

## HOW TO USE GRANT WRITING TO OFFSET LIBRARY

# BUDGET CUTS

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**W**hat are some options for supporting a library during the pandemic? My answer would be to either drastically cut spending or raise revenue. But how do you raise revenue in a time of economic downfall? Grant writing may be the answer.

Grant writing is not always an easy endeavor. The first step is educating yourself. You need to find online and print resources about grant writing, study them, and ask an experienced grant writer for tips. The second step is to gather your research team together and use their skill sets. Tap into your staff's experiences, and don't be afraid to seek volunteers with grant-writing skills to assist your team. Next, you or your team will need to set some goals for your project. Think about selecting a need that has a broad impact rather than something that will serve just your library or only a handful of people. Once you have selected a need, you can start your research to support it and then figure out the solution(s). Try to identify other organizations that share similar needs and ask them to partner with you, and, if possible, bring them onto your team.

Selecting grants to apply for requires both research and time. There are all

sorts of grants available, but choosing the ones that fit your organization and its mission and goals can be challenging. Note that the grant-writing process can take 5-6 weeks. Make sure you start as early as possible!

### GOVERNMENT WEBSITES

There are a couple of websites out there that can help you get on your way: the System for Award Management (SAM) and Grants.gov. To apply for federal grants, your organization must register with SAM, which Grants.gov calls "a web-based, government-wide application that collects, validates, stores and disseminates business infor-

mation about the federal government's trading partners in support of ... contract awards, grants, and electronic payment."

To register with SAM, you should have your data universal numbering system (DUNS) number, your taxpayer identification number, and basic information about your organization on hand. You will also need to prepare a notarized letter confirming that you are the authorized entity administrator before SAM will activate your registration.

After you have registered with SAM, you will need to do the same with Grants.gov. Once you have a Grants.gov account, you may add a profile to associate with an applicant organization and use the

### LINKS TO THE SOURCE

**Library Journal on advocacy**  
[libraryjournal.com/?detailStory=how-to-fight-an-austerity-budget-and-advocate-for-your-library-in-the-age-of-covid-19](http://libraryjournal.com/?detailStory=how-to-fight-an-austerity-budget-and-advocate-for-your-library-in-the-age-of-covid-19)

**Library Journal on funding constraints**  
[libraryjournal.com/?detailStory=budgeting-for-the-new-normal-libraries-respond-to-covid-19-funding-constraints](http://libraryjournal.com/?detailStory=budgeting-for-the-new-normal-libraries-respond-to-covid-19-funding-constraints)

**System for Award Management (SAM)**  
[sam.gov/SAM](http://sam.gov/SAM)

**Grants.gov**  
[grants.gov](http://grants.gov)

**Grants.gov on SAM**  
[grants.gov/applicants/organization-registration/step-2-register-with-sam.html](http://grants.gov/applicants/organization-registration/step-2-register-with-sam.html)

### GRANTS TO CONSIDER

There are different types of grants available, and being choosy is your prerogative. I work for a law library in Oregon, and as an example, I have compiled a small list of grants that I would consider:

- ALA Grants ([ala.org/awards/grants/awards/browse/gmt?showfilter=no](http://ala.org/awards/grants/awards/browse/gmt?showfilter=no))
- IMLS Grant Programs ([imls.gov/grants/grant-programs](http://imls.gov/grants/grant-programs))
- Oregon LSTA Grants ([libguides.osl.state.or.us/lstagrants](http://libguides.osl.state.or.us/lstagrants))
- Oregon Libraries' Ready to Read Grants ([oregon.gov/library/libraries/pages/ready-to-read.aspx](http://oregon.gov/library/libraries/pages/ready-to-read.aspx))
- The Library Corp.'s Library Grants and Funding ([fidelivers.com/library-grants/](http://fidelivers.com/library-grants/))

My Account features to manage profiles within your account. After you have registered, you are ready to start preparing your grant application and proposal.

### WRITING TIPS

To identify the grant that would best benefit your library, you may want to request copies of successful grants from previous winners. Try to use the criteria that reviewers will use to score the application, and if possible, focus on the impact the project will have on people. Back up your grant application with research. Write clear objectives, detail your plan of action, and describe your budget realistically. Identify how you are going to plan for the future and how your goals fit into that plan.

Grants usually start with a call for proposal. Be sure to examine it carefully, because the goals and objectives of the grant proposal are often found there. Write down any questions you have about your grant proposal, and contact a person at the funding agency. Remember that the funding agency wants to support organizations that take the application process seriously. Use basic vocabulary while writing your grant proposal. Refrain from cluttering it up with complicated jargon that is usually reserved for a report or a scholarly article.

Grant writing requires flexibility and planning, as each funder you are applying to may have different objectives and goals, different due dates, and various reporting requirements. Each grant has its own set of criteria, so you will need to

think about the structure of your proposal. Ask yourself what kinds of preliminary information you will require and how you will assess and document your needs. Grant proposals have a greater chance of being selected if they are accurate and appeal to the providing institution.

*You wouldn't apply for a job you're not qualified for, so why would you waste your time applying for grants that don't support your organization's financial needs, mission, and goals?*

Think about the grant-writing process the way you would think about applying for a job. You wouldn't apply for a job you're not qualified for, so why would you waste your time applying for grants that don't support your organization's financial needs, mission, and goals? Remind the readers of your grant proposal how important your library is to your community. Don't forget to illustrate how your library's work aligns with a specific funder's mission. If you have the opportunity to request feedback, do so.

You will need to know your library's budget inside and out. Follow the specific guidelines each funder requires for outlining your budget. Some funders might

stipulate that a portion of the money be matched by your library's budget. These grants may require a little more work, and they normally need verification that the funds are available. Make sure you identify clear objectives for your library. State your problem, articulate the data that supports it, and plan for future reporting that involves calculable measurements. More than likely, you will be asked to submit reports outlining the progress of a project. And you might want to incorporate narratives from community members who use your services. You'll need a way to capture those stories beforehand so you are ready to share them when reporting time arrives. Letters of support are critical, and they can be a valuable component of the application process.

### THE FUTURE

Libraries are successfully altering how patrons think about information and delivery. Those who once were uncomfortable with straying from their piles of books are learning to live without them in exchange for digital information. The narratives that matter now are the ones about measurable outcomes experienced by people who used your library services, visited your library, or spoke with a member of your library staff. Their testimonials can serve as measures of success that can help make a library eligible for funding.

Librarians and other information professionals should feel confident in the grant-writing process—there are certainly plenty of funding sources to choose from. Librarians are thinkers and finders, and they will always deliver information in the best possible ways despite economic, environmental, political, and social challenges. By becoming experts in grant writing, we can strive to be ready for whatever the future may bring.

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