



## AFG Grant Support

The Assistance to Fire fighters Grant (AFG) "Fire Grants" program has made \$285 million available to protect the health and safety of the public and fire fighting personnel against fire and fire-related hazards. Numerous departments have already received a Mobile FireVent Unit through a Fire Grant. The following information is here to assist those who are interested in obtaining a Mobile FireVent Unit through this grant program.

### WHAT CAN BE PURCHASED WITH FIRE ACT FUNDS?

The grant program allows for several categories of items to be purchased with grant funds. Of particular importance is the "Operations and Fire fighter Safety Program - Training" category that allows for training equipment such as a Mobile FireVent Unit.

FireVent, LLC makes three models of the mobile unit. The Academy Model (12ft x 24ft platform) The Standard Model (12ft x 20ft platform) and The Compact Model (12ft x 16ft platform). Each model can be equipped with numerous options, which add to the training evolutions (multidiscipline) and versatility of each unit. The FireVent units are the most versatile, practical and affordable training props available.

Important note: Grant rules require the training system to be mobile on wheels.

### WHAT ARE THE NEW (MORE FAVOURABLE) GRANT MATCH REQUIREMENTS?

With the AFG, agencies are required to match a portion of the overall cost. The current match requirements are:

Population > 50,000	Match = 20% of total
Population 20,000 to 50,000	Match = 10% of total
Population < 20,000	Match = 5% of total

## WHAT ARE THE TOP REASONS WHY GRANT APPLICANTS FAIL?

- Request is for low priority items
- Lack of collaboration, partnerships, or "regional" approach
- Do not check their work
- Do not make a case for financial need
- Do not provide a problem statement
- Fail to make a case for cost-benefit
- Do not itemize desired items
- Request too many items ("shopping cart" proposal)
- Do not follow directions (Source: Office for Domestic Preparedness, 2004 Workshop Presentation)

## HOW CAN FIREVENT, LLC HELP YOU WITH THE GRANT APPLICATION?

FireVent, LLC is committed to providing our customers with supporting information needed to successfully write and receive a grant. This information, combined with your intimate knowledge of your agency and a little determination, will set your organization on its way towards improved training capabilities. Please contact us if you would like further assistance.

FireVent, LLC encourages you to explore the Preparedness Directorate's Office of Grants and Training website for more detailed information regarding grant applications:

<http://www.fema.gov/firegrants/>

Phone: (866) 274-0960 (Toll-free)

## RELATED ARTICLE

### **"What I Learned from the 2009 AFG Workshop"**

Fire Engineering, May 2009, by Jonathan Kaye

# Sample AFG Narrative For FireVent Unit - 2017

## INTRODUCTION

The Central Lyon County Fire Protection District (CLCFPD) is a rural all hazard emergency response agency, including advanced life support transport. We are a combination fire district, about 50/50, located just outside the Nevada State Capitol of Carson City and serve over 30,000 residents in seven distinct communities within a 630 square mile response area. CLCFPD is geographically and population wise the largest of four fire districts within Lyon County.

CLCFPD operates from seven fire stations strategically located throughout the district. Two of these stations (Station 35 & 37) are staffed 24/7 with a total of 5 firefighters on-duty each day and 1 Battalion Chief. In 2017, CLCFPD answered 4206 calls, a 12% increase from 2016, with just over 70% being EMS related. Fatal motor vehicle accidents (MVA's) were up 800% in Lyon County in 2017.

The District participates in the State of Nevada Intrastate Mutual Aid program, and is active in the Lake Tahoe Regional Fire Chiefs Association, Northern Nevada Fire Chiefs Association, and Sierra Front Wildfire Cooperators. We also participate in a Cooperative Fire Protection Agreement with the United State Department of the Interior and support National and Regional Incident Management Teams (IMT's)

In 2005, our county was identified as the 2nd fastest growing county in the Nation, per capita. Just a few years later, we were one of the hardest hit in the country when the housing bubble broke. Over time, the economic downturn has caused the District to curtail its apparatus replacement program, seek concessions from labor, cut back on training, push the lifetimes of important equipment like SCBA's to the edge, eliminate the hydrant inspection program and severely reduce seasonal wildfire staffing, to address the funding needs of day to day operations and avoid employee layoffs.

