

The Experiences of a Public Safety Grant Writer

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Public safety grant writing for the Jersey City Police Department allowed me to obtain significant insight into the causes of crime and the obligations of law enforcement personnel as first responders. Contemporary public safety demands transcend the police officer's traditional role to protect ordinary citizens against crime and victimization. Regional urban gang activity and potential acts of terrorism require today's police officer to receive training which will effectively prepare them with abilities to perform their daily duties to offset threatening scenarios targeting the public's welfare.

Police departments across the country are being pressed to implement programs which their county or city too frequently are unable to afford during this era of budgetary and fiscal restraints.

Many are forced to turn toward various divisions within our state and federal government as well as private foundations to assist their agencies with obtaining additional financial resources to enact programs and community partnerships for policing initiatives. It is at this juncture when grant writing becomes a paramount tool in the search of appropriate funding sources to launch programs designed to promote and enhance the public's protection and security against myriad acts of crime.

I have discovered the following internet sites to be useful when researching grant funding opportunities: Federal Register (www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/index.html), Grants.gov (www.grants.gov), First Gov.com (www.usa.gov), US Government Printing Office (www.access.gpo.gov), the Catalogue of Federal Domestic Assistance (12.46.245.173/cfda/cfda.html), GrantGate.com (www.grantgate.com), Grantstation.com (www.grantstation.com) and the New Jersey Department of Law and Public Safety (www.state.nj.us/lps/grants.htm) and are just several examples in addition to NJLM's Grant Resource Center (www.njslom.org/grants_main.html).

There are many sides to grant writing, and no particular approach will guarantee the funding award that an individual grant writer or municipality may be seeking. Requests for proposals from the state and federal government, as well as from foundations, are structured according to guidelines and regulations that must be strictly adhered to by hopeful applicants during the submission process, and continue throughout the period under which the award is being administered.

To successfully apply for an award, grant writers should not complete the application submission process without a thorough reading and understanding of guideline specifics summarized in the funding sponsor's request for proposals announcement. Careful reading of this section will direct efforts to provide detailed information related to project need and community benefits anticipated through the delivery of services that will occur with implementation.

Reading and outlining this section is especially important because those reviewing your submission will follow a set of standard rules to determine your municipality's eligibility and the project's funding worthiness. Program clarity, budget development, sustainability, expected outcomes and performance measures are important areas to include in your application narrative or executive summary. Each section should be complementary to the project's goals and objectives and overall purpose as a public need.

Most grant proposal review committees are frequently guided in their reading of such information. Internal competitive ranking systems used by state, federal and private funding sources will determine approval or rejection based on these factors.

Another facet for both law enforcement and grant writers to appreciate is the inescapable partnership that exists between them. Establishing relationships between civilian public safety grant writers and sworn law enforcement personnel has a dual significance. For the grant writer he/she can transcend mere words on paper and meaningfully convey a sense of the day to day danger that confront police officers in the performance of their field duty. In this regard, person-to-person acquaintance is significant, especially since awarded grants are used to promote officer safety as well as safe streets.

Within this context public safety grant seekers and law enforcement community members are required to cooperatively share and impart information that will enable them to interactively perform their dual obligations.

The building of such partnerships is further enhanced when the successful obtaining of specific grants are used to aid police officers to effectively perform surveillance activity during terror alerts, as well as to thwart drug trafficking or gang activity. Adding search and rescue assignments to the aforementioned categories are also necessary and important to the prioritization of tasks performed daily by the men and women who comprise the ranks of New Jersey's law enforcement community.

Supportive technology is advancing daily to address the challenges confronting police officers. Required equipment purchases and communication system upgrades for first responders are critical for today's urban police agencies in their efforts to be prepared for managing alerts that, in most cities and specifically the tri-state area, regularly include patrolling crucial transportation hubs, monitoring hazardous waste sites and deployment around major commercial business sectors. Computer software programs to track crime trends and geo-profiling are akin to these situations.

Performing my previous duties as a civilian grant writer for the Jersey City Police Department was an enriching personal experience that simultaneously focused my professional research and writing skills.

Understanding the exigencies of contemporary urban policing helped to **secure almost 17 million dollars** of grant funding within a three-year period. Partnering with dedicated staff and communicating with police superiors and patrol personnel helped to make a qualitative difference for advancing the delivery of police services in Jersey City through the awarding of state and federal grants.

Offering the above thoughts in this forum will hopefully be viewed as a practice for grant writers to follow and a formula any law enforcement agency can apply throughout the Garden State.

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