



“ZOCKLEINISMS”: TIPS FOR GETTING GRANTS

FROM NYS UCS GRANTWRITING TRAINING PRESENTED BY
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1. ***Make friends with the funder.*** Grant reviewers are lonely people. Zocklein urges honest, open and frequent communication with funders throughout the grant process. Contact the funder ahead of sending in a proposal; some may not be able to speak with you directly, but most are willing to talk especially if you begin with “We don’t want to waste your time sending in a proposal that doesn’t meet your needs.” Ask:

- (1) How many applications they get and what percentage they fund. If the number’s too low, you may want to focus elsewhere.
- (2) If your proposed project meets their funding priorities. Funders, particularly government funders, have requirements for the use of specific resources. Make sure there is a match between your grant request and their priorities.
- (3) If an advisory council is desired, if the funding is for a specific project.
- (4) How many letters of support they desire.

Some funders will allow you to submit a draft proposal well in advance of the deadline. When a funder is involved in writing the grant, they are less likely to turn it down.

If your grant is accepted, continue communicating regularly throughout the process. *Funders never like to be surprised*; if something is going wrong at the agency or with the project, make a call to let them know and ask their assistance in remedying the situation if possible. Funders are investors in your success, and most are happy to be involved in solutions to problems. Funders also talk to other funders, so if you have surprised or disappointed one funder in your community, it may hurt your chances of getting money elsewhere. Build strong collaborative relationships with every funder regardless of the size of the grant; you never know who they know or what funds they may have available down the line.

2. ***Letterheads are 5% of getting funded.*** Your cover letter should be attached to every copy of the grant you send. It should be personalized, never sent “to whom it may concern”. Your letterhead should be on decent paper, but not so elaborate as to appear extravagant.

3. ***Boards and advisory councils are 15% of getting grants.*** Make sure your letterhead lists your board of directors, including their place of employment. All the members of the board should be aware you are going after a particular funding source; they may know someone at that agency or on the board of that foundation. A known quantity is always a safer bet for a funder than an unknown, so use your connections. A broad representation on your advisory board also shows your status in the community and ability to work collaboratively.

4. ***Registered voters can be 20% of getting funded.*** Politics can and does play a role in grant awards. Show that you have community support.



5. **Letters of support should be real.** Make sure the letters demonstrate clear knowledge of the activities and success of your agency, and get them from sources important to the funder. Letters of

recommendation should be customized for the specific grant. They should acknowledge the need, mention that the service will not duplicate something already existing, and speak to the strength of the organization.

Don't forget the NYS Unified Court System when collecting letters of support. Particularly because CASA assignments come only through Family Court, the endorsement of that system for your grant request can be critical.

6. **Your issue and agency must have a constituency.** You must not hoard the issue. Show that you are a team player with others concerned about your cause. Tell the funder you will share the results of your project with others interested in replicating it. That gives them a greater reach for their dollars.

7. **Ninety percent of a grant should be done before you find the funder.** Zocklein talked about the "Table" that every not for profit should have (List of Table items attached.) These are templates for the key elements of a grant. So if you get a last minute notice of a grant opportunity, it should mostly be the project description and budget that you are working on; the rest should be on file.

8. **You must import money.** Few funders want to be your sole funder. They want to see that you attract funds from a variety of sources, and that you either currently have the capacity to continue the project beyond the term of their grant, or have the capacity to raise those dollars in the future. It is very appealing to go to a funder with a project for which you have already identified some resources.

You may have a project that warrants funding from outside of your area, from regional, statewide or national organizations. Just remember to follow the State CASA Resource Development Protocol regarding notifying other CASA programs that you are interested in applying on their "turf". It's wise to check with both the State Association and NYS UCS CASA Assistance Program regarding initiatives they may have underway to secure statewide or federal funding for a project, and to enlist their help in connections to those entities.

9. **Bring the funder to you.** Invite the funder to visit your offices, meet your staff, board and volunteers, see first hand what you do.

10. **Involve the media in the issue and in the grant.** Attached positive press reports (if attachments are allowed) and make sure you well publicize the receipt of grants. Credit your funder at public events.

11. **Don't take no for an answer.** If your grant is rejected, contact the funder to get feedback on how to improve the proposal for resubmission. It can be very important – and profitable – to try, try again. There are funders who routinely do not accept submissions on the first try. They want to see that you are committed to a project and are responsive to their suggestions for revision.



NEW YORK STATE UNIFIED COURT SYSTEM • DIVISION OF COURT OPERATIONS

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OFFICE OF ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION AND COURT IMPROVEMENT

12. ***Keep it Simple.*** Once you understand what the funder wishes to support, simply answer the questions posed on the application in an honest, straightforward way, putting your best foot forward. Be open to constructive feedback, and once the money starts rolling in, do what you said you were going to do and keep the funder apprised that you are doing it.

Good luck, and happy grant writing!

For further information, contact the NYS Unified Court System, Division of Court Operations
Office of Alternative Dispute Resolution and Court Improvement

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