

Grant information and forms are available on the Eau Claire Community Foundation website (eccfwi.org) on the “Grant Opportunities” page under the “Lasting Impact” tab.

In a Nutshell...

Your grant proposal should clearly communicate the following information:

- Who you are
- What you want to do
- How you are going to do it
- What your intended outcomes are and how you will measure those outcomes
- How much it will cost
- How much you want the Eau Claire Community Foundation to fund (and how ECCF dollars will specifically be spent)

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

GET STARTED EARLY!: Make sure you allow yourself at least two weeks to work on the grant; rushed, last minute applications often have errors that cause them to be disqualified.

VERIFY YOUR NONPROFIT STATUS: In order to receive an ECCF grant, your organization MUST have 501(c)(3) OR 509(a)(1), (2), or (3) status OR be a tax-exempt government agency or religious organization. If your organization doesn't have official IRS recognition as a nonprofit, you need to find an organization that does and that is willing to serve as your fiscal agent. Grant applications from organizations without verified tax-exempt status will NOT be considered.

MAKE SURE YOU'RE ELIGIBLE: Please read the ECCF Grantmaking Guidelines and to make sure your organization's proposal is eligible for grant funding. (This documents is available for download on the ECCF website's “Grant Opportunities” page.)

KNOW YOUR HISTORY: On a related note, make sure your organization hasn't received previous ECCF grants for the same program or purchase (or a similar one). Because funds are limited, ECCF will not fund consecutive grants that are substantially the same.

COLLABORATE: Before you start a program from scratch, make sure you're not duplicating another organization's services. Some overlap isn't a deal breaker as long as you work with the other organization(s) to effectively administer those services. Showing that you cooperate with other agencies, schools, and people is very important since it enhances your program's sustainability and ensures that your application won't be disqualified for duplicating existing services.

As Your Write

READ THE QUESTIONS! Make sure your responses are clear, concise, and answer the questions on the application form. If you're using snippets of previously written grants, be absolutely certain you've adjusted them to answer the questions on THIS application.

ESTABLISH THE NEED: Explain WHY the funding is needed. Use data to prove that your proposal addresses a strong community need. This can include quotes from articles, demographic studies, census data, and your own organization's experience. You won't have a lot of room to work with, so include specific and relevant information to show how your proposal will help solve a significant community problem.

MAKE YOUR MISSION CLEAR: Grant reviewers want to know what your organization's mission statement is and how your grant proposal will further that mission; your application could be endangered if your mission is missing or confusingly worded.

CLARIFY YOUR GOALS: Make sure that the grant proposal's goals are specific— explain what will be accomplished and what impact the funding will have. In particular, you **MUST** show how any grant funding you receive will benefit the Eau Claire area.

MEASURE YOUR GOALS: You must clearly show reviewers how you'll evaluate your proposal's effectiveness. You should have clear and realistic methods (numbers served, surveys administered to clients, etc.) of measuring success. You should also show how you'll use your measurements to continually improve your program and/or organization.

USE CLEAR WORDING AND SPECIFIC NUMBERS: "Our program will serve 3 meals a day to 45 clients for one year" is much more specific than "Our program will feed a lot of people." Also, avoid jargon and acronyms that might confuse someone outside your organization.

CHOOSE YOUR CATEGORY: In your application, make a strong connection between your request and one of our grant categories. Even if your application is relevant to more than one, you can only choose **ONE** category when you apply, so choose the best one. Categories are:

- **"Create Culture" (Arts and Culture)**
- **"Form Futures" (Education, Training)**
- **"Give Green" (Animals, Environment, Recreation)**
- **"Offer Opportunities" (Social Services, Accessibility Needs, Needs of Elders)**

By The Numbers

CHECK YOUR NUMBERS! Final totals for the expenses and revenue sections should be equal, and your requests for ECCF grant funding in the expenses section should equal the amount of your overall grant request. Please remember that our GLM software does **NOT** add up the numbers for you, so you need to make sure your figures are accurate.

DEMONSTRATE YOUR FINANCIAL SAVVY: Your budget should indicate that you've thought carefully about your finances. You should be able to show what specifically the dollars will be used for and how you've ensured the most bang for the donors' bucks.

ASK FOR WHAT YOU CAN GET: You should **ONLY** ask for dollars that the granting organization is willing to fund. Many grantors, including ECCF and the Women's Giving Circle (WGC), specifically exclude certain expenses, such as those for travel and previously incurred expenses. Your application could be disqualified if you request money for an excluded expense.

DON'T ASK FOR TOO MUCH: Make sure your budget request does **NOT** exceed what the grantor is willing to fund. In particular, the WGC has a specific maximum for grant requests.

PRIORITIZE: Sometimes funders can't award the full amount of the grant, so if you list the priorities of your project, they may be able to at least fund the most important budget items.

BE SUSTAINABLE: Funders want to know what will happen after grant funds have been used. Demonstrate how you can maintain your program and/or organization after the grant dollars have been spent.

After The First Draft Is Done

PRINT A COPY using the “Application Packet” PDF icon.

PROOFREAD: Check for errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation; although your content might be wonderful, typos can easily undermine your organization’s credibility. In the process, check for wordy passages and try to streamline them. Then, find the biggest curmudgeon in your life (ideally one that’s unfamiliar with your organization) and have him or her proofread.

IF YOUR GRANT GETS FUNDED

AGREE TO YOUR GRANT: You’ll receive a Grant Acceptance Agreement detailing the terms and conditions of your grant. Even though your grant will have been approved, the money can’t be released until the Executive Director (or equivalent) of your organization signs it. Pay particular notice to the publicity clause toward the bottom; it requires you to acknowledge your grant in any relevant publicity materials your organization might produce.

