

GRANT WRITING TIPS AND HELPFUL HINTS

SEE NEW HINTS IN PINK, #22 AND #23

1. Get inspired! Talk with your students and colleagues about innovative ways to teach a topic. They might have ideas that spark a great grant application.
2. Start early! Grants usually take a few drafts. Even for experienced writers, grants are tricky! Allow yourself time to polish up your ideas before you submit.
3. Think about a grant like a job interview. You have important things your interviewer needs to know about you so that they will offer you the job. Think about how to include those important facts in the prompts given to you in the application.
4. Proofread your proposal. Ewe don't want to hurt you're chances of being funded for careless errors. Some reel words are the wrong words out of context. Spell check doesn't catch everything.
5. Follow the guidelines. Follow the guidelines. Follow the guidelines. Seriously. Follow the guidelines. Go over the application with a highlighter so you pay attention to all the details. It matters. Follow the guidelines.
6. Read the rubric so that you know how the application will be scored.
7. Form a group. Find a partner or a small team to commit to the task of submitting a grant. Keeping each other accountable will get you to the submission goal!
8. What's an ISBE standard? Asking someone not familiar with your project to review your draft is very helpful. BTBEF grant reviewers come from a variety of backgrounds and only a few have teaching experience. Using jargon or field-specific terms could confuse your reviewer.
9. Be concise.
10. Money matches mission. Your budget has to mirror your narrative. If you talk about important new equipment in your program description but it's not on your budget, the reviewer will notice that inconsistency. If your budget has a line item for supplies that haven't been mentioned in the narrative, that is also a disconnect.
11. Get approvals ready. You will need approval from your principal to submit your grant. Make sure your principal knows you are writing a grant so it's on their radar. Allow time at the end of the process to get the approval.
12. Are there other sources to fund your project? Find out from administrators if monies are available within the district or from other groups to support your proposal or idea.
13. You can do it! Yes, you! Even if you have never written a grant before, you should go for it. If you can write from an outline, you can write a grant.

14. How many widgets do you need? In an environment that is chronically short on funds, sometimes we ask for less than we need or deserve. We think, “If I ask for 10 widgets, I might get 10; but if I ask for 30, I might get 0.” If you need 30 widgets to really be successful, don’t ask for only 10 widgets. Make the case for why you need 30.
15. Evaluation can be challenging. Sometimes we measure things that don’t matter and things that matter are hard to measure. Be sure to articulate what success means in clear language.
16. Less is more. *In my many years as a natural sciences teacher, I have discovered that the day we talk about volcanoes is always really fun and exciting for my students so I want to do more to make this lesson even more memorable.* → Students love volcanoes!
17. $1 + 1 = 3$ Collaboration is best when the partners do more together than they could have done on their own. Show how your project leverages the strength of each partner.
18. Deadlines are deadlines. Grants adhere to very strict timetables and there are no exceptions. This is the case for all grants not just BTBEF. Plan on getting the grant done early so you can get your approvals and submit on time.
19. What is a blind review? The BTBEF does not want to know the name of your school or school district or fellow educators. A blind review process ensures fairness in grant-awarding. Be careful not to name your program “Raider Readers” or “High 5 for Unit 5”. Your application will be returned without review if we cannot guarantee a blind review.
20. Tie up loose ends. Ever leave a movie theatre thinking, “But what happened to that one character?” or “How did she get the secret code if she never made it to Amsterdam?” Read and reread your proposal to make sure there are no unanswered questions.
21. Keep it simple. The reviewers don’t need to be dazzled or distracted by buzz words. They need to feel confident that you have designed a smart project that makes a meaningful difference in your classroom, your school, your district. An innovative idea executed well is a beautiful thing.
22. We understand that sometimes you have an excellent idea for a project that could be great if you receive a Standard Grant, but even better if you receive the Beyond the Box Grant. You ARE allowed to submit both proposals. If you do so, you must use the same title for both applications and in the Beyond the Box application, clearly describe how the extra money will be used. Only one of the two applications may receive an award.
23. You may apply for the Beyond the Box Grant requesting an amount between \$7500 and \$10,000.