

Online Applications

Introduction
Background
How To...
Basic Steps
Examples





ABOUT ONLINE APPLICATIONS

About Online Applications

Growth of OA's



- One in four funders with funding over \$1 million use online applications
- One in three corporate funders with funding over \$2 million use online applications
- Strong use where employees (not upper management) have a say in the grantmaking
- Most regional associations of grantmakers have a **common grant application** that is downloadable
- Not common among smaller funders yet – family foundations and those with interest in “high touch”



More About Online Applications

- OA's are like online hiring forms
 - Computer vetting rather than human vetting
 - Basic Need: connections and concepts
 - Differences in language and grammar

Different OA Purposes



- Provide basic information without human labor
- Eliminate all undesirable grantees
 - Do not meet basic criterion – geo, interest area, npo
- Eliminate several “close call” grantees
 - “Flexible elimination” evaluation tools
 - Meet all criterion, but not closely enough

Different purposes for different types of funders



- **Business**

- Encourage multiple connections with the corporation
 - Sales
 - Goodwill
 - Test marketing

- **Large Nationals**

- Eliminate non-feasible applicants
- Allow multiple staff to view, judge and share comments

- **Locals**

- Share information with applicants
- Share information with trustees



More Purposes

- Permit a relationship to go forward -- LOI
- A final decision-making platform
- Allow quick judgments with no paperwork rejections
- Allow several staff to evaluate without paperwork
- “Test market” certain consumer and community values, demographics, and concepts (Hispanics?)

Six Types of Online Application Formats



- **Download** information and instructions
- **Download** information and form – MN Common Grant application
- Question by Question **Qualification** – Very basic qualification questions – *e.g., are you a nonprofit?*
- **Permission** to submit an LOI
- **Upload** answers with strong limits – *answer these questions in 50 characters or less and nothing else*
- **Upload** with few limits – your proposal in boxes

Three Types of Limitations



- Online Funder limits qualifiers to:
 - Their very specific program (training for our curriculum, using our technology)
 - A specific program with general parameters (adult literacy, financial literacy, obesity)
 - The same qualifications as their general funding parameters/criteria



BASICS FOR GRANTSEEKERS

Grantseeker Keys to Online A's

Preparation is all



- Know the questions
- Know the funder's language
- Know the answer limitations
- Know your own program's unique features
- Know good verbs



Use their language and concepts

- Read their website
- Remember THEIR words and concepts
- How do they match your words and concepts
- Remember they want to promote their agenda – not yours

Simple language and sentences



- Remember a computer is reading your final draft
- Remember there are several hundred competitors
- Remember readers have very limited time

Simple demographic, need and evaluation data



- Very simple concepts
- How many kids, how many are kids of color
- How many other vulnerable populations – that they specifically sight in grants and guidelines
- How many units of service will you provide
- What %s and \$s can you site in your evaluation

Simple program & request concepts are critical



- Must be unique, innovative and simple
- Must be memorable
- Must have basic 1-2-3 steps
- Must have simple requests – we need money for these two things – e.g., staff and transportation



Outlining and Formatting are critical

- Remember the computer
- Remember the reader's time limits and propensity to turn you down
- Remember the need for absolute clarity
- Remember the reader's need to remember you

Must have benefits for funder



- Funder must know there is something in it for us
- Simple invitation to attend
- Invitation to sponsor (name on event, name on brochures, name on webpage)
- Profuse thanks and opportunities to be thanked
- For private funders – a new, simple, replicable system or methodological aspect

Unique lead concept followed all the way through



- Remember reader's need to turn you down is greater than reader's need to say yes
- Remember *lack* of “memorability” is your greatest enemy
- Remember repetition is great tool to help reader remember



TEN BASIC STEPS For Online Applications

1. Select Your Funding Request



- General Operating
- General Program (after school program)
- Specific Program (girls' after school program)
- One-Time Specific Program (field trip, computers)

2. Select Prospective Funders for Your Program



- Traditional

- Pick 10-12 general prospects for your specific program
- Beyond general prospects – eliminate those with restrictions on time, money, language, geographics
- Eliminate those with the least potential for your program
- Send LOIs or proposals to best prospects

- Online

- Pick several 4-6 online prospects with some interests
- Write proposals or answers to go with these prospects
- Be prepared to send out 3-4 in one day/afternoon

3. Put Together an “At Hand” File



- Have a basic list of information available
 - **Cover piece information** – EIN, phone #s, budget
 - **Names:** Board members, Key Program Staff,
 - **Attachments** – budget detail, IRS letter, audit summary
 - **Proposal pieces** – organizational history, constituencies, program summaries



4. Look over the proposal, questions, framing of questions, limitations

- Are you a “quick fit”?
- If not, do you have another similar prospect in which you are a “quick fit” that you can use?
- Can you address your weaknesses & limitations in ways that look like they are your strengths?

5. Simplify and shorten your proposal language



- Simple, short declarative sentences
- Use Active verbs
- Fewer clarifying phrases (“...which is central to the program”)
- Tables, if they can be loaded correctly
- Outline format – I, A, 1, a, i
- Section or Paragraph headings

6. Try out the language



- on word document
- spell/grammar check
 - Use the readability stats in grammar check
- then upload through cut & paste

7. Upload and then Download



If possible, save, upload and then download the application to see if it works –

8. Get in the Swing of It

- Do 2-3 OA's in a 1-3 day period –



9. Connect Outside of OA



Try to call or email outside of OA

Did you get our application?

Did you have any questions?

Thanks for accepting our proposal

What can we do to improve chances next time?

10. Resubmit and Resubmit



- Unless the response is **definitively** and **eternally** “no”