

TELLING A COMPELLING STORY TO FUNDERS

A RESOURCE SHEET FROM A WEBINAR TO PREPARE BUSINESSES FOR OBTAINING FUNDING

The Great Lakes Midwest Regional Food Business Center will distribute over \$10 million in Business Builder grants and assistance to eligible food and farm business owners in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Wisconsin. This resource sheet is designed to assist entrepreneurs in preparing to apply for grant funding from various sources, including the forthcoming Business Builder grant program. This resource follows a webinar hosted on October 24, 2024 that outlined ideas for writing a compelling narrative to attract funders. [Find the webinar recording here.](#)

6 STEPS TO TELL A COMPELLING STORY TO FUNDERS

STEP 1

Read the instructions carefully

- Review the request for proposals or applications.
- Thoroughly review the funder's goals.
- Before deciding to apply, make sure your project supports the funder's goals.

STEP 2

Write about the basics: use the 5 W's to guide your messy first draft¹

What does your proposed project consist of? What are the activities and intended outcomes of your project?

When will the project take place? Consider your timeline from start to finish.

Who is involved? Do you have community partners or support outside of your business?

Where will the project take place? Is your project located in the funder's priority area?

Why is this project important and relevant? Be able to outline and demonstrate the potential impact of your work.

STEP 3

Revise

- Shape your messy first draft to align with the grant opportunity's priorities.
- Communicate the connection between your business's values and mission to the goals of the grant opportunity.
- Answer all of the funders' questions.
- Use plain language so people outside of your business understand your project plan.
- Fix any spelling or grammatical errors.

¹ The 5 W's was originally shared in an article by the New York Foundation for the Arts linked below under Resources.

STEP 4

Write your narrative, using technology as a tool, not on its own

- Only you can best convey how your business aligns with a grant opportunity's mission or purpose.
- Use tools like AI for spell check, grammar check, and formatting.
- Reviewers will likely know if you used technology to write your narrative.

STEP 5

Review your draft narrative

- Ask a peer or someone outside of your organization to review and provide critical feedback about your narrative.
- Ask yourself the following questions:
 - ☑ Did you address each required question clearly and directly?
 - ☑ Did you communicate your business's mission and values?
 - ☑ Did you connect your project to the goals of the grant opportunity?
 - ☑ Did you use personal anecdotes and stories to connect with reviewers?
 - ☑ Did you demonstrate the potential impact of your proposed project?

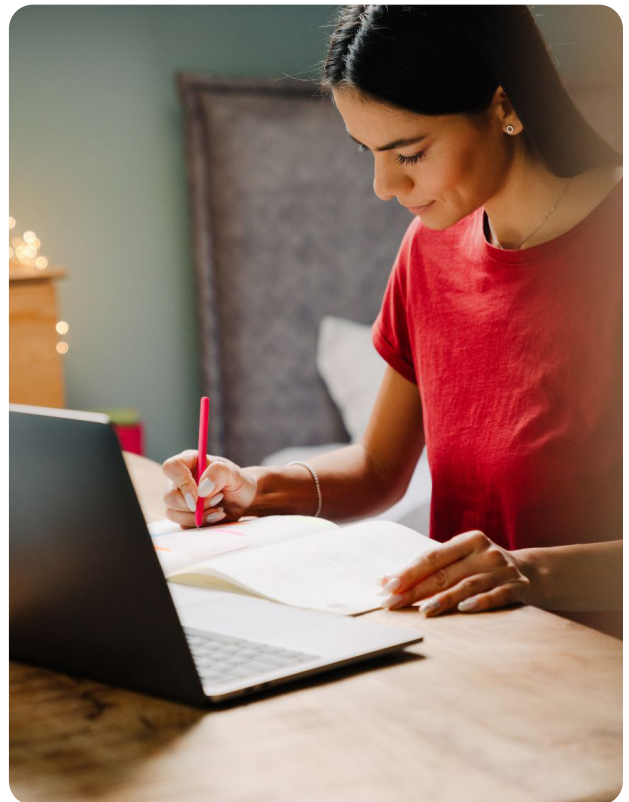
STEP 6

Re-read and refine your narrative

- Double check that it aligns with the grant objectives.
- Double and triple check for any errors.
- Make sure the plans outlined in your narrative match your proposed project budget.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Include details that will stand out to reviewers and funders. **Be as specific as possible**, such as how many people will benefit from the project or how the project will support the larger local food ecosystem.
- **Tell your story to the reader.** You know your business inside and out, but the reader might not be familiar with you or your business.
- Let your personality come through and **share anecdotes in your narrative** to grab the reviewers' attention.
- **Tie your business's mission and values to the story** you tell to funders and reviewers.
- Review for spelling and grammar errors.
- **Make sure the narrative aligns with the budget**, and you have included everything asked in the instructions for the call for proposals or applications.



RESOURCES

- [Purdue OWL](#) is a no-cost resource from Purdue University where you can find help with formatting a grant application.
- [Grammarly](#) is a no-cost resource to help with grammatically correct writing.
- The New York Foundation for the Arts article, [How to Write An Effective Project Narrative](#), features tips for organizing, brainstorming, and editing project narratives.
- [USDA Natural Resources Conservation Services](#) offers education and funding opportunities for farmers and ranchers.
- [USDA Sustainable Agriculture Research Education](#) offers education and funding opportunities for farmers.
- Chicago Food Policy Action Council [Good Food Purchasing](#) provides tools, support and funding for institutions sourcing local foods.

BUSINESS BUILDER GRANTS –

How can my business get ready for the application?

- Watch for updates from [Great Lakes Midwest Regional Food Business Center](#) or your [Regional Food Business Center](#).
- Connect with your [state or regional network](#) coordinator.
- Review your incorporation status and business plan.
- Consider your business values and how you would articulate them through your business story.
- Consider these questions:
 - Is your business entity registered with your state regulatory agency?
 - Do you have an Employer Identification Number (EIN)?
 - Do you have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) from [Sam.gov](#)?

Follow the Great Lakes Midwest Regional Food Business Center and its partners for updates.

ABOUT THE GREAT LAKES MIDWEST REGIONAL FOOD BUSINESS CENTER

The Great Lakes Midwest Regional Food Business Center is dedicated to offering coordination, technical assistance, and capacity building opportunities for small- to mid-sized historically marginalized food and farm business entrepreneurs in support of a more resilient, diverse, and competitive food system.

Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems (MI) coordinates the [Great Lakes Midwest Regional Food Business Center](#) that is comprised of network coordinators – [Chicago Food Policy Action Council](#) (IL), [Northwest Indiana Food Council](#) (IN), [Food Finance Institute of the University of Wisconsin System](#) (WI), and the [Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin Department of Agriculture and Food Systems](#) – who seek to take a transformational, rather than transactional, approach. Learn more at [glm-rfbc.msu.edu](#) or contact [glm-rfbc@msu.edu](#)

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