



Grant Writing—The Future of Orienteering?

Wendy Hellinger is the grants officer for Lafayette Parish School System. She has written a proposal that would bring professional training in Orienteering to the Physical Education teachers of twelve schools. As one who teaches grants writing at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette she shares some thoughts on grants writing. We would like more teachers to “go for the gold.”

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Project Grant Writing is an occupational hazard of teaching to most of us. It just isn't something that most of us would be anxious to get home to our significant others to announce. “Guess what, dear! I have just found out that I get to write up a long, tediously researched paper to people that I have never met begging for money!”

Most of us would run from the thought like a Florida Orienter that has just stumbled across a panther's den. Yet, there are definite rewards. “I have met such nice people through networking for this grant—this is the bonus of being the grants officer,” says Wendy.

This sport is becoming sufficiently known to attract interest. Orienteering, however, needs to be presented to and experienced by an ever larger portion of the population if it is to continue to grow. Teachers are in a unique position to provide those experiences.

“In Louisiana, as across America in recent years, there has been a renewed interest in physical fitness and exercise.”

Billions of dollars of grant funds are available nationwide—through federal, state, local, and family foundation grants. There are, as well, a considerable number of businesses and organizations that donate money and materials in less structured ways than formal grant-making.

In general, to qualify for grant funding,

your group or organization must either be a nonprofit (i.e., 501[c]3) organization, a public school, or a government entity. Sometimes it is possible to get such a qualifying grantee to sponsor your program. That means they are the fiscal agent; i.e., the ones who receive and disburse the grant money.

“Orienteering builds the key physical fitness activities that the President's Council (of Physical Fitness and Sports has identified as important for physical fitness. . .”

Generally speaking, the federal government is looking for projects that have wide impact, are able to be duplicated elsewhere, and that involve the community (beyond those immediately involved in the project).

State government grant proposals are often successful if there is considerable collaboration and participation by taxpayers in the project.

Many foundations are seeking to fund projects that will make major community improvements and that will generate publicity for the funding source. Businesses will donate funding if the outcome will positively impact the community in which the business operates or improves the future workforce for the business.

“Building academic competencies, integrating athletics and academics, and providing opportunities for students to work both independently and together as a team will improve the overall performance of students, physically, socially, and academically.”

The first step to being awarded a grant is writing a good proposal. It not only describes the organization's idea in an intelligent manner, but the proposal should include the pieces needed to show why the project you have developed is needed in the community and how it will operate.

Grant proposals must tell what you plan to do (in detail), who will do it, what the goal and objectives the project are, and explain how the organization will determine whether the project is successful. Explain your fiscal management plan and how funds will be accounted for.

“It is anticipated that additional schools will opt into the orienteering program in the future and this first year project in twelve district schools is viewed as a pilot for more extensive implementation of the orienteering program.”

You should also describe how the project will be sustained after grant funds have run out. Most grants are one, two, or (maximum) three year awards.

The needs statement, project goals and objectives, organizational background statement, evaluation plan and continuation plan—or the lack of any of these—determine whether your project will be selected to be funded.

“In orienteering, students combine intellectual pursuits with physical exercise, enabling students who are ‘thinkers’ to use their greatest gifts as surely as those who are more physically coordinated will benefit from their own talents.”

Your project should show innovation. It should be something different and should show a positive impact on the community in which it is taking place. Plus, you must show convincing evidence that the organization has the knowhow to run the project well.

Claims you make about the benefits of the project must be supported by research. You must sound as if you have actually done this research (which usually means you actually have to do it.) Applicants must also make it clear that the project is being done with, not to, the target population.

“Students who participate in orienteering report not only improved physical fitness but also increased self-confidence, improved problem solving abilities, and teamworking skills.”

Realize that you will be competing against professional grants writers when you submit your proposal. These people are often more experienced and have “the lingo” of grants writing at their fingertips. But a highly-motivated beginning grant writer is just as likely to get funded on a well-written proposal as a pro.

Go for it!