Today, Lyon County appears poised for another period of rapid growth. Completion of the USA Parkway (State Route 439) in September of 2017 connected the jobs of the Tahoe Reno Industrial Complex (TRIC), the largest industrial complex in the world containing businesses such as TESLA and Switch, with the bedroom communities located in CLCFPD. Commuter, freight, and other traffic has increased as the new road significantly decreased travel time for industrial traffic headed from TRIC to points south like Las Vegas and Los Angeles. The road is also driving industrial development in our District with the recent approval of the Northern Nevada Industrial Center, a project of a scale to rival TRIC.

The Districts workload is increasing, some building has started, slowly, and potential projects abound, but to date revenues remain flat and several recent events, the loss of Medicare extender payments December 31, 2017 and the approval of a significant Consolidated Tax refund by the State of Nevada, have negatively impacted our budget. CLCFPD takes pride that we are facing down our challenges and continuing to meet the needs of our community.

CLCFPD is responsible for critical infrastructure necessary for national, local and economic security, and the well-being of citizenry. Our critical infrastructures include: two municipal airports, two regional high-pressure natural gas distribution lines serving hundreds of thousands of residents, a power plant and distribution lines that supply power to Carson City (NV State Capitol), a major rail system with hazardous cargo, Interstate Highways 50 and 95A are major arteries for travelers and commerce serving much of the Western United States including 28,000 commuters heading to/from work and travelers to historic Virginia City or special events such as “Burning Man”, the historic Virginia and Truckee (V&T) railroad hauling tourists to the Comstock Mining District, a large open pit gold mine run by Comstock Mining in the Silver City area of the District, and several State Parks, including Dayton State Park, Fort Churchill State Park and the newly created Walker River Recreational Area as well as thousands of acres of Federal lands that include the Pony Express route.

## FINANCIAL NEED

CLCFPD is an independent fire district, organized under Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS) Section 474, funded primarily through ad valorem taxes, consolidated taxes, and ambulance fees.

Lyon County Nevada, once one of the fastest growing counties in the Nation, became the 3rd most economically stressed county in the United States during the recent recession. Our District was hit incredibly hard, assessed valuation declined over 45% in a 5 year period. Compounding matters, during the expansion years the State of Nevada capped assessed valuation growth at 3% on residential and 8% on commercial properties per year. As a result the District is trying to climb out of a 45% hole one 3% step per year.

Our second largest source of revenue comes from an Ambulance Enterprise Fund for EMS operations. Our patient mix is mostly Medicare (54.77%) and Medicaid (20.58%) and after “contractual allowances” we only collect roughly 20% of our actual cost for providing EMS services to these patients. As a result, our EMS Fund posted an operating loss of \$380,990 in FY 2017. Compounding the issue, in January 31, 2017 Medicare eliminated the add-on extender payments. Central was previously classified as “super rural” in recognition of the long distances (average transport is 35 miles one way) to a definitive care facility. The loss of the extender payments will decrease FY 2018 revenues by an estimated \$250,000.

Lyon County is just over 1.3 million acres and almost 75 percent of the county is federal land. A significant portion of federal lands lay within CLCFPD. They generate calls for assistance, but no tax revenue. The Federal Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program is designed to help local governments offset the loss of property tax revenues due to the presence of tax-exempt federal lands. While nearly 75% of our district is comprised of federal lands, with the highest population, the PILT funds are allocated to other entities in Lyon County. This decision is out of our control and remains a source of frustration. Especially when the Federal land management agencies have no fire suppression units based in Lyon County and Central Lyon Fire resources are often initial attack on Federal fires.

Nevada has a biennial Legislative session. Every odd numbered year for the past 4 sessions CLCFPD, and Lyon County, have faced an organized effort by the City of Fernley (our neighbor to the north) to reallocate the Consolidated Tax collected in Lyon County. We must remain financially able to operate should the effort prove successful in 2019, the revenue impact would be around 10% of our annual budget.

