

Grant writing guide

for K-12 education leaders



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Grant writing tips

Getting started

The grant writing process can be challenging—even for experienced writers. The competition can be fierce. You have only one chance to make a good impression to capture the reviewers' attention.

Here are six tips to ensure that your proposal is both effective and competitive:

1

Start early

Allow extra time for writing, reviewing, and editing.

2

Know the deadline.

Submit your grant proposal prior to the deadline.

3

Follow directions!

Read the instructions carefully. Check for required information, forms, and signatures.

4

Use active voice.

Don't write to impress. Get to the point clearly without wasting words. Use easy to understand language since the reviewer could be a "novice."

5

Format matters.

Use the required font, sizing, and line spacing. Know the page limits. Any information presented beyond the word count limit will not be reviewed.

6

Be persistent!

If your proposal isn't funded, request a copy of the reviewers' comments to make improvements before submitting your next grant proposal.

Useful Links

Check out these sites for additional inspiration.

- [Grant writing basics from grants.gov](#)
- [Grant writing tutorial from NEA](#)
- [Writing your first grant from faculty focus](#)



Grant application components

Each grant proposal will vary in certain aspects. Every funder has unique guidelines that dictate the format and direction of the proposal. Typically, most grant applications contain these elements.

Essential components	Have you considered?
<p>Executive summary</p> <p>This section provides a brief overview of the project and is usually written <i>after</i> the proposal has been completed. The summary gives a taste of the proposal to come and is your chance to make a good first impression.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audience: Who will be directly impacted by the project? • Need/Problem: What need will the project address? • Educational Goals: What does the project strive to accomplish? • Performance Targets: Who will be able to do what, by when? • Activities: How will the project be carried out?
<p>Needs statement/assessment</p> <p>This piece should convince the reviewer that what you propose to do is important.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will the needs for the project be identified? • What supporting research and data validate the identified needs?
<p>Goals and objectives</p> <p>The goals and objectives should describe the desired outcomes of the project.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the goals aligned with the project’s needs? • What results do you expect to achieve?
<p>Program design</p> <p>The program design should be detailed and describe how you plan to achieve the goals and objectives of the project.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you included a timeline and specified who will do what and when? • Do the activities relate to the program goals and objectives as well as the project requirements? • Does each activity address the identified needs of the targeted population and is it sufficient to achieve the measurable outcomes?
<p>Assessment and evaluation</p> <p>This section describes how you plan to track progress and measure success.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you have formative and summative assessment data? • How will you know if the desired impacts have been achieved?
<p>Sustainability</p> <p>For this section, describe how the program will continue when funds expire.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will your project continue after the grant period has ended? • Is there an education foundation that could help with some of the costs?
<p>Project and resource management</p> <p>This section should show how the grant activities will be managed and monitored.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What existing resources will be utilized? • How will management of facilities best maximize the use of funds? • Will you work with other organizations to leverage resources? • Did you include a list of the project team along with their roles, responsibilities, and qualifications?
<p>Budget</p> <p>This should be an accurate “estimate” of the associated costs. Be sure to include a line item for every cost described in the narrative proposal.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where will you need to expend resources to achieve your goals? • Are there other funding sources that may cover some of the costs?



Final assembly



Refer to these tips to ensure your application is ready for submission.

- Use the “**Evaluation Criteria**” as a checklist.
- Have several people **proofread and provide feedback**.
- Ensure you have all required **signatures** and review **formatting instructions**.
- Mail or deliver the proposals **prior to the deadline**.

Funding sources

Funding for K-12 public schools

Public schools receive money from **three main sources: federal, state, and local**. Federal funds make up the smallest portion of the three, encompassing around eight to ten percent. These funds are usually earmarked for a specific purpose and provide supplemental assistance to state and local investments. Most federal monies are sent directly to state agencies where they are shared with local school districts based either on a formula or via a competitive grant process.

State and local resources make up the **largest portion of school funds**. Each state has a different method of awarding money to its districts. Economic conditions play a role and vary by state which can affect funding amounts. Most of the state revenue comes from two sources—sales and income taxes. For local funds, property taxes make up almost half of school monies.

