

UTAH COMMISSION ON CRIMINAL AND JUVENILE JUSTICE

# Seven Steps to Being Awarded a Grant

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## Seven Steps to Being Awarded a Grant

*It's as easy as 1, 2...uh, 7!*

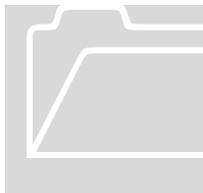
**M**ost people find writing a grant proposal a daunting task best left to professionals or that one unlucky staff person who happened to be standing around when the assignment was made. But writing a grant is not much different from the other things you've done on the job.

For example, when you need to purchase or replace equipment in your office, you research the latest gadget, try to get the best price and go to the boss with compelling reasons for why the equipment is needed and how it benefits the organization. You do the same thing whether you're asking for a day off, seeking a promotion, or want permission to attend a training event in, say, Hawaii. It's all about identifying a need and convincing the person who holds the purse strings that it's a valid expense.

Believe it or not, by following seven steps you can produce a grant proposal worthy of attention. More importantly, a well-written grant proposal is more fundable.

### Step 1: Identify the Need

The first basic step in grant writing is identifying the need. What problem or problems are you trying to solve? What gaps are you trying to fill? What will you do that's not being done?



#### Real versus Perceived Needs

A real need is something that, when done, will solve an identified problem and change its outcome. For example, finding transportation to work is a real need. Wanting to upgrade from your current station wagon to a red sports car to get to work is a perceived need (although some may argue it's a real need).

How do you find the real need in your organization? You can ask around. You can examine data about the problem. You can draw upon your own experience. The key is being able to validate that need with hard data. The grantor (the person or agency with money to award) will want to know that you have thoroughly examined the problem from several different angles. Therefore you need to review data from more than one source and over different time periods.

For example, you have identified car burglaries as a problem. To determine how big of a problem it is, you will need data on the number of car burglaries reported in the last three years. Or if you want to look at trends, pull data from the last ten years. Is there anything unique about the data? Is the rate going up or down or staying steady? Is there a certain area of town that is experiencing more car burglaries than another area? Is there an explanation for the increase in car burglaries? Has there been a population shift? Is unemployment up? What about other crimes?

Try and imagine all the questions the grantors may have and find answers for them. This process of gathering hard data is how you establish your need.

- Distinguish between real and perceived needs (wants versus needs).
- Gather hard data to support your claims.
- Cull data from a variety of sources and covering a minimum of three years.

#### Data Websites:

##### **Federal:**

[www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)

Everything you ever wanted to know about people living in your community and state. Includes all types of demographic data from family structure, income levels, and education levels to race and ethnicity data.

[www.ojp.usdoj.gov](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov)

Lists funding opportunities, training, programs, statistics and research about justice related topics.

##### **State:**

[www.justice.utah.gov](http://www.justice.utah.gov)

Contains a section on local crime data by year and community, with data comparisons to state and national crime rates.

[www.governor.utah.gov/dea](http://www.governor.utah.gov/dea)

Links to the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget's Demographic and Economic Analysis. Provides Utah data on population and the economy.

[www.highwaysafety.utah.gov](http://www.highwaysafety.utah.gov)

Provides crash data and other traffic related information.

[www.usoe.k12.ut.us](http://www.usoe.k12.ut.us)

Has data and information about Utah's education system and its students. Contains such information as drop out rates, test scores, and pupil to teacher ratios.

[www.hsdsa.utah.gov](http://www.hsdsa.utah.gov)

Contains research reports and data about drug use, treatment rates and risk and protective factors.

**Local:**

[www.utahchildren.net](http://www.utahchildren.net)

Publishes the annual "Measures of Child Well-Being" report on Utah's children. Includes everything from teen pregnancy rates and prenatal care to unemployment and drug use.

**Other Sources:**

Visit your county or city website. Local school districts may also have information.

## Step 2: Find the Money

The next step is to find funding sources. You can identify most potential sources of funding from the comforts of your own desk by conducting Internet searches. But the Internet should only be the beginning of your search. Call your local, state and federal agencies equipped to handle the problem identified.