Central has, of necessity, focused our ad valorem taxes, consolidated taxes, and ambulance fee revenues on keeping fire stations staffed and the lights on. We have access to the Regional Fire Training Facility in Carson City, but not the capacity to support on duty personnel out of District for training, the call volume is too heavy and we end up canceling training or calling in mutual aid. We do not have the overtime budget to support holding over staff to attend training. We have applied, unsuccessfully, through various grants and other opportunities to obtain simple, basic, training props. We had developer's agreements in place during the construction boom to address, or mitigate the need for in District training opportunities, but they fell through during the crash. We have looked at impact fees and they, by law, cannot be used for training props or overtime, only construction of fire stations. Our highest priority need is response capability based, we need to train our firefighters significantly more than we need a new station. We have scrounged abandoned or under remodel builds to train in, but those are fairly rare and cannot be counted on to keep our base skills sharp.

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION / BUDGET

CLCFPD has identified, and prioritized, firefighter training as a key to preventing firefighter injury and death. In addition we recognize that through increased skill and competency our firefighters will be able to operate more efficiently and reduce overall civilian injury, mortality and fire loss. After analyzing of our compliance with NFPA 100, which includes the minimum job performance requirements (JPRs) for career and volunteer fire fighters whose duties are primarily structural in nature, we identified a need for improved basic skills maintenance, and development. We currently lack the ability to practice foundational firefighting skills like throwing ladders, making entrance to a building, and rooftop ventilation, all stuff we can't do dragging hose in a parking lot. CLCFPD participates in the State of Nevada firefighter certification program. All of our, career and volunteer, go through an extensive training process at a Regional Academy, obtaining a State and NFPA Firefighter 1 and/or 2 certification before they are employed or eligible to serve on the fire ground, but then muscle memory fades as they spend more time in a Rescue/Ambulance than the fire or training ground.

The purpose of this proposal is to request funds to purchase a mobile training prop to provide training on a large variety of basic firefighter operations. These operations include vertical ventilation on pitched and flat roofs, gable end ventilation, forcible entry in "through the lock", non-destructive door prying, hinge cutting, dead bolt cutting and drop bar entries. The trailer prop would also allow training opportunities for confined space entry/rescue, through the floor rescue, ceiling pulling/breaching, ladder evolutions, and firefighter bailout drills. The prop includes a trailer mounted hydraulically raised roof assembly with a 24'x12' roof deck, multiple forcible entry doors, sheet rock tacks for pulling/breaching onboard electrical system and lighting with shore power options. The mobile nature of the training prop allows for direct

delivery, instructor led training at every station and volunteer district. The ability to move the trailer from station to station would enable for duty crews to train between calls or when it is convenient for them and volunteers to train in their own back yards. In our line of work, it is a matter of life safety that we develop the skills needed to be an efficient firefighter. It is equally important that we maintain these skills.

CLCFD does “a lot” with limited staffing and resources. When you factor in our call volume (over 4,200 calls last year), long transport times, station duties, and AOR’s this leaves limited time for actual hands-on training. Currently we do not have a designated training facility or training prop where we can throw ladders, practice forcible entry, perform vertical and horizontal ventilation, or other basic firefighter skills. The closest training facility for us is in Carson City at station 52; we mostly use this facility for new hire academy’s, firefighter one skills, or live burns. Generally, the paid staff go to these trainings to help instruct but rarely get the opportunity to participate in the hands-on training itself.

Our paid staff, reserves, and volunteers have rarely had hands-on training with chain saws, rotary saws, throwing ladders, or practicing RIT since their original fire fighter one class. This is not due to a lack of motivation but rather a lack of easy accessibility to a training facility. Only 15% to 20% of our calls are fire related so a lot of our basic fire skills only get used on calls a few times out of the year. Skills like vertical and horizontal ventilation in our district fall into Gordon Graham’s “high risk low frequency” category. Having easy access to a versatile training prop would allow us to better maintain these skills and potentially lessen the risk of having an on scene injury or accident. The ability to train on-site and in our own District is essential. We cannot afford to meet our training requirements by sending firefighters to outside training opportunities and doing so leaves our communities under protected.

