



## The Art of Grant-Writing: How to Create a Grant Proposal

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Making a Difference in the Community



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## About Your Presenter: Cheryl Smith

1. **Current:** CEO, Dewlyn Nonprofit Services.
2. **Reach:** Training, start-up, and strategic alignment for thousands of nonprofits each year. U.S. Small Business Week Presenter for SBA/SCORE and Maui, HI. Training for faith-based, universities, banks, community-based organizations and SCORE chapters across the U.S.
3. **Experience:** 25+ years in Nonprofit Sector, including C-Level and Board Positions.
4. **Education:** BA, Michigan State (MI); MPA, Kennesaw State (GA).
5. **Past Contribution:** Secured millions in grants for small nonprofits.
6. **Author:** 21 Ways to Fund a Nonprofit.
7. **My Favs:** Morning runs, books on the quantum field, metaphysics and consciousness, and making soap!
8. **Other Wins:** Mother to 3 amazing people & Nanna to 1 brilliant future leader. ❤️

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You're in the  
right place  
if...

- You manage a charitable program.
- You haven't reached funding goals.
- You want to mitigate denials.
- You want to learn something new.
- You are ready to make necessary changes.



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# Thought for Today

Being rich is hard. Begin poor is hard.  
Choose your hard.

Eric Worre

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## Today's Discussion

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- The purpose of a grant-proposal.
- Standard grant-proposal sections.
- Why grant proposals are denied.
- Best sources for finding grants.



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## The Purpose of Grant Proposals

1. Grant-Proposals are used to pursue funding for a specific purpose.
2. Grants represent a significant source of revenue for nonprofit organizations.
3. A barrier to grant-writing is the "writing" itself!



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## Standard Grant Proposals Include:

1. Organizational Background
2. Statement of Need
3. Program Description
4. Target Population
5. SMART Goals
6. Measurement & Evaluation
7. Sustainability Plan
8. Budget

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Example Organization



The logo for Community Smiles Incorporated features a stylized blue and green swoosh with three small stars above it. The text "Community Smiles" is in blue and "Incorporated" is in green below it.

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A collection of dental models and heart-shaped cutouts on a light blue background. The models include a red upper arch, a clear lower arch, and a clear upper arch. The heart cutouts are yellow and pink, with a green toothbrush and a pink gear inside them respectively.

**Organization Background**

**A brief overview of the organization:**

- Legal status, year founded, and location
- Mission and benefactors
- Accomplishments
- Governance

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## Example of Organizational Background

Community Smiles, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization established in 2018 and based in Chicago, Illinois. Our mission is to transform lives by providing free orthodontic care and oral health education to uninsured individuals. To accomplish our mission, we deliver services that improve oral health and build confidence among uninsured individuals from underserved communities.

Community Smiles partners with dental schools, community clinics, and health providers to bring orthodontic services to those who need them most. Over the years, our organization has delivered services to more than 1,000 individuals, improving their self-esteem, health, and quality of life. We are governed by a dedicated board of directors made of 5 professionals that live and work in the community we serve. Our voluntary board oversees our mission, partnerships, and strategic direction.

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# Statement of Need

Also Known as the **“Problem Statement”**

Describes an unmet need and how your organization will help solve the problem.

1. **The first sentence** is the problem.
2. **Middle paragraphs:** Clarify the problem by defining both the behavior and what is normal (i.e. explain ideal state).
3. **Concluding paragraph:** State that this is a pressing need (include what you are doing and cost of doing nothing).



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# Problem Statement

Millions of Americans face untreated dental and orthodontic issues due to lack of insurance and access. The harsh truth is that over 76 million people in the U.S. live without dental coverage, making services like braces a luxury rather than a necessity (CDC, 2020). The result is a widening gap in health equity, where untreated malocclusion contributes to pain, poor self-esteem, and missed opportunities.

The primary barriers to orthodontic care are cost and lack of coverage. Only 10% of low-income adults can afford orthodontics, and less than 20% of children with Medicaid receive treatment (NADP, 2022). Untreated alignment issues are linked to speech difficulties, chronic jaw pain, and increased risk of oral disease. These issues are especially prevalent in low-income and uninsured populations who are excluded from traditional dental care systems.

Inaction carries a steep cost. The American Dental Association estimates \$45 billion in lost productivity annually due to untreated dental issues, including misaligned teeth. Socially, individuals report significantly higher rates of anxiety and depression when oral health is neglected (CDC, 2020).

Source:

<https://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/basics/access-to-oral-health.html>  
<https://www.ada.org/resources/research/health-policy-institute>  
<https://www.nadp.org/dental-benefits-basics/>

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# Problem Statement

- 1. The problem
- 2. Clarification/Stats
- 3. Pressing need / cost of doing nothing

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# Project Description

**Project Description:** What the program does (you are describing “what” not “why”)

**Project Methodology:** How the program will implement its services and general activities.

The Project Description includes a methodology that expands on:

- 1. What you do?
- 2. How you do it?
- 3. Who is eligible
- 4. Who you partner with?