For example, the Utah Office of Highway Safety distributes federal funds to state and local law enforcement for traffic safety such as Driving Under the Influence blitzes. The Office of Crime Victims Reparations provides grants for domestic violence shelters and advocates. The Utah Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice is the state designated agency to receive federal funds from the Department of Justice to give out to state and local agencies for crime prevention and crime fighting efforts.

Identify the agency's grant manager, the person in charge of awarding and managing the grants. It may be more than one person. Make contact with this person. Don't just call once. Call several times throughout the year. Many agencies have a grant-making season that corresponds with a fiscal year. That means in the spring, state agencies are often releasing Requests for Proposals (RFPs) to fund programs that will take place

during the state fiscal year (July 1 to June 30). County agencies may have a later schedule depending on their fiscal year. Some agencies give out grants at other times throughout the year or at a time to correspond with the federal fiscal year (October 1 to September 30).

In some cases, agencies may be sitting on a small pot of unobligated funds (money that still needs to be awarded) or deobligated funds (money that was not spent out by the funded agency and returned to the grantor). In many cases, these funds must be awarded and spent by a specific deadline. Because the amount is typically small, the grantor is unlikely to issue an RFP. Instead, the grantor (the person with the funding) will consider individual projects on their own merit. Your project may be just what the grantor needs.



#### How to Pitch Your Idea

Be direct and to the point. Let the grantor know why you are calling, what problem you are attempting to solve, what funds are needed and how the funds will be used, your anticipated outcomes and how your proposal fits into the grantor's mission. Your pitch should take no more than five minutes.

#### Attend Technical Assistance Meetings

When responding directly to an RFP, make note of any opportunities to meet with the grantor. The grantor may host a Technical Assistance Meeting to go over all aspects of the RFP, detail funding priorities and explain expectations for proposals. It's an opportunity to ask questions and listen to other questions being answered. It will also give you a good idea of who else is applying for this same funding. This is a meeting you don't want to miss. If you can't attend, send someone in your place to take detailed notes.

Some grantors may be willing to review a concept paper or even a rough draft and give you feedback. If such an offer is made, don't pass it up. Grantors know what types of programs are likely to be funded. Besides, it's free advice and we could all use some of that!

- Search for funding frequently through various means: Internet, phone calls, referrals.
- Make regular contact with grantors. Don't be afraid to ask questions.
- Attend all technical assistance meetings offered by the grantor. They are a goldmine of information.

Funding Website:

**Federal:**

[www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov)

Allows organizations to electronically find and apply for competitive grant opportunities from all federal grant-making agencies.

[www.usdoj.gov](http://www.usdoj.gov)

Lists funding opportunities, training, programs, statistics and research about justice related topics. Includes a link to the Office of Justice Program grants ([www.usdoj.gov/fundopps.htm](http://www.usdoj.gov/fundopps.htm)) which lists current RFP's and a listing of grants awarded

**State:**

[www.justice.utah.gov](http://www.justice.utah.gov)

Lists grant RFPs for federal and state grants for juvenile delinquency prevention, gang and crime prevention, crime scene investigation, and drug and gang task forces. Also includes grant management tools.

[www.highwaysafety.utah.gov](http://www.highwaysafety.utah.gov)

Grants to local communities and organizations to help reduce traffic-related deaths and injury on Utah roadways, within three main areas: (1) Safe Community Projects, (2) Police Traffic Services Equipment, and (3) Mini-Grants.

[www.dced.utah.gov/cdbg](http://www.dced.utah.gov/cdbg)

Application information for Community Development Block Grants.

**Local:**

Visit your county or city website.

## Step 3: Develop the Plan

If you are responding to a Request for Proposal (RFP), read it and then read it again two more times. Surprisingly, grant applicants are disqualified from the funding competition simply because they did not follow directions spelled out in the RFP. Little things such as page limits, required signatures or forms, and even font size can eliminate your proposal.

As you read through the RFP highlight key information and note any requirements or deadlines. Create a checklist if there is not one already provided for you. Once you are familiar with the RFP, you are now ready to write your proposal. Before you begin, review some writing tips:

Write in Plain English

There is nothing more difficult than reading a grant that's written as a college dissertation. Now is not the time to show off your mastery of obscure, multi-syllable words. Grants should be written in a straight forward and easy to understand manner.

