

**BIGGER FASTER STRONGER**

**BFS**

*Dedicated to Helping Athletes  
Succeed Since 1976*

# HOW TO WIN A GRANT

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*If the major problem with your athletic program is money—or rather lack of it—consider writing a grant proposal*

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# How to Win a Grant

At BFS we understand that one of the biggest issues in improving your fitness program, and thus your winning record, is the budget. Despite exhaustive fundraising efforts, there just never seems to be enough money for the ideal equipment setup and all the training programs you want. And with local budgets being cut more each year, available funds just keep getting smaller. Sports programs are even being cut completely from school curricula.

*USA Today* reports that parents are now required to pay for extracurricular programs in some schools, from California and Michigan to Kansas, Missouri and Ohio. Payments are now often required for football, tennis, basketball and soccer programs, along with a variety of arts programs. These "Pay to Play" programs can cost parents

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**BFS Editor Kim Goss poses with Tim McCord, keynote speaker at the PE4Life Summit in Washington DC on May 4, 2004. McCord helped his school district receive a major grant for exercise equipment**

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hundreds and even thousands of dollars each year for their children to participate in what we have until now considered basic fitness rights of children in school. And this comes at the same time the government is emphasizing the health problems children suffer as a result of too little exercise.

How can a school get the best training and optimally outfit its gym in these tough times? How can you afford to buy needed equipment or get training, nutrition or character education assistance for your team or for your school? Have you considered a grant?

## A Grant? What's That?

A grant is an award of funds by a governmental or private organization to nonprofit organizations such as schools, churches and charitable groups. The bad news is that this usually means a one-time award, rather than ongoing funding for a program (efforts which, by definition, would be considered fundraising). The good news is that the amount of money available for qualifying programs is staggering.

In 2002 approximately 56,000 private US foundations awarded \$29 billion in grants, but that's peanuts compared to what various governmental agencies give. Altogether, there is about \$350 billion available, varying from grants of a few hundred dollars to those of several hundred thousand dollars. Grant funds have doubled in the past six years. Many middle schools have obtained grants in excess of \$300,000 from various organizations to purchase exercise equipment. Surely your program will fit the bill for an award of some of these funds. And because of the increasing interest in addressing obesity, pre-diabetic conditions and weak bones in children, more grants are being awarded all the time for programs addressing these issues.

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## How to Get a Grant

The most important factor in having your grant application approved is correctly matching up your needs with the qualifying needs set forth by the



award. Accordingly, it pays to carefully evaluate the available grants to find the short list of those for which your organization is clearly eligible.

Before beginning the application process, learn as much as you can about the various grants available to address your issues. If your school wants to implement a program to fight obesity, carefully choose a grant that addresses that particular problem.

You might, for example, decide that your school wants a comprehensive nutrition and fitness curriculum that educates students about the dangers of excess bodyfat and provides solutions for them to this ever-growing health crisis. Or, you may decide instead that your football team needs clear character and goal-setting principles addressed. Whatever your concerns, decide what type of program would specifically address them, and then start searching for the grant that best matches your needs.

Grants are available for programs to meet almost every conceivable need of youth organizations or schools: fitness training and exercise equipment, drug and alcohol education, self-esteem development, character education, obesity and diabetes management-the list is seemingly endless. Just find out what is available and is right for you.

Grant searches can be made on the Internet, in the library and at the bookstore. You will find a wealth of resources to help you put together your application and get funds coming your way. Spend your time finding a good grant match rather than on the time- and effort-intensive process of applying to a multitude of grants that are not well suited to your needs.

Once you have your short list, determine what the donors desire in the application. Contact them directly for this information or see what they have published on the Internet. Do they want you to fill out a form? Or do they want a complex, detailed, written proposal? This fact may help narrow down your list.

First, check the Internet to see if the donor's website provides the application information. In most cases you will find that to be the case. Usually the forms can be printed, then scanned and completed. In some cases, however, funders won't allow their forms to be replicated by scanning, requiring instead that the form be filled out by hand or a typewriter. (Choose a typewriter in this case-and good luck!)

If the information you need is not available

online, contact the donor directly for this information. Be prepared with specific questions concerning the information you require and request that an application packet be sent to you, if one is available.

