

## Pre-Writing Activities

Whatever resources you employ in your search for prospective funders, there are three key things to look for:

1. Funding agencies with a track record of awarding grants in your geographical area, your field of interest, or for the type of support you are seeking.
2. Funding agencies that offer grants of a size compatible with your needs.
3. Funding agencies whose resources are not already committed years into the future, or agencies who seem to fund the same groups year after year.

### Online Research Tool

The Idea Bank has published an online resource library to help you in your grant research activities. The library is divided into special sections with links to hundreds of resources. It is located at [www.theideabank.com/grantlibrary.html](http://www.theideabank.com/grantlibrary.html).

The sections include:

- ❖ Sample (fire service) Grant Proposals
- ❖ Online Publication
- ❖ Data Collection
- ❖ Foundation Web sites
- ❖ Federal Funding
- ❖ Fire Service Organizations
- ❖ Writing Your Proposal
- ❖ Private Sector Funds

### Matching Missions

If you go to an Internet search engine and keypunch in the phrase “fire grants,” you won’t find much. Funding agencies have their own terminology and language. Part of your research requires that you develop translating skills in order to match missions with the prospective grantor. This is where your creativity is needed.

For example, there isn’t money available for juvenile firesetter intervention programs, but funding does exist for at-risk youth. You probably won’t find grants to help with fire safety training programs for senior citizens, but there is money available for elder care programs. While you may not locate grant funds to purchase AEDs for your community, there are many foundations that offer support for community health and safety.

Use the language of the grantor and opportunities will present themselves to you. On page 17, we have provided a Prospective Grantor Profile template which you may adapt for your own use. This will help you keep a record of your contacts with funding agencies.

## **Making Contact**

Once you have narrowed your search of prospective grantors (and before you submit a proposal) it's important to make contact by phone. Your objectives:

1. Obtain key contact name(s) and promote recognition of your department
2. Gather additional information about the funding agency's current grant activities and initial reaction to your interest in submitting a proposal.
3. If the response to your inquiry is positive, try to set up a face-to-face interview.

## **The Interview**

People give to people. That's why it's a great advantage for you to meet face-to-face with the prospective grantor. Sometimes this is not possible, however, it should always be your goal. You want two outcomes from this interview:

1. An answer to your question, "May we submit a proposal?"

During the interview, you need to provide an overview of your department and also discuss the project you want the agency to consider funding. Listen carefully and be flexible. The agency may be more interested in one aspect of your project than another. At some point during the interview, you must ask specifically, "May we submit a proposal to you?"

2. A response to the dollar amount required

Always request a specific dollar amount for a specific project in a specific location, and specify the number of people impacted. "May we submit a proposal for \$75,000 that will support "terrorism" training for 1,500 Denver firefighters to meet the needs of the 4.3 million residents in the City of Denver."

Your research is important. You need to know (before you ask) whether the funder supports projects related to yours, and that your dollar request is within their average grant range.

Contact recent grant recipients of the funding agency. You can gain from them information not available anywhere else. Ask about their experience with the grantor. Was the project successful?...were there any problems? ...Would you work with them again?

## **Supporting Materials**

There are two types of information you can use to strengthen your justification for a grant; quantitative and qualitative. Try to include both in your proposal.

**A. Quantitative information** includes data and statistics.

### **Examples:**

1. Your justification for a new fire station might cite the distance (in miles) and response time (minutes and seconds) to a section of your community. In your justification you would also cite the NFPA or ISO standards for minimum response time.

2. Your argument to replace old apparatus may be based on the number of times the vehicle has been out-of-service (from vehicle maintenance records), or how often the vehicle has broken-down in route to an emergency (department run records) within a specific period of time. Specific equipment that you want on this new apparatus may be spelled out in NFPA 1901: Standard for Automotive Fire Apparatus, 1999 Edition.

3. The need for a fire prevention program targeted to a specific at-risk-population might be based on the number of emergencies to that population (department run records) along with the size and/or growth of that population (census and demographic information) in your community. If the at-risk-population is in a specific industry, you might cite statistics from the Department of Labor for your state or national averages of injuries and death in that specific industry.

