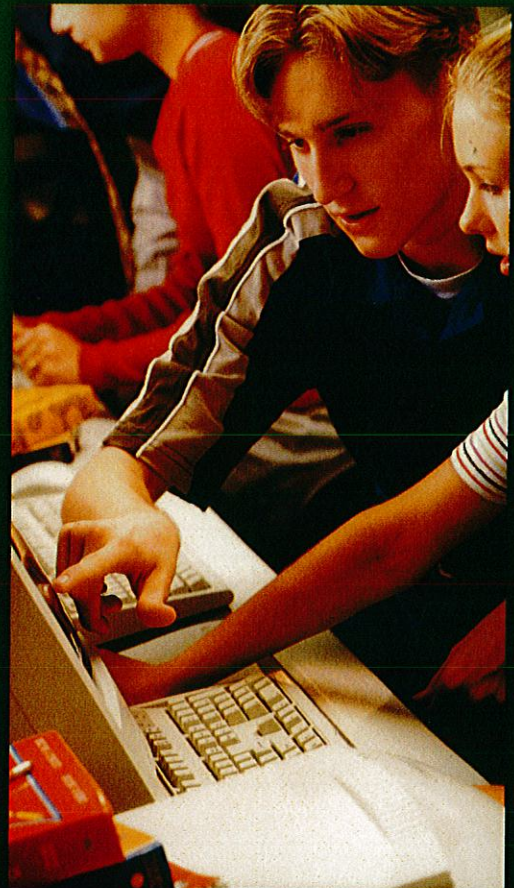
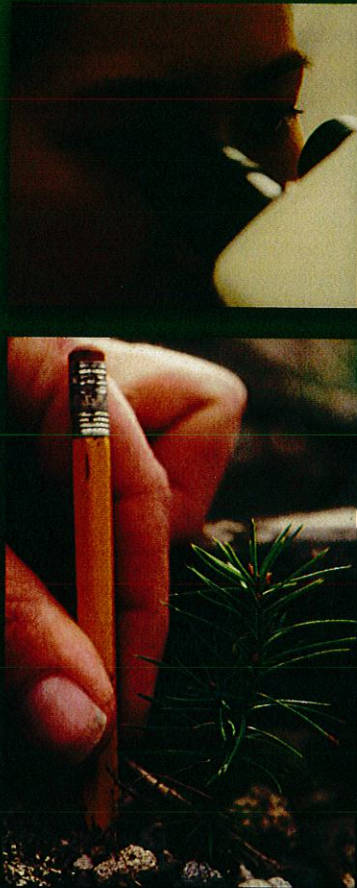
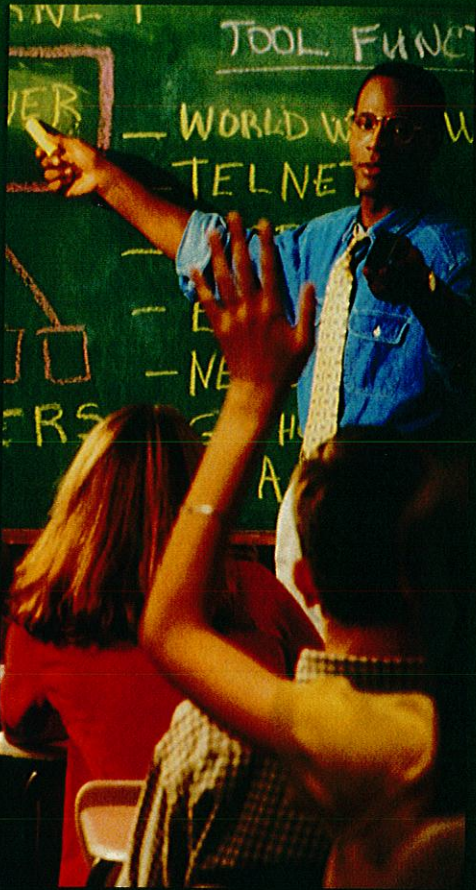




HOLT SCIENCE

Professional Reference for Teachers



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APPLYING FOR EDUCATION GRANTS

by Ernest W. Brewer



Ernest W. Brewer has many years' experience writing, implementing, administering, and evaluating grants. Over the past 20 years, Brewer has taught numerous grant writing courses, workshops, and community education classes. Today Brewer is a professor in the Educational Administration and Supervision Department at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. He is also the principal investigator and project director of Pre-College Enrichment Programs at the University. Brewer has written many articles on grant writing and is best known as the primary author of *Finding Funding: Grant Writing from Start to Finish, Including Project Management and Internet Use*.