Second, evaluate your choices for the format and depth of information required that will be most appropriate for your situation. While an application may be only a few pages, an extensive grant proposal will generally be a large packet of information provided to the donor, including a cover letter, a letter of intent, a budget, a detailed description of exactly how the program will be put into effect and evaluated for progress, and many attachments.

Government grants usually require the following: an application cover letter or form, a summary or abstract of your proposed program, a table of contents, a program narrative, a budget description (both general and specific) and various required forms and attachments. The attachments can be quite numerous or quite simple, depending on the type and complexity of the project you are proposing.

The description of the project should include specific information describing the problem you wish to address, the specific way you intend to address it, the equipment or materials the project requires, how the program will be implemented and how progress and success will be assessed. The budget will be a detailed and realistic projection of the program's anticipated expenses.

Foundations generally do not require as much detail as governmental grant agencies. An application for foundation funds might include a cover letter, a narrative describing the project and your organization, and a description of your specific funding request. Be prepared to provide extensive attachments to foundation applications, however, including assessment plans, a detailed description of your group structure and finances, and additional documents. For a template of basic foundation applications, see the Network of Grantmakers at [www.nng.org](http://www.nng.org) (click on "common grant application." You can also find other common grant applications at [www.fdncenter.org](http://www.fdncenter.org) (click on "Common Grant Applications").

Corporations require the least amount of documentation, generally only six or fewer pages. This may include a brief description of your organization, the problem you are attempting to address with the

corporation's funds, the program you have devised to address the issue, the cost of the program, and a closing statement. Some attachments will be necessary, including those demonstrating your group's nonprofit status, the budget for the proposed project, and details on your organization.

## Timing

Be prepared to set aside a reasonable period of time to put the application or proposal together. The process will include finding the most appropriate donor for your project, holding meetings to discuss and clarify the details of the program, writing the proposal or filling out the application form, collecting the necessary paperwork-reference letters, news articles, statistics and other items-to attach to the proposal, and carefully reviewing the proposal or applica-

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**Is this your idea of a perfect high school weightroom? If so, a grant can help you acquire the funds to build it.**

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tion for completeness, accuracy and neatness. It will likely be between six and forty pages, plus attachments.

The entire process can take from one to five months, depending on the complexity of the proposal as well as the scope of the proposed project. Generally, the more money available for the grant, the more extensive the application process will be. So, be sure to budget your time well and meet that deadline for submission! These deadlines are strict and exceptions are not made.

## Hiring a Writer

It is common for organizations that plan to apply for grants requiring time-consuming and complex proposals to enlist the aid of a professional grant

proposal writer. Such a person is experienced and skilled in putting together proposals and can show you the ropes of the whole process. Be prepared to pay for this service (generally on a pre-proposal basis), although lower-cost alternatives might be available to you. But a professional can be worth their weight in gold when large grants are on the line. A list of experienced grantwriters available on a freelance basis is available at The Foundation Center's website, [www.fdncenter.org](http://www.fdncenter.org). (The Foundation Center is an excellent resource for information regarding private grants. It provides general information concerning philanthropic projects, funders, grants available and the application process.)

On the other hand, do you know a college student who is a good technical writer? Do you have an

employee who might be able to become trained to do this type of work? Perhaps even a student wanting to benefit from the program could work on the proposal project for extra credit. Classes on writing grant proposals are often available at community colleges. Finally, consider a law student,

or even a lawyer with some extra time, who might have the ideal writing and analytical training to put together a persuasive proposal for you.

The fees to hire a writer will vary dramatically but will ultimately need to be agreed upon. Make sure the terms of your agreement are clear-that you have specified the type and approximate amount of work to be done, the applicable meetings and reviews required, specific deadlines to be met, when payments will be made and how, and the rate your organization and the writer have agreed upon. Get the agreement in writing and give a copy to the writer. Most grant proposal writing projects are paid on a per-project basis. But you must decide what works best for your group.



If you do hire a writer to do the proposal or application, you must still oversee the process. View your writer as an assistant in the process, but plan adequate meetings with him/her to assure that adequate progress is being made and that the writer clearly understands your objectives, concerns and deadlines. Review drafts of the proposal during the writing process. Carefully review the package to assure that it accurately describes what you and your staff want and intend. And please remember, grant proposal writers, while skilled at their profession, have no control over the donors' decision making process. No writer can guarantee that your proposal will win the grant, but a good one certainly improves your chances!

