



Alabama Outdoor Classroom Program Grant Writing Tips



1. Identify one or two persons to be responsible for grant writing.

The persons need not have experience writing grants, but they should have satisfactory writing skills and use correct grammar. They should be able to communicate your planning committee's ideas in a clear and concise way while following the grant application guidelines.

2. Work with your outdoor classroom planning committee to write down and organize a Master Plan that includes your school's outdoor classroom goals and objectives along with Individual Project Plans that include the tasks, materials, timeframe, and budget needed for each project.

Use your Master Plan and Individual Project Plans to help you organize and prioritize your projects. (A Master Plan Worksheet and example Individual Project Plans are available on the Alabama Wildlife Federation's Outdoor Classroom Planning Materials webpage.) You can use the information from your Outdoor Classroom Master Plan and Individual Project Plans to answer the questions that are commonly included in most grant applications such as the Purpose of the Project, a Project Description (should reflect how your project matches the funding objectives of the grantor), Project Details (demonstrate your project is achievable and a good investment), Timeline (promise only what you can reasonably achieve), and a Budget. This information will help fill out the grant application in a succinct and timely manner.

3. Utilize your Master Plan to help you choose which grants to pursue.

Match projects in your Master Plan to specific grant opportunities while following your planning committee's goals and objectives. Do not apply for a grant just because it is available if it does not match your identified outdoor classroom needs.

4. Read through the entire grant before deciding whether or not to apply.

Make sure you understand all aspects of the grant application. Consider the following questions:

- ❖ When is the deadline for submitting the grant, and when does the project need to be completed?
- ❖ Does the grant, if funded, require a mid-project report and final project report?
- ❖ How complicated is this grant's reporting process? The amount of time required to complete this process may not be worth the amount you are requesting through the grant.
- ❖ Does the grant provide the funds up-front, or is it based on spending school funds first and then being reimbursed with proper documentation? You will want to check with the school's administration to see if this is allowed.
- ❖ Does the grant require or encourage matching funds and/or in-kind donations and support such as the cost of donated items like building materials, plants, waived consultation fees, and volunteer hours?

5. Pay attention to the language in the grant application package.

Successful grant writing is really a match-making process: The grantor has definite objectives and you must convince them that your project fits their needs. Put key wording from the application package right into your proposal. Many times, this key wording will appear in boldface within the grant information and it will not hurt to also boldface it within your application or proposal.



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6. Let the school community know that you are looking for grants.

The best grants to seek are small, local grants. In fact, some grants may only require a letter of request to the grantor. There will be less competition for these, and you are more likely to have personal contact with the grantor. However, do not hesitate to file for large national grants that are well-matched for your project. For a list of grants that are available to assist outdoor classroom development, review the list on the Alabama Wildlife Federation’s website under Outdoor Classroom Grants page.

7. Once you have a grant application in front of you...FOLLOW ALL DIRECTIONS to the letter!!

This is the most common mistake which can lead the grant reviewers to dismiss your application without even reading it. The application format set out by grantors helps them in the review process. Deviating from the format means that you are making things difficult for the grantor to read and fully understand your proposal, and oftentimes, this will result in immediate elimination of your grant proposal from the application pool. Make sure your proposal at least gets read.

8. Make yourself a checklist from the grant application package if they do not provide one.

Make sure you have addressed all points mentioned in the grant application. For example, if the grantor prefers to fund projects that promote community involvement, express clearly how your project will involve the community. Do not neglect to address any funding goal of the grantor set out in the grant application package.

9. Have someone read your proposal before you submit it.

Your reader should ideally be someone not closely involved or informed about your project. This distance will help them find any gaps or confusing elements in your proposal. You should also provide them with the grant requirements so that they can double-check to make sure your application meets all of the requirements. Any questions left unanswered by your proposal for this reader will also be unanswered questions for the grant reviewer.

10. Finally, make sure your proposal is neat and pleasant to read.

Look at it objectively: Have you used a font size large enough to read easily? Many grant applications will specify the font style and size. Have you broken text into small sections with headings or do you have long, unbroken passages that can turn off the reader? Use the grant application’s sub-headings as the sub-headings in your proposal.

The Alabama Outdoor Classroom Program is a partnership between:



**Alabama Cooperative
Extension System**



Alabama Wildlife Federation
www.alabamawildlife.org/classrooms/



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SHARE THE WONDER.
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