Grants are gifts given by an organization to support a project, program, or research. This handout will help you write grant proposals.

Basic Information

What is a Grant Proposal?
Grant proposals are written requests for funding. Each funding organization will have specific requirements for their applicants, therefore the format and length of proposals will vary. For example, some organizations will require a letter of inquiry before submitting a full proposal, while others will not.

In addition, some organizations will evaluate proposals and appropriate funding on a rolling basis, while others establish a specific deadline for reviewing applications. As a result, it is important to become familiar with the funding organization and carefully comply with application instructions.

Who Awards Grants?
Grants are most often awarded by charitable foundations, individuals, corporations, local businesses, and local and federal government agencies.

Who Applies for Grants?
Anyone can apply for a grant as long as the applicant meets the requirements laid out by the funding organization.

Note: Because those applying for grants and their projects, programs, and research are so diverse, this handout will use the terms “applicant” and “project.” Know that the information contained in this guide is meant to be general and can be used as a support when writing a grant for any funding organization.

Elements of a Grant Proposal

Letter of Inquiry
A letter of inquiry is a preliminary step to applying for a grant. It is particularly important if the relationship between the prospective grantee and the funding organization is new.

The letter is a “sneak peak” or mini grant proposal that allows the prospective funding organization to get feedback on eligibility and project design before using time and resources to write a full grant proposal. The letter of inquiry is a formal letter that addresses several key points:
• Your organization’s mission
• The need that your organization has identified
• The outcomes that you expect from the implementation of your project
• General details about your project
• The potential fit between your organization’s mission and that of the funding organization

**Executive Summary**

An executive summary is similar to an abstract for a research paper. It is a summary of the grant proposal and is designed to convince the funding organization that the project is important and worth their consideration. If the funding organization requires a letter of inquiry, the points addressed in the executive summary are woven into the letter.

When writing an executive summary, certain information should be included:

• The problem or need that your organization has identified
• A description of your project as a solution to the problem
• The funding requirements of the project and if applicable, how it is sustainable
• A description of your organization and its expertise in addressing the stated problem

**Need Statement**

The purpose of this statement is to answer the question, “What is the problem that needs to be addressed?” This statement will set the framework for the rest of the proposal. A need statement will provide evidence, such as statistical facts, expert views, or qualitative interviews, to demonstrate that there is indeed a problem or need and that your project will address it.

Be certain to answer the “5 Ws” (*Who, What, When, Where, and Why*):

• *Who* is in need?
• *Where* are they?
• *What* is the problem?
• *Why* is there a problem?
• *When* is the problem evident?
• *What* will happen if the need is met or not met?

**Goals**

Goals are large, broad statements about what you hope to achieve. They can be set at the individual, program, or organizational level. Goals can be non-specific and non-measurable, but they should provide vision and focus and relate to your need statement.

**Incorrect:** Students who visit UMB’s Writing Center will write.

**Correct:** Students who visit UMB’s Writing Center will become better writers.

**Incorrect:** Adults will use blue kickboards when swimming across the Chesapeake Bay.
Correct: Adults who complete the Speedo Fit Program will be able to swim across the Chesapeake Bay.

Objectives
Objectives are realistic steps that are taken to achieve a goal. Because they are action steps, objectives should be always be active and use strong action verbs. Additionally, objectives should always be **SMART**: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound. Each goal should have at least one, but not more than, three objectives.

Incorrect: Goal: There is a playground within walking distance for all children in Baltimore City.
Objective 1: Construct 14 playgrounds in Baltimore City.

Correct: Goal: There is a playground within walking distance for all children in Baltimore City.
Objective 1: Increase the access to playgrounds for children in Baltimore City by constructing two playgrounds each year over the next seven years.

Incorrect: Goal: Gable Middle School will create a time capsule that will be opened in 100 years.
Objective 1: Students will put items in the time capsule next Monday.
Objective 2: A burial ceremony will be held.

Correct: Goal: Gable Middle School will create a time capsule that will be opened in 100 years.
Objective 1: By June 15, 2014, at least 20 students and 5 teachers will contribute one object that they would like to share with students and teachers 100 years in the future.
Objective 2: By June 30, 2014, at least 20 students and 5 teachers will participate in the time capsule burial ceremony where they will demonstrate their understanding of the importance of preserving school history by presenting the object that they would like to be included in the capsule and explaining why they chose that item.

Beneficiaries
Funding organizations want to know how many people will be positively impacted by the completion of the project. Grant beneficiaries are people who will benefit. They can be **direct** or **indirect**.

Example: If a grant is written to obtain funding for breast cancer research, the **direct beneficiaries** of the research are people diagnosed with breast cancer. **Indirect beneficiaries** may be people who are genetically susceptible to breast cancer.

Example: If a grant is written to construct a new playground, the **direct beneficiaries** are young children. Young children that will be born in the near future can be considered **indirect beneficiaries**.