## More Tips

You might find it worthwhile to check with your local chamber of commerce or other community group supported by business. These groups may have a mentor available to assist you in clarifying your goals, preparing a statement describing your group, preparing a budget and writing other items or documents needed for your application or proposal. Check your phone book for these business support groups or do a local Internet search.

Pay attention to whether the donor wants an application or a proposal. Where an application form is requested, fill out the form and attach the requested supporting information. If you submit a proposal rather than following the donor's instructions, your request will be denied. The result will be the same should you submit only an application when a proposal is expected.

Remember to type the application. No matter how lovely your handwriting might be, stick with a professional, typed presentation. Keep a complete copy for your records. And be sure to overestimate the time required for mail delivery.

## Don't Forget...!

The great majority of donors will want your proposal to include information explaining how the benefits of the funds they give will be evaluated. They want to know they are making a difference. Let them know that you too care about results and are deter-

mined to both get and document the benefits.

For example, in fitness programs, results can be monitored by noting bodyfat percentages before, during and after participation in the program. Strength and endurance can likewise be tabulated. Just be sure to clearly explain how you intend to measure your results.

## Success!

The proposal with the closest match to the donor's guidelines, the clearest statement of the problem desired to be addressed with grant money, the best description of the program and desired benefits, and the most helpful evaluation protocol will win the grant. If your grant meets these requirements, you stand a very good chance of receiving that cash and getting your program started.

## How Can BFS Help?

BFS is taking steps to implement a program to assist schools and youth groups in obtaining the financing they need to start programs and procure equipment to make their athletic and education dreams come true. We will soon offer a service that will answer your questions about types of grants that might be available for your needs, how to apply for funds and what other resources are available, as well as offering assistance in drafting and submitting applications and proposals.

Although a few other organizations provide similar services, please be aware and beware of companies that offer to write your applications or proposals for you if you promise to buy their equipment. Some even offer overpriced equipment in exchange for an agreement to buy their equipment exclusively with the grant money after they write your proposal.

Concerning such a case, the Minnesota State Auditor's Office and Minnesota Attorney General recently investigated the appropriateness of a program that was sponsored by the National School Fitness Foundation (NSFF).

The NSFF sold an exercise program and equipment to more than 500 school districts around the US. It solicited agreements with the school districts in which the districts would pay between

\$200,000 and \$1 million, up front, for the program. In exchange, the NSFF sold the districts grossly overpriced exercise equipment and agreed to reimburse schools monthly, if possible, until the full purchase cost was repaid. Later, the NSFF wrote the districts informing them that due to "rapidly depleting revenue streams and donations" they would not make any more payments under the agreements, which admittedly required payments by the NSFF only as long as they were possible.

Under this apparent pyramid, or "Ponzi," scheme, the payments going out to the districts seemed to have come from initial payments of recently recruited school districts. In all, only \$38 million of the more than \$77.5 million collected was reimbursed. The Minnesota Department of Commerce and the Office of the Attorney General issued a cease and desist order against the NSFF. Recently, NSFF's president and owner pleaded guilty to bank, mail and wire fraud.

Clearly, it is important to pursue program and equipment funding with an eye toward avoiding scams and to be wary of being overcharged by vendors who might offer assistance in obtaining program and equipment funding. At BFS we are committed to assisting your school or youth group to acquire the best resources to meet your fitness, character and health goals, with absolutely no obligation to purchase BFS programs or equipment. Our goal is to promote fitness, character and health for all school children. Please contact us with any questions you might have.

## Funding Sources

The following is a list of just a few governmental programs, foundations, and corporate donors that give grants for physical fitness, health and nutrition, character education, and drug and smoking edu-

cation programs.

1. **Carol M. White Physical Education Program (PEP Grant).** The objective of this funding program is to improve physical education programs for children in grades kindergarten through 12th. The 2004 budget is \$70 million. [www.pe4life.org](http://www.pe4life.org). March is the application deadline.

2. **Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative.** This program supports the implementation of strategies encouraging safe and drug-free schools.

