# GRANTFINDER

# Local Government GRANT WRITING

A 7-step guide putting you on the right track
to a successful grant application

# INTRODUCTION

Grant writing demands a lot of time and resources. The process can be difficult, confusing and frustrating to say the least. In local government, it's almost always a challenge to submit a competitive application.

At Lexipol, we've developed an easy-to-follow process to get you up to speed on the basics of identifying, applying for and securing grants. This step-by-step guide will walk you through the sometimes tedious process of collecting the information critical to nearly all grant opportunities, regardless of their origin.

In this ebook, we identify 7 steps that will put you on the right track to a successful grant application:

1. Define a Project
2. Research Funding
3. Prepare Necessary Documentation
4. Create and Review
5. Apply and Monitor
6. Manage Your Award
7. Closeout (and Begin Again?)

## 7 GRANT WRITING STEPS

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# 1 DEFINE A PROJECT

The first step is to identify your community's current needs during your strategic planning sessions. Where would your community benefit from grant funding? Give priority to those areas that will produce the most measurable impact on your community. Be prepared to explain how the requested funding will solve a problem, and what the negative impact will be on your community if the project isn't funded.

Once you have identified a project, it's time to plan. If you don't have your UEI confirmation or SAM registration, now's the time to get those in order. A Unique Entity ID (UEI) and System for Award Management (SAM) number, register your municipality with the government as a grant applicant. Once this is in order, it's time to itemize and organize all costs associated with the project into a comprehensive budget, including equipment, accessories and additional training if required.

You should also identify your stakeholders—the people and organizations in your community that will be impacted by the grant. These may include departments within your municipality, mutual aid organizations, public utilities, schools, churches and population groups.

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> ## Where would your community benefit from grant funding?

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# **2** RESEARCH FUNDING

Now that you've got your project in mind, it's time to find out who can help you fund it. It's just as important to know which grants to apply to as it is to know how to apply.

How can you find a grant that will fit your needs? The best way is to search for grants through a grant database such as GrantFinder, Lexipol's real-time, online database. With a subscription to a grant database, you can search federal, state, foundation and corporate grants in one place. You can perform a search by grant category (federal, state or corporate), keywords (such as vehicle or equipment) or your state.

The search results may seem extensive depending on what type of search you are performing, but it is important to review each of these grants carefully. Focus on the summary of the grant's purpose, funding areas identified by the grantor and the eligibility requirements.

If you think the grant may be a fit, it is always in your best interest to review the full request for proposals (RFP). Although RFPs may seem tedious, they often include important application requirements, dates for deadline submission or tips on how to have your application score competitively. RFPs will also give you important clues about how to frame your narrative so it best matches the grant opportunity.

While grantors don't usually change their guidelines drastically from year to year, it is important to review the most current RFP for any grant you plan to apply. Using an online grant database that is reliable, current and constantly updated will help ensure you're accessing updated grant deadlines, information and links as soon as the most current versions become available.

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# 3 PREPARE NECESSARY DOCUMENTATION

The number one reason grant applications are denied is failure to follow the guidelines. Once you've identified a grant to apply for, take the time to read the funding guidelines published by the organization. Applying for a grant without providing the information requested is a waste of time for all parties involved.

Some grantors sponsor workshops or provide written guides, which can be helpful in keeping your grant application process on track. When looking at a guidance document, watch for items that are "must do's," "should do's" and "could do's."

Collect all the documents and data outlined in the RFP. Most often, this will include call data, operating budgets and inventory lists. Notify stakeholders, such as local businesses that fall into your response area, and request their assistance. Getting a letter of support or pledge for monetary assistance can strengthen an application by proving your project will benefit the whole community.

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# **4** CREATE AND REVIEW

You've been gathering all the information you need, and now it's time to put it together. Throughout this process it is important to remain mindful of the grant application submission deadline. A lot of hard work goes into grant applications so a missed deadline can be devastating.

Assemble your application following all of the rules and requirements you researched in the last step. Some applications have strict formatting requirements, such as what font size you can use and how each heading must appear.

