6 Keys to Grant Writing Success

How to Utilize the Six Keys to Grant Writing Success

Grant programs provide valuable resources to mapping and spatial data development to further GIS impact and initiatives. You can use GIS grants for staff and equipment; data creation and analysis services; system development; software creation and implementation; studies and resource management projects; data layer creation; GIS strategic planning; open data and community engagement projects, and so much more.

The big question here is: **HOW do you go about securing grant funding?**

The first step is to identify a specific GIS project for which you'd like to secure grant funding. Next, you tackle the job of writing your grant proposal. You should be prepared for completing forms, adhering to key criteria and scoring mechanisms, presenting a budget, providing supporting documentation, following the required formatting and page limits, and ensuring your argument is strong, engaging, reasonable, and grabs the reviewer's attention.

Whether you're writing it on your own, with the help of your team, or working with an outside contractor, there are six keys to success that will streamline the process for you.

The Six Keys to Grant Writing Success are:

1. Originality
2. Purpose
3. Impact
4. Specificity
5. Measures of Success
6. Sustainability and Resilience

Originality in grant writing is reflected in a discussion of applying the latest technology, ideas, and innovations to build something unique and substantial. Considerations include the logical stages of GIS maturity, smart organization practices, high-performance organizations, paradigm shifts, and the 6 Pillars of GIS Sustainability: Governance; Training, Education, and Knowledge Transfer; GIS Software; Procedures, Workflow, and Integration; GIS Data and Databases; and IT Infrastructure.

Purpose is the reason for which something is done — why are you writing this grant? What are you hoping to achieve? Include a summary of your proposed project, detail the purpose of your request, include you vision, and list the ultimate outcomes.

Impact is a core component of your grant. What problem are you addressing? Who do you serve with the project? What difference is your work making with an identified group? Who else addresses this problem, or why has it not been addressed previously? Why are you the one to address this issue? As you answer these questions, it's important to provide both objective (statistics and data) and subjective (personal stories and examples) details to support your impact statement.

Specificity adds clarity to your argument and actively directs the attention of your reader. Write what the reviewer wants to hear. Be specific with your project description, involved parties, plan of action, impact, and all other attributes of your proposal. Use trigger words such as "economic development," "community," "technology," and "innovative." Be specific, but also be concise.

Measures of success are important to communicate clearly and with specificity. Explain when and how your program will be evaluated. Include program goals, milestones, and benchmarking along with the metrics and analytics to be used. Explain who will benefit and what they will gain. Consider creating and submitting a timeline that details checkpoints and when reports will be delivered to track progress and measure your success.

And, finally, focus on **sustainability and resilience**. Patrick Dixon said it well, "The key to understanding the future in one word: Sustainability." Ensure a resilient project by gaining stakeholder and executive buy-in right from the start. Create a detailed project budget to submit with your grant and provide justifications for proposed expenses. Explain how the budget for this project fits in with your organizational budget as a whole. Be reasonable with timelines and checkpoints and create an internal system of ownership and responsibilities within your team.

The success of your grant proposal is ultimately up to you. Make sure you're telling the story you want to tell with a clear beginning, middle, and end. Look at your project for a holistic view and remember the Six Keys to Grant Writing Success.

If you'd like further support with your grant, please do not hesitate to reach out to our team. You can call our home office at 888-757-4222 or email moreinfo@geotg.com.
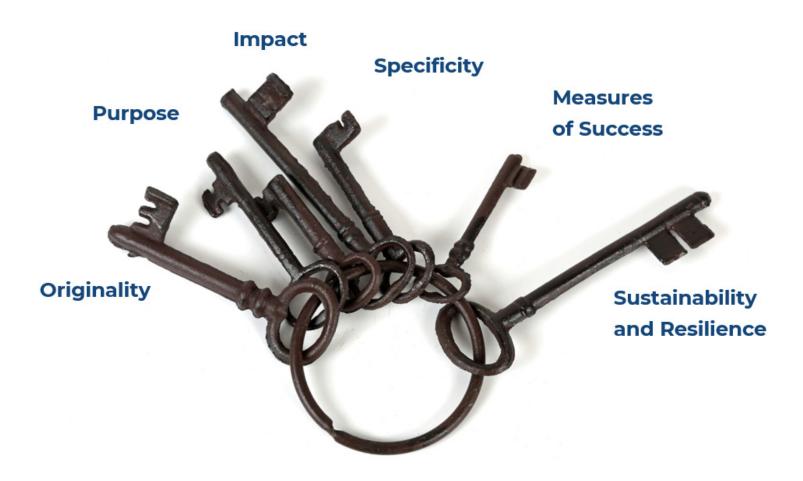

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