Quick reference chart of the most common federal K–12 funding sources**

Program and focus area	How are funds distributed?	What can be purchased?
Title I, Part A Underserved Students in High-poverty Schools	Formula (based on percentages of students from low-income families)	Intervention Programs, Supplemental Materials, Technology, Professional Development, Programs to Incorporate a Well-rounded Education
Title II, Part A Supporting Effective Instruction	Formula (at least 95% is targeted for sub-grants for local districts and schools)	Professional Development, Evaluation and Support Systems, Educator Quality, Preparation, Recruiting, Induction, and Retention Strategies
Title III, Part A English Language Acquisition	Formula (based on the number of English Learners reported in US Census data)	Professional Development, Language Instruction Programs, Personnel, Education Technology, Community & Family Literacy Engagement, Accelerated Learning Programs, Developing or Implementing Language Instruction Programs in Preschools (coordinated with other related services)
Title IV, Part A Student Support and Academic Enrichment	Formula (based on Title I allocations)	Music & Arts, STEM, Computer Science, History, Civics, Geography, Accelerated Learning Programs, Bullying Prevention, Blended Learning, Mental Health & Counseling, Professional Development (using data and technology to improve instruction), Foreign Language, Physical Education, Social-Emotional Learning, Family Supports, Technology, Personalized Learning
Title IV, Part B 21st Century Community Learning Centers	Formula to states; competitive sub-grant to districts and schools	Activities, Services, and Programs (focused on academic enrichment designed to reinforce and complement the regular academic program)
IDEA, Part B Special Education	Formula (includes students with IEPs and children living in poverty)	Special Education Teachers & Administrators, Materials & Supplies, Professional Development, Specialized Equipment and Devices
Perkins V Career and Technical Education (CTE)	Formula	Industry Training, Equipment and Curriculum, Personnel, Career Guidance, Professional Development, Work Experiences, Miscellaneous Academic Supports, and Certifications
Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) Indian Tribes & Alaskan Natives	Formula	BIE schools have access to the federal funding sources listed above as well as Indian Education Grants to LEAs. Allowable purchases vary.

** This is not an exhaustive list of funding sources and/or allowable purchases

Alternative funding sources

It's nearly impossible to rely solely on federal, state, and local dollars to support the educational programs of today's students, teachers, families, and communities. Additional funding opportunities exist from public and private foundations, grants, and crowdsourcing organizations to help cover books and materials, professional services as well as technology. Many educators are turning to these alternative funding sources to enrich the classroom while preparing students for college and career readiness.

The links below and on the following pages provide resources for locating additional funding sources.

Grant database sites

- [Grants.gov](#)
- [GetEdFunding](#)
- [GrantWatch Resource Center](#)
- [Grants for Teachers](#)
- [The School Funding Center](#)

Crowdsourcing organizations

Organization	Description/Grant Amount
DonorsChoose.org	"Public school teachers from every corner of America create classroom project requests, and you can give any amount to the project that inspires you. Connect to a thriving community of donors that is eager to fund your classroom projects. You know what your students need. We're here to help you get it. Founded by a history teacher, DonorsChoose.org is 100% focused on educators."
AdoptAClassroom.org	"We believe every child should have equal access to the tools they deserve to be successful in school. With your help, we make this possible. We offer the most flexible and accountable funding for teachers and schools through our proprietary, easy-to-use fundraising platform."

Foundations and corporations

Focus	Organization	Description / Grant Amount
Classroom Resources	Association of American Educators	General Classroom Resources Up to \$500
	NEA Foundation	Student Success Grants \$2,000 & \$5,000
Education (General)	AT&T Foundation	Education & Skills Building Amount Varies
	Brown Rudnick Center Foundation	General Education Grant \$2,000
	Dr. C. Moorer and Associates, Inc.	From Failure to Promise K-12 Educator's Grant Up to \$500
	Dr. Scholl Foundation	General Education Grant \$5,000-\$25,000
	W.K. Kellogg Foundation	A database of over 20,000 grants serving children, education, and families Amounts Vary
	McCarthy Dressman Education Foundation	Academic Enrichment Grants Up to \$10,000/year for 3 years
	Michael & Susan Dell Foundation	Projects serving disadvantaged children, especially in the areas of education, family economic stability, and health Amount Varies
	Reiman Foundation	General Education Grant Amount Varies
	SC Johnson Grants	General Education Grant Amount Varies
	State Farm	Good Neighbor Citizenship Company Grants Amount Varies
	Voya Unsung Heroes	Innovative projects to improve learning \$2,000
Walmart Foundation	Local Community Grants \$250-\$5,000	
The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation	Early childhood, STEM, Out of School Time Up to \$5,000	