Through the CLCFPD Training Division we provide direct delivery, hands-on, instructor led training to our staff (34) and volunteers (37) on a regular basis. We also support a Regional Fire Academy with a Regional Training Officer and SME’s as necessary and instructors to the Truckee Meadows Community College Academy and Fire degree programs.

The cost of the mobile fire training prop, from a local vender, and including forcible entry door module, night operations capability, bail out second story window, and smoke system is \$82,586.

## OPERATIONAL SAFETY COST / BENEFIT

The two most critical factors in fire suppression are getting capable firefighters on scene quickly and establishing an adequate water supply/flow. The ability to train on basic firefighting skills in District and consistently, keeps muscle memory fresh, would allow us to adapt quickly to the new challenges of the NNIC, and maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of limited staff on scene without a net. If this project is funded, Central will greatly enhance our ability to provide basic and advanced training to career staff and volunteers, conduct skill reviews and improve compliance with NFPA 1001 Standard for Firefighter Professional Qualifications.

CLCFPD cover 630 square miles with 7 fire stations. The mobility of a Fire/Vent trailer will allow each station to train while still being available for response in their area and decrease

response times for the second in apparatus to the majority of incidents, including MVA's, Haz-Mat and wildland fires in the District. The mobile nature and the expected 25 year operational life of the trailer will allow us to deliver training to our firefighters instead of bring the firefighters to the training for decades. Increased opportunity for quality training of basic firefighting skills creates and enhances opportunities for life saving interventions and equates to reduced damage to residential, commercial and industrial properties, improved fire ground safety, and efficiency of operations, and reduced use of Mutual Aid.

Central Lyon Fire has provided direct delivery, instructor led training of the highest quality and certification levels to our 75 personnel and helped neighboring Districts/Departments as well. The funding of a mobile fire training prop would provide training opportunities that would develop and maintain almost all fire skill sets needed to safely and efficiently deal with residential and commercial fires.

#### STATEMENT OF EFFECT/IMPACT ON DAILY OPERATIONS

Receiving this grant will without question improve firefighter safety, reduce the potential for loss of life and property and increase compliance with NFPA 1001. The trailer would be based at Station 38, literally in the center of the District and available to all Stations to utilize and schedule into their training plans, significantly increase opportunity, reps, and capability in our first responders and providing a positive impact on daily operations both for Central Lyon Fire and the people who live in, work in, and visit our communities.

CLCFPD provides comprehensive instructor led training opportunities that lead to nationally and State approved certifications. The mobile fire prop will facilitate the transfer of didactic learning to practical application. The process of removing a person through a floor or a window differs from the textbook experience. The effect of this grant funding would provide the means to practice basic and advance firefighting skills not currently available in our District. We would also make the mobile fire prop available to our neighboring Fire Districts.

Central Lyon Fire has been in extreme conservation mode for the almost a decade, weathering the effects of the recession. Even before, our training program was under funded and lacked the capability to train in District and on regular time. We are at a critical point with our front line personnel. Their basic firefighting skills are rusting out. We know one trailer won't fix/solve everything, but it would give us a foundation, a reliable and capable opportunity to train located in the heart of the District on which to build as our revenue stream picks up in accordance with growth.

The effect of a Training Trailer, could be measured in its ability to improve safety and efficiency of firefighters and reduce loss of life and property. But, in Lyon County and Central Lyon Fire the biggest effect would be the tangible evidence that we are truly turning the corner, gaining back ground lost, and responding to the challenges and growth ahead. The ripples of that impact would far exceed any other effect.

# 5 GRANT WRITING TIPS

By Heather Cotter

Winning a federal, state, local or private grant is tough. As a former peer reviewer for the United States Department of Justice, I can tell you firsthand that the quality of proposals received for funding consideration often exceed peer reviewers' expectations. Here are five actions you can take to make sure your proposal stands out from the others.

