

# EFFECTIVE GRANTWRITING

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NJ Council on Developmental Disabilities

# First Things to Consider

A grant is issued because the grantor wants to develop innovative ways to successfully address a public issue.

A grant is an agreement to give money, with conditions attached for the purpose of achieving specific outcomes.

“There is no grantsmanship that will turn a bad idea into a good one, but there are many ways to disguise a good idea.”

Norm Braverman, National Institute of Health

A grant application must present much more than a good idea.

A successful grant application must explain in detail a specific plan for implementing a good idea.

Does your proposed project match the purpose of the grant?

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Read everything the Grantor provides about the grant!

Review and understand the granting organization's:

- ***mission***

- ***priorities***

- ***purpose*** for offering the grant

# NJCDD Mission, Purpose and Priorities

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- Mission
- Five -Year Plan
- Purpose of current grant cycle
- Desired project outcomes

# Understanding the Grantor's Mission, Priorities & Purpose

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- Target population / People to be served
- Type of activities previously awarded grants
- Desired Grant Outcomes



# Types of grants

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- Demonstration / Pilot Project
- Training
- Research

# Is your organization eligible for the grant?

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- Eligibility specified in grant guidelines & application
- NJCDD does not give grants to individuals, only to organizations
- Conflicts of interest & appearance of impropriety
- Must have partnership agreement for any collaborating organizations

# Avoiding Problems

## Submitting the Application

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- NJCDD requires both hard and electronic copies?
- Establish online submission accounts in advance
- Fed-ex & others will not deliver to post office box
- Number of copies needed (See RFP)
- Form of copies- how bound, thumb drives, etc.

# Avoiding Problems Submitting on Time

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- Deadline is when received, not when postmarked?
- Do not submit on last day or at last minute
- Leave more time than you think you need!

# Plan Ahead for Attachments

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Determine early what is required & start preparing and collecting

- Forms
- Signatures
- Organizational resolutions, votes, records
- Letters of Support

# Can your organization perform all activities of the grant project?

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- Ability & Capacity: personnel, facilities, experience to perform, evaluate, & continue the activities
- Adhere to match requirements?
- Review Selection criteria – example: if criteria includes hosting website

Remember –  
Rules and Requirements  
Apply to All Applicants !

# Beginning the Grantwriting Process

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- Read and read again:  
application guidelines & instructions
- Look at past recipients
- Email NJCDD at [grants@njcdd.org](mailto:grants@njcdd.org) with:  
questions on instructions, purpose



Make sure to start your draft with required formatting:

- font
- margins
- line spacing
- page, word, character limits

# Good writing = Good Communication

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❖ Clear organized writing reflects  
clear, organized thinking

❖ Clear organized writing helps the reader  
understand you and see your plan clearly

# Tips for Clear Writing

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- Active tense – **start with a noun**
- Diamonds are clear
- Avoid first person – I, We, Our
- Grammar!!!!
- Thanks I needed “That” & “which” hunts

# Communicating Effectively

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- Consider your audience of reviewers
- NJCDD and other grantors include community members-reviewers may not just be professionals or others with experience reviewing or writing grants

# Communicating Effectively

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- NJCDD reviewers and other granting organizations include individuals who may have intellectual disabilities or processing differences
- Good writing tips become especially important- short sentences, active tense, understandable language

# Use language that communicates easily:

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The gregarious, juvenile canine bounded swiftly in the direction of a tot, who displayed a countenance of extreme trepidation.

The friendly puppy ran toward a child who looked very frightened.

# More Tips for Clear Writing & Communication

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- Use headings and subheadings, especially those specified in instructions
- Use bullets, graphs, tables where helpful
- No jargon
- No alphabet soup

USE  
PERSON FIRST,  
STRENGTH-BASED,  
RESPECTFUL LANGUAGE!