Did you hear about the science teacher who was awarded a \$20,000 grant to build a rain-forest environment in his classroom? What about the science teacher who received \$2,500 to attend a 2-week summer science camp, and even got graduate credit for the experience? Sound exciting? Do you have a good idea for enhancing your teaching or your students' learning but lack the necessary funds for putting the idea into action?

Today, many educators find that in order to provide certain kinds of innovative or hands-on learning experiences for their students, they need to look for funds beyond what the school budget allows. Often, an education grant can be the answer. Writing a grant proposal is not necessarily difficult. But it does require a basic understanding of the process and procedures that are involved. The most important thing to remember is that if you never apply for a grant, you will never get any of the funds available for your program! This article outlines a simple six-step plan that will help you get organized and apply for educational funding.

Six Steps to Funding

1. Identify your need
2. Get pre-approval
3. Identify sources of funding
4. Contact sources
5. Write the proposal
6. Submit a letter of intent



◆ Science summer camp, Austin, TX; funded by NSTA grant and the Weinert Foundation



◆ Girls exploring math and science, Austin, TX; funded by NSTA and Girl Scouts Lone Star Council

1

Identify Your Need

Although you probably have a long wish list of projects and items, it's important to define your needs simply and specifically. Perhaps you need \$100 to provide rewards for participants in the school science fair or several thousand dollars to install a computer workstation in your classroom. Or you might be a member of the district's professional-development committee and need money to send teachers to an important conference.

Whatever your needs, limit it to one specific event, item, or activity. For instance, it is better to ask for one set of World Book™ encyclopedias than to ask for 100 new books about science. The first request is simple and specific; the second request is too large for many organizations, and too general. What kinds of books about science? and for whom? Grant donors want to know specifics, and they have a right to know what their money is going to be used for. When formulating an idea for a proposal, try to put yourself in the shoes of the people with the money. What would you want to know about the proposed program before you wrote the check? In addition, make sure you can justify your need. You should be able to articulate what you're doing, why you're doing it, and how much money you need. It also means being able to state what the anticipated outcome or benefits will be if your need for funding is met.

2

Get Pre-approval

Before you start working on your grant proposal, be sure to get approval from your immediate supervisor. This may be your principal, superintendent, or other authorized person. First of all, your supervisor may be aware of certain district procedures or requirements that must be met before applying for a grant. Second, administrators in some school districts or schools may have a larger fundraising strategy of which you are unaware. Organizations and businesses are constantly being asked for contributions and donations. Suppose your assistant superintendent just spent 3 days courting a local soft-drink distributor for a major contribution in excess of \$100,000, and a meeting to formalize the donation has been set for one week from today. Not knowing this, you and several co-workers start making telephone calls and writing letters to the same company requesting a donation for a smaller project. This unfortunate coincidence would be confusing to the grantor and would reflect badly on you as a potential grantee. An uncoordinated fundraising effort sends a negative message to businesses and organizations and may dissuade them from funding your proposal. Getting approval before beginning to search for funding sources may head off embarrassing or potentially damaging funding conflicts.

Getting approval before beginning to search for funding sources may head off embarrassing or potentially damaging funding conflicts.

3

Identify Sources of Funding

Once you get administrative approval, the next step is to identify sources of funding. There are thousands of grants available to educators. Grants can range from \$100 donated by local grocery chains to National Science Foundation awards in excess of \$1 million.

Local and Regional Resources

Many community organizations, such as Kiwanis Clubs, Rotary Clubs, and Lions International groups, make small grants (usually under \$1,000) available to teachers for innovative education projects. Call the organization, and ask for information about grant applications. A number of retailers, such as Wal-Mart® and J. C. Penney®, allocate funds for community and educational



General Tips for Grant Seekers

- Read professional journals and professional trade magazines. Ads frequently appear in these publications announcing grant competitions.
- Make as many contacts as you can: network, network, network!
- Gather as much background information as you can about the grantor before you begin to write.
- Write to the grantor and request a copy of its most recent annual report and grant guidelines.
- Read and study the information you receive. Target those organizations whose grant outlines most closely match your specific needs.
- Call the organization if you have questions. Ask to speak with the individual who is in charge of grants. Make every effort to get to know this person on a first-name basis.
- Keep a filing system of information about grantors that match your interests and needs. You may not have time to submit a proposal to all of the organizations, but you may find them useful at a later time.
- Set realistic goals for yourself.

projects as well. These funds are not usually advertised; look for fliers posted near the customer service desk, or call the public relations or customer service department and ask for information.