Don't Use Unfamiliar Terms

Write from the perspective that the reviewer doesn't know anything about your problem or your organization. That means, don't assume the reviewer knows what P.O.S.T. (Peace Officers Standards and Training) certified means or that L.C.S.W. stands for Licensed Clinical Social Worker. Avoid acronyms unless you identify their meaning first. Also avoid jargon, lingo or slang.

Follow the Format and Write to the Evaluation Criteria

Most RFP's will be divided into specific sections with each section given a score. Within each of these sections will be specific criteria or even questions that need to be answered. If your RFP is formatted this way, then your proposal should follow the same format.

The reason for doing so is that the grant reviewer will be scoring each application based on this format. If the RFP provides a copy of the scoring sheet to be used by the reviewer, that's even better. Make sure your proposal addresses each and every element that the reviewer will be considering.

Determine your Approach By First Thinking About Your Budget

All grants have similar elements, the basics being a Needs Section, a Project Design Section, an Evaluation Section and a Budget Section. Some grantors will request additional information such as agency experience, collaborative agreements and partners, or a logic model.

Begin the writing process by gathering all the data you have already collected when you identified your need. What will it take to solve the problem? Consider it both from a programmatic point of view and a budgetary point of view. Will the problem require additional personnel? Will you need to purchase supplies or a special piece of equipment? Is training necessary?

While it may seem strange to start talking about money before you've fully developed your approach and plan, now is the time to do it. Thinking about money forces you to justify your request. It also helps the writing process by quantifying what it is you want and need and allows you to weave in that justification throughout your proposal. Every grantor has gone, "Ugh!" more than once upon reviewing a proposal's budget that, for example, includes a \$10,000 equipment request that was never mentioned in the proposal.

By having a preliminary budget in mind, your proposal will be much more focused, to the point and easier for the reviewer to understand. As you conduct your research and do your writing, adjust your budget as necessary.

#### Build a Solid Foundation

Grantors want assurances that your approach to the problem is not only sound, but also backed by science and research, often referred to as an evidence-based strategy. Again, this is where the Internet comes in handy. Conduct a search of your problem to determine how it's been handled in other places. This search will also yield other important information such as the problem's impact on a community or target population if it is left unresolved. This data is necessary for your need statement as well as your program design strategy.

Be sure to cite sources for your data and research strategy to lend credibility to your proposal. Footnoting your sources is preferred by reviewers so they do not have to search for a bibliography page. If it is necessary to include attachments, it's important to first summarize the attachment for the reviewer rather than just write, "See attachment."

#### Define your Target Population

When most people think of a target, they think of a bulls-eye. The closer to the center you get, the more points or accolades you receive. A target population is not much different from a bulls-eye in that both are defined as a smaller and more focused part of a whole area.

Depending on the grant program, you may be required to identify your target population and provide data about that population. Your target population could be as small as a one-block area in a crime-infested neighborhood. It may be as large as one zip-code area, county or even state. A target population is not always geographic. It could be a specialized population such as pregnant teenagers or middle-school students. The focus could also be narrower. Maybe you only want to target pregnant teenagers who are low-income and an ethnic minority living within the city boundaries.

Once you have defined your target population, get to know them by gathering all the data you can to characterize this population. What makes them unique? Why are they being targeted? What particular risk factors are they experiencing?

#### Risk and Protective Factors

What's a risk factor? A risk factor is a set of characteristics or circumstances that puts a person or community at greater risk to experience an identified problem. For example, people who fail to look both ways when crossing the street are at greater risk of getting run over by the bus.

In the world of grants, however, risk factors won't get you flattened by the bus. Rather there is a lot of scientific research on risk factors as they pertain to youth delinquency and crime. This data is useful in identifying those characteristics that will put a community or a youth at greater risk for problem behaviors. Issues such as neighborhood disorganization, family management and peers are all considered and measured. The Utah Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health recently completed a cooperative survey of Utah school children that examined their risk and

protective factors. A visit to their website will allow you to download school district specific data and statewide data.

A protective factor is something that will help to alleviate the extent of the risk factor. For example, a person who crosses the street without looking may be “protected” from getting hit by the bus if the street being crossed is not along a bus route. There is no guarantee, however, that the person won’t be hit by another type of vehicle.