- Follow formatting requirements
- Follow instructions for headings and order of sections
- Make sure every question asked is answered
- Make sure every question asked is answered  
– *this is so important, check twice (at least)!!!*
- Do not repeat yourself  
(unless required by instructions)

- Do not “pad” application with repetitive or irrelevant extra information or attachments
- Do not send more material than requested

# Common Grant Sections

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## *The Abstract*

- Often most important section
- What reviewers focus on & Council Members vote on
- Many prefer to write this last

# The Abstract

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- Clear
- Concise
- Complete
- Communicates

# Organizational Qualifications

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- ❖ Your organization's abilities & capacity
- ❖ Why will you succeed:  
past experience & current networks
- ❖ Personnel & experience

# Organizational Qualifications

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- Do not over-do this, especially for NJCDD which has strict limits on section length
- Keep in proper application sections
  - Do not confuse this with or put in project narrative
  - Keep separate from planned activities, objectives, goals

# Targeted Population

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Brief background about why your project will produce outcomes the grantor wishes to achieve through the grant for the people the grantor wishes to reach

If possible, include example(s) of data, research, or of a similar project to demonstrate that successful outcomes are likely to result from your proposed activities.

Can be project from another state, university research, or anecdotal examples



# Project Narrative- Goal

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- What is the *long term* change that the project will make more likely?

# Project Narrative -Objectives

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- What are the measurable short term outcomes and benefits that will be produced by your project?
- Be realistic
- Be specific -not too broad or general

# Project Narrative -Activities

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- Each objective is the result of numerous activities.
- State the measurable specific tasks or actions that will produce each objective.
- Who will do what, when they will do it, how you will measure outcomes

# SMART

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Specific

Measurable

Achievable

Relevant

Time Bound



# Check for The 5 W's

Does your project narrative cover: **Who, what, where, when & why ?**

- Who** will do **What** with the grantor's money?
- Where** and **When** will the activities occur?
- What** specific outcomes will result from the activities?
- Why/How** will these outcomes lead to the objectives & goal(s)?
- What** will be delivered to the Council as a product of the grant project?

# Output/Outcome

the specific measurable result of the project activities

*e.g. 20 people with developmental disabilities will learn how to use an email account.*

# Evaluation methodology – How you will measure and report progress and results

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- How will you demonstrate success
- What data will you gather & how will it be gathered
- Recordkeeping- how will you save data
- How will you analyze & report data (outcomes)

# Budget

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- Realistic
- Reasonable and necessary
- Answer questions, meet requirements-  
comply with federal requirements



# Budget

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- Budget Explains “Input” – the resources you will use to perform the activities you describe in the application  
*e.g. funding, staff time, equipment, volunteers, etc.*
- Be consistent- expenses for activities in your budget should match activities described in project narrative.

# Budget Narrative

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- Another chance to convince the reviewer that the result you are promising is worth the money you are asking them to spend on project.
- Reassure that the grantor's money will be used wisely to produce desired outcomes.

# Sustainability / Duplication

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Remembering that the mission and purpose of the granting organization is to impact a public issue and make lasting, long term change (goals):

- ❖ Explain how your project will continue after the grant period.
- ❖ Explain how your project can be implemented by others to have the same positive outcomes.

# Dissemination

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How will you report your activities and outcomes, and other information and data about the project, to the public or interested parties?

- Publications
- Online resources
- Presentations
- Technical Assistance to Others

# Finalizing Your Application

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- Take a day or 2 away from draft, then read & edit
- Then have someone with fresh eyes read & edit
- Have someone else read it, not take notes, & tell you what the project is about
- Revise many times:  
“Great works are not written, they are rewritten.”

# Trouble Shooting:

Check You Have These to Avoid Common Pitfalls:

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- All required content
- All required headings
- All questions answered
- All answers are in the right places
- All required attachments

# Trouble Shooting:

## Check that you have complied with:

- ❖ Page limits
- ❖ Word and character limits
- ❖ Font, margin & line spacing requirements

If granted-

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- ❖ Follow instructions
- ❖ Report as required
- ❖ Do what you promised
- ❖ Follow timelines



# Rejection

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Does not mean the idea for your project was rejected.

Common reasons:

- instructions not followed
- implementation and evaluation plans weak
- Lots of competition for limited funds

Consider revising application and project plan and resubmitting next year (if funds available) or to other grant program.