

10 Tips for Writing Good Narratives for Educational Grant Applications

01

Answer the question

There is nothing wrong with rewording the question to make sure you answer it concisely! Reintegrating the questions into your answer not only keeps you focused on answering the question, but it highlights to the reviewer that you're serious about meeting their expectations while staying concise. Nothing is more frustrating for a reviewer than to read through an answer to a question that doesn't answer anything.

02

Be concise in your explanation

Every answer to every question must be concise and clear to the point where the reviewer would have no confusion about your project and its goals. This can be difficult to do, especially if there is much you want to accomplish through your project. The key is confidence and simple grammar - If A leads to B and B leads to C, A is worth implementing. Simple rationalization of your project and its goals/outcomes/sustainability is easy to do when you keep the leading question in mind.

03

Be comprehensive in your justification

When providing justification for your project (i.e. "how is your project different from other projects being offered at your school, if any?"), approach your answers from multiple directions. The grantor wants to know that you've thought through every potential result. It wouldn't necessarily be a bad thing to mention potential obstacles if you have solutions prepared to share! Be realistic in your goals and expectations, but be optimistic in your tone. Grantors respect honesty and confidence and won't support a project if its leaders cannot confidently justify why it's needed.

04

Highlight the data

Data is extremely important to educational grantors. Try to supply demographics, statistics, and evaluations about your project. If you want to pilot a new program at your school, be sure to include what sort of data you hope to gather by the end of the project. In the long run, the data you collect will help you tremendously with applications for other funders. Consider the outcomes of your project and how you might evaluate them - what sort of data could you collect as those outcomes are being met and evaluated? If your students struggle with multiplication, for example, consider pre-testing them prior to the project and post-testing them after to determine change in student achievement!

05

Highlight the commitment for the project

It is crucial to highlight that everyone at your school who would be affected by this project is on board, including other teachers, administrators (principal/superintendent), curriculum director, intervention specialists, and parents. Share this information with the grantor! This can take the form of an official Letter of Support, but explaining who is willing and able to commit to supporting this project is worth including in your proposal narrative - this gives the grantor confidence that there won't be communication hiccups during the project's actual implementation.

06

Highlight the sustainability of the project

Grantors love knowing that their contribution to your project will last well beyond the timeline allotted for the funds/project. The sustainability of your project depends quite a bit on the project itself and its outcomes. If you're worried that your project would be more of a "one-off" and not offer long-term impact, consider adding teacher PD to your project. The training of teachers lasts years and directly affects students over time.

07

Restate and revisit your project goals

In a similar vein to steps two and three, there is no problem restating your project goals throughout your application (as long as it's relevant to the context of the question you're answering). Doing so keeps you as a writer focused on what's most important, and to the grantor, such a move illustrates consistency and commitment.

08

Remember your voice - formal and human

All grant applications should tend towards the "formal" side of writing styles, though you should never lose your voice in your writing. Grantors do not want to hear from a robot - they want to hear from you, which is great because you're a teacher who knows exactly what is needed in your classroom! Be honest about what your students/school/district needs, and don't be afraid to include moments of passion and 'calls to action'. It is also worthwhile to consider the traditional modes of persuasion, which can really amplify your ability to persuade the reviewer to seriously consider your application. The modes of persuasion are logos, ethos, and pathos. Logos is an appeal to logic - persuading an audience by reason. Answer each question rationally, including logical steps to achieving your goals (e.g. if implementing A leads to B, and B is a positive outcome for students, the implementation of A creates positive outcomes for students). Ethos is an appeal to ethics - convincing someone of the character, credibility, or reliability of the persuader. As a teacher, there isn't much you personally have to do to convince the grantor that you're credible or of good moral character, but your reliability and leadership can be amplified if you share your previous project successes or awards. The idea here is to prove to the grantor that you/your school would be able to easily complete the project and meet expectations. Pathos is an appeal to emotion - convincing an audience of an argument by creating an emotional response. One's voice can really shine when emotion is involved, but in terms of a grant proposal, highlighting the need of your project can achieve this end. If students are struggling and need help, illustrate the specifics! Include your school's current achievement scores/data/demographics. Such an appeal tells the grantor that (1) you're passionate about the project, (2) that changes do in fact need to be made, and (3) your project can make those changes.

09

Keep your grammar consistent

Inconsistent or incorrect grammar, spelling mistakes, and informal styles can be eyesores for reviewers. Depending on the grantor, these errors can be viewed as sloppy and unprofessional. Be sure to double-check your narrative prior to submission. It's never a bad idea to also have a third-party individual review the narrative with fresh eyes.

10

Use keywords from the grantor

It's always worth it to go the extra mile to make sure that you include keywords from the grantor's website/priority areas in your answers. Grantors want to make sure that what they're funding aligns perfectly with their own vision and values, so the best way to do so (and keep you focused on your writing) is to include those same keywords. If the grantor is interested in supporting innovative SEL programs, be sure to include the keywords "SEL" and "innovative/innovation" throughout your application. Chances are the reviewer has a rubric in hand that they will use to grade each of your responses. These rubrics are hardly ever available to applicants, but your best chance of understanding that rubric are the priority funding areas highlighted by the grantor itself, which can usually be found on the grantor's website, newsletter(s), or even the application!