## 1. CLEAR, CONCISE WRITING

Every sentence in your proposal must be clear and concise. Sentences should be constructed in such a way that any lay person or subject matter expert can understand the message you're seeking to convey. Writers should avoid using jargon and acronyms as much as possible. Also, it is important to avoid complex sentence structures — in other words, do your best to minimize the number of words and compound sentences in your proposal.

Once the proposal is drafted, it is a good practice for a lay reader and an expert reader to review it to make sure everything makes sense and is easy to read. No grant writer should ever assume that every individual reviewing a proposal is a technical or subject matter expert.

## 2. QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ALIGNMENT

After the proposal is written, it is critical to perform quality assurance checks to make sure everything you proposed (including any financials) is in alignment. A best practice is for two or three individuals to double check for accuracy. Typically, funding agencies ask for financial information in the program narrative or abstract, in a budget worksheet and in a budget narrative. Often times budget worksheets are adjusted once the proposal is completed, and sometimes these late changes are not adjusted in the other sections of the proposal. This oversight may lead to deductions in your overall score and it may cost your agency an award.

## 3. CITATIONS WITH FACTS

Every fact or statistic that is included with your proposal should include a citation. Ideally, every grant proposal will have a combination of sources from local, state or federal data and other relevant empirical research that you can cite. It is important to demonstrate the local needs you're addressing and how the problem is also relevant at a larger (regional, state or national) scale. The reason being is that it is important for funding agencies to know that you're aware of the significance of the issue and that your proposed effort can be replicated in other jurisdictions. Make sure to follow the solicitation's rules for citations (e.g. footnotes, endnotes, bibliography).

## 4. COLORS, GRAPHS AND IMAGES

Imagine if your agency sent out an RFP and you receive multiple vendor responses. Which proposal will you gravitate toward prior to reading? Will it be the wall of words or the proposal that has breaks in it with colors, graphs and images?



Peer reviewers and funding sources receive many proposals, so put yourself in their shoes when reviewing your own proposal. Quality writing, demonstrated need and staying within the financial parameters are critical in determining whether or not you win an award, but don't discount the importance of a proposal that is aesthetically constructed.

Before you begin including any colors, graphs or images, make sure it is within the parameters of the solicitation's rules. And when in doubt, always ask.

## **5. IF YOU DON'T WIN, BUILD A RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PROGRAM OFFICE**

It is important to realize and accept the competitive nature of grant funding. Further, it is also important to establish relationships with the program office from which you're seeking funding. More than likely, future solicitations will come out from that organization. Therefore, building a relationship with the program office will help you stay current on the organization's priorities, and you will better understand how to align your agency's needs to complement their areas of focus in your next proposal.

Grant writing is more than writing a response to a solicitation. It is a craft that requires attention to detail, an understanding of local and national needs and should always have more than one individual working on it (and reviewing it) if you want to win.

### **About the author**

Heather is the senior editor of PoliceOne and CorrectionsOne. She has been working with law enforcement and public safety for over 15 years. She also serves as volunteer as Executive Director at the International Public Safety Association, a 501(c)3 non-profit. Prior to joining Praetorian Digital, Heather worked on several national, state and local law enforcement projects. Heather earned her Master's degree from Arizona State University and her Bachelor's at Indiana University, both in Criminology. She currently calls Arizona home.

# Getting Grants

with [Jerry Brant](#)

## How to strengthen your AFG application

### Forget the score, and learn what you can from your rejection to improve your next Assistance to Firefighters Grant application

Nov 14, 2017

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For months, grant writers in fire and EMS stations that applied to the FY2016 [Assistance to Firefighters Grant](#) program anxiously awaited word on the status of their application. As time went by, those that never received any notification began to wonder if their application was going to be funded. Then, several weeks ago, unsuccessful applicants began to receive the dreaded turndown notices from FEMA.

After the initial shock and frustration wore off, applicants began the process of trying to determine [why their application didn't get funded](#). If you were one of these people, here are some tips to help you understand the turndown notice and why you received it.

#### THE AFG SCORING PROCESS

To understand your turndown notice you first need to understand the AFG scoring process and how far your application advanced in the system.