State and Federal Resources

Some federally funded agencies, such as the National Science Foundation and the U.S. Department of Education, are major contributors of education grants. Federal grant programs tend to be highly competitive, usually involve money in excess of \$100,000, and require extensive paperwork. Awards are made to institutions of higher education (IHEs), state education agencies (SEAs), and local education agencies (LEAs). Federal grants for individual teachers occasionally become available, but these are rare. If you plan to apply as an individual, find grants that are designated for individual teachers and classrooms. However, grant money is still accessible to teachers because the money is often distributed by IHEs, SEAs, and LEAs for individual programs. Your LEA, for example, can submit a grant proposal that designates you as the project director. Applying for large state and federal grants requires a fairly sophisticated grant writing ability. It may be worthwhile to have the proposal written by a grant writing consultant or an individual whose job involves responding to grant notices.

Other Resources

Educators have been highly successful in funding classroom activities and projects by tapping into the resources of private foundations, corporations, and organizations. Good places to begin your search for information about these sources of funding are public libraries, your school district's administrative center (which may have a research or grants office), and local colleges or universities. The Internet is an invaluable place to research sources of funding as well.

Grant notices from private and public organizations often appear in professional journals and trade magazines. Many education honor societies also offer small grants to individuals who are members. Grant information and applications are generally available from the national headquarters of these societies.

4

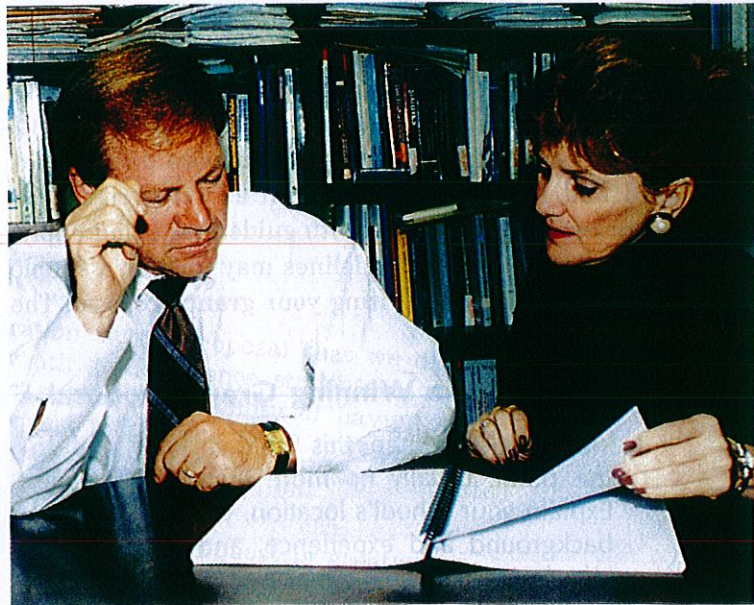
Contact Sources

Once you have identified and researched four or five organizations with grant programs that seem to match your needs, you are ready to make contact. Before you make your first call, spend some time rehearsing what you plan to say. It might be helpful for you to jot down the important points that you want to include in your introduction. Always have a pen and paper close by so you can write down important names, titles, addresses, telephone numbers, submission dates, and other pertinent information. At the end of the conversation, you should know if this organization's program and your needs are a match. If the organization is not interested in your idea, do not discard your information. Keep it in your files as a reference—you may need to contact this organization in the future.



Tips for Making Contact with Potential Grant Givers

- Be on your best professional behavior by being polite and courteous.
- Avoid using a speaker telephone. Using a speaker telephone is annoying and often appears too impersonal.
- Be brief and to the point. The offices of many charitable institutions are understaffed, and the employees are very busy. They appreciate callers who are clear and concise.
- Find out the name and preferred title of the person you speak with. Keep detailed records of whom you spoke with and when.
- Ask the individual to send you any printed information about his or her organization and its policy for making donations or contributions. Usually this will include some type of brief outline or description that you should follow in requesting funding.
- If you are supposed to call back, be sure to find out the best time to do so. You will save time and avoid appearing pushy or unorganized.
- Thank the individual for allowing you to submit your proposal for consideration, and act quickly.



5

Write the Proposal

So your call has been received positively and the organization invites you to submit a proposal! One of the things that I have noticed in my work with grant writers over the past 20 years is that many individuals get very excited about the prospect of someone giving them grant money, yet very few are willing to follow through and make the effort that it takes to research, plan, organize, and write the proposal. Before you start writing, it is important for you to answer a number of questions.

Pre-Writing Checklist

- ✓ How much time do I have to devote to writing a proposal?
- ✓ Will I be working on the grant alone or with co-workers?
- ✓ Why do I want or need to write a grant proposal?
- ✓ Does my school or school system have guidelines or procedures that I must follow?
- ✓ Am I willing to complete all of the paperwork that may be required by the funding agency if I receive funding?
- ✓ Do I have all the information necessary for writing a grant proposal?

