

# Post-Submission Follow-Up: Strengthening Relationships and Learning in the Grant Writing Process

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## Abstract

Post-submission follow-up is a critical yet often underestimated stage of the grant writing process. This article examines the practices of confirming proposal receipt, responding to funder inquiries, managing rejection constructively, celebrating successful awards, and maintaining long-term funder relationships. Emphasis is placed on communication, professionalism, and persistence as key factors in building credibility and sustaining partnerships. Case illustrations demonstrate how organizations have turned rejection feedback into future success and how public recognition of awards can boost morale and visibility. The analysis situates follow-up practices within broader discourses on accountability, organizational learning, and relationship management in the non-profit sector. By viewing rejection as a learning opportunity and success as a platform for visibility and engagement, organizations can transform post-submission interactions into strategic assets. For academics, this stage reveals the relational dynamics between funders and grantees; for practitioners, it provides a roadmap for maximizing long-term benefits beyond the immediate outcome of a proposal.

## Keywords

grant writing; post-submission follow-up; funder relationships; non-profit management; rejection feedback; organizational learning

## 1. Introduction

Grant writing does not end at submission. The post-submission phase, encompassing confirmation, communication, and relationship management, plays a decisive role in funding outcomes and long-term organizational credibility. While rejection and success are both possible, how organizations respond to these outcomes influences their future

opportunities. This article analyzes post-submission practices, situating them within broader debates on professionalism, persistence, and accountability in non-profit funding.

## **2. Context and Background**

Research on donor–recipient relationships highlights the importance of trust, transparency, and communication in sustaining long-term funding partnerships (Ebrahim, 2003; Burnett, 2007). Post-submission practices—whether acknowledging receipt, responding to inquiries, or following up after a decision—demonstrate organizational professionalism and reliability.

At the same time, post-submission stages are opportunities for organizational learning. Rejections provide feedback that can improve future proposals, while successes create visibility and strengthen funder confidence (Worth, 2019). By framing follow-up as a strategic process rather than an administrative step, non-profits can leverage this phase for continuous improvement and relationship-building.

## **3. Core Dimensions of Post-Submission Follow-Up**

### **3.1 Confirming Receipt**

Polite confirmation of receipt via email or phone demonstrates diligence and ensures proposals are logged for review. Records of communications provide accountability and transparency.

### **3.2 Responding to Funder Inquiries**

Prompt, organized responses to follow-up questions demonstrate professionalism and readiness. A designated point of contact improves consistency and reduces miscommunication.

### **3.3 Managing Rejection Constructively**

Rejections should be reframed as learning opportunities. Soliciting feedback, identifying recurring weaknesses, and investing in training or mentorship support future success.

### **3.4 Celebrating Success**

Announcing awards through newsletters, social media, and press releases enhances organizational visibility. Thank-you letters and stakeholder recognition strengthen relationships and build morale.

### **3.5 Maintaining Long-Term Relationships**

Engagement continues beyond single proposals. Regular updates, transparency about challenges, and participation in funder events foster goodwill and open doors to future opportunities.

## **4. Case Examples**

- **Effective Follow-Up After Rejection:** A regional non-profit received critical feedback after rejection, highlighting weak evaluation metrics. By revising its evaluation framework and resubmitting in the next funding cycle, the organization secured funding.
- **Celebrating Success for Visibility:** The XYZ Community Center publicly celebrated a grant award via newsletters and community events, which not only boosted team morale but also attracted additional partnerships and donors.

## **5. Discussion**

Post-submission practices highlight the relational nature of grant writing. While strong proposals are essential, long-term success depends on trust and engagement with funders. Rejection, often viewed as failure, can serve as a catalyst for organizational learning when systematically analyzed and integrated into future proposals (Patton, 2015). Conversely, successes provide opportunities for visibility, signaling legitimacy to other funders.

However, challenges persist. Obtaining detailed rejection feedback is not always possible, as some funders provide limited information. Additionally, sustaining engagement with multiple funders requires significant time and resources, which may strain smaller organizations (Chambers, 2014). These challenges underscore the need for systems and capacity to manage relationships strategically.

## 6. Conclusion

The post-submission phase is a critical component of grant writing, shaping both immediate outcomes and long-term organizational success. Confirming receipt, responding promptly to inquiries, learning from rejection, celebrating awards, and maintaining funder relationships transform post-submission interactions into opportunities for growth and sustainability.

For academics, this stage offers insight into the dynamics of accountability and donor–recipient relationships. For practitioners, it provides actionable strategies for fostering professionalism, resilience, and credibility. Future research should explore digital communication tools and collaborative platforms that facilitate more transparent and equitable post-submission practices.

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