

How to Write a Grant Letter of Intent to a Foundation

v.1

Prepared • January 21, 2014

I was recently asked my thoughts on how someone considering a grant should approach writing a letter of intent to a potential funder. Below are my thoughts. Please add your own thoughts in the comments.

Do your homework – it's not about what you want to do, it's about what the funder wants to support.

- Research their website. Look at what they currently support. Look at who is on their board and see if you can make any connections.
- Give the program officer or foundation representative a call or email. Many are happy to answer initial questions about how your project might fit their goals.
- Dig deeper into past grants by finding news releases, past newsletters, any quotes from program officers or board members, etc.
- Know the exact grant opportunity specifications – does the funder state the average amount and length of grants? You don't want to ask for too much or too little.
- Dig even deeper – foundation 990 tax returns contain an unfiltered view of who has been funded and for how much. Even though a certain dollar amount might be publicly suggested the 990 will show you if any exceptions are ever made.

Write a compelling letter

- Compelling means heart-felt, detailed, and specific.
 - Heart-felt – show your passion by succinctly describing the issue(s) the people/population you or your organization face and how you will address these issues
 - Detailed – demonstrate your in-depth knowledge of the issue by highlighting important facts and figures

How to Write a Letter of Intent for Grants

- Specific – but balance these facts and figures with specific stories or examples of the problem and how you will address the problem
- Highlight how your project fits the funder’s area(s) of interest.
- Concretely define what success looks like for your project.
- Make a definite ask.
 - Define what it is you will do, how you will do, when you will do it, your audience, and what the funder could provide to make your project a success for the people you serve.

Follow-up and prepare for next steps

- The letter is just a first step. You made be given a flat no, but you made be asked for more information, or given a qualitative yes.
- Be prepared to respond thoroughly and in a timely manner.

Say Thank You

- Regardless of the response you receive, say thank you. Hand-written notes work well and keep doors open.
- Of course, say thank you if you are asked to submit a full proposal and be prepared to deliver a great one!

If you would like any help with your letter of intent, please email me at michael.e.roman@gmail.com or fill out the form below; I am happy to take a look through your letter of intent.