[www.ed.gov/programs/dvpsafeschools/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/programs/dvpsafeschools/index.html). The application deadline is July.

3. **Local Initiative Funding Partners.** Offers funds for projects directed at improving student and community health.

<http://www.lifp.org/html/apply/programdetails.htm>. 1. Deadline for submission of initial information is July.

4. **Aon Foundation.** Provides funding for projects directed at improving student and community

health. <http://edreform.com/info/grant.htm>.

The grant has rolling deadlines of April, July and October.

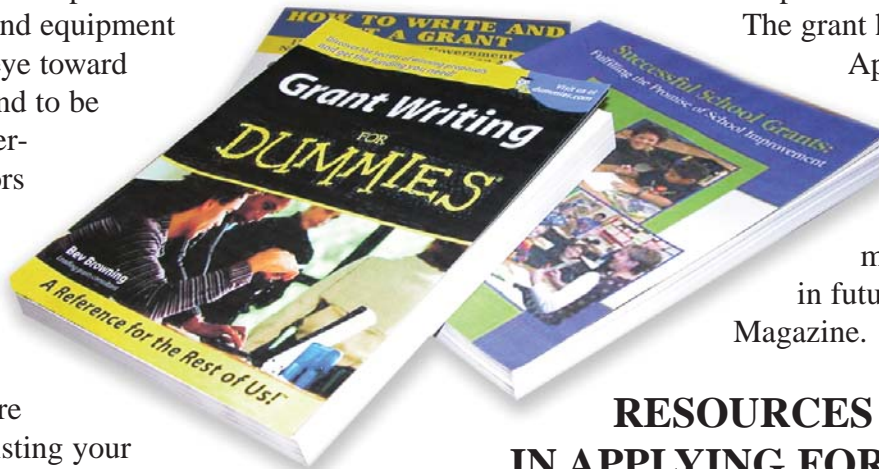
We will describe additional sources and updated deadline information on our website and in future issues of BFS

Magazine.

## RESOURCES TO ASSIST YOU IN APPLYING FOR A GRANT

The following are some resources providing additional information on obtaining grants. They provide specific recommendations and examples of successful proposal approaches, as well as a wealth of general information. Also see the American Association of Fundraising Counsel's website at [www.aafrc.org](http://www.aafrc.org).

1. *Getting Funded: The Complete Guide to Writing Grant Proposals*, by **Mark S. Hall and Susan Howlett (2003)**. This highly rated book clearly lays out strategies and tips for getting grants.



2. *The Only Grant Writing Book You'll Ever Need: Top Grant Writers and Grant Givers Share Their Secrets!* by **Ellen Karsh and Arlen Sue Fox (2003)**. This book gets high marks for its inside tips derived from interviews with grant makers.

3. *Getting a Grant*, by **Barbara Loos (Barnes and Noble Basics, 2003)**. An excellent overview of the process with specific pointers for various types of proposals.

4. *Proposal Planning and Writing, 3rd ed.*, by **Jeremy T. Miner and Lynn E. Miner**. This book is an in-depth guide with specific tips for proposal writing.

5. *The Complete Guide to Getting a Grant: How to Turn Your Ideas into Dollars*, by **Laurie Blum**. A book on the basics of applying for grants.

6. *Winning Grants: Step by Step, 2nd ed.*, by **Mim Carlson (The Alliance for Nonprofit Management)**. This workbook is highly rated because of its practical examples and helpful exercises that walk you carefully through the proposal writing process.

7. *Secrets of Successful Grantsmanship: A Guerilla Guide to Raising Money*, by **Susan L. Golden**. Another excellent guide. This one discusses the philosophy behind grants to give you a better understanding of how to win one and includes non-grant fundraising advice.

8. *Grant Writing for Dummies*, by **Bev Browning**. One of the excellent "For Dummies" series on every topic under the sun, this book breaks the grant proposal process into manageable chunks and mixes it all up with a bit of humor.

9. *Finding Funding: Grantwriting from Start to Finish Including Project Management and Internet Use*, edited by **Ernest W. Brewer, Charles Achilles, Jay R. Fuhrmann, and Connie Hollingsworth**.

