

Not So Fast!

(Things to consider before you start writing that grant proposal)

Does the purpose of the grant funding match your school or district priorities?

If you don't know, you must find out before you decide to pursue this funding opportunity. Here's why: If the project doesn't fit in with school/district priorities, it's much harder to get administrative support and successfully implement project activities.

Is there enough interest and support to fully implement the proposed project?

Who is passionate and committed enough to be part of this project from start to finish? Do you have a "critical mass" of support from different levels in the school/district? Here's what sometimes happens...one or two individuals get excited and develop a project, but don't have much support from anyone else. Those projects have a slim chance of succeeding, and practically no possibility of being sustained. If you don't have broad support yet, work on getting support this year, and apply for funding at a later time.

Here's a common scenario to avoid:

Someone in the school or district reads the application and decides to apply for funding for their pet project – even if it doesn't really meet the grant guidelines. They end up spending lots of time trying to make their project fit, and the reviewers see right through it. The pet project doesn't get funded, and everyone has wasted precious time.

Do you have the infrastructure and/or expertise to conduct required evaluation activities?

Evaluation is required in most grant proposals. Take time to understand the degree and complexity of evaluation required. If your school or district doesn't have enough evaluation expertise, you can contract with an outside expert to get help. Be sure to get this person on board *before* you start developing your project. Their input will impact the project design and implementation, and you'll need to include their fee in the budget.

How much time do you have to put the proposal together?

Strong proposals don't happen in a burst of inspiration! It takes time to decide on the outcomes you hope to achieve and then develop a project capable of reaching those outcomes. Factor in all of these variables:

- time to get a broad-based group together to develop your project;
- time to write a first draft and have others review it;
- time to rewrite the proposal based on reviewer input;
- time to develop a budget;
- time to get the final proposal through your school/district protocol.

Start early!