THE WORK/BOOK

GRANT WRITING 101

ASK.BEANS

STRATEGY · STORYTELLING · SYSTEMS

FOR PURPOSE-DRIVEN PEOPLE

I've learned that most people don't struggle because they lack ideas. They struggle because they're taught to move fast without grounding, to scale without structure, and to plan without ever pausing to ask why they're building in the first place.

I've watched talented people burn out chasing funding they weren't ready to manage. I've seen business owners outsource their thinking to tools, trends, and templates that were never built with their lives in mind. I've seen community initiatives fail not because the mission was wrong, but because the foundation was rushed.

Ask.Beans exists because strategy without intention costs people more than money. It costs clarity, confidence, and sustainability.

This is especially visible in how people use AI for career and business planning. AI can organize, outline, and move fast, but it can't read the room. It can't feel timing, relationships, or lived experience. Tools don't replace discernment. They support it.

The ideas that grow are the ones planted in solid SOIL: **systems** that create order, **opportunities** that expand reach, **intentionality** that keeps alignment, and **leverage** that prevents burnout. Whether it's a business, a nonprofit, or a career pivot, the pattern stays the same. Ideas don't fail because they aren't good. They fail because they aren't supported.

Ask.Beans helps people build foundations before expansion. We don't replace your voice. We help you strengthen it. Because growth isn't just about getting to the bag. It's about building something that can actually hold success when it arrives.
Beans don't turn green by accident.
They turn green because the ground was prepared.

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GET INVOLVED !!

Goals & Objective

THIS GUIDE IS DESIGNED TO HELP YOU:

- Understand whether you are actually ready to apply for a grant
- Think strategically about funders and what they are looking for
- Clarify your project, budget, and capacity
- Prepare strong foundations you can reuse across applications

What this guide will not do is write the grant for you. Grant writing is not just about words on a page. It is about clarity, alignment, and capacity. This workbook focuses on the thinking and preparation that makes grant writing stronger and more effective.

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Reflection

What do I want to fund?
Why does this matter right now?
What would change if this funding were secured?

Why am I seeking funding right now?

**Use the space below to answer honestly.
There is no right answer.**

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GRANT READINESS CHECK

Before writing anything, it is important to know whether you are ready to apply. Many grants are not denied because of bad writing, but because the project, organization, or capacity is not fully aligned yet.

Check all that currently apply. Be honest. This checklist is meant to clarify readiness, not judge it.
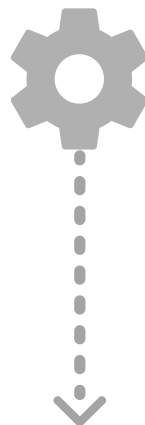
- [ ] I have a clear program or project idea that is defined by a specific audience, expected outcomes, and intentional planning.

- [ ] My project shows knowledge of leverage, including partnerships, resources, or systems that support the goal.

- [ ] I have outlined systems or processes that explain how the project will be implemented.

- [ ] My strategies are informed by research, lived experience, or a proven history of similar work.

- [ ] I have completed the S.O.I.L workbook (linked here), or a comparable planning tool that clearly defines scope, objectives, impact, and logistics.

- [ ] I have a budget that makes sense and does not raise concerns about self-serving use of funds.

- [ ] My budget is supported by research, real costs, quotes, or current market data.

- [ ] I understand who will manage the funds and what systems will be used to track spending and reporting.

- [ ] I know how I will evaluate the program and measure or define success.

- [ ] I have the time, capacity, and support needed to complete the project if funded.

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Common Reasons Grants Fail
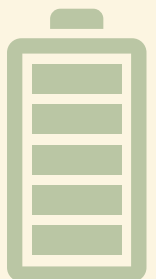## THAT HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH WRITING

The project **idea is not yet clearly defined.**

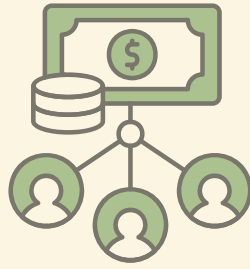The **budget does not match** the project description, or it seems unrealistic

The organization **lacks capacity** to manage the grant

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Common Reasons Grants Fail
THAT HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH WRITING

The **funder is not aligned** with the mission or audience of the project, meaning your goals do not match what they typically fund.
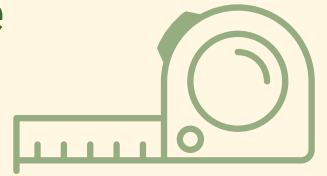
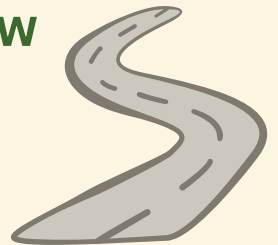Documentation and supporting **materials are incomplete** or missing

The application has **many errors**, omissions, or unclear messaging.

The project does not clearly **demonstrate measurable impact**

Failure to **follow the funder's guidelines**, formatting, or eligibility criteria.

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UNDERSTANDING RUBRICS

To ensure that the Funder of the grant is aligned with the idea, it is important to read and understand any rubrics related to the grant you wish to apply for. Not all grants have a rubric, however you can create one for yourself using the descriptions on the funder's site or the direct grant questions.

