



# Grantwriting Basics

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*“A good grantwriter does the research, follows the rules, and keeps it simple.”*

## The Grant Myth

For many, grantwriting is an enigma. It is part of the nonprofit world that seems untouchable. The process can seem much too large and complicated a job to tackle.

It's time to dispell the myth.

Anyone that can follow directions and has a good grasp of simple, concise language can be a successful grantwriter.

## So What is a Grant Anyway? And Where Can We Get One?

Grants, at their core, are a contract for services. With funds provided by the grantor, the grantee provides a service, which could be coordinating a special project, purchasing/building a capital item, providing a community service, etc.

Grants can be broken down into two general catagories:

**Government:** The federal government in the United States is the largest grantor in the world. Government grants fund a wide variety of research and project related programs. Nearly all government grant information is published through a Request for Proposal (RFP). An RFP is an invitation from the funder to submit an application on a specific topic with a specific purpose. To find out more about RFP's and the system of applying for government grants, visit *The Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance* at [www.gsa.gov/cfda](http://www.gsa.gov/cfda).

**Foundation:** This broad catagory includes community, private, family and corporate foundations. These organizations set their own rules for the distribution of funds and require a considerable amount of research on which grant best fits the project. The best place to find information about foundation grants is through *The Foundation Center*, [www.fndcenter.org](http://www.fndcenter.org).

## How to Write a Good Grant

Successful grants require three important processes:

1. **Research, Research, Research:** The first step in assuring you have a grant that will be approved is to make sure you are applying for the right grant. Does the grant fit your organization's mission and vision? Will you be able to continue the project/position once the grant funds expire--in other words, is your project sustainable? Avoid creating projects or positions just to get funds; have a clear plan of what you need and seek out grants that fit your project. Before you apply

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for any grant, have a plan for project continuation and verify that the grant is not putting a quick fix on problem that really needs a systemic solution.

**2. Follow the Rules:** It may seem a bit simplistic, but if you can't follow the rules for the format and presentation that a grantor demands, your application will carry no weight. You may have a fabulous proposal but if the grant was to be written in 10 pt. font and you used 12 pt., your grant will never be read. Read the directions carefully, and then read them again. Have someone else read the directions and check that you have complied.

**3. Keep it Simple:** When preparing your grant, make sure you answer all the the questions asked, but no more. Flowery, esoteric language is not necessary and may eliminate your application. Keep your writing simple, active and concise. Additionally, fancy presentation materials are often a waste of money. A simple, stapled document in black and white will be just fine in most cases.

## Alaska Resources for Grantwriters

Are you new to writing grants and don't know where to start? Need help navigating the many available grant directories? Did you write a grant without success and are looking for tools to help improve your chances?

**Grantstation.com:** This nationwide resource is based out of Fairbanks, AK and provides an interactive website directory of funding sources and mentors members through the process.  
[www.grantstation.com](http://www.grantstation.com)

**The Foraker Group:** This is an Alaska-specific organization that assists nonprofits in many aspects, including fund raising. Members receive reduced rates on educational opportunities, shared services and organizational development.  
[www.forakergroup.org](http://www.forakergroup.org)

## Need More Help?

One of the benefits of your membership in the Alaska Food Coalition is the opportunity to have another set of eyes review your grant applications. Are you unsure if you've followed all the directions? Do you need someone to review for clarity and purpose? Want to make sure your 'i's' are dotted and your 't's' crossed? We're here to help you!

To access this resource, contact Kerri Burrows, Alaska Food Coalition Manager, at [afc@foodbankofalaska.org](mailto:afc@foodbankofalaska.org) or 907.222.3103.

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