

McGrants—Fast food approach to Grant Writing

Fast food empires are built on finding a successful model and serving it up, again and again. It made Ray Kroc a multi-billionaire through his McDonald's franchises. And, based on the same principle, John Dufour, elementary teacher and UG Ambassador in South Carolina, took a winning formula for grant writing and "franchised" it through his User Group. He's generated, what he thinks, is equally exciting financial success for teachers in his district.

Who Has the Money?

There are both public and private grant sources. Connie Louie, Educational Technology Coordinator at the Massachusetts State Department of Education explains, "State and Federal grants are public grants. In many cases, Federal monies are given to states to distribute as either entitlement grants—non-competitive grants where a per-student allotment is given to each district, or discretionary grants—competitive grants applied for directly through the state or an agency that has won money from the state and chooses to distribute it in a specified way." In South Carolina, an annual discretionary funding program, the Educational Improvement Act Teacher's Grant, allocates \$240,000 to be divided into 120 individual grants of \$2000 each. These are the grants Dufour and his User Group members set out to win.

Sharing the Winning Formula

Dufour applied for, and won, three grants through South Carolina's funding program and wanted to share his successful grant-writing model with his User Group. UG members met twice a month after school for 1 1/2 hours each session. Many of them had no previous grant-writing experience and limited experience with developing technology-supported programs. A combination of Dufour's savvy and some teamwork generated excitement and results.

First, the group explored software and hardware solutions. Then they brainstormed how this technology could enhance their teaching. They developed ideas for innovative classroom activities and helped one another create wish-lists of hardware and software needed to make their ideas into realities. At this point, the teachers were excited, but still unsure they had the know-how to write winning grant proposals. Dufour provided the magic formula—an electronic template of one of his funded projects. Teachers used the template to translate their ideas and wish-lists into grant applications.

Enjoying & Sharing Success

Of 25 grants written by UG members during the last school year, 15 were funded, representing 12% of the total monies distributed through the South Carolina program. In the two years Dufour has employed his "fast food approach" to grant writing, the district has won \$60,000 in grants. He suggests these tips to other UGs:

- Seek grant sources close to home. Local business people are often the parents of children you teach. Ask them to fund specific projects.
- Seek guidance and support. Don't be afraid to ask administrators, colleagues, and community members for help.
- Work as a team. It generates ideas and creative solutions.
- Determine your needs, and ask specifically for those items.
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Ask to see copies of previously funded grants, and replicate format and language.

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Don't be discouraged if your first few attempts are unsuccessful. Continued, dedicated efforts, based on sound educational ideas, get results.

Dufour believes that his colleagues always had the ability to develop innovative programs and get them funded, but it took the User Group environment to nurture the ideas and translate them into winning proposals. •

Grant Writer's Assistant Software Demo

Grant Writer's Assistant, software from ITS, Inc. and The FundWare Group, is designed to assist in the development of funds for education and other non-profit organizations. It includes a searchable/expandable database with potential funding sources, examples, templates, online help, a check list for project development, and a tutorial. A fully functional demo (system requirements: Macintosh, minimum 2 megabytes of RAM, hard drive) with the "save" feature and some examples disabled is available to download from AppleLink (pathway: K-12 Education area, Education Resources board, Grants folder) or by contacting Stephen Williamson, ITS, Inc., 315 Pioneer Circle, Woodstock, GA 30188; 404/924-3317. •

Note: You can order the Demo from SchoolHouse Mac for the usual \$4.00 copying and handling fee.

Ten Tips to Sharpen Grant Proposals

As funding becomes tighter, finding and winning grants becomes more competitive. John Marvelle, Education Professor at Bridgewater State College and seasoned education grant writer, offers ten tips to enhance your grant-writing skills:

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Read and re-read the proposal guidelines to avoid technical disqualification.

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Visualize your funding source as one person.

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Write in the third person.

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Be serious but not dull.

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Be positive by emphasizing opportunity rather than need.

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Demonstrate confidence by saying "we will" not "we hope."

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Be concrete rather than philosophical.

- Eliminate jargon, and avoid emotional appeal.
- Create a skimmable proposal. Include a table of contents, numbered pages, and dividers. Present bulleted lists, and underline key words.
- Have others read your proposal and grade it according to the guidelines.

“The first step to a successful proposal is knowing what you want to do and allowing it to be modified and enhanced by the available funding source,” advises Marvelle. Professor Marvelle helps oversee a Grants folder on AppleLink. For more grant tips, sources, and leads, follow AppleLink pathway: K-12 Education area, Education Resources board, Grants folder. •

Grant Resource

A Teacher's Guide to Fellowships and Awards, written by the Massachusetts Department of Education, D. C. Heath, and the Massachusetts Field Center for Teaching and Learning at U Mass. Boston, features more than 100 institutes, fellowships, and awards that assist professional growth. The book is currently under revision. However, most programs are offered annually with some variation in application dates and contact information. For single copies, send a check for \$2.00 to cover shipping & handling with a letter requesting A Teacher's Guide to Fellowships and Awards to: State House Bookstore, Room 116, State House, Boston, MA 02133. •

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