Early Care and Education
Grant Writing Tips

Many centers look to private foundations and corporate giving programs as a way to expand their funding base. Whether you are completing an existing application or assembling a proposal from scratch, here are several grant writing tips to keep in mind:

√ **Start with the end.** Before soliciting potential funders, first identify the outcomes you hope to achieve with a particular program or project. What’s going to change as a result of this endeavor? How will you know if you’ve achieved that result? How will it be measured? For most funders, these questions are paramount. The clearer you can be about the potential impact of a grant, the better.

√ **Know yourself.** What makes your center unique? What types of families do you serve? What are the demographics and particular needs of your local community? Maximize your time and resources by seeking funds geared towards your distinct niche. Pay close attention to eligibility criteria – and if your center doesn’t fit, don’t apply. When in doubt, pick up the phone and talk to a program officer. Better to know in advance than to spend time on a proposal that gets rejected right off.

√ **More isn’t necessarily better.** Related, don’t give in to the temptation to constantly re-invent yourself or create new and different programs simply for the sake of obtaining funds. An organization with a clear, strong purpose is far more compelling than one with scattered and diffuse programs and projects. Your center can’t be all things to all people, and funders don’t want you to be.

√ **Tell the story well.** Yes, you’ll need to provide data and numbers. Yes, you’ll need to answer what may at times seem like tedious questions. Ultimately, though, your proposal is meant to tell a story – the story of how your center makes a difference in the lives of the children and families you serve. Engage the reader. Don’t assume she or he is familiar with child care and education. Connect the dots for your reader. Provide examples. Help your work come alive.

√ **Words are important, but only to a point.** It goes without saying that your proposal should be clear, concise, and well organized. And in such a competitive funding environment, a poorly written narrative barely stands a chance for serious consideration. It’s the quality of your programming, however, that must ultimately speak for itself. Words are simply a showcase for demonstrating the importance of your work and your center’s capacity to achieve it. So give your proposal meat. Style is great, but substance is essential.

www.firstchildrensfinance.org
1-866-562-6801

Copyright © 2011 First Children’s Finance
Page 1 of 3
√ **Follow directions.** Speaking of style, some funders have very specific requirements about acceptable fonts, size of margins, attachments, use of staples, exact time during day for deadline, etc. Why get eliminated at the front door by ignoring these seemingly minute details? Follow directions.

√ **The grant is just the beginning.** Follow-through is incredibly important as you establish and maintain a relationship with your funder. Make sure you have systems in place to track promised information. Keep a master calendar of reporting deadlines, and stick to it. Just as important, find ways to celebrate the progress and success of your programs. Send periodic updates to your funders and invitations to special events. Touch base by phone occasionally. Funders will welcome being recognized and involved in your work as the valued partners that they are.