Rubrics are helpful because they:
- help to create and gauge quality work based on the grantor's specifications
- give a basic outline for free write or proposal-based applications
- can breakdown what a grantor may be looking for that may or may not be listed in the descriptions or application questions

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Grant Application Evaluation Rubric - Operational Grants

| Criteria	Excellent (5)	Good (4)	Fair (3)	Poor (2)	Very Poor (1)
Organizational Need	Strong justification for operational support; clearly demonstrates financial need	Clear need for support with some justification	Moderate need described but lacks depth	Limited or unclear financial need	No real need or justification provided
Community Impact	Organization has a strong, ongoing impact on the local community	Provides meaningful services to a defined group	Some community benefit present	Limited or unclear community impact	No clear benefit to the community
Organizational Capacity	Demonstrates strong leadership, governance, and ability to manage funds	Solid structure and experience managing funds	Adequate capacity with minor concerns	Some concerns about stability or capacity	Serious concerns about ability to manage funds
Sustainability	Clear plan for long-term stability and diverse funding sources	Shows some planning for sustainability	Basic sustainability plan	Limited or unrealistic sustainability planning	No sustainability plan

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SAMPLE RUBRIC

PROJECT IDEA/OPERATIONS

Grantors need clear, concise, and particular descriptions of your project. Some grants, especially free write and proposal based grants.

However, describing your idea is often not enough. Grantors sometimes request to know how you will operate the project and with whom. Some key elements include:

- Day to Day Operations
- Enhancing Partnerships
- Troubleshooting Guidelines and Plans
- Other Funding
- Strategic Plans
- Flow of Internal Operations
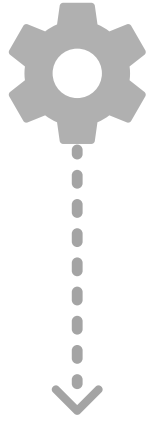
EXPECTED DELIVERABLES

This is the section where the outcomes and results get laid out. The idea of the project can be the best in the world, but how will you measure its success? This section is best approached with a quantity over quality mindset

For Example: (Project Name) will increase productivity in the company by 25% per quarter.

Does the proposed project have:
- quantitative (with numbers) and measurable objectives
- a plan filled with strategies that enforce the possibility of the desired outcomes coming true
- knowledge of the current variable (things, environments, and statistics) and their state as it relates to the project and its outcomes
- realistic visions and missions for your project

QUANTITATIVE

DATA THAT CAN BE QUANTIFIED BY COUNTING OR MEASURING

WHY YOU?

- The proficiency rates of your skills and talents.
- Number from your latest events with projected outcomes of your next project
- Survey results from your target audience
- Logistics from your previous marketing strategy

EXPECTED BUDGET

MONEY! That's what its all about! Yet, we must remember that where the money goes and why has more potency with grantors than the feeling that the money is simply NEEDED. Everybody needs it, but why should you have it over hundreds or thousands of other applicants?

Outside of that fact, there is also a possibility that the items you wish to put on your application may NOT be an eligible buy for this particular grant application; as some grantors are strict about what their funding can be used for, even if you win it.

Let's also consider that a lot of people run from this section due to calculations, anxieties about their ideas, and lack of accounting knowledge or experience. The good news is that there is a lot of software out there that can do most of the work for you and some components within your own grant write-up can help you as well.

Some tips, tricks, and resources to consider when building your budget are:

- Use a spreadsheet to track expected expenses (spreadsheets often use formulas and can calculate for you as you build out your plan
- Use an accounting software
- Estimate individual costs for future projects based on expenses incurred in past projects
- Use your project outline to find items for budgeting (for ex: a project directed toward students may need extra hires to chaperone, snacks, first aid materials, and partnerships that may cost a little to fulfill your portion OR a project geared toward farming may need to include seed land, water, pot, soil, and gardening tools costs that may or may not include a lawn mower)
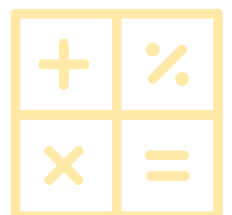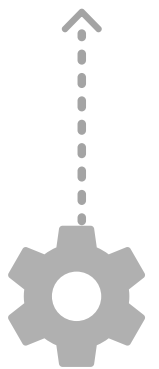
The Game of Value

ADDING WEIGHT

With grant writing, there is a lot of creative freedom. This can be both freeing for some and scary for others. As a way to overcome the fears that may be involved, one might wish to strengthen the grant or project that they intend to perform. Means of improvement can be added to the project outline or the project's teams.

A few examples of grant strengtheners include:
- Partnerships with aligned organizations and individuals
- Partnerships with advanced and influential entities
- Mentioning the acquisition of other funding
- Adding credible professionals to your team
- Mentioning successful results in the past for similar experience or projects
- Extensive population research on your topic
- Press and media exposure
- Credible partners and the mention of their past results
- non-profits and for profit partnerships

LET'S CREATE!

Let's add value. Name your project idea in the notepad to the left and then list some ways you can boost this project in a grant proposal in the box to the right.

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