

Sample Timeline for Writing a Grant Application

Six weeks before the due date (or as soon as the funding opportunity is announced):

- Print a complete copy of the Request for Application (RFA) and read it from front to back. Pay particular attention to fundable activities, due date, the question submission process, bidders meeting schedule, evaluation requirements and budget requirements and restrictions.
- Determine whether the fundable activities are aligned with school/district priorities. If so, make additional copies of the RFA and pass it along to several other staff members (including administrators) to assess how much support there is to apply for funding.
- If there is enough interest, convene a group to help with planning and writing.
- Include at least one administrator, and if available, an evaluator.
- Find out the process and timeline for routing a grant through your school or district.
- Download any support materials (e.g. best practices) referenced in the RFA.
- At the first meeting, set at least one meeting date each week until the due date. Create a task list with activities, person(s) responsible, and timeline. Review and add to the task list at every subsequent meeting.
- Assign someone to check the funder's website once a week to get a list of questions asked about the proposal and their answers.

Five weeks before the due date:

- Start with the end in mind: what is it that you really want to accomplish with this funding? What data do you have that indicates need for the project? This discussion can be challenging and may take more than one meeting. Have a skilled facilitator!
- With your writing team, develop initial goals and objectives for the project, based on your desired outcomes and the guidelines provided in the RFA. Align goals and objectives with school/district priorities.
- With the evaluator, refine objectives to make them SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-phased).
- Begin to brainstorm activities for each objective, based on best practices.
- Determine which staff members will be funded, and at what percentage of time. Make sure these staff members are part of the planning/writing team.
- Determine who will write which sections of the application. Note this on the task list.
- If letters of support/collaboration are required, identify who will be asked to write letters, and assign someone to contact them. It's helpful to send the letter-writers a short summary of your project or a sample letter.

Four weeks before the due date:

- Send the draft goals, objectives and activities to a broader group for input. Include people who will be involved, impacted or who will have influence over proposed activities. Give them a 3-5 day timeframe to return comments.
- Begin writing the first draft of all sections in the RFA.
- Incorporate staff input into goals, objectives, activities and section narratives.
- Begin drafting the project budget.
- Confirm the process for routing the completed proposal through the school/district, and add this to your task list and timeline.
- Keep track of letters as they are received.

Three weeks before the due date:

- Continue writing all sections of the grant. Each section writer should send out a draft to other staff for review and input. Request a 3-5 day turnaround time. Incorporate staff input into the sections as appropriate.
- Work with your business office to refine the project budget.
- Make sure the budget narrative accurately reflects the figures in the budget.
- Make personal contact with any letter writers who have not yet submitted their letter.

Two weeks before the due date:

- Finalize budget and narrative.
- Complete all other forms required (signature pages, assurances, etc.)
- Electronically assemble all of the grant sections in the order indicated in the grant instructions.
- Send the grant proposal to several reviewers. Ask them to read the grant and give you input about which sections need more information or clarity.
- Incorporate input from content reviewers and send to an editor for review.
- Start the proposal through your district approval process (you may need to take this step sooner if your district has a more lengthy process).

One week before the due date:

- Read the submission requirements carefully and decide how the proposal will be delivered (e.g., electronically, in-person, FedEx, other). If you use a delivery service, choose a reliable vendor that provides a tracking number.
- Incorporate any final input from the district review process.
- Re-read the RFA to make sure you've included all the required documents.
- Make copies of the final proposal (required number for submission, plus additional copies for the school/district).

Due date!

- Submit the correct number of copies on time. Actually, it's best to submit a day or two in advance – just in case there's a glitch. If delivering the proposal in person, ask for a receipt from someone in the building.
- Celebrate!