Session One - October 13, 2025

Setting Up for Success

Processes & approaches for writing a successful grant application

- Understanding the Reviewer's Lens
- Common Mistakes and How to Avoid Them
- Breaking the Grant Writing Process into Manageable Tasks

Understanding the Reviewer's Lens

Listen first, for understanding

- Read the grant guidelines thoroughly and carefully
- Discover what they've funded in the past
- Research the funder, the corporation, their board of directors

Don't think about your response; focus on what they're saying.

- Focus on their priorities, the needs they want to solve, the kind of solutions they want to fund
- Pay attention to the kind of information they are asking for
- Note the vocabulary, terms and phrases they use,

Restate what they've said

- Take note of key phrases, values, priorities, focus areas
- Continually review to ensure your response aligns
- Ask for clarity if needed

Can AI be a Writing Partner?

Yes. But. And.

- AI is all about context. You need to provide the discernment.
- Don't ask AI to write your responses; it doesn't know enough.
- Do ask AI to evaluate your writing.
- Feed it your research, guidelines, and the application itself.
- Share your strategy, your rationale, what you've learned.
- Ask AI to evaluate your responses based on a set of criteria, i.e. completeness, integration of their language, matching with their values and goals, etc.
- Consider using a subscription.

Common Mistakes, and How to Avoid Them

Applications Missing Key Information

- Create a checklist that outlines all the application elements
- Start your application earlier than you think you need to
- Work on the attachments first
- Set your deadline for a few days before the grant is due
- Schedule someone else to proofread and double check the application

Proposal Misaligned with Funder Priorities

- Don't assume that a previously funded program is still a match.
- If you aren't sure about a guideline, reach out for clarification.
- Don't submit if it's a mismatch
- Clearly demonstrate how your proposal aligns with the grant program and values
- Thoroughly read all guidelines and materials before you start writing.

Weak Demonstration of Problem or Approach

- Use data when writing an effective needs statement and case for support
- Provide objective responses; "We're the best" or "The need is big" doesn't cut it.
- If space is limited, prioritize facts over storytelling.
- Use quantifiable metrics to demonstrate past success and projected outcomes.
- Prove you have the capacity to deliver: track record, standards, certifications achieved, qualifications, experience

Unclear or Indirect Responses Given

- Make it 'reviewer-friendly' - connect the dots for them
- Restate the question they ask, the values they prioritize, or the solution they seek
- Use their language, not your language; do the translation
- Answer Their questions, concisely and directly
- Don't include more than they're asking for; extraneous information can raise questions, create doubt, reduce credibility

Proposal is Disjointed, Appears Rushed

- Define your strategic response at the start, and apply it consistently throughout - budget, need, solution, evaluation, letters of support, etc.
- Always allow time for review and editing before submission.
- Small errors = big credibility losses; ensure NO spelling or grammar mistakes
- Ensure accuracy and intense real consistency throughout - staffing, budgets, partial funding response, etc.

Breaking the Grant Writing Process into Manageable Tasks

- Creates smaller more **manageable** tasks
- Develops a **timeline**
- Identifies where you need help, **assign** tasks - with advance notice
- Provides a definitive **resource** for everyone to reference
- Forces you to think about **strategy** and approach before you start writing
- Ensures you have a **complete** application
- Integrates peer **review** into your timeline
- Makes the whole process more **collaborative** and supportive

Session One - October 13, 2025

ECCF SAMPLE Grant Intake Form

Your Nonprofit Site Name	
Your Nonprofit Project Name	
Grant Funder	***Eau Claire Community Foundation - Community Impact Grants***
Application Deadline	*01/21/2026*
Target Submission Date	*01/16/2026*
Application Submission Type	*Online portal*
Website	*https://eccfwi.org/community-grant-cycle/*
Application Portal Website	*https://www.grantinterface.com/Home/Logon?urlkey=eauclairecf*
Application Portal Login	
Application Portal Password	
Grant Options	*Program Grants; Asset Grants; Operations Grants.*
Priority Areas	*Create Culture, Form Futures, Give Green, Offer Opportunities*
Funding Period	06/01/2026-05/31/2027
Funder Stipulations	Collaboration, community strengths, local important community needs, serve the greater Eau Claire area; cannot be used for repetitive / consecutive requests, endowments, ECASD, excluded expenses (travel, previously incurred)
Suggested grant range	Operations Grants can request up to $10K
Requirements	Report within 30 days of spending funds, including receipts; clearly show reviewers how you'll evaluate your proposal's effectiveness; tag ECCF in social media posts about the grant and share directly to ECCF's FB page. Acknowledge grant in media.

Eau Claire Community Foundation Grant Writer's Training

Session One - October 13, 2025

Dead-line	Application Requirement	Strategy / Direction	Grant Writer	Project Director	Finance
11/21/2025	Program to be funded / Request Title			*Programs A and C both qualify and need funding; which program serves more people and more directly meets community needs?*	
11/21/2025	Organization description				
11/21/2025	Mission statement / how proposal helps				
11/21/2025	Grant category				
Thanksgiving Week 11/22 to 11/30/25					
12/05/2025	Target population description				
12/05/2025	Estimated # lives impacted, how estimate was determined				
12/05/2025	Choose Field of Interest Funds				
12/12/2025	Community needs, how identified				
12/12/2025	Program differentiation, avoid duplication				
12/12/2025	Organization collaboration				

Session One - October 13, 2025

11/21 /2025	What community needs does this grant address?	Affordable housing for low-income and ALICE households			
11/21 /2025	How does this program relate to your mission?				
12/05 /2025	What are the outcomes of this project?				
12/05 /2025	What activities will take place within this program?				
12/05 /2025	Detailed budget using funder's form				*Detailed budget using funder's form in Google folder*
12/05 /2025	Other sources of funding				
12/12 /2025	Who are the program partners?				
12/19 /2025	How will the project be sustained?				*Is there a plan for maintenance and capital improvements?*
Holiday Break 12/20/2025 - 1/03/2025					
12/19 /2025	Required document submissions		*501c3, 990, audit*		
01/09 /2026	Final Draft Submitted for Review				*Review grant guidelines, application; check includes all key elements*

Develop Your Plan for Integrating New Solutions Into Your Next Grant Writing Project

What are the top 3 things you've learned today that you want to integrate into your next grant writing project?

Who else does this impact? Does this make their job easier or more difficult? How do you introduce this to them?

Are their barriers to integrating these 3 things into your process? How will you address them?

Write down the 3-5 things you're going to do, **and by when**, to improve your grant writing process?