Foundations and corporations

Focus	Organization	Description / Grant Amount
Literacy	AASL Innovative Reading Grant	Grades K-9 Up to \$2,500
	Believe In Reading	Existing literacy programs \$1,000-\$10,000
	Wish You Well Foundation	Family literacy education grant From \$200-\$10,000
	Dollar General	Youth Literacy Grant Up to \$4,000
Mathematics	Mathematics Education Trust	Enhancing Student Mathematics Learning through the Use of Tools and Technology Up to \$3,000
	National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM)	Mathematics Education Trust Grants \$1,500-\$24,000
Professional Development	Fund for Teachers	Supports educators' efforts to develop skills, knowledge, and confidence that impact student achievement Amount Varies
	NEA Learning & Leadership	Open to NEA members \$2,000 or \$5,000
Science	American Chemical Society	High School Chemistry Classroom Grants Up to \$1,500
	National Science Foundation (NSF)	Database of funding opportunities Amounts Vary
Children with Special Needs	Learning Disabilities Foundation of America	Scientific, literary, and educational services to bring awareness to learning disabilities Amount Varies
STEM	AFCEA Educational Foundation	Elementary and Middle School Teachers Up to \$1,000
	Corning Foundation	STEM/STEAM & workforce development programs Amount Varies
	Lockheed Martin Corporation	STEM Education Outreach Amount Varies
	Siemens Foundation & Discovery Education, Inc.	K-12 Teachers at Title I Schools Up to \$10,000
	Toshiba	Grants for K-5 Up to \$1,000 Grants for 6-12 Up to \$5,000
	Westinghouse	Education with a focus on STEM Amount Varies
	Verizon Foundation	Education with a focus on STEM Amount Varies

Glossary of Terms

Understanding the terms and acronyms related to educational funding is essential when preparing your grant application. Here are a few we think may be helpful.

Absolute Priorities: Activities or conditions that must be met for a grant proposal to be considered; typically used in federal grant applications

Abstract (Executive Summary): Usually a one- to two-page summary of the project

Administrative Costs: Funds used to manage the project

Allocation: Distribution of funds or an expenditure limit established for an organization

Appropriation: Money set aside for a specific purpose

Assurances: Requirements that applicants agree in writing to observe as a condition of receiving funding

Asynchronous Learning: Learning that does not occur in the same place or at the same time

Audit (Financial): The examination of records and reports to ensure what is provided is accurate

Audit (Program): A review of the accomplishments of a program by the staff of the funding agency

Award: A funding agency's acceptance of an application or proposal, which results in a sum of money allocated to the awardee over a specified period to meet the goals and objectives outlined in the grant application

Awardee: Recipient of a grant award

Best Practices: Professional procedures that are accepted or prescribed as being correct or most effective

Blended Learning: Learning that takes place electronically as well as in-person

Block Grants: Unrestricted funds awarded to help fund a specific project or program

Budget Period: An interval of time into which a project period is divided for budgetary purposes

Carryover: Grant funding transferred or resulting from a previous situation or context

Cohort: A group; often it refers to a group of grantees when multiple rounds of awards are made during the life of the grant cycle.

Competitive Grant: Grant that must go through a competitive, objective review process

Competitive Priority: Applicants have the option of answering specific elements or certain conditions to give them additional scoring points in a grant application

Community-Based Organization (CBO): Agencies that are nonprofit and nongovernmental that focus their support on community-based needs

Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI): A type of school improvement identification under ESSA; CSI focuses on the lowest-performing schools

Conflict of Interest: Occurs when a person's personal interests directly or indirectly affects the financial or business interests of the employee, an immediate family member, or an associated entity

Consortium: A pooling of resources to make as big of an impact as possible and to leverage the talents of multiple organizations with similar goals

Continuation Grant: Grant available for the continuance of a program already underway

Contract: An agreement with specific terms between two or more persons or entities in which there is a promise to do something in return for a valuable benefit

Contracted Services: Services provided to the grant recipient by an outside consultant or provider

Declining Grant: A multi-year grant that grows smaller each year

Demonstrates a Rationale: The fourth level of evidence-based research under ESSA; demonstrates rationale based on high-quality research or positive evaluation that such activity, strategy, or intervention is likely to improve student outcomes; includes ongoing efforts to examine the effects of such activity, strategy, or intervention

Direct Costs: Costs allowed by the funding organization, directly tied to the operation of the project

Disclosure: Making new or secret information known

Discretionary Grant: Funding which is subject to the preference of the grantor

Distance Learning: Learning that takes place when teachers and students are separated by distance

Donor: A foundation or individual that provides the funds for a grant

DUNS Number: The Data Universal Numbering System number required for every federal grant application submission

ED: U.S. Department of Education

EDGAR: The Education Department General Administration Regulations governing the Education Department's grant programs

