StrengthenND®

Grant Writing Manual

Revised for the City of Minot

Economic Development

June 2019

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Writing the Agency's Qualifications Section

Show the Agency's History

- How or why was the agency formed, and what did it begin to do after it was founded?
- What milestones/progress has it made over the years?
- How have your programs grown over the years?
    - *The City of Minot's Economic Development Department was created in 2019, with a goal of supporting the business community, increasing private investment, and elevating entrepreneurs in the Minot area. Since its establishment, the Economic Development Department increased private investment in the community by 10%, while also developing partnerships with Norway for professional development and continuing education opportunities for area entrepreneurs.*

Show the Agency's Qualifications

- What impact, in measurable terms, have you made in your local community?
- Have you received any awards or recognition?
- Have you managed major grants before? Do you have the skills to do so?
- Do you have a strategic plan? How do you plan for bad economic times?
    - *The City of Minot's Economic Development Department is furthering the work laid out by a master planning process led by the International Economic Development Council. The strategy outlined in the plan is in alignment with area anchor economic development institutions and their efforts, including the Minot Area Development Corporation, Minot Area Chamber of Commerce, and Visit Minot.*
    - *The City of Minot is adept at managing major grants - whether they be awarded by private foundations, state government, or federal government. The City of Minot has successfully managed grants from the Bush Foundation, State of North Dakota, U.S. Department of Transportation, Economic Development Administration, and the Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD), with the largest grant on record being awarded by HUD and managed by the City of Minot for $74.9 million beginning in 2016.*

Identify Your Supporters

- How many volunteers do you have? How many hours do they contribute annually? If you didn't have these volunteers, what expenses would you have?
- What in-kind (non-cash contributions of goods and services) does your organization receive? What is their value?
    - *The City of Minot's Economic Development Department leverages time and talent from area economic development professionals through their service on the City's*

Stakeholder Committee. It is anticipated that the time and expertise provided by their service amounts to approximately $10,000 annually.

Your Turn: Agency Qualifications

Describe your agency's history. Explain how or why the agency was formed? What milestones/progress has it made over the years, and how have you grown?

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2.

3.

What impact, in measurable terms, have you made on your local community? Have you received any awards or recognition?

1.

2.

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What support do you receive from the community?

Volunteers: How many volunteers do you have? How many hours do they contribute annually? If you didn't have these volunteers, what expenses would you have?

In-kind: What non-cash contributions of goods and services does your organization receive? What is the value of those contributions?

1.

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3.

Developing the Needs Assessment

Identify the need or issues related to the problem to be addressed.

Crime rates, poverty, health status, academic performance, unemployment, and other issues are indicators for a need. If the program addresses the issue of elderly poverty, you might look for data on:

- *Cost of living for residents in Minot compared to Social Security allocations;*
- *Availability of low- or no-cost food programs (Meals on Wheels and community meals);*
- *Availability of low- or subsidized housing; and*
- *Number of elderly individuals working (or have the potential to work) in the community.*

If you are targeting a specific population, look for research/evidence to show that they (ethnicity/racial groups, low-income, migrant populations, etc.) have higher needs than the general population.

Stay focused and be strategic.

Avoid using data that isn't related to your issue or something that you will be addressing. The needs statement should identify needs that you will be addressing directly by the activity being proposed.

- For elderly poverty, don't cite crime statistics, domestic violence statistics, etc.
- If you're not serving low-income populations, don't use poverty data.

Stay local.

You can use some national data, but the more local the data, the stronger the case that the program needs to happen in your community.

Stay positive and show the opportunities.

Funders get overwhelmed by needs statements that paint a long description about the desperation and despair. Sometimes the need is based on an opportunity the community will lose if you don't act now.

- *The City of Minot is seeking to integrate public child care and child care workforce training into senior citizens, which will narrow the gaps in Minot's child care shortage by providing increased staffing capacity while also enhancing the quality of life and economic opportunity for participating seniors.*

If necessary, connect the dots.

If the importance of changing a behavior or addressing a specific issue is not obvious, cite evidence or research to show why it is important.

Your Turn: Needs Assessment

Identify a program for which you would like to seek funds. Discuss how you will substantiate your proposed program (you can collaborate and work in teams).

What kinds of information could you collect to document that your program is needed? What community indicators might show that there's a need? What local data (county, state) is available to substantiate the need?

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Where might you find this information?

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2.

3.

Developing the Activities/Methods

- Include a **SMART goal** of what you expect to accomplish
    - *The City of Minot will increase the amount of private investment in the community by 20% by 2022.*

- Include an **objective** on how you will address the goal:
    - *The City of Minot will conduct eight (8) Familiarization (FAM) Tours in 2020 and 2021, which will result in over 160 private investors becoming acquainted with Minot's pockets of economic opportunity.*

- Describe what you are proposing to do, the steps you will take to carry out the program and how you will address the objective.