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## Project Description

Community Smiles, Inc. is a Chicago-based nonprofit that reduces oral health disparities by delivering free orthodontic care and education to uninsured individuals through our ***“A Smile for All”*** program. Services are delivered through community dental clinics and fully equipped mobile units that reach underserved neighborhoods across Cook County.

In addition to orthodontic care, we offer hygiene education, follow-up retainers, and post-treatment support to promote long-term health. Participants receive a full dental evaluation, braces or aligners, and access to workshops and hygiene toolkits. This approach restores both physical health and personal confidence.

***A Smile for All*** serves uninsured children, teens, and adults who otherwise would not be able to afford braces or orthodontic services. Priority is given to low-income individuals, those living in under-resourced communities, and people experiencing long-term dental neglect due to financial barriers.

Community Smiles partners with dental schools, health providers, and community centers to reach participants and deliver services. Collaborators include the University of Illinois Dental School, local community health clinics, and school-based health programs. These partnerships allow us to expand reach, reduce delivery costs, and support participant referrals.

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## Project Description

1. What you do
2. How you do it
3. Who is eligible
4. Who you partner with

**Community Smiles, Inc. is a Chicago-based nonprofit that reduces oral health disparities by delivering free orthodontic care and education to uninsured individuals** through our ***“A Smile for All”*** program. **Services are delivered through community dental clinics and fully equipped mobile units that reach underserved neighborhoods across Cook County and beyond.**

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## Your Target Population

- **Primary** – People who will regularly use or benefit from your services.
- **Potential people** (everyone else).



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## Target Population Example

Our program targets [uninsured children, teens, and adults who lack access to orthodontic care in Cook County, Illinois.](#)

- With a total population of 5,087,072, Cook County is the most populous county in Illinois.
- An estimated 106,787 individuals in Cook County at or below 138% of the poverty level are uninsured (NIMHD, 2024).
- The median household income in Cook County is \$78,304, yet the average cost of living is \$49,273 per year for a single adult and \$85,880 for an adult with two children (MIT Living Wage Calculator, 2024).

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# SMART Goals

- **Specific:** They tell what, how much, and by when.
- **Measurable:** Data can be collected, detected, or obtained.
- **Achievable:** Possible, even for you.
- **Relevant to the mission:** Fits in with your overall and mission.
- **Timed:** Will be achieved at a finite time.

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# SMART Goal

To provide free orthodontic care to 100 uninsured individuals through braces or aligners by Dec 31, 20xx.

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**S M A R T** Goal Planning

**S** **SPECIFIC** What EXACTLY do you want to accomplish?

**M** **MEASURABLE** How will you know when you meet your goal?

**A** **ATTAINABLE** Is it possible to meet this goal with effort by your timeline?

**R** **RELEVANT** Is this goal worth working hard to accomplish?

**T** **TIMELY** What is the deadline you set to meet your goal?

*A goal without a plan is just a wish. --Antoine De Saint Exupery*

## SMART GOALS

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To **provide free orthodontic** care to **100 uninsured individuals** through braces or aligners **by Dec 31, 20xx.**

**Is it attainable?**

- You currently offer this service through clinics and mobile units
- You are partnered with dental schools and licensed orthodontists

**Is it relevant?**

- The goal directly aligns with your mission to improve oral health equity
- It supports access and confidence for low-income, uninsured individuals

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Evaluation

## Evidence that your project succeeded or failed.

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**How Community Smiles tracks success:**

- Enrollment and Participation
- Treatment Completion
- Workshop Feedback
- Satisfaction and Impact

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## How Community Smiles tracks success:

### Enrollment and Participation

- Track the number of individuals enrolled and gather demographic data.

### Treatment Completion

- Measure how many participants complete their orthodontic care, including braces or aligners.

### Workshop Feedback

- Administer pre- and post-surveys to assess knowledge gained during oral health education sessions.
- Use participant feedback to improve workshop content and delivery.

### Satisfaction and Impact

- Conduct mid-year and end-of-year satisfaction surveys to assess participant experiences.
- Hold small focus groups to collect in-depth feedback on program effectiveness.

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## Sustainability

Continuation plans = what happens once the money runs out.

How will the program sustain itself once funding awarded has been depleted?

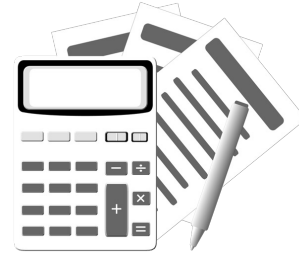
### Example:

1. **Multiple Funding Sources:** Grants, individual donors, corporate sponsors, and annual fundraisers.
2. **Cost-Efficient Delivery:** Use of mobile units, dental school partnerships, and shared clinical space.
3. **Strong Community Partnerships:** Collaborations with schools, clinics, and nonprofits for outreach and referrals.
4. **Skilled Volunteer Base:** Leverage dental students and interns to support services and reduce staffing costs.



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# Budget



A typical nonprofit budget has minimum 3 columns:  
Chart of Accounts, Costs, and Description

### Budget Income

1. Grants
2. Contributions
3. Contracts
4. Program Fees
5. In-Kind
6. Fundraising
7. Board Contributions

### Budget Expenses

1. Salaries
2. Rent & Utilities
3. Fundraising Fees
4. Professional Fees
5. Travel
6. Supplies & Equipment
7. Marketing

### Line-Item Descriptions

Use this column to describe:

- **Income:** details of the funding request.
- **Expenses:** rational for the expense.