E-Learning: A form of learning where instruction and content are delivered primarily over the internet; same as online learning, cyber learning, and virtual learning

Eligible Applicant: An entity who may apply for a grant as specified in the grant guidelines

Eligibility Criteria: Factors used to determine whether a person or entity is qualified to participate in a particular initiative

Encumbered Expense: Funds set aside for project implementation

Encumbrance: The legal obligation to pay a vendor or reimburse an employee when goods or services have been requested, but have not yet been provided

Entitlement Funds: Money received on the basis of a formula

ESSA: Every Student Succeeds Act, signed into law in 2015, governs the U.S. K-12 public education policy (starting with the 2017-2018 schoolyear)

Evaluation: Assessment of whether a project achieved the intended outcomes

Evaluation Data: Two types of evaluation data are typically required: (1) quantitative— student test scores, numbers of teachers trained, or other objectively measured outcomes and (2) qualitative— information gathered through open-ended questionnaires, observation notes, artifacts such as student projects and sample lesson plans

Evidence-based: As defined by ESSA, there are four levels of evidence: strong, moderate, promising and demonstrates a rationale. The top three levels require findings of statistically significant effect on improving student outcomes or other relevant outcomes based on— (i) Strong evidence from at least one well-designed and well-implemented experimental study; (ii) Moderate evidence from at least one well-designed and well implemented quasi-experimental study; or (iii) Promising evidence from at least one well-designed and well implemented correlational study with statistical controls for selection bias. The fourth level is designed for ideas that do not yet have an evidence base qualifying for the top three levels. Demonstrates a rationale based on high-quality research findings or positive evaluation that such activity, strategy, or intervention is likely to improve student outcomes or other relevant outcomes and includes ongoing efforts to examine the effects of such activity, strategy or intervention.

Executive Summary (Abstract): A one- to two-page summary of the project, including its goals and objectives

Expenditure: Payment for goods or services, or a charge against available funds in settlement of an obligation as evidenced by an invoice, receipt, voucher, or other such document

Federal Funds: Money appropriated by the US Congress

Federal Register: Source of official government announcements for application information

Fiscal Year (FY): A period for which accounting books are kept

Formula Grant/Funds: A grant distributed by federal departments in which the amount of the grant is determined by a formula based on established criteria that is written into the legislation and program regulations

Foundation: A private organization established as a nonprofit corporation or charitable trust, with a principal purpose of making grants to unrelated nonprofit organizations for scientific, educational, cultural, religious, or other charitable purposes

Free or Reduced Lunch (FRL): A school's percentage of students eligible to receive free or reduced lunch; usually a determining factor for eligibility for additional funding

Funding Agency: The organization that funds a grant

Funding Cycle: Starting with the announcement of available funds, the funding cycle includes all phases of the grant, i.e., deadline for application submission, proposal reviews, award, issuance of grant documents, release of funds and fiscal reporting

Funding Priorities: Specific elements that applicants are asked to address or certain conditions that must exist for applicants to be eligible for a certain grant

Goals: Broad and long-term targets (e.g., increasing high school graduation rates)

Grant: An award of money given to finance certain activities with a set of established requirements and criteria

Grant Agreement: A legally binding contract between a grantee and a grantor specifying the terms and conditions of the grant

Grantee: The person or organization that receives the grant

Grantor: Party issuing the grant

Hybrid Learning: Combines face-to-face and online teaching into one cohesive experience

Incremental Funding: Grants that are funded with specific spending limits below the total costs

Indirect Costs: Costs incurred for an organization's operating expenses (e.g., utility bills, janitorial services, etc.) which cannot be readily and specifically identified for a particular project

In-Kind Gift/Donation: Rather than cash, it is a donation of goods or services such as labor, equipment, supplies or the use of facilities

LEA: Local Education Agency (e.g., school or district)

Lead Applicant: A lead agency which manages and takes responsibility for coordinating and fiscally managing a project

Learning Management System (LMS): Technology platform through which students access online courses or digital materials

Letter of Inquiry, Letter of Intent (LOI) or Intent to Apply: A brief letter outlining an organization's activities and its request for funding sent to a funding source to determine whether it would be appropriate to submit a full grant proposal

Matching Funds: Contributions required by a party other than the grantor

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU): A formal document required from grant consortium members outlining roles and responsibilities

Mission Statement: Declares "why" an organization exists, and is the foundation upon which a long-range strategic plan (the blueprint for carrying out the organization's "business") can be developed

Moderate Evidence: The second level of evidence-based research under ESSA; must have at least one well-designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental study (i.e., matched)