The narrative is one of the most important parts of your grant application. It's your opportunity to tell the grant makers your story. Use your data to paint a picture of how you and your community are being impacted by the outdated gear or equipment. Has anyone been injured because they didn't have the training, equipment or additional support personnel on site? Were there any recent incidents where lives or property could have been saved if your organization had the requested equipment?

Before you turn in your application, have a few individuals review it. It's surprising how easily we can skip over the simplest grammar and spelling mistakes. A fresh pair of eyes can help eliminate those errors. If your budget allows, hiring an experienced grant writer to review your application can ensure you are submitting a high-quality grant application.

Once you've had your application reviewed and made any changes, it's time for the moment of truth: submitting your application.

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## 5 APPLY AND MONITOR

As when putting together your application, it's important to follow submission guidelines closely. If possible, don't wait until the last minute—too often, electronic submission sites will have surprises not outlined in the written guidelines. When the clock is ticking, you don't want to be dealing with a password reset issue or facing the need to drastically cut your submission in order to meet a word count you didn't know about.

Save copies of what you submit, even taking screen shots if needed. These are helpful for future applications and can help you track your application if anything goes wrong.

Make a note in your calendar of when to expect to hear about the status of your application and follow up if needed. The time from application submission to award notice will vary depending on the grant. Some grants can take up to 12 months, while others can be as short as one to two weeks. On average, a grantor will make their funding decisions in about three to six months.

If you are turned down, request feedback from the grantor. Guidance on why your application was turned down and what you can do to strengthen your application for future submissions is valuable. In some instances, it can be beneficial to show the grantor how important this grant will be to your community, which you can show by following up and resubmitting.

In other situations, the grantor may request that you apply again the next year with additional data they are interested in. Regardless of the outcome, it's always a good idea to open up the lines of communication with a possible grantor.

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# 6 MANAGE YOUR AWARD

Once you've received your award, it's time to put it to use. Be sure you follow all instructions given to you by the grantor on post-award management. These instructions are sent after the grant has been awarded.

It will be imperative to abide by any measures of success you outlined in your application narrative. If in your grant application you stated that new equipment will decrease response times by 5% each month, be prepared to show that.

Additionally, now that you've been awarded funds, you will be accountable for spending and should be prepared to handle an audit. To do so, keep all grant-related materials in an accessible folder—timelines, activities, cost, performance, etc. Overall, you will be expected to confirm you are in compliance with post-award management instructions.

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# 7 CLOSEOUT
## (AND BEGIN AGAIN?)

This is the time to tie up all the loose ends related to your award and get prepared for the next year's grant application. If you don't complete the closeout process for the grant which you were awarded, you will likely not be able to apply for funding during the following cycle.

Preparation for the closeout process should begin about three months prior to the end date of the grant. The grantor will outline the necessary steps, which usually entail reconciling financial expenditures and submitting final reports and required forms within 90 days of the grant expiration. If the grant was used to purchase property or equipment, there may be additional steps required.

Many of the materials you prepared at the beginning of this process can be repurposed for the next year, so keep excellent records. Doing so will make the grant process easier next year and provide a valuable resource. Most grant programs also require recipients to preserve records for several years.

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# CONCLUSION

Getting approved for a grant can be done. While the process can appear daunting, with the right planning in place, the result is worth the effort. Follow these 7 steps,  and you can strengthen the likelihood of your grant application being accepted.

### GRANT**FINDER**

Schedule a demo today to learn how we can solve your grant challenges.

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## ABOUT GRANTFINDER

Tracking more than 16,000 grants and over $600 billion in funding, Lexipol's grant search tool, GrantFinder, provides access to an onine, searchable database of every federal, state, foundation and corporate grant available to public safety agencies, local governments and their community partners. To learn more about how we can help you effectively identify and pursue grant funding, **schedule a demo today**.

## ABOUT LEXIPOL

Lexipol is the nation's leading content, policy and training platform for public safety and local government, with a suite of online services dedicated to reducing risk and improving personnel safety. Our solutions encompass policies, training, funding assistance, and news and analysis, including the online digital communities Police1, FireRescue1, EMS1, Corrections1 and Gov1. Lexipol serves more than 2 million public safety professionals in 8,100 agencies and municipalities across the United States. For additional information, visit **www.lexipol.com**.

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