statistics, such as standardized test scores or demographic information. You'll want to be as specific as possible.

Funding sources want to see that the programs they fund can deliver results. To help evaluate the success of your program, ensure that you have a concrete evaluation plan that corresponds with your program's needs.

When completing the application, strive for simplicity and clarity. It helps to use active verbs ("teach the class" instead of "the class is instructed," for example) and concrete nouns. Look at every word in your grant application and ask yourself if it's necessary. Remember, you're writing to explain your needs and goals as clearly as possible, not to impress the committee with your prose style.

Keep your document design simple. Wide margins, clean organization and a font size of 10 or 12 points will all help you create a professional application. Don't forget to include original signatures wherever required.

#### Introduction



### **Finishing Touches**

Once you have a concise, attractive application, it's time to review it. Be sure to go over the RFA/RFP when you're finished to make sure you have everything you'll need. Your application could be automatically disqualified if you're missing an important element.

Remember to proofread! Try to have another set of eyes look over what you've done. Too many typos can undercut the professionalism of your application.

If your first application isn't successful, don't give up. Turn it into a learning opportunity by asking for copies of the reviewer's comments if they're available. Incorporate those comments into your next application.

Keep sending out applications! Many grants are competitive so it's easy to get discouraged, but your applications will improve each time. Grant applications often have a steep learning curve -- many people find that once they've completed one successful application, subsequent applications are much easier.



#### **Common Grant Terms**

**Beneficiary**: A beneficiary is a person who will benefit from the proposed program-- for example, a student in a career development class.

**Competitive Grant**: Competitive grants require applicants to submit an application to obtain funds. Whether or not the applicant is awarded these funds will depend on the quality of the application and if the program goals meet the requirements of the grant.

**Competitive sub-grant**: Competitive sub-grants are funded by federal money given to a state. The state coordinates the money and the application procedure.

**Evaluation Plan:** An evaluation plan explains how an applicant plans to measure the success of their proposed program.

**Funding cycle:** The funding cycle refers to the entire funding grant process, from announcing that the funds are available to awarding the funds.

**Grantee:** The grantee is the organization receiving the grant money - this refers to the organization as a whole, as opposed to the individual beneficiaries.

**Grantor:** The grantor is the body awarding the grant – often a federal or state government agency or private foundation.

**Needs statement:** The needs statement identifies the needs addressed by the proposed projects. Needs statements should be backed up by concrete data whenever possible, and applicants should explain how the need was identified.

**Non-competitive grant:** Non-competitive grants are awarded on the basis of student need and demographics. They will usually still require an application showing a need for the funds. Non-competitive grants may also be called formula or entitlement funding.

**RFA:** Request for Application. The RFA will contain the requirements for your funding grant application.

**RFP**: Request for Proposal. You'll find the requirements for your funding grant proposal in the RFP.