

Communicating “No” to Grantseekers

Most grantmakers review more proposals than they can fund. Deciding which proposals will receive funding over others can be challenging. Communicating a “no” to hopeful applicants can be even more challenging. How do you say “no” so that grant applicants feel that they've been treated fairly, understand your foundation's rationale, and can make realistic plans about their next steps?

It's important for your board to establish how much feedback the foundation will give declined grantseekers. It is often difficult to determine how much explanation to provide. It may depend on your foundation's mission and style. Some foundations offer constructive criticism; others aren't comfortable outlining the reasons for declining.

Best Practices for Saying No:

- Be prompt
- Disclose your goals and guidelines
- Be honest
- Offer clear and helpful explanations
- Be firm
- Be polite
- Put it in writing

The Decline Letter - for grantseekers whose grants do *fit* guidelines

If the proposal *does* fit your guidelines but falls short of a grant award, consider sending a form letter stating that the foundation was not able to fund at this time. Also consider providing the foundation's contact person and contact information to give applicants the option of calling to learn more about the declined proposal.

The Denial Letter (or Postcard) - for grantseekers whose proposals do *not fit* the grant guidelines

If the proposal does not fit the foundation's guidelines or there isn't enough interest, indicate so up front. If you are not interested in future applications, do not encourage the grantseeker with language that opens the door to further correspondence.

Sample Decline Letter

Date

Name

Title

Organization

Address

City/State/Zip

Dear:

Thank you for submitting your proposal to the Sample Foundation. Your proposal was carefully reviewed and considered by the Trustees but I regret to inform you that your grant application has been declined for support.

Although we would like to respond affirmatively to all requests, we receive far more proposals than can be possibly funded. It is a disappointment to us that we must decline many worthy projects.

We wish you success in accomplishing your goals.

Sincerely,

Name

Title

Organization

Sample Denial Letter (or Postcard)

Date

Name

Title

Organization

Address

City/State/Zip

Dear:

The Sample Foundation has reviewed your request for support dated (date)

We regret to inform you that it was not approved for further consideration as it does not appear to meet our funding guidelines.

We wish you success in meeting your goals.

Sincerely,

Name

Title

Organization