Perhaps a better example to use for risk and protective factors relates to heart disease. Individuals who are overweight and have a family history of heart disease are at greater risk for a heart attack. Exercising regularly and not smoking are two protective factors for heart disease. This is not an exact science, however. People who have several protective factors may not be able to fully overcome a family history of heart disease, but they certainly can reduce the risk.



#### A Sound Strategy

Developing a strategy based on risk and protective factors is a sound format for your grant proposal. This approach also lets the reviewer know that you have considered both the positive and negative aspects of your problem. Of course, not all grant applications will lend themselves to using risk and protective factors.

- Start with your budget first, then write your proposal.
- Research data about your problem (need) and collect information on the impact of the problem remaining unsolved as well as evidence-based strategies for solving the problem.
- Identify your target population and get to know it inside and out.
- Write in plain English and write to the evaluation criteria.

## Step 4: Write Goals and Objectives

Grant writers often find that goals and objectives are one of the most difficult areas of grant writing. They often confuse goals and objectives believing they are interchangeable. To make matters worse, grantors often ask for such things as performance measures, baseline measurements, outcomes, short-term and long-term goals...the list goes on and on.

Before you call in a professional grant writer, consider first the goals of your own organization. Why does your organization exist? What’s its purpose? What are its goals? Another way to think about it is, what is the mission of your organization?



#### Differences Between Goals and Objectives

A goal is the long-term outcome or societal impact your project is striving to achieve. An objective is the short-term outcome you expect to achieve by completing your project. Objectives are precise statements and are measurable.

Now that you're in the right frame of mind, begin thinking about the goal of your project. What are you trying to accomplish in the long term? What is the ideal? Remember, the goal is a broad statement.

Next, begin thinking about your project objectives. Objectives are the actual steps you will take to make progress toward your goal. Objectives are measurable. In other words, they are quantifiable. You can, for example, count how many hours of training were provided or how many people were educated. You can also count if crime went up or down in your target community.

One word of caution when writing goals and objectives—make them realistic and achievable. Telling the grantor you are going to reach 1,000 parents with your program sounds great on paper. But when the end of the year comes and you've only reached 300 parents, the grantor is unlikely to consider continuation funding for your project or consider another proposal from your agency. In a worst case scenario, the grantor may even request that grant funds be returned.

An example of a well-intended but not well thought-out objective is one based on reducing a problem by measuring reductions in crime rates or arrest rates. If your goal is to reduce drug crime in a neighborhood and your objective is to cut drug arrests by 25% in the first year by beefing up drug patrols, don't be surprised if drug arrests actually go up. More police officers looking for drug crimes should result in more drug offenders being arrested. Instead, your short-term objective should perhaps be to increase drug patrols by 25% in drug-infested neighborhoods. In the long-term, drug crimes should eventually decline.



#### An Example of a Goal and Objectives

My goal is to lose weight and lower my risk of a heart attack. I will work toward this goal by completing the following objectives: (1) moderate exercise three times a week for 30 minutes at a time, (2) reduce caloric intake by 500 calories per week, and (3) eat red meats only three times each week.

- Articulate an overall goal for your project. Remember, goals are broad statements.

- Objectives explain what you plan to do. They are precise statements that are measurable.

## Step 5: Write an Evaluation Plan

If you can't track something, you can't measure it. And if you can't measure it, you won't know what impact you've had on the problem. Grantors are interested in outcomes. And for some grantors, "just the facts, 'mam'" is all they want.

There are two types of evaluation: a process evaluation and an outcome evaluation. A process evaluation examines **how** you completed or implemented your plan. For example, if your objective was to train 200 police officers on a new domestic violence protocol, a process evaluation would count the number of officers trained.

An outcome evaluation measures the **impact** your program strategy had on the problem. In the case of the training protocol, you could measure the increase in officers' knowledge about the protocol by administering a pre-test and a post-test. You could also keep track of the number of domestic violence calls in which the officers used the new protocol. Obviously, the latter measurement would require extensive data gathering that may not be reasonable for your program.

Keep in mind that a good evaluation plan includes a mix of both process and outcome measurements. An evaluation plan should also match your proposal in scope and depth.



### An Example of a Process Evaluation Measure

To measure the effectiveness of our new domestic violence protocol training effort we will (1) develop an 8-hour training protocol curriculum within the first 30 days, and (2) train 200 law enforcement officers in the protocol within the first 90 days. We will know if we are successful if the curriculum is completed within the required time frame and attendance records verify that 200 or more officers completed the training.



