



A Workbook to Make Grants Easier

This book not only helps you write a grant proposal. It's also an excellent way to evaluate your plan.

BY TERRENCE FERNSLER

Winning Grants Step by Step

By Mim Carlson. 115 pages. Softcover.

Published by the Support Centers of America and Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, California.

Available through the Society for Nonprofit Organizations' Resource Center (see the Resource Center Catalog, included in this issue, or call 800-424-7367).

Once you decide to seek foundation and corporate funding, you must prepare a proposal. If you can afford a grant writer, or at least a personal grant "tutor," then you may not need this book (although your grant writer may want it). But if your organization is like most nonprofits, with few staff, *Winning Grants Step by Step* is ideal. Leading you concisely through the steps to getting a grant, it makes you really think about your program and how to present it. It is more focused than a class or workshop, and can be used over and over again.

The author, Mim Carlson, establishes the basics of grant proposals at the beginning of the book. Your proposal

will be better if you keep these key points in mind throughout the process:

- Make the proposal easy to read.
- Make it brief.
- Adapt it to the funder's concerns.
- Write in plain language.
- Support every fact.
- Write in a positive style.
- Show clear connections between cause and effect.

The workbook section of the book consists of a series of exercises, beginning with program planning. As Carlson makes clear, you need to develop a solid program plan *before* seeking funding; you must never develop a plan just to get a foundation's support.

Each step in the workbook brings out the strengths and shortcomings of your plan. Thus, it's an excellent way to evaluate your plan. This in itself makes the workbook invaluable.

Carlson does not do the work for you. She walks you through the process, letting you fill in the blanks. You'll systematically work on each section of the proposal: need statement, goals and objectives, methods, evaluation, future funding, then the budget.

Carlson doesn't make the mistake of having you write your introduction first. As all professional writers know, you write your introduction *after* you've prepared everything else.

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A grant proposal does not take place in a vacuum.



Never develop a plan just to get a foundation's support.

Unlike some books on grant writing, Carlson recognizes that a grant proposal does not take place in a vacuum. Thus, she includes sections on getting ready for and following up on the proposal. She notes, for example, that you need to develop relationships with foundation and corporate funders. She also provides an appendix on researching funders. This section is brief but straight to the point. Many nonprofits seeking grants spend too little time on this subject and end up missing opportunities.

Carlson recognizes that there are different types of proposals and that you

may need to adapt the workbook steps to fit some of them. She is clear that one format does not suit all. Yet this workbook can help you prepare any grant proposal. What she gives you is an excellent format to help you go through the workbook process quickly yet develop a thorough proposal.

This book is an excellent way to get your material and thoughts organized and to be sure you don't miss any important steps. Do the exercises one by one, and you will end up with a fully developed and effective grant proposal. ■