

# Things to Know Before Hiring a Grant Writer for Your Nonprofit

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One of the benefits of being a nonprofit is the surplus amount of grants available. Many organizations have a problem finding them and having enough time to fill out the applications. Depending on the grant type, these applications can run from one or two pages to over sixty. If your nonprofit has no or little staff, finding time to apply for a grant can be close to impossible.

Plus, writing a grant application requires years of experience, understanding of the process, and skills. It's not something you can have done by any staff or writer. The best idea for these organizations is to hire a grant writer. Quality grant writers can give nonprofits a leg up on the competition.

## 3 Unmissable Benefits of Hiring a Grant Writer for Your Nonprofit

Flawless writing of your grant applications isn't the only reason why you need grant writers in your nonprofit organization. There are more. Let's have a look at them here.

### 1. They have a better understanding of grant writing rules

Every grant will have its set of rules that you, as a nonprofit, need to adhere to. These rules are usually listed on the website. It might be a lot for you or your staff to make sense of all these rules and apply them to your grant application. The result – rejection of your application! But when you hire a professional, they are trained and skilled to understand and apply these writing rules. A good grant writer will save you the time and effort of adhering to strict grant writing rules.

## **2. They will find out the best opportunities for your nonprofit**

Most grant writers are excellent researchers too. They have the knowledge and the research skills that one needs to understand which grant opportunities are the best for a particular nonprofit. You can trust them to have a hard look at all the facts and let you know if you should invest time and effort in a grant or not.

## **3. They will increase your chances of winning the grant**

Writing and applying for grants can be quite a task for you and your inexperienced staff members. That often results in inadequate and incomplete grant applications. Plus, you must admit you cannot write as flawlessly and convincingly as a professional grant writer would. Hence, it is advisable that you increase your chances of winning the grant by hiring an adept grant writer.

## **What to Look for in a Grant Writer**

Many nonprofits search for grant writers with high success rates. That may seem like the best choice, but the success factor is often based more on the relationship between the organization and the funder. So here are a few things nonprofits should look for in a grant writer.

### **1. Skills**

The grant writer you need must have writing, research, and people skills. They should be able to research the right grant opportunities for your nonprofit, work with people inside the organization to gather data to support the application, and write flawlessly to ensure you win. It is imperative that they understand grant writing rules and apply them effectively while preparing the grant application.

### **2. Experience**

Writing for a grant is different than other forms of writing. Grants cannot have any grammatical errors, they should communicate clearly, and persuade the audience. Many grant applications will require the grant to follow a specific format, so a grant writer must also follow directions.

**Pro tip:** Look for an experienced writer in your field. If your nonprofit is in healthcare or an environmental field, you may want to find a grant writer with experience making complex terms easy to understand.

### **3. Examples and references**

One of the best ways to learn about a writer's experience is by asking for examples and references. Grant writers should have a portfolio that includes different types of grants they have written and their success rates. If a grant writer does not include references in their portfolio, you should ask for them before hiring the writer. Their examples and references can provide you with answers to the following questions:

- The quality and success of their written grants
- How clearly do they communicate?
- The diversity of their experience in writing grants

### **4. Certification**

Although certification is not necessary, it may give you peace of mind that the writer has been trained in all areas of grant writing. There are several different certification options, but the best known is the Certified Grant Writer with the American Grant Writers' Association. This website provides training and certification options for writers and is a source for nonprofits with lists of grant writers in your area.

### **5. Reasonable pay rate**

Nonprofits can hire grant writers as full or part-time staff members or look for freelance professionals with experience writing grants. Freelance grant writers may be the best option for most smaller nonprofits because you can find experienced grant writers at affordable prices.

It may be tempting to find the cheapest writer possible, but remember, you get what you pay for.

### **6. Ability to write different grant types**

Before hiring a grant writer, you may want to research the different types of grants available. If your nonprofit wants to apply for more government or NEA grants, hiring a writer with experience writing this type of grant is essential.

## **How Much Can it Cost You to Hire a Grant Writer?**

It depends. You can hire a grant writer on an hourly basis or you can pay them a flat rate per grant. Some nonprofits even pay their grant writer a retaining fee for a specific amount of time. The cost varies accordingly. Depending on experience, certificates acquired, and skillset, grant writers charge about \$35 per hour to \$125 per hour. The retaining fee, however, can range from \$2500/month to \$10,000/month.

**Pro tip:** It is advisable that you do not hire commission-only grant writers. They usually charge a certain percentage of your grant amount if/when you win it. It is not ethical and you place your organization at the risk of losing the grant amount altogether. There can be other legal consequences as well.