    - What **activities will be provided** each week? What activities will be provided periodically? What curriculum or methods will you use?
    - What facilities will be available?
        - *The City of Minot's Economic Development Specialist will attend quarterly trade shows to build a private investor network.*
        - *The Economic Development Specialist will work with municipal and economic development partners to create a comprehensive FAM Tour agenda.*
        - *The Economic Development Specialist will create recruitment materials to entice private investors to participate in a FAM Tour.*
        - *The Minot Municipal Auditorium will be utilized as a central gathering place for the participants of the FAM Tour to network, engage in 1-1 conversations with city staff, and develop follow-up travel plans to Minot.*

    - What **staff** will be hired, and what roles will they carry out? How are they qualified?

- *The Economic Development Specialist will work in tandem with the Community Development Coordinator and City Manager to recruit participants, schedule travel logistics, and conduct the FAM Tours.*

- Which **organizations will you work with**?
  - *The City of Minot will contract with the Minot Area Development Corporation to support and participate in FAM Tour recruitment activities.*
  - *The City of Minot will contract with Visit Minot to coordinate and execute engaging community events for FAM Tour participants.*

- What is your **timeline** for activities?

Timeline			
Quarter 1	*Quarter 2*	*Quarter 3*	*Quarter 4*
*Attend investor trade show *Create a comprehensive FAM Tour agenda	*Attend investor trade show *Create FAM Tour marketing and recruitment materials *Disseminate recruitment materials	*Attend investor trade show *Conduct 1 FAM Tour *Debrief the success/failure of the FAM Tour	*Attend investor trade shows *Revise FAM Tour agenda *Conduct 1 FAM Tour

- Also, discuss how the program will be managed, who will be responsible for reporting on the grant, and who will be in charge of managing funds.

Your Turn: Activities/Methods

Develop a program strategy for your project.

Goal (SMART!):

Objective (specific statement of you will accomplish your goal):

What activities will you provide to meet your objective? What steps will you take to implement the program? What curriculum will you use?

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Which organizations will you work with? What services or resources will they provide? The best partnerships are those where you share resources such as staff time, materials, and facilities. You can identify referral relationships, but as much as possible, keep the focus on shared resources.

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Logistics/Management: What facilities will be available? How will the program be managed? Who will be in charge? What is your timeline for activities?

1.

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What staff will be hired, and what roles will they carry out? How are they qualified?

1.

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4.

Competitiveness: Pretend that ten other groups are applying to do the exact same thing that you are proposing to do. Why is your proposal unique? What makes it interesting and effective? (Be sure to show rather than tell)

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Developing the Evaluation

Describe what your program ultimately will achieve.

If the program is addressing elderly poverty, here are some measures we might include:

- 80% of seniors in the program are at-risk for malnutrition because of their poverty status; they will improve their nutritional state through their participation in senior meal programs.
- 80% of seniors in the program will increase their financial literacy as a result of participating in the program.
- The community will increase the availability of low-income or subsidized housing by 20% to meet the needs of seniors in the community.

Describe how you will monitor success. What tools will you use to track success? What data will you collect?

- Quantitative: Numbers participating in financial literacy programs and numbers of hours/days financial literacy programs programs are provided.
- Quantitative: Numbers participating in senior meal programs.
- Outcome: Numbers/percent improving their nutrition levels as measured by semi-annual wellness checks.

- Outcome: Pre- and post-test survey to measure 1) increased consumption of healthy foods through senior meal programs and 2) increased financial literacy and participation in financial planning activities.
- Outcomes: Document the barriers to financial literacy and understanding for senior populations.

You will often be asked how often you will collect data, and how you will use data to improve.

If things are going as well as they should be, will you know that? Do you have a process to monitor quality?

- Interim data will be collected monthly on senior meal program participation, financial literacy participation, and progress toward understanding barriers to senior financial literacy.

Can you prove that your program is of high quality?

- Qualitative: How effective and well-managed is the financial literacy program? Are the seniors attending satisfied?

Some funders want to know who will conduct the evaluation.

Funders are often looking to see if the evaluator is qualified. Or they want to make sure the person carrying out the evaluation has enough time to do it.

Your Turn: Evaluation

Discuss how you could prove that your program is making an impact. What outcomes could you use to measure the impact?

What do you want to achieve?

Think of outcomes such as reduction in high-risk behaviors, increased skills, or improved performance.

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How will you monitor success? What tools would you use to measure participation, outcomes, and quality of services?

1.

2.

3.