As you write your proposal, keep in mind that everything you write should reflect the “five Cs”: Clear, Concise, Cogent, Compelling, and Correct.¹ Keep your purpose clearly in mind as you write. It may be helpful to write your purpose on an index card and refer to the card often as you write. Most agencies will provide you with guidelines about applying for grants. These guidelines may include a simple format to follow for writing your grant proposal. The

Overview of a Winning Grant Proposal

- I. Introduction:** Keep this section brief and to the point, usually no more than half a page. Explain your school’s location, your educational background and experience, and your current job description.
- II. Description of Your Need:** Be clear and concise. Use facts and figures to back up your claims. Don’t paint a tale of woe. Tell the truth, and present information in a fair light.
- III. Goals and Objectives:** The fewer objectives you list, the better. Usually one overarching goal and three to four objectives are sufficient. Your objectives must be measurable! Your benefactors want to know that the donation is sufficient to meet your goal, but is no more than necessary.
- IV. Evaluation Plan:** Assuming you get the grant, an agency will want to know how you will evaluate the success of the project. Be sure to present a carefully thought-out evaluation plan. Let the organization know how and when it can expect to know the outcome of your project and how its donation led to the project’s success. The plan doesn’t need to contain sophisticated statistical methods, but it does need to reflect sound evaluation principles.
- V. Budget:** A budget should clearly show how the money will be spent. If the agency provides a list of approved expenditures, be sure to include only those items. For instance, it is not uncommon for agencies to specify that no funds be spent on travel expenses. If this is the case, be certain that your budget does not include plane tickets! A common mistake made by novice grant writers is to request too much money or too many donations.

guidelines also may offer advice on the length of your proposal, mailing instructions, and deadline dates. Most proposals will be from two to five typed pages. All guidelines should be followed carefully.



Submit a Letter of Intent

When you submit your proposal, be sure to include a letter of intent. A letter of intent is like a cover letter—it summarizes the reason you are submitting the proposal. Usually, letters of intent are no more than one or two pages and follow a standard format.

A Few Last Words

Don’t Forget to Say “Thanks” When you receive a donation or contribution, always thank the donor. Consider inviting a representative to your classroom to see firsthand how the contribution was used or so your students can make personal thank-yous. You could also write an article for your school newspaper or the local newspaper that highlights the donor and the benefits of the donation. Regardless of the follow-up you decide to do, it is always appropriate to send a simple handwritten thank-you note to every individual who helped you obtain the donation.

Dealing with Rejection Getting rejected is never pleasant, and most of us try to avoid it altogether. Unfortunately, in grant writing the only way to avoid rejection is to never apply for a grant in the first place. Assuming that you do apply for a grant, it’s important that you learn from rejection. Call or write to the agency and ask how you might improve your proposal for the next competition or review. Some agencies will gladly provide you with this information, greatly improving your chances for success on your next proposal.

A Little Inspiration Billions of dollars are issued each year for grants and contracts. And many of those dollars are granted to individuals who are submitting their first proposals. So put your grant writing fears behind you and start writing!

¹ Brewer, et al., 1998. (Complete references can be found in *Section III: Continuing the Discussion*, p. 171.)

Sample Letter

Sandra Jones
Director of Public Relations
ABC Distributors
111 Money Street
Grantsville, USA 12345-6789

Dear Sandra Jones:

Submitted for your consideration is the proposal that we discussed last week regarding my seventh grade science students at Central Middle School. I am excited about the possibility of having ABC Distributors consider our request to provide \$500 toward the purchase of badly needed science equipment for our newly renovated science lab.

Any consideration you can make for this request is greatly appreciated. If you have questions or need further information, please feel free to call me at Central Middle School at 555-6789. I look forward to hearing from you after your board meeting on January 18.

Sincerely,

Andrew Adams

Mr. Andrew Adams
Seventh-Grade Science Teacher

Enclosure

cc: Mrs. Harriet Haley, Principal
Central Middle School
Mr. George Hester, Superintendent
Central City School System



Final Tips from Successful Grant Writers

- Remember that practice makes perfect. Consider each submission part of the learning process, and feel confident in the knowledge that your next grant proposal will be better than your last.
- Talk to experienced grant writers and get their insight into grant writing.
- Take a community education class or college level grant writing class.
- Build a grant library of your own, and read as much as you can about grant writing. There are many excellent resources available in your local library and on the Internet for grant writers.
- Think about your readers as you write, and write to the readers.
- Funding agencies' priorities change, so be sure you check them out carefully before you start writing.
- Always have someone else edit your proposal before you submit it.