10. *Demystifying Grant Seeking: What You Really Need to Do to Get Grants*, by **Larissa Golden Brown and Martin John Brown**. An outstanding guide based on substantial experience that takes you through the process to obtain a grant from setting up an office to signing off on the project.

11. *The Foundation Center's Guide to Proposal Writing*, by **Jane C. Geever and Patricia McNeill**. A "must-read" book for the proposal process. The third edition of this guide is available directly from The Foundation Center: [www.fdncenter.org](http://www.fdncenter.org).

You can find additional application and proposal writing resources in many places on the Web.

1. School Grants [www.schoolgrants.org](http://www.schoolgrants.org)
2. The Foundation Center [www.fdncenter.org](http://www.fdncenter.org)
3. National Network of Grantmakers [www.nng.org](http://www.nng.org)
4. Fundsnet Online Services [www.fundsnetser-vices.com](http://www.fundsnetser-vices.com)
5. Public Education Network [www.publiceduca-tion.org](http://www.publiceduca-tion.org)
6. Philanthropy News Digest: K-12 Funding Opportunities [www.fdncenter.org/funders](http://www.fdncenter.org/funders)
7. PEP Grant Information [www.pepgrant.info](http://www.pepgrant.info)
8. School Funding Center [www.schoolfunding-center.com](http://www.schoolfunding-center.com)
9. Grants Office [www.grantsoffice.com](http://www.grantsoffice.com)
10. Federal Resources for Educational Excellence [www.ed.gov/free](http://www.ed.gov/free)

Soon, more grant proposal information will be available on the BFS website at [www.BFS.com](http://www.BFS.com). Be sure to check our site and look for additional information, and contact us concerning questions on the process. While we can't guarantee that your proposal will be successful, with our help your chances should be greatly improved.

## GLOSSARY OF BASIC TERMS

**Application form.** A strict proposal format indicating exactly how a particular foundation or governmental agency wants the information to be presented and

submitted to obtain a grant. This often requires an extensive process of completing forms and describing the nonprofit organization, program, goals and budget.

**Cover letter.** A brief letter (typically one page) accompanying a grant proposal, introducing the proposed project and describing its relationship to the objectives of the funding organization.

**Donor** (also called a grantmaker, funder or grantor). A foundation, a corporation, an individual or a governmental agency that awards funds in the form of grants to philanthropic causes.

**Equipment grant.** A grant awarded for the purpose of purchasing major equipment to be used by a nonprofit organization.

**Foundation.** Usually a private organization or group that invests funds which are used to make grants to philanthropic causes.

**Grant proposal.** A document used for applying for grant funds from a corporation, governmental agency, foundation or individual donor. The proposal consists of a narrative describing a project for which funding is requested.

**Letter of intent** (or query letter). A letter sent by a nonprofit organization to a foundation and comprising a short version of a formal grant proposal. The letter of intent states the desire to send the full proposal to the donor and requests a response.

**Letter of request.** A letter setting forth the information usually contained in a proposal when a grantor has stipulated in its guidelines that this is the request form for submission.

**Mission statement.** A statement expressing the broad purposes of a nonprofit organization and normally comprising part of the organization's articles of incorporation.

**Nonprofit organization.** An organization having as its objective support of philanthropic causes which may not legally engage in any profit-making ventures

where the profits of such ventures are not entirely directed towards philanthropic causes.

**Objectives.** The section of a grant proposal naming the few specific objectives that a project is designed to address to meet a particular stated goal. The objectives are usually followed by a detailed description of the project details, describing how the particular objectives are to be met.

**Program** (or project). An enterprise undertaken to meet a philanthropic objective.

**Program activities.** A section of a grant proposal requesting support of the program or project and including a detailed description of how the project is designed to meet the particular objectives described in the proposal.

**Program grant.** A grant designed to fund a particular program or project of a nonprofit organization.

**Questionnaire.** A grant proposal format consisting of a list of various questions that provide the specific information the grantor has requested and where the questions are the proposal headings.

**Request for Proposal (RFP).** An announcement by the government describing new types of grants available and the benefits and application procedures for applying for the grants.

**Statement of need.** A section of the grant proposal that gives a brief statement describing the specific problem that the proposed project will attempt to remedy.



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