### An Example of an Outcome Evaluation Measure

To measure the effectiveness of our new domestic violence protocol training, we will (1) administer a pre-test and post-test of officers attending the training to measure increases in knowledge, and (2) contact officers who attended the training 60 days later to survey them on the application of the materials learned in their work.

### Who's Responsible?

Your plan should explain what data you will gather, who will gather the data, when and how often it will be gathered, and how often it will be analyzed. It is also useful to consider how the information will be used in your program. Will your evaluation plan allow you to continuously monitor your program so you can make adjustments? Will

you use an independent evaluation (an outsider), or will you assemble an evaluation team? Will the project director also be the evaluator? These questions must be answered.

- Having measurable objectives will easily lend itself to developing your evaluation plan.
- Consider both process and outcome measures—how well you did what you did and what impact it had.
- Assign responsibility for collecting and analyzing the data. Consider how you will use the information.

## Step 6: Build the Budget

In most cases the budget forms are the last to be completed. However, if you followed the steps here, you already have a draft of your budget completed and now all you need to do is put the final touches on it.

The first step is to verify that your budget includes only items that are allowable. The RFP should provide you with this guidance. If you have questions, call the grantor.

### It's All in the Details

Writing a budget narrative is no time to skimp on words. Don't leave the reviewer wondering how you arrived at your budget figures or what the funds you requested will be buying. When figuring personnel costs, for example, list the hourly wage and the number of hours the person will work. Figure benefits separately and show how they are calculated. Keep in mind that grantors will not pay for personnel costs that are already being covered by other funding sources. This is called supplanting and it's not an allowable expense.

### What's in a Name?

There are two types of personnel: regular employees and those classified as consultants or contract workers. The biggest difference between the two from a payroll perspective is that employees are on the regular payroll and consultants or contractors are not. Employees are typically paid benefits and expenses such as FICA and social security are withdrawn from their paycheck. Consultants, on the other hand, are responsible for their own taxes and should be issued a 1099 by the agency at the end of the year.

Whether you hire an employee or a consultant is really dependent upon the nature of the work and your own human resources department. The current approved federal consultant rate cannot exceed \$56.25 per hour. Justification for a consultant is always necessary.

#### Let's Play the Match Game

Many grants require a cash or in-kind match to show agency commitment to the project. A cash match is considered new dollars that are appropriated for your project. An in-kind match is money that has already been covered by other sources for other activities, but is now being transferred to support your effort.

An example of an in-kind match is a secretary who will contribute five hours of time each week to provide secretarial support for your project. Because the person is currently a full-time employee at your agency, that person's salary is currently covered by another source. It is not considered cash, but in-kind match.

An example of cash match is the hiring of a new person specifically to provide secretarial support for your project. If your agency pays for that person's salary specifically for the grant purpose, then it is considered a cash match.

Think of it this way: old money is in-kind match; new money is cash match.

When figuring out the minimum required match, make sure you read the fine print. In the case of federal grants the match requirement is a specific percent of the total grant budget (grant and match funds combined).



#### How to Calculate Your Match

A 10% match can be figured this way: the grant funds divided by 9 equals the required match amount. So the match for an \$18,000 grant will be \$2,000, which is 10% of the total project budget of \$20,000 (\$18,000 + \$2,000 cash match). If you need to provide a 25% match, divide the grant amount you are requesting by three to arrive at your match amount. A 25% match for an \$18,000 grant is \$6,000.

#### Covering All the Bases

Another budget area to consider is supplies and equipment. In some cases the difference between a supply and a piece of equipment is a dollar figure. About ten years ago it was common to see computers and fax machines classified as equipment because of their cost. Today, grantors sometimes consider these items office supplies.

Again, it's important to show how you arrived at your budget figures. You don't need to list every item you think you might purchase from paperclips to staples. Instead, show the monthly expenditure, such as \$50 per month for general office supplies x 12 months = \$600.

If you are purchasing bigger ticket items you may need to have an actual bid or explain how you arrived at the figure listed. Your agency may already have a pre-approved vendor for this item. Contact them for a bid.

