



Tips and Hints for Applying for Grants

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The success of many of today's programs depends upon the ability to secure adequate funding. Often, grants are a crucial part of that funding. The tips and hints listed below provide some simple suggestions to consider that may help to increase your odds of success in your search for money.

1. Focus on an area or program where you can make a significant impact to your library—not too large of a space or too broad of a program. A well organized and carefully conceived program clearly demonstrates how your request will impact your customers, staff, space, etc.
2. Focus and be clear about what you are asking for—you and your staff are uniquely positioned to understand the needs and the goals for your program. Enlist the help of your customers to further refine your list of needs and add things that you may have forgotten about. Once you have a clear vision, communicate it in enough detail that someone who has never visited your library can clearly envision your needs.
3. Understand that nature of what is provided by the grant (ie: goods, services, cash, etc.)—generally this is clearly spelled out in the rules governing the grant and make sure that your proposal falls within those parameters.
4. Understand the competencies of the agency issuing the grant—asking for things that are outside of the scope of what can be provided may disqualify your application—for example, if the company supplying the grant provides design services, furniture and product installation, it is probably not feasible for that company to provide services such as painting, carpeting or interior construction services.
5. Be as positive as possible when filling out your grant materials and give examples of how you have already been making an effort to improve services or the space—use the grant as an opportunity to share your vision with others in your library and look for opportunities to make an even larger impact on your facility. From a facilities standpoint, sometimes updates such as painting a facility can be an inexpensive way to freshen things up—look for ways to raise the needed funds or secure product donations from local suppliers—this goes a long way toward showing how you are making a difference in your facility even with the limited availability of funds. Even making an effort to purge old unneeded items from a space can sometimes help to secure more space for needed materials or services.
6. Recognize that many of those applying for grants are probably in a similar financial situation or status (Title I, free & reduced lunch, etc.). While this helps to identify financial need, what is more impressive is how creative your library has been in raising funds or spreading the word about the vision of your facility. If your customers, parent groups, administration begin to see how your vision can impact the facility they may be willing to assist in efforts to secure needed funds.

7. Take the time to include pictures and plans that more clearly illustrate your proposal. This helps to show your plan has been well thought through—with many applications to read, illustrations and images can give a clearer idea of the plan, the situation as it currently stands, and what the opportunities are.
8. Thoroughly understand the scope of your project and what it will cost. Review the grant to ensure that your request can be adequately funded by the grant funds available—be sure that if the grant includes product that you understand what other expenses may be incurred and need to be covered by the funds such as freight and installation costs.
9. If your project goes beyond the \$ amount funded by the grant be clear as to where the additional funds will come from—many organizations offering grants are not as willing to fund a project that may never truly be completed but are more than happy to match funds to create an even greater impact.
10. Be concise—the review board most likely is reviewing many proposals and well a detailed and well documented plan is important, longer is not always better.
11. Be professional and thorough in your presentation—again take into consideration that there may be a large volume of applications and the reviewer will be impacted by a neat, easy to follow application. Make sure that all questions included in an entry form or questionnaire are adequately answered, as your entry may be disqualified if they aren't.
12. Finally, be realistic in your anticipated timeline—for a furniture project, if the award of a design grant is to occur in early July, it is probably unreasonable to think that it can be designed, ordered and installed by August or September of the same year. At the same time, make sure the program can be completed within the maximum timeline designated for the program so that the funds aren't lost before the project can be completed.