Project Implementation Timeline
When writing a grant, it is important to define the steps of the project and establish a timeline for when tasks can be expected to be completed. As you draft your timeline, indicate who will be responsible for the completion of each task. It is also a good idea to have more than one person who is responsible for the completion of each task.
### Sample Project Implementation Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Tasks</th>
<th>Persons Responsible</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 1</td>
<td>Distribute flyers about parent meeting</td>
<td>Homeroom teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 9</td>
<td>Meet with elementary school parents</td>
<td>Mrs. Rose, principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mr. Tesh, vice principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 10</td>
<td>Distribute collection envelopes</td>
<td>Ms. Johnson, secretary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ms. Bailey, secretary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Plan

Funding organizations want to know that the projects they fund will be completed and the impact they have on addressing identified needs. **Monitoring** refers to checking the progress that a project is making toward achieving its goal. Monitoring should be ongoing and, at times, may require remedial action or an update to the project implementation timeline. Monitoring the overall progress of a project is often delegated to the project leader.

**Evaluating** is different because it usually comes after the completion of the project and assesses its efficiency, relevance, impact, and sustainability. Conclusions drawn from the project evaluation can be applied to other projects in the future.

All M&E plans include success indicators that answer the question “How will I know that the project was successful?” Success indicators relate to the project’s goals and objectives.

**Example:**  
**Goal:** Children in Baltimore City will have better access to playgrounds.  
**Objective 1:** Increase the access to playgrounds for children in Baltimore City by constructing two playgrounds each year over the next seven years.  
**Success Indicator:** Two playgrounds are constructed each year over the next seven years.  
**Evaluation Plan:** Construction rates will be compared against the project implementation timeline.

**Example:**  
**Goal:** Children in Baltimore City will visit playgrounds more often.  
**Objective 1:** Within one month of a neighborhood playground being constructed, the frequency of playground visits by local 1st and 2nd graders will increase by 15%.  
**Success Indicator:** The frequency of neighborhood playground visits will increase by 15% within one month of the construction of a neighborhood playground amongst 1st and 2nd graders.  
**Evaluation Plan:** One month before the start of playground construction in each neighborhood, 1st and 2nd graders from the nearest elementary school will be surveyed to find out how often they visit a playground. The results from this survey will establish a baseline for the number of visits before the implementation of the project. One month after the playground has been constructed, the same 1st and 2nd graders will be surveyed again asking how often they visit a playground. This pre-post survey method will demonstrate the impact of the construction of additional playgrounds.
**Budget**

Most funding agencies will state the range of funds that are available and the size of a typical grant. It is never advisable to request more than the stated maximum grant amount.

*Example:* Range: $100 to $500; Typical grant size: $400

Some funding agencies will require that a percentage of the total cost of the project be contributed by the direct and indirect beneficiaries. Support for a project that is not cash—such as donations of staff time, space and utilities, volunteer hours, and products—are known as **in-kind support**. In-kind support is important because it demonstrates that the direct and indirect beneficiaries in the community are invested in the completion of the project.

When writing a budget, itemize each expected expense and indicate whether it will be covered by grant funds or in-kind support.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample Budget</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Item/Service</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Swing set (2 swings, 1 slide)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 truck-load of mulch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delivery of swing set (gas, mileage)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delivery of mulch (gas, mileage)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Installation of swing set (3 workers, 3 hours, $15.00/hour)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spreading of mulch (2 workers, 2 hours, $15.00/hour)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Budget Narrative**

The budget narrative section is where you explain how you developed your project’s budget. Here you should include justification for each of your expenses, whether costs are exact or estimated, and information about other funding sources for the project if applicable. Documents such as signed estimates may provide additional budget justification support.

*Example:* Based on the space available and the proximity of the playground to an elementary school, swing set S989-A from Home Depot is a reasonable size and is age appropriate for the project’s direct beneficiaries. Attached you will find an estimate of the cost of the swing set and labor for its installation. Grant funds will used for the swing set and its installation. Home Depot charges $45 for equipment delivery but a community member has volunteered to do this. In order to prevent mud and provide children with a soft play area and prevent injuries, mulch was determined to be the most appropriate ground cover material. Based on the dimensions of the playground area,
one truck-load of mulch purchased from King Mulch for $70 is sufficient for 3” of mulch cover. A volunteer will use their vehicle to deliver the mulch to the playground location, a $35 in-kind donation, and two volunteers will spread the mulch. Fifteen dollars per hour is the average hourly rate for such work. Two volunteers will work for an estimated two hours to spread the mulch, resulting in a $60 in-kind donation. Beyond community members’ in-kind donations, no additional funding sources will be used for the completion of this project. The total cost of the project is $1,312.00 with $140.00, or 10.67%, of the project contributed by community members; $1,172.00 represents the total amount of requested grant funds.

References