

# 10 STEPS FOR SUCCESSFUL EDUCATIONAL GRANT WRITING

By: Brittany Ballou, STEAM Teacher K-5



# OVERVIEW

At first glance, educational grant writing can seem like a daunting task. You know your students need supplies/ technologies to help them learn to the best of their ability, but you're not sure where to start. This guide will walk you through 10 steps that will help you hone your grant writing skills. By following this guide you will identify specific needs for your students, learn how to connect directly to data points, and fine tune specific parts of the grant writing process to gain the attention of those reviewing the grant. The next time you pick up a grant application you should feel confident, focused, and ready to write a successful grant application.



# 01

## IDENTIFY A PASSIONATE AREA OF NEED

The first step to applying for any educational grant is to identify an area of need that you are passionate about. Those who review educational grants can sense, through your writing, the drive that you have to supply your students with the needed materials. By being open and identifying the gap in educational supplies, you will grab the attention of those reviewing the application. Individuals/companies funding grant opportunities want to know that they are making a difference, so writing a heartfelt and compelling application that describes this area of need, is your first step.



# 02

## REAL-LIFE IMPLICATIONS

As you identify your passionate area of need, you also want to recognize a key aspect of teaching and learning, and that is connecting your content to real-life careers, particularly in STEM focused avenues. This idea of career-readiness is important for all ages, especially with our youngest learners who begin to visualize what they want to be when they grow up. Oftentimes when students are asked what they want to be when they grow up, you'll hear the responses of a doctor, firefighter, or teacher. We all know that STEM careers are a growing field, but if students are never exposed to specific career paths, such as a computer programmer, electrical engineer, or avionics technician, then they will never know if they are of interest to them. Therefore, think about how you can connect your area of need to specific careers that will continue to help your students learn and grow.



# 03

## REQUEST OUT-OF-THE-BOX MATERIALS THAT TARGET THE NEED

Once you identify an area of need, you need to narrow down what materials will help fulfill that need. In order to help your project stand out, you want to think of unique materials. STEM, by nature, provides this opportunity to provide unique materials that students use through hands-on learning. Those who supply grants want to see how their funds can be used in a way that stands out from other classrooms. For example, the grant application example at the end, shows how using escape rooms (Breakout EDU) help students build their social-emotional skills as well as their learned content, which would be assessed through formative assessments. I was able to narrow down my requested materials list to a specific resource that targeted the area of need for my students.



# 04

## FORMULATE A CREATIVE TITLE

You may think this is a silly step, but I promise, it is one of the most valuable! People who review grant applications can spend hours reviewing applications that are all similar to your own. You want to make yours stand out from the crowd. The easiest way to do this is with a title that is short, creative, and will stick in their mind later on. Try to aim for a title that is 25 words or less, is possibly a play on words, such as a pun or rhyme, and points towards the materials that you are requesting. By following these easy steps you will quickly find a way to stick in their minds even after they read numerous other applications.



# 05

## DEMONSTRATE THE LONGEVITY OF YOUR MATERIALS/PROJECT

As you are brainstorming a list of out-of-the-box materials, you always want to consider the longevity of these resources. In a nutshell, are your resources consumable or reusable? If they are reusable, do you foresee any upkeep needed from year-to-year? For example, if you are requesting some type of technology, do you need to budget for repairs? Are they durable enough that many students can use them without fear of breaking? The longer your materials can be used, the better, in the eyes of organizations funding the materials, because they want a long term impact.



