SFAZ Grant Writing Tips

Increase your chances of submitting a successful grant proposal by keeping these tips in mind:

- **Know the RFP**: Read the guidelines and criteria in their entirety before you begin your proposal. Determine the due date of the proposal and give yourself ample time to complete the application process.

- **Contact the Project Manager**: Many times the funding agency will have a person to contact regarding questions to the RFP. Contact this person, and let them know who you are, what district you’re with, and that you are interested in applying for this RFP. Ask for any additional information that would be helpful in crafting your response, and ‘pitch’ your idea to this contact person and determine if your idea sounds like what has been funded in the past. Request a Previous Funding List. This is a detailed list of past funding activity for the grant with project titles, descriptions, recipients, etc.

- **Make a Plan & Form a Team**: Allow for adequate and collaborative planning time by forming a school or grade level committee to distribute the workload in responding to the RFP.

- **The Power of Description**: Develop a program description and describe the intended activities. Paint a clear picture with your words and provide details of your project/program.

- **Highlight the Good Stuff**: Use bullet points or other formatting to enhance readability for the reviewer.

- **Be Persuasive**: Construct a strong ‘Statement of Need’ (i.e. why should this program be funded/why should we fund your school over another/how is your school more in need over another)? Clearly state your ‘Goals and Objectives.’ Include an ‘Implementation Plan’ and/or ‘Project Timeline.’

- **Do your Homework**: Gather supporting statistics, e.g. student & district demographics, standardized test scores, free & reduced lunch, etc. Include necessary supporting documentation (letters of support, principal's signature, quotes from vendors, etc.). Cite all supporting research, if applicable.

- **Think it Through**: Construct a detailed budget with itemized expenses. Develop an ‘Evaluation Plan’ (i.e. how will the project outcomes be measured against goals and objectives).

- **Write Like a Pro**: Write clearly and concisely by exercising brevity; avoid ambiguity and excessive educational jargon. Remember, many times the response is read by people unfamiliar with the educational domain. Follow grant guidelines to the letter. Never skip over or omit sections.

- **Present with Style**: Label each section clearly (i.e. Opportunity Statement, Description of Need, Goals, Objectives, Measurement, etc.). Package all components of the application neatly. Label attachments as appropriate. Make sure that EVERY section required is labeled and presented. Responses get ‘circle-filed’ immediately for not meeting basic requirements.

- **Final Touches**: Ask at least one other person to 1) read the RFP guidelines, and then 2) proofread your application. Finding someone familiar with grant writing, RFP’s, and these tips can be difficult so use your SFAZ Field Representatives when needed.

- **Meet the Deadline**: Submit your application on time! Read the RFP, sometimes the agency is in another time zone so be aware of these details. Late responses get ‘circle-filed’ immediately for not meeting basic requirements. Don’t let your hard work be voided simply because you were one minute late to file.

- **Manage Expectations**: Professional grant writing is an art and a science, and you should not get frustrated because of non-success. Manage your expectations by following these tips, understand that others are apply/competing against your proposal for limited resources, and funding decisions are sometimes made outside of your knowledge circles.

- **Ask For Feedback**: Sometimes the funding agency will provide constructive feedback which can enhance a particular response, but most funding agencies will not provide this service. So, contact the Project Manager/Point of Contact, be courteous and professional, and request feedback to understand ‘how’ you could improve your proposal for next cycle.