

Added Value

Timely Info from Karen Eber Davis Consulting

Winter 2006

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Never Just a Letter— The Short and Sweet Request

A request letter is a neatly organized marketing piece that contains your mini-case statement and answers a collection of funder questions. You mail it to request grant funds. Although a staff member at a granting agency may request that you “just send a letter,” such correspondence is never *just* a letter. When people misunderstand its importance, they often submit a quick letter only to later report, “They weren’t interested.”

Your well-crafted request letter will help you to achieve the following:

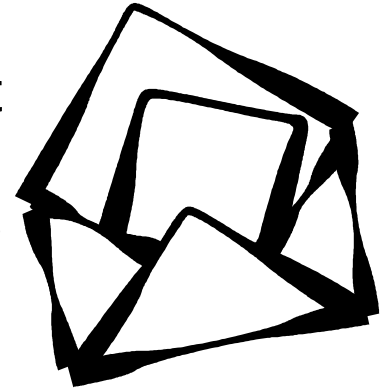
- Introduce your organization
- Remind the recipient of your relationship
- Offer your credentials
- Share an important need and why your solution will help
- Give an overview of your proposed activities
- Show how their gift makes a meaningful contribution
- Call the recipient to action
- Create an opportunity to establish an ongoing relationship

challenge. However, request letters offer a number of distinct advantages including:

- Their brief length provides you an opportunity to polish your words
- As compared to full applications, you can complete them in a short time
- When used as a screening device they allow you to approach more funders
- They provide the writer content control. You decide on points to emphasize.
- You can recycle much of the narrative for other requests
- Finally when compared to full applications, they provide a high rate of return for your time and energy

Contents of Successful Letters

Since letters are so helpful, you will want to guarantee your organization writes compelling ones. Also, because of their ease of use, you need a strong letter to stand out from



Achieving all this in one or two pages is a

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Do you want to achieve more of your mission by discovering ways to use your promising ideas and turn them into exceptional funded ventures? This firm has helped hundreds of groups like yours do exactly that—and secure millions of dollars, improve services and build stronger organizations. Contact the *More than Money Consultant* when you need results with facilitation, creative planning and grants.

*Ked**
Karen Eber Davis Consulting

your competitors. A strong request letter answers at least the following five questions. Suggested answers and examples follow.

1. Why are you coming to us?

Your answer: Write about your relationship. What connection do you have with them? Did you recently meet them? Hear about them at a meeting? What goals do you mutually share? If they are a foundation, why did you choose them instead of one of the other 80,000 foundations? Examples:

- I am writing to you because of your concern for children in this community.
- John Rogers, a board member (and your friend) suggested we contact you when he noticed that half of the groups you support are dance organizations.
- This letter follows-up our telephone conversation. Thank you for encouraging me to mail you information about this opportunity.

2. Who are you?

Your answer: Introduce your agency to the reader, include your mission, background and goals. What is your history of success? What recent accomplishments prove you will succeed with this proposal?

Examples:

- The museum has been recognized repeatedly as one of the top 10, out of 125, for abstract art
- Last month this organization received national recognition from the *New York Times* for its work serving older adults with diabetes
- In 2005 volunteers cleared 300 acres of non-native species on public lands

3. Why and why now?

Your answer: This section presents information about the need and why

a response is urgent. As available, include hard data, like statistics, and soft data, such as quotes from clients and staff from outside agencies.

Examples:

- Kitty Blake, a young adult career placement teacher said, “This is exactly what these youth need. With this addition I can double those helped.”
- The local housing report states that 3,000 new homes are needed for this income level.

4. What will be done?

Your answer: This section briefly shares your solution. What will you do to improve the situation? What will you accomplish with the money you request?

Example:

- This request provides 20 volunteers and students hand tools to build simple household furniture for 30 families impacted by Hurricane Katrina each year. These tools will be used for at least five years.

5. What will it cost?

Your answer: In addition to a specific amount, this paragraph outlines your budget, including the total project cost and how you will obtain the rest. When ongoing funds are needed, identify the source.

- The activities described cost \$7,000 plus in-kind labor donations of \$4,000. The volunteer list currently includes 15 names. To date the library received a donation of \$2,000 from Generous Business. A \$5,000 gift from your foundation will make the project a reality.

Close

The successful letter request closes with contact information and your follow-up plan. It thanks the reader for taking their time to learn about your organization.

Example:

- Thank you for your support of



Bolton’s pets and pet owners. I will call you early next month to confirm you received this letter and to schedule a time for you to tour the clinic.

Remember a request letter is *never* just a letter. When you send yours remember to help your reader learn about who you are, your compelling need and invite them to participate in improving a situation by offering their support. When you follow these suggestions, your short and sweet request letters will help you gain *more than money*.

Do’s

- Use a reference line to help the initial reader identify the content and amount of your request
- Include two or three action photos in the text
- Include a follow-up plan that leaves the next “move” to you
- To get started hire a professional to draft several request letters for your organization

Return on Your Investment

It makes “cents” (and dollars) to have a professional draft a request letter for your organization. The cost for creating successful letters usually runs less than \$1,000. Here are two results from groups who did:

- An art organization created a request letter to sponsor an act. The letters was adapted for different donors to match their interests. Its first use resulted in

Letter, continued from page 2

a new \$5,000 donor and set the stage for additional and repeat sponsorships. One recent one was for \$25,000.

