

How to Win a Grant

If the major problem with your athletic program is money—or rather lack of it—consider writing a grant proposal

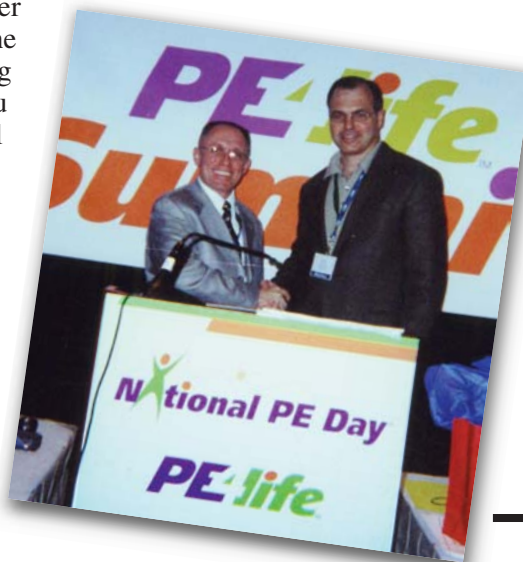
At BFS we understand that one of the biggest issues in improving your athletic program, and thus your winning record, is the budget. Despite exhausting fund-raising efforts, there just never seems to be enough money for the ideal equipment setup and to bring in all the training programs you need. And with local school budgets being cut more each year, available funds just keep getting smaller.

How can a school get the best training and optimally outfit its gym in these tough times? How can you afford to buy the equipment or get the training, nutrition or character education assistance for your team or for your school? Have you considered a grant?

A Grant? What's That?

A grant is an award of funds by a governmental or private organization to nonprofit organizations such

as schools, churches and charitable groups. The bad news is that this usually means a one-time award, rather than ongoing funding for a program (which, by definition, would be considered fund-raising). The good news is that the amount of money available for qualifying programs is staggering.



BFS Editor Kim Goss poses with Tim McCord, keynote speaker at the PE4Life Summit in Washington DC on May 4, 2004. McCord helped his school district receive a major grant for exercise equipment.

In 2002 approximately 56,000 private US foundations awarded \$29 billion in grants, but that's peanuts compared to what various governmental agencies give. Altogether, there is about \$350 billion available, varying from grants of a few hundred dollars to

those of several hundred thousand dollars. For example, the Carol M. White PEP federal grant program will award \$70 million in grants to schools this year alone. At the 2004 PE4Lift Summit this May, *BFS* magazine editor Kim Goss spoke to three middle school principals who each received more than \$300,000 in grant money to purchase exercise equipment for their schools.

Surely your program will qualify for an award of some of this cash. So, how do you go about getting a piece of that grant pie?

How to Get a Grant

The most important factor in having your grant application approved is correctly matching up your needs with the qualifying needs set forth by the award. Accordingly, it pays to carefully evaluate the available grants to find the short list of those that clearly fit the bill.

Before beginning the application process, learn as much as you can about the various grants available to address your issues. If your school wants to implement a program to fight obesity, carefully choose a grant that addresses that particular problem.

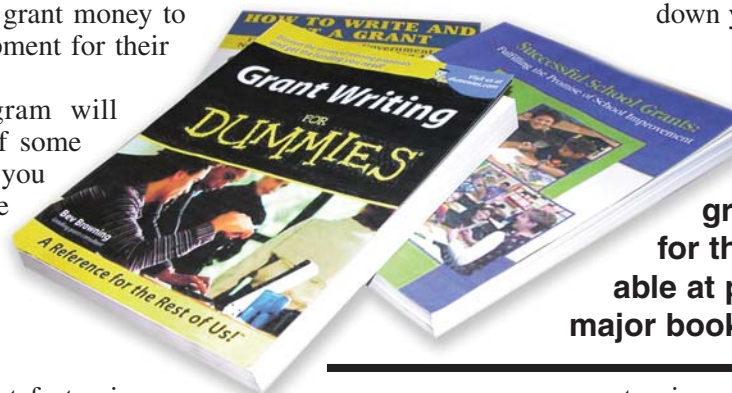
You might, for example, decide that your school wants a comprehensive nutrition and fitness curriculum that educates students about the dangers of excess bodyfat and provides solutions for them to this ever-growing health crisis. Or, you may instead decide that your football team needs clear character and goal-setting principles addressed. Whatever your concerns, decide what type of program would specifically address them, and then start searching for the grant that best matches your needs.

Grants are available for programs to meet almost every conceivable need of youth organizations or schools: fitness training and exercise equipment, drug and alcohol education, self-esteem development, character education, obesity and diabetes management—the list is seemingly endless. Just find out what is available and is right for you.

Grant searches can be made on the Internet, in the library, and at the bookstore. You will find a wealth of resources to help you put together your application and get funds coming your way. Spend your time finding a good grant match rather than on the often time- and effort-intensive grant application process applying to a multitude of grants that are not well suited to your needs.

Once you have your short list, determine what the donors desire in the application. Contact them directly for this information or see what they have published on the Internet. Do they want you to fill out a form? Or do they want a complex, detailed, written proposal? This fact may help narrow down your list.

