

Appendix J: Mock-grant Proposals for Community Initiatives by K. Martin

Overview:

Grant writing is an often-untaught skill that is necessary in a wide variety of jobs. This assignment, that can scale well from 2nd year to 4th and beyond, gets students thinking about fundraising with local community groups, and, in times where meeting is not possible, no contact with the group is necessary.

Pedagogical Purpose:

To create an awareness of local community needs and to understand the grant writing process.

Student Value:

Writing a mock-grant proposal helps students to understand the needs of a local community organization, while also learning about the flow of finances from government (or other) grant schemes to the individuals that do the hands-on labour that helps these organizations stay afloat. Students can follow their own interests and create a grant from an organization they are already aware of or select one that is topical and related to the class or presenter in some way. Understanding that grant-funding is how many non-profits, charities, and co-ops get started (and continue to receive much of their income) helps students to reframe these organizations in their minds. Developing thinking about the organization's goals (usually drawn from a website or other public documentation) will increase student awareness of local needs and desires. Attempts at plotting out these needs and applying for limited funds to solve social issues will demonstrate the many-layered difficulties associated with this work, building a new-found respect for those that do this work full-time.

Sample Assignment Description:

The instructor should prepare the following in advance of the course and plan to walk students through them in detail:

- A set of guidelines for application to the Mock Grant. These can (and should, where possible) be based on existing grant applications and should fit the discipline of the course (SSHRC PEGs for Humanities students, Trillium Grants for Arts or Social Work students, for example).
- Clear indications of what is expected of the student for each section of the application, modified to fit their level of education.
- Slides about how to build a budget, one of the most challenging things for students to understand. There are many available on the web, but it's good to outline particulars of working with Canadian funding bodies.
- A list of potential community organizations with accessible, online, public material about their mandates, goals, concerns, and contributions to local life.

Note for instructors:

From the beginning of the term, make students aware of the style of this assignment, so they have a lot of time to think things through and find an organization that they're interested in. Encourage students to use their skills (as future historians, artists, scientists, etc) to think through how they understand the goals of their chosen organization and how their own knowledge will build a fundable project to support them. You can scale this assignment up or down by changing the application size and the amount of money one can apply for.

Ideally, having a 2-step assignment, with a 2-3 page “letter of intent” submitted for grades in the first half of term for the instructor to provide feedback and a final polished version of the grant as a final project. This could, however, be a smaller one-off assignment focused on understanding the needs of community members.

As the information for this project can be drawn from online resources, this could be an assignment for an online, distance, or hybrid course. You could increase interest in any course by selecting one or two particular community organizations and having a guest speaker come in and address the course about their needs and desires