

# Grant Writing Advice from a Veteran

*Dr. Wendy Tackett has been writing grants since 1991. During her 5 years as the grant writer for a school district, she brought in over \$20 million and had an 85% success rate with competitive grants. Since starting an evaluation firm, iEval, in 2002, she and her team review and assist in the writing of grants for current clients, helping to ensure the project components and evaluation align closely with the grant rubric to improve their clients' chances of funding.*

DO NOT	DO
<b>GENERAL</b>	
Use "I" or "We" in your grant application – do not make it personal	Speak from the organizational perspective
Use acronyms willy-nilly...don't go overboard using too many acronyms throughout the grant	Define an acronym the first time you use it Example: <i>The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) requires...</i>
Drop names just because you think the funder will be impressed	Include only names of true partners or collaborators in your project and references if applicable
Overcomplicate your explanations with technical terminology or fancy words	Keep it simple – you want the funder to really understand what you're describing
<b>FORMATTING</b>	
Try to make your grant <b>SPARKLE</b> with fancy fonts and creative formatting	Carefully follow the formatting guidelines laid out by the funder. If there are no such guidelines, then stick by the generally accepted practice of one or two fonts (sans serif like Arial or Arial Narrow for headers and serif like Times New Roman or Garamond for body), 12 point fonts for the body, 1" margins, and double spacing. Focus on making your document easily read – remember, funders will be reading lots of grants, so you want to make yours pleasing to the eye and not give anyone a headache trying to decipher it!
Use lots of graphics, charts, and tables	Only use graphics, charts, and tables when they genuinely help tell your story and enhance what you are writing. Make sure your charts and tables are consistently formatted and easily understood.
<b>CONTENT</b>	
Only share the big vision	Clearly articulate the details for implementation, which shows you have taken the time to thoughtfully plan out the project
Make up details for implementation if you're unsure	Share what you've determined but admit that you're also going to learn and adapt along the way to best meet the needs of your clients



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Tell your story creatively in your own manner – because you know how to best tell your story	Clearly follow the funder’s rubric, even if it’s redundant. Yes, you do know your story best, but you need to frame it within the funder’s format so the funder can clearly relate what you want to do to what they want to fund. If you’re unclear about their rubric, ask the funder for more explanation.
Develop a project specifically to meet the funder’s requirements	Make your work fit within the funder’s framework. You do not want to change the substance or intention of your work, but you may be able to creatively explain it so it clearly relates to the funder’s guidelines.
<b>PROJECT JUSTIFICATION</b>	
Only use national data to explain the need for your program	Use a combination of local data (e.g., needs assessments, interviews, focus groups, statistics, aspirations), state/national data, and research on best practices to explain why you want to do what you are proposing. Adequately document your sources, including year.
Approach the grant from a theoretical perspective	Integrate some theory into your grant if appropriate, but focus mainly on the action-oriented tasks and results you will accomplish...speak from a proactive, not passive, perspective. Unless your project is truly innovative, the funders probably are already familiar with the theory and justification of why you’re proposing a specific idea.
Tell the funder that you know how to solve the problem they want to fund a solution for	Explain clearly your understanding of the problem, the root causes of the problem in your community/context, the proposed solution, how that solution will impact the root causes, and what the potential outcomes of your project will be.
<b>IF FUNDED OR NOT FUNDED</b>	
Create a project that has no flexibility in the implementation	Understand that your project may be partially funded or funded by multiple funders. You need to have flexibility built into your design so you could implement part of the project, if not fully funded, and still have some positive impact towards your ultimate outcomes.
Expect to follow your grant application exactly after funded	Talk and work with your funders after funded to help them understand the dynamic nature of your project. If the context or systems change, explain that to them and explain what adaptations need to be made to your original plan. Most funders will understand that and will want to work with you to help you be successful.
Start from scratch each time you write a grant	Request reviewer feedback if you do not get funded as it can help you improve future grant submissions as well as your project design