While an application may be only a few



There are many excellent books on grant writing written for the lay person available at public libraries and major bookstores.

pages, an extensive grant proposal will generally be a large packet of information submitted to the donor, including a cover letter, a letter of intent, a budget, a detailed description of exactly how the program will be put into effect and evaluated for progress, and many attachments.

It is common for organizations that plan to apply for grants requiring time-consuming and complex proposals to enlist the aid of a professional grant proposal writer. Such a person is experienced and skilled in putting together proposals and can show you the ropes of the whole process. Be prepared to pay for this service (generally on a pre-proposal basis), although lower-cost alternatives might be available to you. But there are other choices.

Do you know a college student, for example, who is a good technical writer? Do you have an employee who might be able to become trained to do this type of work? Perhaps even a student wanting to benefit from the program could work on the proposal project for extra credit. Classes on writing grant proposals are often available at community colleges.

You can find additional grant application and proposal writing resources many places online. For a template of basic applications, see the Network of Grantmakers at www.nng.org [click on “Common Grant Application”]. You can also find other common grant applications at www.fdncenter.org [click on “Finding Funders” and then “Common Grant Applications” in the Search the Site text box or click on the FAQs link for links to examples of grant proposals]. A list of experienced grant writers available on a freelance basis is available at the Foundation Center’s website, www.fdncenter.org. Also see the American Association of Fundraising Counsel’s website at www.aafrc.org.

Grant Writing Guidelines You Must Know

The great majority of donors will want your proposal to include information explaining how the benefits of the fund they give will be evaluated. They want to know they are making a difference. Let them know that you too care about results and are determined to both get and document the benefits.

It is most critical to not miss the deadlines

For the latest information on grant writing, including many online resources, you can download a free booklet from the BFS website, www.biggerfasterstronger.com

for application and proposal submission! After all your hard work getting the application or proposal together, be certain to get it to the donor on time for consideration. These deadlines are strict, and exceptions are not made.

The proposal with the closest match to the donor's guidelines, the clearest statement of the problem desired to be addressed with grant money, the best description of the program and desired benefits, and the most helpful evaluation protocol will win the grant. If your grant meets these requirements, you stand a very good chance of receiving that cash and getting your program started.

Be Aware of Grant Funding Scams

BFS is taking steps to implement a program to assist schools and youth groups in obtaining the financing they need to start programs and procure equipment to make their athletic and education dreams come true. We will soon offer a service that will answer your questions concerning types of grants available for your needs, how to apply for funds, and what other resources are available, as well as to assist in drafting and submitting applications and proposals.

Although a few other organizations provide similar services, please be aware and beware of companies that offer to write your applications or proposals for you if you promise to buy their equipment. Some even offer overpriced equipment in exchange for an agreement to buy theirs exclusively with the grant money after they write your proposal.

Concerning such a case, the Minnesota State Auditor's Office and Minnesota Attorney General recently investigated the appropriateness of a program that was sponsored by the National School Fitness

Foundation (NSFF).

The NSFF sold an exercise program and equipment to more than 500 school districts around the US. It solicited agreements with the school districts in which the districts would pay between \$200,000 and \$1 million, up front, for the program. In exchange, the


NSFF sold the districts grossly overpriced exercise equipment and agreed to reimburse schools monthly, if

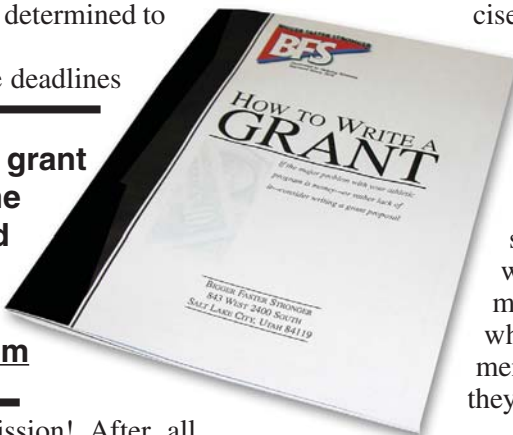
possible, until the full purchase cost was repaid. Later, the NSFF wrote the districts informing them that due to "rapidly depleting revenue streams and donations," they would not make any more payments under the agreements, which admittedly required payments by the NSFF only as long as they were possible.

Under this apparent pyramid, or "Ponzi," scheme, the payments going out to the districts seemed to have come from initial payments of recently recruited school districts. The Minnesota Department of Commerce and the Office of the Attorney General issued a cease and desist order against the NSFF and are pursuing the matter.

Clearly, it is important to pursue program and equipment funding with an eye toward avoiding scams and to be wary of being overcharged by vendors who might offer assistance in obtaining programs and equipment funding. At BFS we are committed to assisting your school or youth groups to acquire the best resources to meet your fitness, character and health goals, with absolutely no obligation to purchase BFS programs or equipment.

As our motto states, "At BFS we are dedicated to helping athletes succeed." Helping you get the money you need for your athletic program through grants is one way we hope to help you accomplish your goals.

(Please consult our website (www.biggerfasterstronger.com, select downloads under the Tools for Coaches) for more information about grant writing, including a 10-page grant writing booklet you can download.) 



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