

AOC Grant Program Grant Application Narrative Tips and Tricks

1. **Organize your ideas.** Read and reread the funder's guidelines so that you are providing exactly what the funder wants. Then, organize your writing by creating an outline for your grant narrative or proposal. For some writing projects, writing whatever comes to mind first works, but, for a grant proposal, you will save time by carefully outlining what you will write and in the order that you will write it. Not only does this keep you organized by creating a sort of “road map” for you to follow as you progress through the project, but it is rewarding to check off sections of the outline as you finish them.
2. **Stay on track.** It may be helpful to create a “timeline” for yourself in order to ensure you give yourself plenty of time to complete and edit your application narrative. Keep in mind that you will likely have more than one person involved in the grant application process; you’ll want to make sure you allow enough time for everyone involved to complete his or her portion adequately.
3. **Avoid jargon.** Be mindful of the language and wording you use. Jargon can be alienating to readers and may cause readers to lose interest in your court. Avoid using any terminology that is commonly used only within your court.
4. **Use active voice.** A good general rule of professional writing is to use “active” rather than “passive” voice. In a sentence written in *active voice*, the subject of the sentence performs the action while, in a sentence written in *passive voice*, the subject receives the action. Active voice allows you to be succinct and to the point in your writing and helps clearly convey your point to the reader.
5. **Don't exaggerate.** Your writing needs to convey your passion for the project but be sure to keep your representation of the problem and the solutions realistic. Describe manageable problems and propose doable solutions. Don't promise more than you can deliver, and provide specifics and facts to support your claims.
6. **Simplify.** The length and complexity of your proposal does not affect the amount of money you may receive. Thus, stick to the main points, eliminate wordiness or irrelevant details, and present your ideas as concisely as possible. Don't try the patience of your readers. Short and succinct will win them over. Simplicity should be apparent in your format choices as well. Use Times New Roman, size 12 font unless the application instructions specifically call for something else.
7. **Revise, edit and clarify.** After writing the best draft you can, put it aside and let it “cool” for a few days. Then go back, reread the document, and ask yourself the following questions: “Does it make sense?” “Are there gaps?” “Is the language used appropriate and the grammar and punctuation correct?” Have one or two other people, who are willing to give you honest feedback, read the proposal and provide suggestions, ask questions etc. You may also want to try reading the proposal out loud to someone. Sometimes reading aloud will indicate areas where the wording is awkward or your ideas become confusing and/or incomplete. Finally, go back and read the funder's guidelines again. Have you done what they asked?

For additional information and suggestions, please refer to *Writing for Business and Pleasure* by Stephen Wilbers – (www.wilbers.com).