# 06

## IDENTIFY HOW YOUR MATERIALS WILL DIRECTLY IMPACT LEARNING

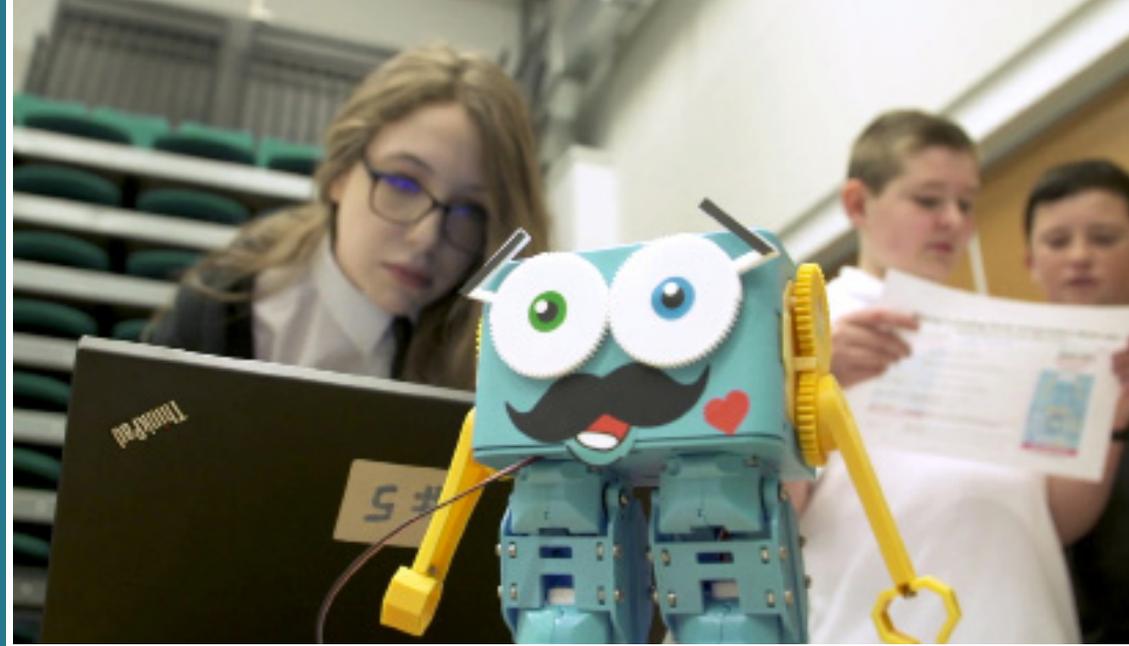
This may be one of the most important parts to any grant application. Grant reviewers love data and they want to know specific steps and guidelines that will be used to assess how the materials will successfully bridge the gaps that you identify in student learning. If you're trying to figure out what type of data you can link your grant to, think about formative, summative, social-emotional learning assessments, rubrics, or any other specific data set that you have to connect to the grant. This also provides an easy follow up point to demonstrate to grant reviewers how you will accomplish your goal by receiving the requested resources.



07

## IDENTIFY HOW MANY STUDENTS WILL BE IMPACTED BY THE MATERIALS REQUESTED

Just like grant reviewers pay attention to how the materials will directly impact learning, they also want to know how many students will be impacted. Why, you ask? It is really simple when you think about it - they want to know that they are making the biggest impact with their grant monies. As you think about writing your grant, think about how many students will be directly impacted by the materials. Is it a small group of students? If so, how can you expand the project to make a greater impact? Maybe you will start implementing the project/materials with a small group, but you will continue to expand it to an entire class or grade level? Could you make it a bigger impact by sharing your resources amongst multiple grade levels? The more students who benefit from the materials the better, so if you're thinking small, expand your goals to eventually reach more students.



08

## IDENTIFY MULTIPLE SOURCES OF REVENUE FOR YOUR PROJECT

When applying for a grant, the funds may not cover your entire project needs. However, this should not deter you from applying, and in fact, could help you with receiving additional funds, if you have a strategic game plan. Organizations providing grants like to see how their monies will be used to make a larger impact. You may have already received partial funding for materials you're requesting, or you may have a long term goal to receive funds over a certain amount of time. Make sure you detail this in your grant proposal. Describe how your project is being implemented in chunks over time and how receiving funds for the next set of materials will allow you to continue growing your idea, or how the initial funds will start your long term project.



# 09

## FOLLOW UP WITH THE GRANT SOURCE AFTER THE PROJECT IS FUNDED

If you are successful in receiving a grant, it is important that you take the extra step to follow up with the organization that provided the funding. Sometimes this is a requirement for receiving the grant funds, while other times it is not. However, in either scenario the organization is going to love receiving updates about how their funds had a meaningful impact. Include pictures, videos, thank you letters, written statements, or anything else you can think of that would show the direct impact that the organization had on your students and their learning. I promise, they will not forget this! In fact, it may be beneficial for you in the future if you find yourself applying for a grant through the same organization again.