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# Organizing Your Budget


- Revenue/Income goes at the top of the excel spreadsheet
- Expenses are placed after Revenues/Income

Revenue should ALWAYS be Equal to or greater than Expenses



Category	Amount	Description
<b>INCOME</b>		
Grants	\$10,000	Requesting assistance with...
Grants	\$10,000	Awarded: ABC Foundation Grant
Contributions	\$12,500	Board commitment
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$32,500</b>	
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
Rent/Utilities	\$12,000	\$1,000 per month x 12 months
Marketing	\$5,000	Website hosting, social media ads...
Program Supplies	\$15,000	Braces, aligners, mobile unit supplies...
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$32,000</b>	

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## Why Proposals Are Declined

1. Not mission-aligned
2. Guidelines not followed
3. Poorly written
4. Unrealistic budget
5. Highly competitive
6. Funder depleted funds

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## Awesome Grant Databases

### **Grantmakers.io**

- Free access to thousands of grant-making funders. Visit: <https://www.grantmakers.io>

### **Foundationcenter.org**

- Free access to Foundation Center database and resources at a location near you at no cost. Visit: <http://https://fconline.foundationcenter.org>

### **GrantGopher.com**

- Free Search Available: Yes. Visit: <https://grantgopher.com>

### **HelloAlice.com and USChamber.com**

Business grants, loans, and other resources for small business owners.

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## Ending thought...

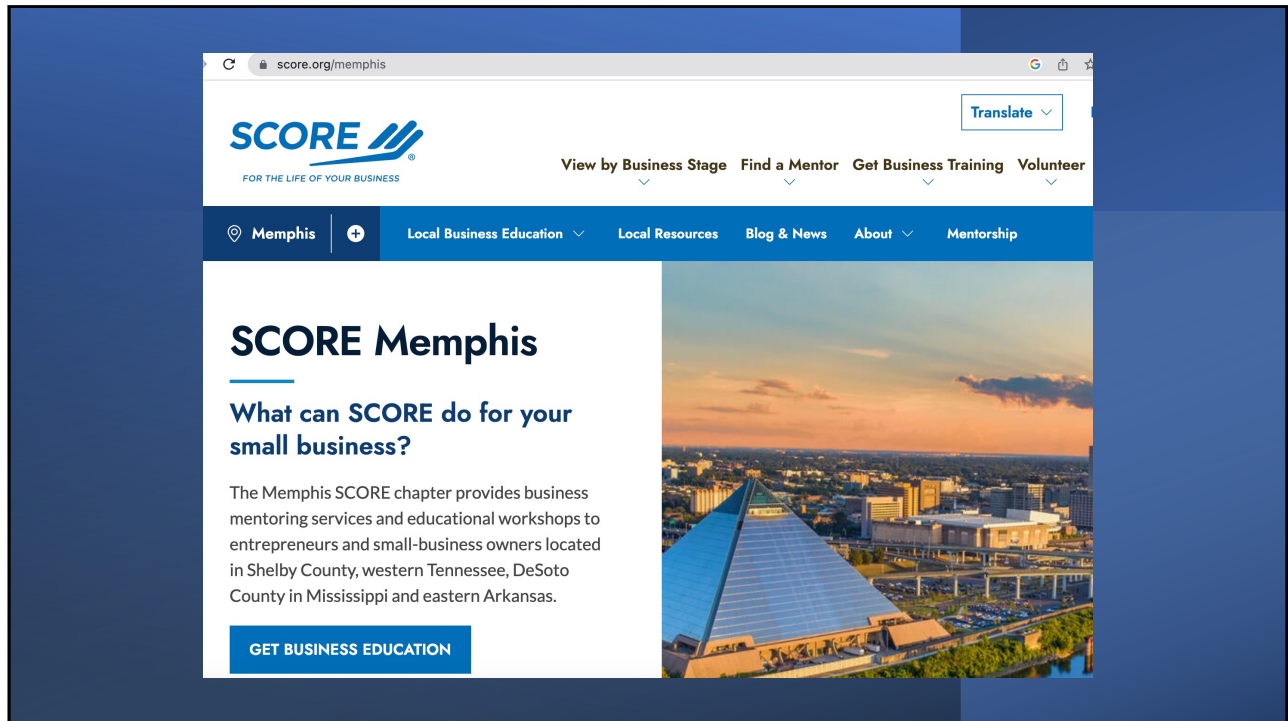
“You may encounter many defeats, but you must not be defeated. In fact, it may be necessary to encounter the defeats, so you can know who you are, what you can rise from, how you can still come out of it.”

**Maya Angelou**

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Cheryl Smith, CEO  
Dewlyn Nonprofit Services  
National Nonprofit Trainer & Coach

## What I do each day...

1. Establish nonprofit organizations
2. Grant proposal-writing
3. Strategic Planning
4. Group coaching and training

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# Thank You!

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