

Grant Writing Tips

U.S. EPA Environmental and Climate Justice Community Change Grants

PREPARING TO APPLY:
This document is part of a series of tools for school districts created by a collaborative of non-profit partners and funded with generous support from Flu Lab.

PREPARING THE APPLICATION

While the application contents are prescribed by the EPA's [Notice of Funding Opportunity](#) (NOFO), it will speed up your work if you prepare answers to certain topics first. We recommend following steps in the following order.

1. Determine the Project Area, including the Disadvantaged Communities that are within the area, and create a map. For help with the map, view our recorded *Training Module 2: Project* as well as [training videos](#) from EPA's Technical Assistance provider. Having the map in hand will assist you as you talk to prospective partners, consider the project details, and articulate the project's results on the relevant Disadvantaged Communities.
2. Determine the project scope, keeping in mind that it has to be completed within three years, it must meet climate action and pollution reduction strategies outlined in the NOFO, and it must improve the lives of the residents in the Disadvantaged Communities.
3. Choose partners that will strengthen your application. The NOFO is specific that a formal partnership must be part of the application, and successful applications will choose partners to balance complementary strengths and weaknesses. A community-based organization (CBO) must be included and can serve as either a Lead Applicant or Statutory Partner.
4. One of the requirements of the application is a projected milestone schedule. Once the first three items above are addressed, it may be helpful to develop your milestone schedule to understand the three-year timeline you will propose. Keep track of these milestones as you are completing the rest of the application.
5. Prepare the required Attachments first before tackling the project workplan. It may be helpful to bring all parties together to delegate individual Attachments to project team members; once these Attachments are completed, the project workplan can summarize Attachment content where needed and then knit all of the content together.

A PROFESSIONAL GRANT WRITER'S TIPS FOR BEGINNERS

Grant writing is relatively straightforward, but it does take practice. It is, as our grant writer says, "telling a story in an odd format." The story must cover all of the characters and topics requested, and it must be published in a specific order; but, overall, it must tell a compelling story.

- To avoid drafting all new content, look for needed information in past grant applications, strategic plans, annual reports, and other reports.

- Read and reread the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO).
 - Pay attention to the scoring and points assigned. It can guide your work and what you emphasize.
 - Pay attention to page limits for each section and do not exceed it. It is helpful to have a reader/editor look at the whole package near the end to help clarify language and ensure that the page requirements have been met.
 - Readability is important. Even if you are running low on page space, use a reasonable font size and margin width.
- Simple declarative sentences work best. However, general statements need to be backed up. For example, saying “the school district believes in diversity and inclusion” is not enough. Cite statistics such as the demographics of the teachers and staff, specific policies in place, and awards and recognitions.
- If required information can be conveyed through tables or charts, go ahead and do it. It may save space and show the information in an easy format.
- Information is repeated in a grant application in different sections. Do not assume because it was said in one section, it will be remembered or applied to a different section. Place the information in all the sections and forms that ask for it.
- The budget will take some time to create; share early drafts of the Appendices and Project Workplan with whomever is responsible for putting together the budget.
- The project workplan, the attachments, the budget form, and budget narrative must align and tell the same story. If you make a change in one part of the application, make sure you change it in other places – workplan, attachments, budget.
- Reduce the use of acronyms unless they are used in the NOFO.
- Leave plenty of time to submit the grant application through grants.gov. It can be a frustrating experience, especially if the deadline is looming.