# 10

## DON'T GIVE UP

This is often the hardest step, but don't give up. I know it is easier said than done, but it is important. Remember you will not receive every grant you have applied to. At times there are hundreds or thousands of individuals that apply to receive funds. If you have followed each of these steps, then you're on the right track. Go back and analyze your application and have a colleague do the same. Having a fresh set of eyes can always help! Think about areas of your application that you can provide more detail, get more creative, pare down the materials you are requesting, and give yourself time. It takes time, but if you don't give up and keep trying, it will happen!



## SUCCESSFUL GRANT APPLICATION EXAMPLE: GRANT APPLICATION



**PROJECT DESCRIPTION:** Describe the project in detail. Please address the following items as specifically as possible.

- **NEED:** Why is this project necessary?
- **IDEA:** Summarize what you propose to do and explain how it is innovative.
- **IMPACT:** What will be the impact of the proposed activities?
- **TARGET POPULATION:** Describe the primary participants as well as other target audiences that will be involved. How many of each audience do you estimate will be involved?
- **TIMELINE:** When will the project activities begin and end? Identify events, trips, presentations, etc. that are planned.
- **SITE(S):** Where and when will the project take place?
- **EVALUATION:** State your goals and how you plan to measure your expected results. Try to employ empirical data to show results rather than anecdotes.

We are requesting 5 Breakout Edu School Bundles, which will provide us with 30 total Breakout Edu kits. They will be used at Grange Hall Elementary School beginning August 2020 and will be used continuously throughout the academic school year. These kits are necessary for teachers to implement a collaborative, small group setting for SEL lessons that will teach students how to communicate successfully, while gaining experiences with self-awareness, self-management, and social awareness. It will also provide teachers with opportunities to introduce, review, and reinforce core content topics. 60% of the Breakout Edu games focus on a variety of STEAM topics where students must apply their academic knowledge in order to solve complex problems. We want to continue to build upon our SEL program at GHES as well as provide unique activities for core content standards that allow students to think outside-of-the-box, provide movement in their learning, and reinforce core content.

**TARGET AUDIENCE:** Who will benefit from your idea? Be specific: identify grade level(s) and/or subgroup(s) of students, which CCPS employees, parents of whom, etc. Estimate the number of students and/or others who will participate and/or benefit.

We currently have 810 students enrolled at GHES. Students in grades K-5 will participate in the SEL portion of the activities (810 students), while the core content is geared for grades 2-5 (555). All teachers (46) at GHES will be trained on using the Breakout Edu Kits in their classroom through professional development during teacher work week. They will have an opportunity to engage in their own Breakout Edu game as part of the activities to welcome teachers back to school and engage teams during teacher work week. They will have the opportunity to put themselves in their students' shoes, while also learning how to implement the program in their classroom.

**EXPECTED RESULTS:** What results do you expect from the idea and how will you evaluate or measure its success? Can this program be replicated in other schools?

**SEL Data:** Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA) will be given in the fall, winter, and spring to evaluate student competencies (TScores - 8 total per student) for their social and emotional skills. We expect student TScores to increase for at least 3/8 categories for their social and emotional skills (need to typical or typical to strength).

**Content Data:** Focusing on 5th grade, grade level teachers will use Breakout Edu kits to review for formative assessments. Data from PowerSchool end of unit assessments will be gathered and it is expected that 100% of students pass at 75% or higher. Yes, this program can be replicated in other schools.

**TIMELINE:** When do you anticipate the project to start and end? Indicate if the benefits are ongoing.

I will implement a professional development module during teacher work week in August to train teachers how to use the program effectively in their classrooms. In September, the kits will be used in the STEAM classroom and homeroom classes to work on SEL curriculum. The benefits will also be seen throughout the year and beyond as curriculum games are used for core content. Benefits will be seen beyond the academic school year.

**BUDGET ITEMS:** The maximum award is \$5,000. Please plan carefully, additional funds are not available after the grants are awarded. Indicate the total amount you are requesting and an itemized list of projected expenditures, i.e. transportation, materials, equipment, staff time, etc.

Breakout Edu School Bundles - \$800 x 5 = \$4000 (30 total kits)