SPEND THE MONEY WISELY: Always use the funds you receive for their intended purpose. You’ll need to submit a Grant Report within 30 days of the grant period’s end, and you’ll need to prove that you spent the money according to the budget in your grant proposal. Minor deviations—for example, if a budgeted item proves slightly less or more expensive than you’d anticipated—don’t pose a significant problem. However, major deviations from your initial proposal—for example, using the grant to pay staff instead of to purchase the computer you’d requested—could result in your organization having to return the grant money. If you anticipate a major deviation in your project spending, contact ECCF at least 60 days before the end of the grant period. You can write a letter of request asking for a grant extension and/or a re-direction of funds to a similar purpose, but the ECCF Board must have time to approve the request before the end of the grant period.

KEEP YOUR RECEIPTS: You’ll need them for your Grant Report!

SHARE YOUR STORY: ECCF is always happy to share the story of its grantees. Please tag ECCF in social media posts about your grant and share directly to ECCF’s Facebook page so we can make more people aware of your great work. Also, try contacting local newspapers, television stations, and social media networks. They might do a story about you, which would create free publicity. (Don’t forget to acknowledge your grant if that happens, though!)

QUESTIONS?

TALK TO US! The ECCF staff is happy to answer your questions. You can contact us at grants@eccfwi.org or call ECCF at (715) 552-3801. You can also stop by our office at 306 S. Barstow St., Suite 104, Eau Claire, WI during our normal business hours (Monday-Friday 9:00 a.m. through 4:00 p.m.)

A helpful acronym for your grant proposal
(from the Foundation Center’s Proposal
Writing Basics Webinar):

S (pecific)
M (easurable)
A (chievable)
R (ealistic)
T (ime-bound)

Seven Qualities of Excellent Grant Proposals

By Diane H. Leonard, GPC | January 3, 2014



There are literally dozens of books and articles (okay, perhaps hundreds) written about how to write excellent grant proposals. They walk you through the technical components of the application: need statement, SMART goals and objectives, budget narratives, and the rest. They deal with the more precise aspects of the grant writing process.

Understanding and mastering these components is critical to your long term success in grant seeking. However, once the technical understanding of grant application components is accomplished, I strongly believe it is time to focus on enhancing the craft of grant writing. It is time to now focus and improve on how you *tell the story* of your organization and proposed program or project within your proposal narrative, cover letter, and letter of inquiry.

I also believe that there is always room for improvement regardless of how long you have been a grant professional. Particularly in the age of online application forms with extremely short character or word counts, expressing the traits outlined below within such tight parameters pose a challenge for even the most seasoned grant professional.

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As you focus your efforts on editing the first draft of your next grant proposal, consider how reviewers would rate each of the qualities listed below. Then go back and edit with them in mind. Below I outline questions to consider for each of the seven qualities of a proposal that if mastered, will land you in the stack of excellent funded grant proposals during the next grant application review.

1. Energy!

Does your proposal convey not just a clear understanding of the need your proposal seeks to address, but does it also convey your/your organization's passion and energy for the program?

2. Expertise

Have you clearly expressed your organization's authority on the subject matter related to the proposed program or project? Have you demonstrated not just an understanding of the need for your proposed program, but also for the other models available that could potentially address the program, and articulated your expert opinion for choosing the proposed model?

3. Commitment

Does your proposal convey a clear commitment to the proposed program? While funding is required for the proposed proposal or project, is your organization's commitment to the proposal shown to be a critical component of achieving your strategic plan?

4. Clarity

Is it clear to the potential funder what impact your specific program or project will have? Is it clear how their grant funds will impact the proposed program? Are there any assumptions of knowledge in the proposal that would leave a potential funder with questions about the program design or anticipated impact?

5. Collaboration

Have you considered all forms of potential collaboration to benefit your proposed program or project? If there are similar organizations or services in the community or region have you addressed any potential duplication?

6. Comprehensiveness

Have you addressed all aspects of the proposed program or project? Have you discussed common barriers to participation for your target population? Does your staffing model match the level of services required to achieve the SMART goals and objectives of the proposal?

7. Effectiveness

Are you articulating your definition of success? And are you sufficiently addressing how you plan to measure, monitor and analyze your progress toward achieving that success? Do you have the capacity to manage that process?

While meeting all of these qualities in one proposal can be daunting, at first, slowly tackling each quality within your editing process. Challenging yourself as a grant professional will ultimately make the crafting of a grant proposal with all of these qualities automatic, just as crafting a well-cited need statement is now second nature.

Photo credit: [Horia Varlan](#) via [photopin cc](#)

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BEFORE YOU HIT

Submit

on your Grant Budget...

- Do the math**
Make sure your numbers add up! Don't rely on auto calculations
- Round your numbers**
*Don't leave any cents hanging off your decimals
Round numbers to end in 0s or 5s*
- Ensure that revenues balance expenses**
Remember, in-kind goes in and out (revenue and expense)
- Match activity with expense**
Does your budget reflect the rest of your application? (description, objectives)– is everything accounted for?
- Try to get your bids in**
If your budget includes contracted services be prepared with the bid
- Check ineligible costs**
Refer back to the grant guidelines to make sure you handled ineligible costs appropriately
- Show your work**
Explain how you calculated your revenue and expense items in the budget narrative section
- Phone a friend**
Have someone else review your budget (in the context of the whole application)
- Do the cringe test**
Are your estimates honest and accurate? Does the thought of answering questions about your budget make your skin crawl? If so, you may need to go back to the drawing board