Developing the Budget

- The budget is just as important as the rest of the proposal. Use the budget to show that the project can be accomplished at a reasonable cost.
- Make sure the budget is consistent with proposed activities. If you have a staff title in the budget, make sure the role of that staff member is explained.
- Show as much detail as you can to prove that you really thought through costs and came up with accurate estimates. Itemize your projected expenses. Use sub-sections (i.e. personnel, supplies, etc.), and then list out expenses under each category.
- Foundations want to see matching sources and only want to fund a portion of overall costs. Federal and some state grants are more likely to fund a majority of or all costs for the project.
- You can include in-kind donations in your budget, but include them as both revenue and expenses. For example, a donated computer would count under income (value of

donation of the computer) and expenses (what it would have cost you to purchase the computer).

- Foundation/corporate budgets and many government grants ask for a budget in an income/expense format.

Example

Income	
Grants	$140,000
City Allocation for Senior Services	$77,080
Total Income	**$217,080**

Expense	

Salary *Economic Development Specialist (100% FTE) *Administrative/Program Assistant (50% FTE)	 $125,000 $25,000
Fringe @ 25% FTE	$37,500
Emergency Food Vouchers @ $125/month	$1,500
Contractual for Financial Literacy Training @$20/hour*1,250 hours	 $25,000
Materials @ $100/month (photocopies, pens, etc.)	$1,200
Travel for Mileage @ 58 cents/mile*3,240 miles	$1,880
Total Expense	**$217,080**

Your Turn: Budget

What income sources will support your project?

What expenses do you anticipate? Be specific on how you will calculate your costs.

Effective Grant Writing Tips

Do Your Homework:

1. Identify funding sources (use the Internet, referrals from other nonprofit personnel)
    a. Government (State and Federal)

   b. Foundations
   c. Corporations
2. Absorb your funding source's reports and materials
3. Be familiar with funder's submission/approval process
4. Understand the proposal guidelines as provided by funding source

Call or email funder for clarification as needed. Some are more open than others, but all will help you decide whether they are the right people to ask. Be prepared with at least the basics of what you want to get funded, expressed nicely, before you call or email. Then they can react to your idea, and you will learn the most about their priorities.

Letters of Support FIRST!

- It can take a long time to get a letter of support. Start right away!
- Figure out whose support you will need and ask them for a letter.
- Write the letters yourself, unless you think it would offend someone, especially if they are busy. Make it so pretty that they can cut and paste it out of your email or copy it onto their letterhead, and you should be able to get an immediate signature.
- Be prepared to hand-carry or hand-collect all letters of support. Leave enough time to do it!

Tie in Winning Strategies from Funded Proposals - Effective "Stealing":

1. Avoid "reinventing the wheel". There is no such thing as plagiarism in grants! Get everyone to help!
2. Cut and paste all of the headings and instructions from the RFP and then cut and paste your statistics, background material, or ideas into the categories. It makes you feel better to have something under each heading and helps you overcome "overwhelm".
3. Copy funder's jargon and language at the top of your grant and somehow use it in your narrative. Reiterate funder's goals and objectives and relate them to your own.
4. Plug in national, state, regional, and institutional goals and relate them to your proposal's goals.

Proposal Vocabulary and Thesaurus

Do - implement, achieve, initiate, accomplish

Get - obtain, procure, establish

Make - design, create, develop

NEVER use the words “could” or “should”. Always use “will” and “can” because you are SURE that you will get the money and CONFIDENT that you can do what you say you will.

DON’T use jargon, unless you know that everyone reading your grant is in your field (for instance, a Department of Education grant). Use plain language, sixth grade rule. Even a word like “articulate” used to talk about making 2+2’s will not be understood by Mrs. Smith Moneybags, in that context, unless you explain it.

DON’T use too many acronyms. Think of a better way to do it, and reiterate the full name of something with the acronym after it in parentheses if you haven’t used it in several pages, or if you’ve only used it once before.

Organizational Tools

Always put the the RFP (Request for Proposals/guidelines) in a three ring binder so that you can leave it open to guide you. Mark sections you refer to often with Post-It Redi-tags.

Paste a copy of the table of contents (outline or format if there is no table of contents) on the front of the three-ring binder and keep it near the computer, upright, or scotch tape it to the wall.

If you can, cut and paste the RFP into your proposal as your outline to write the proposal, color it green or red, and then kill each instruction as you complete it. That way you always see how much you have left to do and what questions are left unanswered.

Format for a Grant if they Give you no Format

All of the following elements will be in almost every proposal, whether governmental or private:

Organizational Background: Should include brief history and experience in the type of project for which you are asking for money.

Need: Community description, poverty, and education and employment levels, and any other information that describes or relates to your target population and the objectives of your proposal. Make sure the NEED relates to what you are going to do.

