FREE GUIDE

Grant Writing Before and After Examples (Free PDF)

Eight fictional weak and strong pairs from common proposal sections, each with a note on what changed, plus blank rows for rewriting your own sentences and an editing checklist.

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> These pairs show the same sentence written weakly and then strongly, with a note on what changed. Every example is fictional: the organizations, places, figures and sources are invented to show the technique, so do not copy them into a proposal. Your funder's instructions and scoring criteria come first.

What the strong versions have in common

- A specific person, place, number or date where the weak version has an adjective
- A source for every figure
- A plain statement of who does what
- Nothing the organization cannot show or deliver

Need and objectives

These examples are fictional.

Section	Before (weak)	After (strong)	What changed
Need statement	Many children in our area struggle with reading, and the need for our program has never been greater.	In Example County, 41 percent of third graders read below grade level, compared with 29 percent statewide (Example State Department of Education, 2025). Two of the county's four elementary schools have no tutoring program.	A local figure with a comparison, source and year. The gap is in the community, not in the organization.
Objective	We will improve literacy among the students we serve.	By June 30, 2027, 45 of 60 tutored students (75 percent) will gain at least one grade level in reading, measured by the district's fall and spring reading assessment.	Who, how many, by how much, by when and measured how.

Summary, capacity and inquiry

These examples are fictional.

Section	Before (weak)	After (strong)	What changed
Executive summary opening	Example Literacy Alliance is a passionate, innovative nonprofit dedicated to transforming lives through the power of reading.	Example Literacy Alliance requests $40,000 to provide twice-weekly reading tutoring to 60 students in grades 1 to 3 at two Example County schools during the 2026-27 school year.	Opens with the request: who, what, how much, for whom and when. Adjectives removed.

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Section	Before (weak)	After (strong)	What changed
Organizational capacity	Our experienced and dedicated team has a proven track record of success.	Since 2019 our coordinator and 20 trained volunteers have tutored 310 students. Last year 38 of 52 students gained at least one grade level.	Adjectives replaced by what was done, when and with what result.
Letter of inquiry opening	We are writing to introduce our organization and to tell you about the wonderful work we do in the community.	Because the Example Family Foundation funds early literacy in Example County, we are writing to ask whether a $40,000 request for reading tutoring at two elementary schools would fit your current priorities.	Starts with the funder's interest, states the request and asks a clear question.

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Budget, evaluation and sustainability

These examples are fictional.

Section	Before (weak)	After (strong)	What changed
Budget justification line	Supplies: $3,000.	Supplies, $3,000: leveled reading books for 60 students at $40 per student ($2,400), plus assessment booklets and tutor materials at $50 a month for 12 months ($600).	Shows the calculation and what the cost supports.
Evaluation measure	We will track the success of the program and gather feedback.	The coordinator will record each student's fall and spring reading assessment level and report the share who gained at least one grade level. Attendance is logged at every session.	Names the measure, the tool, who collects it and when.
Sustainability sentence	We will seek additional funding to continue the program after the grant ends.	The school district has agreed in writing to cover the coordinator's salary from year two. We will apply to two local funders for volunteer training costs, and we will report by month nine which costs remain uncovered.	Confirmed commitments separated from plans, with a date for reporting what is still open.

Rewrite your own

Copy a sentence from your draft into the first column. Note what is missing, then rewrite it. Use only facts and figures you can back up.

Section	Your sentence now	What is missing (number, source, date, who, how measured)	Your rewrite
Need statement			
Objective			
Executive summary opening			
Organizational capacity			
Budget justification line			
Evaluation measure			
Sustainability			
Letter of inquiry opening			

Words I overuse and will cut:

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Editing checklist

- [ ] Each section opens with its main point
- [ ] Every figure has a source, year and geography, and I have seen the source
- [ ] Adjectives such as "innovative", "unique" and "proven" are replaced by facts
- [ ] Each objective says who, how much, by when and measured how
- [ ] Every budget line shows its calculation
- [ ] Each sentence says who does what
- [ ] Nothing is promised that we cannot deliver or show
- [ ] The same terms and numbers are used in every section
- [ ] Someone outside the team has read it start to finish

> **Want help with this?** The Complete Grant Architect is a free 16-week grant writing course, and you can hire a grant writer for your next proposal. Both are at subthesis.com.

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