Monitoring: Overseeing the accomplishments of a project

Needs Assessment: Documentation of why the grant/project is needed

Non-Compliance: Failure or refusal to comply, as with a law, regulation, or term of a contract, grant or agreement

Notice of Grant Award (NOGA): A legally binding document serving as notification to the recipient and others that a grant or cooperative agreement has been made

Objectives: Short-term targets (e.g., increasing reading scores by a specific percent within a specified time frame)

Online Learning: A form of distance learning where instruction and content are delivered primarily over the internet; may also mean the same as virtual learning, cyber learning, and e-learning

Performance Measure: A characteristic or metric that can be used to assess the performance aspects of a program or project (i.e., dollars expended, students enrolled, grade point average)

Performance Report: A report of the specific activities the grant recipient has performed during the budget or project period

Planning Grant: A special type of grant that enables an organization to gather the resources to develop a strong, full proposal

Private Foundation: A tax-exempt, non-profit organization with a principal fund or endowment of its own which are set up to help social, educational, charitable, or religious actions that serve the common good of society

Pro Forma: An anticipated, proposed or hypothetical set of numbers for a project (generally the budget)

Procurement: The action of obtaining or acquiring equipment, materials, or supplies

Progress Report: A scheduled report (usually annually) required by the funder that summarizes the project to date

Project: The planned program; the goals and objectives for which the grant funds are being requested

Project Director or Principal Investigator (PI): The person responsible for fulfilling the terms and conditions of the grant or contract

Project Period: The total amount of time for which a grantor promises to fund a grant and authorizes a grantee to conduct the project

Promising Evidence: The third level of evidence-based research under ESSA; must have at least one well-designed and well-implemented correlational study with statistical controls for selection bias

Proposal: Document detailing the program or project developed in response to the grant requirements

Recipient: The receiver of the grant funds

Replicability: The likelihood that the proposed project can be replicated in other schools or districts or on a broader regional or national scope

Request for Proposals (RFP) or Request for Application (RFA): Solicitation document sent by the funder seeking applications from potential grantees

Research-Based: Projects based on technology, instructional strategies, or curriculum that are proven through carefully monitored experimental or quasi-experimental studies and demonstrated to improve student achievement and/or teacher performance

Restricted Funds: Funds that must be spent for a specific purpose, as determined by the funder

SEA: State Education Agency or other agency or office primarily responsible for the supervision of public elementary and secondary schools

Seed Money: Funds used to start a new project or organization which may cover salaries and other start-up expenses

Statute of Limitations: A type of law that restricts the time in which legal proceedings may be brought, serviced or completed

Stipends: A fixed, regular sum paid as a salary or allowance

Strong Evidence: The top level of evidence-based research under ESSA; must have at least one well-designed and well-implemented experimental study (i.e., randomized)

Sub-grant: Awards made under the authority of another grant

Sub-grantee: The receiver of pass-through grant funds from a grantee rather than from the grantor; sub-grantees are required to follow all policies and rules of the original grant plus any additional conditions added by the grantee

Supplant: To replace; to use federal funds for more than one source to pay for the same personnel position or activity

Supplement: Something that completes or enhances something else when added to it

Sustainability: A plan for continuation beyond the grant period and/or the availability of other resources necessary to implement the grant

Synchronous Learning: Learning in which participants interact at the same time and in the same space

Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI): A type of school improvement classification under ESSA that focuses on schools with persistent achievement gaps

Target Population: Individuals, students, schools, or other recipients who will be the focus and beneficiaries of services provided through a grant project

Tax-exempt: Organizations not subject to taxation such as federal, state or corporate taxes

Technical Assistance: Management or operational assistance given to non-profit organizations including budgeting, financial planning, grant assistance, programmatic or financial review, as well as program planning

Trustee: A foundation board member occupying a position of trust who assists in making decisions about the way grant monies are spent

Universal Design for Learning (UDL): A framework to improve and optimize teaching and learning for all people based on scientific insights into how humans learn

Unrestricted Funds: Funding that has no requirements or restrictions for use

Unsolicited Proposal: A proposal that is not in response to an RFP, RFA or announcement

Video Conferencing: Interactive communication technologies which allow two or more locations to interact via two-way video and audio transmissions simultaneously

Virtual Learning: A form of distance learning where instruction and content are delivered primarily over the internet; same as online learning, cyber learning, and e-learning

Vision: A statement containing the direction the applicant wants to take and the desired end-result

Waiver: An intentional relinquishment of some right or interest

Set **growth** in motion for every student



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