

What Should you Know About Working with a Grants Consultant?

A grants consultant (also known as a grant writer or grant strategist among other titles) is a professional who helps organizations secure grant funding by providing strategic guidance and assistance throughout the grant-seeking process. **Most grant consultants provide a litany of services** including researching funders, prioritizing opportunities, managing timelines, assisting with program design, developing budgets, and of course writing and submitting proposals. Grants consultants are **experts in presenting program or project needs and descriptions** while keeping the concept of storytelling, data requirements and grant guideline limitations in mind. Outsourcing the time-consuming and specialized aspects of grants processes by working with a grants consultant can significantly enhance the grant seeking process, making it more efficient and effective. Before hiring a grants consultant consider the following:



Finding a Grants Consultant

First, **identify your organization's needs**. Are you looking for someone year round or to just work on a few proposals? Are you looking for someone who specializes in certain topic areas such as the arts or education or healthcare? Do you want someone with state or federal grant writing experience in addition to foundation grant writing experience? Do you want someone familiar with funders in your geographic area? Next, **research options online and ask peer organizations for recommendations**. Interview candidates and consider asking them to **provide a writing sample and references**. Keep in mind though you want **the full package**- someone who is not only skilled at proposal writing but who is also an excellent strategist and project manager. Once you've identified your preferred consultant, ask them for their contract or share your agency's own.



The Grants Process Roles

As it is often said, **teamwork makes the dream work!** As such, although you may hire a grants consultant, your organization's staff will still need to be involved in the grants process. Your nonprofit should assign a specific staff person who will ultimately implement the grant program or project to work with the grants consultant. Your **agency point person** will be key to activities such as articulating the agency's needs, enabling access to other team members and partner organizations, and helping the consultant gather the needed organizational information and data. The staff are the program experts, and it is **the consultant's job to draw that information out** of them so they can craft compelling proposals. The consultant will rely on the program staff for information but will lead the full process, including maintaining a communications schedule and developing and adhering to a timeline.



Consultant Fees

Fees can vary significantly depending upon the scope of services, the consultant's experience and whether you want to hire them on a project by project basis or on retainer. Some consultants charge by the hour where others prefer to charge by the project. Regardless, **paying a percentage of a grant awarded is unethical** by professional associations in the field so you won't find that as a pricing model option from a professional grants consultant.

For more information on **grant writing** or assistance with **grant proposal preparation** please visit sheerstrategy.com or contact us at (215) 680-0684 or at maddyschiering@sheerstrategy.com.