

## eGrants Navigator

Ann Kayman, CEO of the New York Grant Company

In this month's article we will explore eGrants; what are they and who uses them. The tips that follow come from Anne Kayman, one of Bohse's associates specializing in writing successful government grants.

More and more grant makers, including government agencies and foundations, allow or even require electronic filing of grant proposals online. Such "eGrants" systems offer tremendous efficiencies but must be approached with care. The following are a few practical tips to help you navigate your eGrants or online applications.

First, eGrants typically require **pre-registration** in order to gain access to the actual grant applications. Registration usually entails submission of your federal tax identification number (TIN), also known as your employer identification number (EIN), as well as authorized contact information, sector codes, and other key items. Without these items, registration may be denied. Prospective applicants should therefore check all registration requirements thoroughly and *early* to ensure successful access (see *Seven "Get Started" Tips in the League's Grant Seeker's Toolkit* at [http://www.njslom.org/grants\\_7-steps.html](http://www.njslom.org/grants_7-steps.html)).

You should then have all of the pre-qualifying information handy (including your municipality's TIN) as you register online for the grant application. Please note that grant makers will generally cross-check your information against the information of tax authorities before giving you access to the grant application. Turnaround time varies, so please allow for this.

Second, **become fully familiar** with your specific eGrants instructions, templates and other features of the electronic filing *well before* embarking on your application. Read every morsel, even if it does not appear relevant to you. Important information, useful tools and sample answers can be imbedded in unexpected places. Also, as with many traditional grant programs, orientation sessions may be offered or required, so do take advantage of these sessions if available.

Once you become comfortable with the eGrants functionality - how the system works, what form and look your content will take, how to save and return to your work in draft and how to organize your application - you will save much time and aggravation once you are ready to put "pen to paper" (electronically, that is) in making your application.

Third, be aware of any eGrants **system's limitations and save your work often**. I recently prepared an extensive application for a State-funded homeland security grant. The deadline was tight, and I repeatedly lost and had to re-input several "e-pages" of content that cost me an entire weekend and several sleepless nights! The content was simply "disappearing" from the page. Once I realized (the hard way) that the "**Save**" **button** of the eGrant application was timing out automatically and far too quickly, I hit that devilish "Save" button at least once every few seconds and was able to finish.

A related problem is that eGrants's systems often are **not intuitive**. Upon first reading an eGrants application, for example, you may overlook how to save your work in draft, or you may be led to assume that such a save feature does not exist. This is another good reason to **read and re-read every page of instructions, as well as every item on every toolbar**, in advance of actually proceeding to write your application.

Another vexing limitation is **space**. eGrant applications often limit the length of your content to pre-sized space. Consider this to be a healthy dose of writing discipline! Choose your words with economy. Use active and plain language, not passive jargon. Make your case forcefully from the first sentence. Your application will be stronger for it.

Also be sure to **go through the entire eGrants application from beginning to end** and back again before writing. Think of it as a cooking recipe. Remember those times when you began cooking, having carefully started with Step 1 and having proceeded to Step 2, only to have found at Step 6 that Steps 1 and 2 had to be done the night before? The same is true with eGrants. By familiarizing yourself ahead of time with the entire set of screens, from end to end, you will happily cook a beautiful, well-organized and efficiently executed application. Enjoy!

Finally, beware of **submission**. eGrants systems can be "locked" by the grant-maker and jammed by heavy traffic at deadline. This can completely block you from making last-minute edits, or worse, from filing on time. Fortunately, grant givers using eGrants systems are usually aware of such glitches and have the tools to help you.

If you do have questions about your eGrant applications—before, during, or after submission—please don't be shy. Do call the grant maker and **ask to speak with a human being**. Never assume that the computer is smarter than you are, or that you are barred from speaking in person with someone just because the only way to apply is online! You deserve professional attention and every opportunity to make your best application.

In sum, eGrants are there to serve you as a tool. They are not perfect; they require special care. Familiarity and perseverance, much more than computer know-how, are the keys to your success. For all of the wonders of the computer, there is no replacement for a good-spirited human being on the other end of the phone to help you get where you need to go.

*This article is courtesy of Ann Kayman, CEO of the New York Grant Company. For further information please visit their website [www.nygrants.com](http://www.nygrants.com).*

---

To learn more about how to write grants visit Bohse & Associate's Web site at [http://www.bohse.com/html/grant\\_proposal\\_sites.cfm](http://www.bohse.com/html/grant_proposal_sites.cfm), where they have provided a listing of links to various grant writing proposal aids, or visit the *Online Proposal Writing Aids & Courses* section of the League's Grant Resource Center at <http://www.njslom.org/grants.html#proposal>.