

# Grant-Writing Tips

The Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) provides grants for adolescent pregnancy prevention, family violence prevention, and homeless youth services. FYSB is the only federal office that funds programs to help runaway and homeless youth achieve long-term stability, including housing, employment, education, and permanent connections. It also administers funding to address domestic violence and dating violence through the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act, which ensures the provision of emergency shelter and other non-shelter support services such as victim advocacy, crisis counseling, safety planning, support groups, information and referrals, legal aid, and housing assistance. Additionally, FYSB administers funding through the Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Program to states, Tribes, and community-based organizations to prevent adolescent pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, non-marital sexual activity, and other risky behaviors among youth through holistic education.

Grants from federal agencies and other organizations can help you obtain funding for programming. Here are some tips for submitting successful grant applications (sometimes referred to as proposals) drawn from years of insights from youth workers and partner organizations.

## TEN TIPS FOR WRITING A STRONG GRANT APPLICATION

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**1**

### **Do your homework.**

If you know you will be submitting an application for an upcoming opportunity, begin collecting current data and other information to support your application. In cases where a grant has been awarded in previous years, familiarize yourself with the old funding announcements, reach out to existing grantees you know, and read as widely as you can about the organization or office that is offering funding. For FYSB grants, contact the grant program's training and technical assistance provider for help navigating the funding opportunity announcement and the grant-writing process.

**2**

### **Follow directions.**

Above all, you must meticulously follow the instructions for preparing and submitting your grant application. Read the funding opportunity announcement very closely and be sure to provide exactly what it asks for in the way it asks for it.

**3**

### **Assemble a grant-writing team.**

Appoint a single point person to manage the project, set deadlines, create the file system and marshal team members along. Assign writers to support the point person. Rotate team responsibilities for each grant application to avoid burnout and to give different staff members the opportunity to develop their skills.

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#### FYSB Mission

To support the organizations and communities that work every day to put an end to youth homelessness, adolescent pregnancy, and domestic violence.

#### FYSB Vision

A future in which all our nation's youth, individuals, and families—no matter what challenges they may face—can live healthy, productive, violence-free lives.

**4****Start fresh.**

A common mistake is starting from last year's application. Without the reviewer's comments, you won't know why that previous application was funded or not. Applicants for FYSB grants receive comments at the conclusion of the review process. If the comments cannot be found, contact the agency to request a copy. After reviewing the comments from a previous application, be sure to start a fresh application.

**5****State the facts.**

State the problem that exists in your community and find current research to support the identified need. In cases where your organization doesn't meet all the criteria on its own, demonstrate that you have access to resources and partners that qualify your organization for funding.

**6****Tie it all together.**

Because many staff members have information to contribute, applications often come in without a cohesive voice. One writer should edit the final submission to give the full product a uniform tone.

**7****Make it visual.**

Consider what information can best be communicated visually. Convey as much as possible in easy-to-digest formats. Use logic models, graphs, and bullet points.

**8****Make sure your financial statements are sound.**

Reviewers want to see that your proposed expenditures are reasonable and will support your activities and services, so ensure that your financial statements accurately reflect what you say you'll spend and do. To make sure your application is not disqualified on fiscal grounds, the budget should not exceed the maximum amount or fall below the minimum amount specified in the instructions.

**9****Proofread, please!**

Although you won't lose points on paper, if the grant reviewer spots a typo, you won't make the best impression. Have a pair of fresh eyes review the final product.

**10****Don't rush.**

Don't wait until minutes before the submission deadline to solve unforeseen problems and polish your work. Remember that submitting even a minute late can be disqualifying.

## FOUR PRACTICES TO SET YOUR APPLICATION APART

### Help reviewers see the impact of your work.

Whether it's the number of youth who became gainfully employed or more individual stories about young people's improved circumstances, make sure that your application conveys exactly how your program helps the community and what outcomes you help achieve for young people.

### Choose your words.

Avoid words that over-promise – like "unique," "the best," "the only" – unless they are really true.

### Brevity and bullets ensure your application gets read thoroughly.

Funders read hundreds of applications. Teach writers to express information succinctly.

### Translate the mission.

A crucial part of the narrative will be aligning the program's mission with the requirements of the grant. Writers should talk with program managers and work out creative ways to explain how your organization will fulfill the requirements of the grant.