

GRANT WRITING TIPS FOR RKF SCHOLARSHIPS

The following suggestions relate to the writing and presentation of a grant application.

1) Put yourself in the funders' position. Would you give your money to:

- Someone who couldn't be bothered to follow instructions (number of copies, deadlines, etc.)? These kinds of errors can result in your application being immediately discarded. Also, spell names correctly, even if that entails a phone call to be sure.
- Someone who disregarded funding guidelines and priorities clearly stated in the application? Help the panelists give you a high score by directly addressing the areas of focus stated in the application.
- Someone who submitted an application that gave you no confidence in their ability to think clearly, organize an expedition, or manage a budget? Panelists want to give you money, and they also have a responsibility to the funders to be sure their money is well-spent.

2) Learn how to describe yourself.

- Writing about yourself or your group is a fun activity which will help you clarify your vision, remember why you do what you do, and get you excited about yourself. If your writing doesn't excite you, why would it excite the panelists?
- The tone of your words is important. Sincere and passionate is good; self-congratulatory or arrogant is not good.
- Give them facts; document your accomplishments and the quality of your experiences. Be specific.
- Round out your descriptions: you can touch on epics as well as summits, because you probably learned something from the epics.

3) Don't wait until the last minute.

- You run the risk of discovering that you need information or signatures that will take time to obtain. A grant application is like a recipe; you don't want to find out halfway through that you are missing crucial ingredients.
- Your final product will be better if you give yourself time to write a draft, let it sit, and then review it.
- Ideally, you will have two other people read it:
 - someone who is familiar with the expedition and you – he or she will notice missing budget items or similar oversights
 - someone who knows nothing about the expedition – they can let you know what questions might occur to a panelist who is not familiar with your work or point out specialized terminology that might be unclear. Panelists are not always specialists in your field.

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4) Be a strict editor.

- Read your application as if you'd never seen it before. What might raise a red flag or confuse someone? The goal is to present a seamless proposal that raises no questions.
- Notice if your mind wanders at any point. Tighten up the writing.
- Edit mercilessly. Generally, you can cut out about half the words in your original version, (for example use the word "consider" instead of "take into consideration").
- Spell check with a computer and proofread, working backwards.
- Edit out unnecessary words such as very and really. They weaken impact.
- Use the active voice ("we will announce" instead of "the announcement will be made").
- Don't say anything twice.

5) Typesetting basics

- Use the point type specified, in Times or another basic serif font.
- Use a sans serif font, such as Helvetica or Gill Sans, for headings.
- DO NOT WRITE IN ALL CAPITAL LETTERS. IT IS DIFFICULT TO READ.
- Avoid script and other creative fonts. They are also difficult to read.
- Don't cram as many words as possible on the page. Too much text will bury your important points.
- Bullets are a very effective way of presenting a lot of information concisely.
- Use margins of at least one inch. Panelists want room to make notes.
- Make sure your entire application is professional-looking, including cover letter and envelope.
- Use a footer. You want panelists reading the grant to know who you are at all times. They read a lot of grants very quickly. (Also- seriously- should someone drop your application on the floor, you want it to be able to be easily reassembled.

6) Remember

- Grants get easier and easier to write. Once you have developed good quality written material, your task becomes tailoring already written material to a specific application rather than starting from scratch with each application.
- Think of grant writing as a long-range project. Each grant is one step of the project. You can learn a lot from both successful and unsuccessful applications.