The initial review phase for every application is a computer review to score the request on how closely it is aligned with the [AFG goals and priorities](#). If your application has a sufficient score, it is sent to a three-person peer review committee, which reads and scores your narratives. There are three groups who get rejected from AFG funding:

1. The first group contains those who do not score high enough to be sent for review.
2. The second group of turndown letters are those that make it to peer review but do not score high enough to be considered for funding.
3. The third type of letters go to applicants who scored high enough in peer review for consideration, but the AFG program simply ran out of money before reaching those applications.

## **UNDERSTANDING THE NOTICE YOU RECEIVED**

Every year, when turndown notices arrive, I hear the same complaints from applicants. They sound something like this:

- My turndown looks like a form letter.
- What was my score and is there a way to request my score?
- Is there any way to appeal this decision?
- Does FEMA offer any individual help?

Yes, your notice is very similar to everyone else's. Given the number of notices that must be generated, some elements of yours, such as the initial introduction, are boilerplate. These paragraphs are simply an explanation of the AFG program and review process.

Because FEMA receives close to 10,000 applications, they simply are not able to develop individual rejection notices. Instead, the notices are developed around groups of applicants who applied for similar projects.

The next several paragraphs of your notice are generated using the sections of the AFG NOFO on which your application scored the lowest. Because these letters are based on groups of applicants, all the information in this section may not pertain specifically to your application.

It will, however, provide general areas where your application fell short. For example, if your notice states the following, "However, we can tell you that the peer review panel scores indicate that in order to help you obtain a higher score in a future AFG grant request, it is recommended that you review the portion of your application in which you addressed your department's need for financial assistance and the inability to address the need without Federal assistance," this statement is letting you know that your financial need narrative scored the lowest of all your narratives and needs improvement.

## **KNOWING YOUR AFG SCORE**

Applicants do not receive their scores and there is no formal process to request them. Even if you knew your score, it wouldn't do you any good anyway. It would be like telling you that Chicago scored four runs in last night's game. Did they win? You wouldn't know because you don't know the other team's score – the same is true with your AFG score. You wouldn't know how you fared unless you knew everyone else's score. Also, if you knew you scored an 89 and they funded everyone down to 90, then you would be lulled into a false sense of thinking that you only had to improve by one point – when in fact next year, the cutoff for funding might be a score of 92.

There is no way to [appeal FEMA's decision](#). In accordance with appeal procedure outlined in the Code of Federal Regulation, FEMA will only reconsider an application, "with respect to an initial grant award decision only when the applicant asserts that FEMA made a material technical or procedural error in the processing of the application and can substantiate such assertions."

The citation further goes on to state that "as grants are awarded on a competitive basis ... FEMA cannot consider a request for reconsideration based upon the merits of an original application. Similarly, FEMA will not consider new information provided after the submission of the original application."

## **GRANT-WRITING RESOURCES**

This year, FEMA initiated a series of webinars to review why applications did not make it to peer review. The seminar is very informative and can give you areas to investigate within your application for deficiencies.

Finally, for applicants who have submitted a substantial number of applications without an award, FEMA does have mentoring services available. In the past, FEMA has considered applicants who failed to receive funding on five or six applications in a row to be eligible for a mentor.

This does not occur automatically. If you are interested, you must make an application through your regional FEMA office for a mentor.

# How to not win a fire, EMS grant proposal

Here are four of the most common mistakes in public safety grant writing and how to avoid making them

Mar 6, 2017

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Grant proposal writing isn't any more complex than running a cardiac arrest resuscitation or leading a team of firefighters at a residential structure fire. It's a learned skill. Like any fire or EMS skill, it takes practice, practice and more practice. You don't improve your intubation skills without practice. The more grant proposals you write, the better you will get.

Inexperienced grant writers tend to make similar mistakes. Here are four of those common mistakes.

## 1. NOT FOLLOWING INSTRUCTIONS

Almost all funders, whether a government agency or a foundation, will tell you exactly how to present the materials. The request for proposal and proposal guidelines will tell you what information they want and how they want you to format the proposal. They will tell you what font type and size to use, the page margins, line spacing, and other seemingly unimportant stuff. If they don't tell you, opt for simple: 11 or 12 point Times New Roman, single spaced, with one-inch margins all around. You may also encounter word limits or character limits, especially with online applications.

