A Checklist of Rules to Follow for Good Grants Hygiene

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Grants are so highly competitive that a success average of one out of five submissions (20%) is quite acceptable. By contrast, a batting average of .200 in baseball will get you demoted to the minors or released.

We recommend that grant writers follow this checklist to make sure their applications and proposals remain competitive:

1. Are your **attachments up-to-date**? Be sure your financial statements (independent audit and/or IRS Form 990) are the most recently available ones. Verify the Board of Directors list; members may come and go each year. Does your list of key staff members reflect the latest hires? Are your organizational and program budgets current, and do they square with the numbers in the audit and Form 990? Are you still including in your information packet press clippings that by now are out-of-date?

2. **Strict compliance** with the funder's requirements. If the funder wants two hard copies of the proposal, or a signed statement that the Board has authorized the submission, or has stipulated that the pages of the submission should not be stapled, or that all components of the application should be submitted via e-mail on one pdf, have you noted and complied with these requirements?

3. **Save copies** of all submissions in a convenient electronic file so that you can retrieve one in seconds for future reference should the funder call.

4. **Online applications** require a checklist all their own:

- Start early so that you can complete one section at a time over several days rather than having to tackle the whole application at the last minute.

- Keep a library of previous online applications to more easily match your answers to the space constraints of the next one (500 words; 2,000 characters, etc.).

- At the initial sitting, first complete just a couple of boxes and make sure you can log out and log back in with ease, and that your answers are saved.

- Different online application portals require passwords of differing length and different combinations of letters, numbers, and symbols. Keep track of which password you used for each separate funder.

5. When you receive a grant, don't toss away the **award letter**. The award letter, *not* the proposal or application, is the legal document specifying how the funds are to be used. Consequently, the award letters are what your organization's auditor needs to examine.

This checklist will help make grants management manageable!

What techniques do you use to keep your grant submissions competitive?