Always **provide an analysis** of the statistics you cite. Is your response time higher or lower than what's recommended? How does it affect your ISO rating? How does your vehicles' maintenance and reliability affect emergency response? Is your targeted population growing and, without public education, do you expect the emergencies to increase as well? Do not assume that the reader will connect the numbers to the problem. Your job is to spell it out for them.

There are a **variety of sources** you may use to retrieve the data that supports your proposal. These may include your department's run records, state and national fire incident reporting systems, as well as information published by public and private organizations.

**Collect statistical information** using customer service surveys, interviews, or observations. The information you collect needs to be analyzed. You may present the results descriptively or you may want to format the data into maps, charts or graphs.

**B. Qualitative information...** statements, quotes, stories and examples.

Quantitative information may demonstrate the hard reality of your problem, but qualitative information adds drama, interest, and puts a face to the problem. The statements you make tie together your analysis of the quantitative information and should be factual while at the same time limit the extent of the problem to one that you can solve.

Quotes from political leaders after an emergency or disaster can help spotlight the problem. Quotes can also add drama and interest to your proposal. This Biblical quote was used to dramatize the applicant's proposal for a thermal imaging camera:

**"Without vision, the people die."**

Stories from fire survivors can also help spotlight and dramatize your needs statement. For stories, quotes and anecdotes, try interviewing your fire department colleagues. You may be surprised by all the terrific information you have at your fingertips. Also look for illustrative stories on the Internet, from fire-related publications, from survivors in your own community, newspapers, radio, and your own creativity.



# Anatomy of a Grant Proposal

- Cover Letter
- Title Page
- Table of Contents
- Executive Summary
- Introduction
- Need Statement
- Goals and Objectives
- Methodology
- Evaluation
- Future Funding
- Budget
- Appendix

## “The Package is Part of the Product”

- ❖ Make sure each page of your proposal quickly orients the reader. You can do this by consistently using a title or subject line at the top.
- ❖ Keep your paragraphs short. Long blocks of single-spaced type are intimidating to the eye. Find ways to break up long paragraphs into two or more short ones.
- ❖ Select a clean, legible typeface and print the proposal on a high quality printer.
- ❖ Use upper and lower case letters. All upper case lettering is difficult to read in body text. Limit its use to titles or brief headings.
- ❖ Use ample headings and subheadings. Center the main ones and line the others up along the left margin. Print the subheadings in upper and lower case letters, and put them in boldface type or make them underlined.
- ❖ Don't justify the right margin of your proposal. Allow it to run unevenly at natural line lengths. Justifying your text makes it look more formal than you'll want. Also, it is shown that people read more accurately when the text is printed in 'ragged right" format.
- ❖ Leave ample white space. Make generous margins on both sides and leave room at the top and the bottom. This ensures that your proposal won't seem crowded to the reader.
- ❖ Orient charts and tables for ease of reading. Avoid making the reader twist the proposal sideways to look at its graphic pages.
- ❖ Highlight your key points. Make the important material stand out by employing bold type, underlining, italic, color, bullet points, indentations, and graphics. Be consistent and tasteful, but make it stand out.

# COVER LETTER

**Purpose:** The cover letter is a key part of your proposal because it introduces your organization to the prospective funding source and is usually read first. Try to *grab* the reader's attention with the first sentence of your cover letter.

**Tip:** Always address the cover letter to an individual. Impersonal greetings such as "Dear Sir" or "To Whom it May Concern" will distance you. Your goal is to establish a personal relation with the funding agency from the outset.

**Recommended Length:** One page

## What to Include:

- ❖ The funding agency representative's name title and address
- ❖ A brief overview of your organization and its purpose
- ❖ The reason for your funding request
- ❖ The title of your proposal
- ❖ The dollar amount of your request
- ❖ The name, title, phone number and email address of your grant coordinator
- ❖ The title and signature of your fire chief.

.....END OF SAMPLE PAGES.....