QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE TO GRANTS AND FUNDRAISING

The Learning Ally Audiobook Solution is available to schools and districts nationwide. When existing funds are exhausted , determined schools and districts nationwide have found creative funding solutions to provide the students with this powerful literacy solution.

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Before you begin, **check in with your administration** and be sure to have their support. Have a **clear goal and a plan** before you apply, working with colleagues to think about the long-term benefits to your students.

COORDINATED FEDERAL FUNDS

Schools receive multiple budget line items from the federal Department of Education to serve disadvantaged students. Districts are allowed to pool funds from multiple budgets to fund a project. For example, Title II can pay for professional development while IDEA or Title I funds the licenses. Splitting costs between departments is often the quickest way to fund a project versus applying for a grant.

GRANTS DEPARTMENT or LOCAL EDUCATION FOUNDATION

Check within your district or network for grant writing support; many districts have staff dedicated to grant writing who can support your work. Local education foundations may also have grants available that meet your project needs and scope, if your area has one.

If your school or district doesn't already have a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization formed, you may want to consider creating one. There is cost, time, and energy involved, but some private foundations, particularly at the state and local level, may provide grant support only to non-profit groups.

COMPETITIVE GRANTS

Discretionary grants award funds to eligible applicants on the basis of a competitive process. Applications are typically released 4-6 weeks before the submission deadline. Proposals are reviewed and scored based on the quality of the responses to the requirements and selection criteria. The review process gives the department discretion to determine which applicants best address the program requirements and are, therefore, most worthy of funding.

GRANT WRITING BEST PRACTICES

- MAKE SURE YOU HAVE THE RIGHT MATCH. Look for grant opportunities that match your program's goals and objectives. Understand the mission of the grantor; look at previously funded programs to make the right match.

- DON'T DO IT ALONE. Work with other educators and parents, especially those who have a passion for the project—and even better, grant writing experience! Ask someone who was not part of the grant writing to review your proposal before it is submitted. They can more easily catch omissions or confusing descriptions.

- UNDERSTAND GUIDELINES AND REQUIREMENTS. Most funding agencies publish grant guidelines or requirements. Be certain you understand them and follow them to the letter. Note any deadlines! Assign one person to check regularly for additional requirements or new technical assistance information because they can change.

- BE CLEAR ABOUT YOUR MISSION. Your "needs statement" drives your entire grant proposal. The proposed program should be clearly based on the challenges you face and describe the reason you need the program. Include the use of statistics and other research data when possible.

COMPETITIVE GRANTS, continued

Depending on the size of your proposed project, consider asking for financial donations from local businesses, community organizations, or service organizations. Some school districts' Parent Teacher Associations have been instrumental in initiating implementations of the Learning Ally Audiobook Solution.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

School districts, not individual teachers or schools, are the candidates most often eligible for state and federal grants. This underscores the need for project buy-in from district-level administration. Grants that best apply to the Learning Ally Audiobook Solution can be found on the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, and your State Department of Education website.

CROWD FUNDING

Websites like DonorsChoose or AdoptAClassroom empower public school teachers from across the country to request much-needed materials and experiences for their students. With plenty of guidance on how to write your request for funding a classroom project, these websites can be an efficient way to fund Learning Ally Audiobook Solution subscriptions and support. Teachers can post a project to be funded at any time and share it through their communities and networks. More than 70% of projects posted on DonorsChoose are fully funded.

COMMUNITY OR CORPORATE PHILANTHROPY

Ask your local public librarian for access to the Foundation Directory either online or in print. Search for community outreach or philanthropy programs sponsored by local companies (or national companies with local presence) and look into their funding requirements. Local family foundations, private foundations or advocacy organizations may also have funding available and accessible to schools.

GRANT WRITING BEST PRACTICES, continued

- WRITE A STANDOUT PROJECT ABSTRACT. The abstract defines your entire project—needs, goals, objectives, and budget—within a few paragraphs or a page at most. This summary is usually read first. Grant writers often find it helpful to save writing the abstract for last because you can include excerpts from your own text, edited to suit the shorter format and using active voice.

- USE "SMART" GOALS. Smart goals are specific, measurable, attainable (or attainable with budget), relevant, and time-bound. Take the time to detail the activities that will be implemented to accomplish the program's goals and objectives. Your budget and budget narrative must closely match the described activities. Your evaluation should carefully measure whether the stated project objectives are being met on a timely basis.

- BE COLLABORATIVE AND GRATEFUL. It is always good policy to send a thank you note to the grantor for the opportunity to submit your proposal. Even if your proposal is not funded, ask if it is possible to receive reviewer comments and use them to improve your proposal-writing techniques. If you are selected, keep your funder informed about the progress of your project, and document results—it can make it easier to obtain your next round of grant funding!