Not following instructions is usually the first step the funder uses to eliminate proposals. If you can't follow instructions, you probably can't manage the grant successfully. Everything in an RFP is important.

## 2. NOT RESEARCHING YOUR FUNDER

Many funders have very specific priorities. You need to make sure the government agency or foundation funds what you want or need. If the organization has a website, check it out. It will tell you what and who they fund and do not fund. Unfortunately, most foundations do not fund municipal agencies, but they might fund nonprofit fire/ambulance services. If the website lists a contact person, it's always good to call and ask questions. That way you can introduce yourself and your agency and the contact person can put a voice to an application if you decide to submit.

For foundations, websites such as [GuideStar](#) will give you a lot of information and if you register, which is free to do, you can access the most recent IRS 990 forms. These will tell you how much the organization gave during that year and the 990 lists the organizations to which they gave money and the amounts.

For government funders, the agency website will list the grant recipients and what they received. Grants.gov is the go-to place for Federal agency grants. [Grant Finder](#), a Praetorian Digital product, is another good way to look for state government funding sources, as well as many foundations. You can also check your local public library. It often provides access to the [Foundation Center's Foundation Directory](#). The online directory only list foundations, but they have the largest number of foundations in their database.

## 3. NOT USING PLAIN ENGLISH

Every occupation has its own language, buzzwords, jargon and acronyms. Different occupations often use the same acronyms to represent different things. These words are common for you, but a grant reviewer might not know what you mean or the context in which you are using the words. If the reviewer doesn't understand your words and must continually look them up to know what you are saying, this will drastically reduce your chance of success.

Most reviewers are reading dozens of applications and they are looking for ways to eliminate applications quickly. Two of the worst things you can do are losing the reviewer's attention or interest and making them do extra work to understand what you are saying. They will probably toss your application, even if it is for a worthy cause or a community need.

Don't use fancy words and phrases to impress the reviewers. They will know you are trying to polish a poor application with a fancy vocabulary. Instead, use simple and concise words. Avoid words like innovative, cutting-edge, game-changer or unique, unless you have done your research and you find you are the only one in the country doing what you propose. You may think it's new and innovative, but it rarely is.

#### **4. NOT USING A PROOFREADER**

Not much puts off a reviewer more than a proposal that has grammar, spelling and punctuation mistakes. The reviewers have probably read many proposals and they will not tolerate bad writing. This will cause the reviewer to eliminate your proposal or give it a low rating. It shows that you don't care enough about what you are presenting to correct your mistakes. If you don't care about the accuracy of your proposal, why should they?

To avoid this, have another person review your writing; preferably someone who doesn't know anything about the subject. When my wife was alive, she reviewed everything I wrote. She had a keen eye for spotting mistakes. If I saw a puzzled look on her face, I knew something was amiss. If it confused her, then it probably would confuse the reviewer.

Today's grant world is very competitive. Foundations and government agencies will always have many more applications than they can fund. One of the local health care foundations in my area routinely has more than \$20 million worth of "asks" and only \$4 million to award. That means even very good proposals don't get funded. I'm not saying don't try. An old fundraising adage says, "You don't get what you don't ask for," so keep working to present the best possible application you can. Ask for professional help if you need it.

#### **About the author**

Mark is a Grant Professional Certified (GPC), through the Grant Professional Certification Institute, and is a member of the Grant Professionals Association. He has been a full-time grant professional since August 2006 and has more than 19 years of experience identifying and securing grant funding. He has been a grant consultant since January 2012.

He has written 160 successful grant proposals, totaling more than \$37.7 million and reviewed/edited 15 successful proposals totaling more than \$17.03 million. He averages 11 successful grants per year and more than \$3.8 million per year in grant funding. He has achieved 61 successful health and healthcare-focused grants, totaling more than \$25.18 million, for hospitals; safety-net clinics; and fire/EMS departments. Contact Mark by email at [mark.dunlap@emsgrantshelp.com](mailto:mark.dunlap@emsgrantshelp.com).