

Hire a Grant Writer or Do-It-Yourself?

One of the first decisions you need to make is whether to write your proposal entirely on your own or to seek outside assistance. Some questions to consider are:

- Do I have the grant writing experience necessary to write a successful grant?
- Am I a detail-oriented person who can write a complete grant application?

If the answer is “no” to either question, you may want to consider hiring a professional grant writer to work with you on completing the grant application on time.

What to Consider When Hiring a Grant Writer

- Ask for a resume that includes past grant writing experience.
- Ask for and check their references.
- Ask if they have worked on VAPG proposals in the past. If they have, have those proposals been funded? If not, why not?
- Ask how many other proposals they are working on while working on yours (do they have the time to spend on your proposal?)
- Ask if they have experience working with agricultural or rural businesses.

Tips and Pitfalls in Submitting a VAPG Proposal

When you hire a grant writer it is important to remember that you will need to take the time to work with them to complete the application. You are the best source of information on your business and your business plan. Working successfully with a grant writer will require that you invest time in the process to have the best application possible. Plan to spend 30-50 hours on your VAPG application, working in conjunction with your grant writer.

Some tips:

- You will need to work with the grant writer to have all the necessary financial statements in order for the application. Determine how the financial forms will be completed early on in the process as this can take time.
- Leave time to review the grant writer’s work.
- Pay attention to the VAPG application checklist. You must turn in all required documents and forms for your application to be considered.

Some pitfalls:

- Not planning the time needed to work with the grant writer. Remember it is a cooperative process and completing the application will require your significant involvement.
- Incomplete applications. You must review the checklist to determine if all the forms and documents are submitted. Don’t leave this to the last minute.

List of Grant Writing Consultants

The following people have expressed interest in providing assistance with VAPG proposals. They have either had positive results with VAPG proposals in the past, they have grant writing experience, or they have attended a grant writer training on the VAPG program. Rural Development, the Ag Innovation Center and our partners do not "endorse" these writers. It is the responsibility of the VAPG applicants to screen any consultants they may hire. We must emphasize that successful grant applications typically require significant involvement from the applicant.

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