

Grants 101

with [Sarah Wilson](#)

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Gathering the right data to write a grant

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According to Denise Schlegel, Supervisory Instructor at NCTC and Grants Consultant with Allutiq, grants are defined as "a negotiation through analysis, skill in problem solving, professionalism through project design and lots of good, old fashioned effort." Most of the effort Denise refers to happens in the preparation for the grant. Defining your organization by taking basic data about your department, the community you serve and trends in call statistics can build the basis for a successful grant application.

The first thing you will need to do before writing your proposal is gather the documentation or data to support your proposal request. If you are part of a small department with no staff, a knowledgeable chief, city leader or board member are the logical resource for this information. If you are in a larger agency, there should be administrative, operational and financial support staff that can help you.

Below is a step-by-step breakdown of data you should collect prior to beginning your grant project. This information is useful for all organizations in the data collection process and can be the starting point for all future grant applications.

Mission Statement/Vision Statement

It is important that you have a good sense of how the grant project fits with the mission and vision of your agency. A mission statement should clearly define your organizations purpose whereas a vision statement describes a realistic desired outcome of your organization. Collecting background data on your organization and on the needs to be addressed will help document your arguments for funding. Funders want to know that a project they might fund reinforces the overall direction of your public safety organization.

Strategic Plan

Individual public safety agencies may not have their own strategic plan, but the community, county, or city you service should have one. Most chambers of commerce have a strategic plan as do offices of emergency services. Make sure you get a copy of the plan to find out where your service fits and more importantly if you are set up to respond accordingly. A lot of organizations you work with have already done the strategic planning — so tap into that work.

Demographics

The demographics of your response area are going to be a substantial data resource within your grant application. You have more than likely drawn conclusions about why your area has seen an increase in call volume — demographic trends will help support these conclusions. To research and describe the demographics of the community you serve — population, economy, geography, and community issues — you can find from [American Fact Finder](#).

Decision Makers and Financing

In order to get anywhere with grants you need to know who to know in order to get support for your project. The decisions in your department could be made by your chief, a commission, a board of directors or even city leaders. Try to find out who makes the decisions for programs and equipment and how that selection is made. These decisions should be based on the community needs, department needs or ideally both. The final decision maker should be the person who signs your grant — make sure you have access to them.

Many of the private foundations will request copies of an organizational chart, biographies and current job descriptions. At a minimum you should include the decision-makers and their direct reports. Generally human resources or administrative personnel can assist you with obtaining this information.

All grant applications will ask for a project budget. You will need to show why you do not have budget for this grant project. Before you do that, do some due diligence on how your department is financially supported. How is your operating budget financed? Is it through taxes, bonds, donations? Make sure you get a copy of your most recent annual budget from your chief, accounting department or city manager.

Community Services and Grant History

Your department is providing a number of services to your community. These could

include K9, Narcotics, SROs, First response, Disaster Response, etc. Make a list of all the services your organization currently provides or is expected to provide.

Find out if any programs have been the result of grants funding and if any community organizations were included as part of this project. This will help you figure out your organizations grant history and if you have ever been funded before. You should have an idea at this point as to what other funders have given your organization money — private donations, corporate donations or other state or federal funds.

Equipment

Think about the equipment and new programs that are of interest to your organization. Prioritize them in a list. Now, what equipment in this list will you need to make your grant project successful? Equipment included as part of a grant application should directly assist in solving the problem in your community you are addressing.

Sustainability

Last and most importantly, think about how your organization will sustain/fund the new equipment or program after the grant. Talk to the person who manages the department budget. You want to make sure your department considers the budget beyond the grant funding timeframe and build in funding for things like replacements, insurance costs, training, upgrades or repairs.

Conclusion

While tedious and a bit time consuming, this data-gathering process makes the actual grant writing much easier. Involving other vested interest parties in the process helps key people within your agency seriously consider the project's value to the organization.

If you are interested in a worksheet to help you gather this information email me your request: sarah.wilson@policegrantshelp.com