10 GRANT WRITING MISTAKES WE DON'T WANT YOU TO MAKE

by Kaine Riggan
Kaine Riggan – Grant Writer - Project Manager

- Former Government Grant Officer – Tennessee Arts Commission
- Founding Director – Senior Center for the Arts, Nashville, TN
  a block grant initiative for NEA
- Director of Grants & Sponsorships – Beverly Hills Performing Arts Center
- Consultant & Grant Writer for Group Victory, Ft. Lauderdale, FL

Grant Panelist
The Best Resources for Grant Writing
Categories of Support

- General Operating Support
- Special Projects
- Capital/ Equipment
- Endowments

By far, the most frequent reasons that foundations reject proposals are:

- They don't have enough funds to accept every request.
- The applicant didn't follow the application guidelines.
- The request falls outside of the funder's giving interests.

1/3 Receive fewer than 50 grant proposals
38% Funded at least half of them.

*2016 Foundation Center – Growth & Giving Estimates
What are TNHF's Giving Interests?

A.k.a. Funding Priorities

**Chronic Disease Prevention**

**Mental Health & Substance Abuse**

**Nutrition & Physical Fitness**

**Reproductive Health**

**Success in School as it relates to Health & Wellness**

**Additional Considerations** in evaluating applications...

(sometimes called Invitational Priorities)

1. **Strategic Focus**
   - The Foundation's priority will be projects that are evidence-based or new and innovative that will make long-lasting and beneficial changes in the health and quality of life of the people in the Triangle North Region.

2. **Sustainability**
   - As a catalyst for the development of initiatives with long-term viability and impact, the Foundation will consider the sustainability of projects and programs. The Foundation will consider funding for ongoing operations, but not construction or renovation.

3. **Collaboration**
   - The Foundation places priority on collaboration between organizations in matters of common concern to maximize effectiveness and impact of a program.

4. **Program Evaluation**
   - Programs that include measurable goals with strategies that will contribute to healthy outcomes will be essential. The Foundation will also look for programs that have good evaluation systems in place for monitoring success.
Proposing a project that does not match the funding priorities

a.k.a
invitational priorities
or
focus areas
A Friendly Reminder

If it doesn't fit, you must QUIT.
NOT KNOWING THE FUNDER

Don’t be a “left-field” applicant

Who is the Grant Officer?
What is their mission statement?
Examine their 990.
How much did they award last year?
Who did they fund last year?
Average award amounts?
What boards do they serve on?
Do you have board members in common?
Have you discussed your project with them?

What is the fastest way to find this information?

Val Short – TNHF Executive Director
An Exercise in Google Stalking... um, Internet Research

What did I learn about the funder?

- She started March 19th, 2012
- 16 years as Vice President for Halifax Regional Medical Center in Roanoke Rapids
- Last four years as regional marketing position for a national skilled nursing and rehabilitation company.
- From Swansboro, NC
- She's a Tarheel (Journalism & Public Health)
- Married to Warren county native Tony Short (two children)
- Board Chair is Eddie Ferguson (2012)

Helpful Tips for Building Relationships with Grant Officers

- People Fund People
- Discuss Your Project First
- Create Name & Face Flash Cards
- Send Thank You Letters/Notes for Awards & Rejections
- Invite Them To Key Program Events
- Send Project Updates & Press Clippings
Not Reading & Knowing the Request for Proposal
#3 Treat the RFP with TLC

- Print it out, single sided, put it in a binder
- Take it home — read it in a comfortable place
- Highlight the key terms
- Use the left side for notes & program staff input
- Use their language
- Definitions of key terminology
- Webinar schedules (strongly suggested)
- Point value, selection criteria and review process
- Post-award reporting & performance measures
- Links to required forms

Read it again! You will find something new every time.
#4 Going at it alone...

From *The Non-Profit Narrative: How Telling Stories Can Change the World*

Your *why* is more important than your *what*.

Communicate the WHAT of your mission and you can have an audience. Communicate the WHY, and you'll have collaborators.

Dan Portnoy

Create a working WHY

**Collaborators**
Creating Partnerships
Consortia

**Grant Review Team**
Program Staff
Outsiders
Newspaper Editor

Clearly Define Roles
MOU's or MOA's

"People who write usually don't know the facts and people who know the facts usually can't write."