- A community center used a professionally written letters. In its first year it received \$1,500 from a corporate sponsor and \$5,000 from a local foundation or a 650 percent return.

In both cases, staff adapted the original letters to create other marketing documents, additional letters and grant requests.

2006 Workshops and Opportunities

Feb. 22	Principles of Development: <i>Grants</i>
March 17	Teleconference <i>A Marriage of Convenience: How to Link Your Grants & Individual Fundraising Efforts</i>
Sept. 15	Teleconference: <i>Proven Ideas & Results: Innovative Grant Program Design</i>
Nov. 30	Grant Clinic: <i>Creating Sustainable Grants</i>

For more information see: www.kedconsult.com

Frequently Asked Questions About Letter Grants

Q: When will you use a request letter?

A: Both when a funder requests it and when no form is given

Q: Should we request a specific amount?

A: Yes

Q. How many attachments should I use?

A. Unless otherwise specified use two or three including your 501 (c)(3), a simple brochure or article. Include a one page budget, when the amount you request falls short of funding the total activity.

Meeting, continued from page 4

- **To allocate time to your priorities:** Budget your meeting time, i.e., 20 minutes for each key item or arrive 10 minutes early to talk with an individual.
- **To accomplish results:** As part of each meeting decision establish, a plan on its implementation. Include what will be done, how, by whom and a timeline. For accountability, decide how the group will learn the action is complete. For example, "We'll seek \$20,000 from the division for staff to provide individual learning for each child. Stephanie will email us the deadline and a work plan by the 15th."

Add Value to your 2006 meetings, select an action from the above list or better yet, adopt them all.

To Order or Request Information

name _____ organization _____
 street _____ city _____ state _____ zip _____
 phone _____ email _____

Please contact us ASAP regarding: facilitation planning, grants, other _____

For orders, please enclose a check made out to: Karen Eber Davis Consulting for the total amount. Mail to P.O. Box 15464, Sarasota, FL 34277. Telephone: 941-924-4860. Prepaid only.

____ of copy(ies) of *Pinellas County Local Sources* @\$50 \$ ____
 # ____ of copy(ies) of (Charlotte, Manatee and Sarasota) *Local Sources* @ \$95 \$ ____
 # ____ of copy(ies) of (C,M,S) *More Local Sources* @ \$30 \$ ____
 # ____ **Special** 3 Workshops-in-a-Brochure @ \$15
Help I'm Writing a Grant, How to Run a Great Meeting & How to Enlist Great Help \$ ____
 Shipping and handling \$ 5.00
 FL orders add 7 percent sales tax or proof of exemption \$ ____
Total enclosed: \$ ____



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Strengthening organizations with planning, facilitation and grants since 1994

Add Value to Your \$1,000 Meeting Investment

How many meetings are on your schedule this week? Four, five, six or more? Did you know that the value of your average one-hour meeting easily exceeds \$1,000? How do you reach this conclusion? Easy. Add up the hourly rate plus benefits of everyone in the room. Include preparation and post-meeting catch-up, time and cost of transportation, the cost of lost opportunities and the impact of the decisions you make at the meeting. You'll arrive at similar or greater total. Even if you attend only **one** meeting per week in 2006, you will be part of a \$50,000 investment.

To make this year one where every meeting counts, select one or more of the following actions to take over the next twelve months. (These work even when you're not in charge.)

- **To accomplish your priorities:** Identify three specific results you want from each meeting, i.e., to determine fundraising priorities for the year, to approve the budget and to gather feedback on a proposed collaboration. Or to talk to three people about a new idea.
- **To help people prepare:** Publicize or announce your agenda (these results) beforehand
- **To ensure strong attendance:** Confirm 24 hours in advance

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Newsroom

New for 2006

- Book: *Pinellas County Local Sources*
- CD: *Nonprofit Myths that Snag Even the Best Organizations*

New Articles

Three new articles join a collection of 25 others on the website.

- *Why and How to Design Meeting Openers that Help You Achieve Your Agenda Goals*
- *How to Prepare for Last Minute Grant Opportunities*
- *How to Conquer Three Money Hazards that Block Group Decision Making*

For more information
see www.kedconsult.com

Pinellas County



Pinellas County Local Sources is an easy to use grant reference that lists 183 funding sources located in Pinellas County Florida

How will *Pinellas County Local Sources* help you?

With *Pinellas County Local Sources* you will:

- Save time by quickly learning about local grant opportunities
- Discover people who fund organizations like yours
- Learn the giving potential of grant funders
- Discover where to invest your time to get the biggest bang for that investment
- Save money. Why buy thick texts that cover large areas when you need the names of local sources and the type of groups they fund?

This comprehensive listing is available only to individual organizations.

C -----
name _____ organization _____
street _____ city _____ state _____
zip _____ phone _____
e-mail _____

Contact us regarding: helping our organization take the next step in planning, grants,
 facilitation or _____

Enclose a check made out for the total to: Karen Eber Davis Consulting. Mail to P.O. Box 15464, Sarasota, FL 34277. Telephone: 941-924-4860. Prepaid only.

(Or via the web at www.kedconsult.com)

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FL orders add 7 percent sales tax or proof of exemption	\$ _____
total enclosed	\$ _____