Travel and training needs are another budget area that needs attention. Justification is needed, especially if the training takes place out of state. You should determine the travel expenses to the conference, the registration fee, hotel charges, per diem, and other training related expenses. This category is also where you put mileage needs.

Your budget form may include an “Other” category for items that did not fit into one of the above categories. In this category you may include expenses such as confidential informant funds, rent, overhead, administrative fee (if allowed), and other non-easily classified items.

The last step in the budget area is to double and triple check your figures. Grantors have been known to reject grants or reduce award amounts because your match was insufficient or because they couldn’t make sense of your budget figures. Never make the grant reviewer work too hard. It makes the reviewer cranky and less likely to give you a good score.

- Show how you arrived at all budget figures by detailing the calculations. Attach a budget narrative to explain and justify your request.
- Follow the grantor’s budget guidelines. Don’t ask for things that are not allowed and don’t “pad” your budget. Your request should be reasonable and credible.
- Recheck your figures to make sure the addition is correct and the match is sufficient.

## Step 7: Submit the Proposal

Before you sit back, stretch and let out a victory yell, make sure the entire grant is in order before you submit it. Proof reading the grant is critical. In this modern technological age, spell check and grammar check have almost eliminated the need for proofreading. The key word here is almost. Spell check won’t pick up the difference between “to” and “too” or “mad” and “made.” Grammar check may prompt you to make your sentences less passive, but it won’t pick up every grammatical mistake.

Take this document, for example. Even though it has been read multiple times by the author, it stills gets another comb through by the office proofreader. A fresh set of eyes will be able to discern if what you meant to write is what was actually written.



### Does it Make Any Sense?

Having someone else proofread your proposal will also give you feedback on the proposal’s strengths and weaknesses. If your proofreader returns the grant back to you with a quizzical look, you know you’re in trouble. Ask for what’s missing, what’s vague, or what’s just plain confusing.

### Check Your List and Mark it Twice

While no one wants to admit it, there are those few grant managers who are just itching to throw your application out for a technical reason. Don’t give them the pleasure!

Make sure your application is on time, with the correct number of copies and uses the correct forms. Create a checklist for yourself if one is not provided in the RFP. And plan for the worst-case scenario.

Equipment fails, copiers jams, and traffic accidents all seem to occur when you're trying to finish up your grant and get it in by the deadline. Back-up your computer files. Make sure you have appointments to gather all the necessary signatures. Have staff available to help make copies or take the application to a copy store. Verify that the pages are in the correct order and that they're all there.

And forget about trying to make your proposal look "pretty" by inserting it in an attractive binder or preparing a graphically pleasing cover sheet. Nine times out of ten, the grantor will rip the proposal out of the binder or rip off the decorative cover sheet before the proposal is sent along to the reviewers. Grantors tend to prefer uniformity among the grants and that means that each proposal will have the same cover sheet.

It's Due When?!

Many agencies are now requesting that grants be submitted by 3:00 pm or earlier. Be sure to identify if the grantor will accept a postmark or if the application must be received by a certain date or time. In many cases, the grantor will want the application in their hot little hands and not in the mail.

If you do send something through the mail, make sure you send it by overnight carrier or by registered mail to verify receipt of the package.

If you're concerned about making sure you met all the guidelines, make an appointment with the grantor or arrive well before the deadline and have the grantor review your packet. When you submit your application you should also request a receipt from the grantor verifying that the application was received and that it was received on time.

- Have a set of fresh eyes proof read your grant. Preferably, find someone who is not familiar with your program and who's a crackerjack when it comes to spelling and grammar.
- Create a Grant Checklist and check it off as you go.
- Give yourself plenty of time to turn in the application. Don't wait until the last minute.

## What's Next?

It's time to celebrate the time and effort you've put into writing the proposal. But you may be surprised to learn that you've just finished the easy part. Now comes the hard part—waiting to hear if your proposal is funded.

If you do get the good news, make sure the contracts are all in order before the funds are expended. If you are not funded, ask how you can improve your proposal next time and if you can see the reviewer's comments and scores. Grantors are interested in funding good programs; therefore, they are willing to spend the time to help you improve your proposal.

Now that you know the seven steps to being awarded a grant, what are you waiting for? Get to it! You have nothing to lose and everything to gain.