Description of Project: Start with your Goals and Objectives.

Goals should be SMART: “Fitness Educators will reduce the incidence of childhood obesity in Ward County by 20% by 2020,” and be followed by several objectives which are directly related to achieving the goal. It’s ok to have only one goal.

Objectives - make sure objectives are clear, timed, and measurable. There are two kinds:

1. Process objectives: “By September 30, 2016, Minot Public Schools counselors will provide 800 male students at risk for dropout with group counseling and anger management” and

2. Outcome Objectives: "By September 30, 2016, there will be a 5% reduction in the rate of deaths due to breast cancer in western North Dakota."

Next, describe HOW you will achieve those objectives. You can call the subsection "Methods", "Implementation", or "Approach". If they do not ask for a section on Key Personnel or Project Management, describe that here, too - Who, Where, When, What, and How Much (service, clients, not money) for EVERYTHING.

Don't forget an Organizational Chart - a picture or graph is worth a thousand words.

Key Personnel or Project Management: (if not included above)

Don't forget to talk about training, chains of command, and who does the reporting, mention how often staff meets, etc. Organizational Chart here if not above.

Work Plan:

Doesn't have to be a part of every grant, but is often requested. You can change the format to suit what you are going to do but try to answer the following questions:

(Why)	(What)	(Who)	(When)
Objective	Activities	Persons Responsible	Timeline

Evaluation:

Quantitative Evaluation (you don't have to label it):

- You want to relate all your evaluation to your objectives.
- Talk about how data will be collected and by whom for both process (="formative") and outcome (="summative") objectives.
- Tell who will put data together and analyze it, and
- VERY IMPORTANT -> How you will use it ("to adjust program based on evaluation results in a process of continuous quality improvement") in addition to including it in reports
- Talk about how evaluation results will be shared with project personnel and administrators on a regular basis, and discussed, and changes made.

Qualitative Evaluation (DO label this)

- "Qualitative" evaluation, using student/client/participant/staff satisfaction surveys. Say that you will change your program according to survey results.

Qualitative - SUBJECTIVE, no numbers, "good", "bad", although you can say how many (what percentage of) people you expect to say "good" or "bad".

Timeline: I always put a timeline in, even when it is not requested, if space is not a problem. It is a good visual.

"Partners" or "Community (client) Involvement" sections are often asked for now. It is always helpful to describe how well you are connected to your community and clientele. You can put your staff's committee memberships here. This is show-off place, like the Key Personnel. You can make a little sound like a lot: "Key staff for this project have maintained memberships with the following organizations." Any requests for assistance or training from another organization is a "partnership".

Budget:

Budgets can contain the narrative in the main document, but usually there are two separate pieces: 1) a budget form to fill out with the totals for each category and 2) a separate budget narrative.

- Be sure not to ask for amounts that seem unreasonable (get real prices).
- Be sure to cover all the costs you will need.
- DO NOT exceed the maximum amount allowable by the funding source, if they have a limit.
- Put on your thinking cap and put a price on everything YOU are bringing to the grant and put it in In-Kind or under Agency Share.
- Do the same for other funding - put a price on what others will do toward the goals of the grant.

Abstract, AKA Executive Summary, sometimes AKA Cover Sheet:

Always write this section LAST even though it goes FIRST. You would not believe how much a plan can change by the time you are through writing the grant.
This section should be a one-page miniature version of your proposal and tell the person who is sorting the grants for review everything they need to know:

- WHO
- WHAT
- WHY
- WHERE
- WHEN
- HOW MUCH

The Order in which you should Develop and Write a Grant:

1. Decide who your partners will be and start talking to them about letters of support and/or rules

2. Organizational Background
3. Need
4. Goal(s) and Objectives and Budget
5. Implementation Plan (Project Description) - Revise Budget and Objectives
6. Work Plan
7. Letters of Support
8. Timeline
9. Key Personnel
10. Organizational Chart
11. Management Plan
12. Evaluation
13. Abstract/Executive Summary
14. Appendices (if solicited and/or allowed):
    a. List of Board of Directors/Advisory Board
    b. Letters of Support/Commitment/Partnership
    c. Resumes of Key Staff
    d. Leaflets that Describe Your Program
    e. Audits

Organization of a Proposal

I. Abstract (Executive Summary)
II. Organizational Background
III. Need
IV. Goals and Objectives
V. Methodology/Project Description (work plan)
VI. Key Personnel/Management Plan
    A. Organizational Chart
VII. Evaluation
VIII. Budget
    A. Budget Narrative
IX. Appendices
    A. Roster of Board of Directors or Advisory Boards
    B. Letters of Support
    C. Resumes (if requested)
    D. Financial Audit and/or Agency Budget