1940's classic book & film *Lady in the Lake*
Who’s doing what — and when?
The State University of New York (SUNY) is located in Oneonta, New York. The objective of SUNY's CAMP project is to continue to provide the migrant and seasonal farm working students of New York State with a comprehensive array of educational and support services in a rigorous college setting to enable them to successfully complete their first year of college, and intensive follow-up assistance so they are successful in completing their post-secondary education.

From an actual 2016 Dept. Of Education—Office of Migrant Education $2.1M CAMP proposal, SUNY collaborates with partner organizations to provide services to the target population in the service region.
How will the project contribute to your organization's overall mission?
Not Answering the Questions
Not using the right grant proposal language ...

Students will be recruited to participate in the YMCA’s activities.

Outreach workers will recruit students to participate in YMCA activities.

Stick with the active voice!
Not using the right grant proposal language ...

Parenting workshops will be conducted for parents of the children who participate in the new programs.

Nurse-practitioners will conduct parenting workshops for parents of the children who participate in the new programs.
We only write in third person.

Grant writers only write in third person.

Search your document for I, we and our. Replace them.

Your narrative should read like a newspaper article.

Our partners include local schools, churches and businesses.

The McKendree Center's partners include local schools, churches and businesses.

Leave Most Acronyms Out

“We invite you to fund this unique initiative and join our leading organization, as we develop, implement, utilize and demonstrate innovative education programs that address chronic issues of stakeholder community opportunities, clearly advancing the foundation's mission.”

PLEAS E

DON’T DO IT

WHAT?

BS

DON’T DO IT!!
The Three Sections That Will Make or Break Your Grant Proposal

In most grant review panels, less than two points are all that separate the winners from the losers.

1. Evaluation
   - Not communicating clear and measurable goals & outcomes.

2. Process
   - Formative
   - Outcome
   - Summative

   - Qualitative
     - Interviews & Surveys

   - Quantitative
     - Testing & Scores
But are your goals & objectives Measurable?

Let's find out!
SMART

Specific
Measurable
Attainable
Relevant
Time Based
Specific
Measurable
Attainable
Relevant
Time-Based
Hint: This is where you make your case

Weak in the Needs

Use Data & Trends

Include Charts & Graphs

Compare County, State & National

Bring Them to Tiers

Tell the Stories

Combine Your Counties into Regional

Collect hard statistics all year

Kerr-Tar, Newspapers, Triangle Business Journal, Census Data, Workforce Data
“the most overlooked required element in grant applications”
Ellen Karsh & Arlen Sue Fox
*The Only Grant Writing Book You’ll Ever Need*

“can get grants from completely eligible organizations rejected before they go to panel”
Jane Chu, Chairman, National Endowment for the Arts
Create & Maintain A Boilerplate File

Mission Statement
Articles of Incorporation
501(c)(3) Determination Letter
Employer Identification Number
DUNS #
Board List
990 Tax Filings
Annual Report
Budget & Audit

Organizational Chart
Job Descriptions
Key Staff Resumes
Key Staff Bios
Leveraged Resources

Assurances
ADA
Drug-Free Workplace
EEOC

MOU’s & Letters of Support
Questions?

KaineRiggan.com
NONPROFIT LEADERS

LEADERSHIP SERIES:
PACKING YOUR TOOLBOX FOR A STRONG NONPROFIT

Sponsored by
TRIANGLE NORTH HEALTHCARE FOUNDATION

Carolyn Powell
TNHF Grant Coordinator

REGISTER NOW

FREE

Time for Each Seminar: 1-3 p.m.
Location: VGCC’s Main Campus, Building 7, Room 7109, 200 Community College Road, Henderson
Lunch, sponsored by Triangle North Healthcare Foundation, will be provided each session at 12:30 p.m.

Sessions will be led by experts in the field of nonprofits including Melissa Driver Beard of Driving Force Relations, Ed Ormsby, and Karen Kennedy, Community Development Manager for the City of Sanford.

Attendees of the program also will be required to become a client of VGCC’s Small Business Center.

Preregistration is required by Wednesday, January 31, 2018, online at www.vgcc.edu/schedules/small-business-center.
For more information, please contact smallbusiness@vgcc.edu or (252) 738-3240.

CAROLYN POWELL
TNHF Grant Coordinator