



Starting a Grant Writing Consulting Business: Things to Consider and How to Get Started

So..... you're thinking of starting a grant writing consulting business. One of our missions at GPLH is to encourage and help individuals who want to start their own consulting businesses. This publication is designed to give you some guidance on things to consider and steps to take.

The first thing you should do is take inventory of some important factors to decide if a grant writing consulting business is right for you:

Do you have experience?

- You absolutely must have prior experience writing grants.
- You will to have a successful record in writing grants. Create a list of successes.
- Consider volunteer writing for a favorite charity to gain experience.
- Join GPLH's internship program where you'll gain experience and be mentored by a seasoned grant writer. Learn more on the [programs and services page](#) on our website.

Is it a fit for your personality?

- Are you comfortable working every day by yourself with little human interaction? Or do you prefer having co-workers?
- Are you super self-motivated, or will you get distracted by laundry, cleaning, or other day-to-day tasks?
- Can you take criticism? Clients will want to "tweak" the copy.
- Can you accept loss? You will not always win every account you go after. And, you will lose clients through no fault of your own; for instance, they may decide to go with an in-house grant writer.
- Do you have patience? You will have to grow your business one client at a time.
- Are you a salesperson? You must enjoy "pitching" business.
- Can you handle "difficult" people? You will run across all sorts of personalities, including overworked and stressed program managers.
- Are you persistent? You will sometimes have to contact a program manager five times to get a program update.
- Are your exceptionally organized? Can you juggle many things at once and NOT miss a deadline?

Are you ready to work for yourself?

- Do you have a dedicated office space?
- Do you have the assets to carry your household expenses until the business takes off? (Typically, 6 months' income is recommended.)
- Do you have the money to initially invest in your company? Start-up costs may include: printing of business cards and brochure; subscription to Foundation Center Online and other RFP e-blast services; accounting software; membership dues; attorney fee to set up a corporation; DBA or LLC; liability insurance (because some agencies require consultants to obtain professional liability insurance).

Next, think about the following pros and cons to operating your own business:

On the "pro" side:

- You will never miss your child's soccer game or dance recital! Your time is your own.
- If you have a diverse range of clients, your work will be varied.
- It is very rewarding work – your clients value your expertise. When you land a special grant, it will be very satisfying.
- You will always be in demand.
- You can deduct some of your household expenses, such as a portion of your Internet, cell phone, etc. (*Always consult your Accountant for tax advice.)
- You can continue to write part-time into retirement and keep your mind sharp.
- If you move, you can probably keep your clients.

On the "con" side:

- No medical coverage, although you can probably buy it through a membership organization or the NYS health plan.
- No 401 K.
- You will pay full social security (15%) because you have no employer kicking in half. But, you will deduct expenses which lessens this burden.
- For a couple of years you will probably earn less annual income than if you worked for an organization.
- You must be able to tolerate handling business finances. This will include logging in expenses, reconciling your monthly bank statement, and paying taxes.
- You are on call 24/7, even on vacation.

You've thought it through, and now you want to launch your business. What do you need to think about next, and what actions should you take?

Preparing for this career change - Some things to consider:

- Obtain some education:
 - Consider taking courses through [The Foundation Center](#).
 - Westchester Community College offers a 4-week evening class in grant writing.
 - There are numerous online grant writing boot camps.
 - View these and other learning opportunities on the GPLH website [grant writing education page](#).
- Join GPLH. Attend our quarterly webinars/seminars; Grants Connection calls; networking events; etc.
- Check out the [grant writing education page](#) on the GPLH website. You'll find more info on these and other learning opportunities. You'll also find educational PowerPoint presentations, developed by GPLH members, which are strongly suggested as valuable learning tools.
- Join the [Grant Professional Association](#) (GPA) to have access to a myriad of pre-recorded webinars, monthly webinars, and a daily blog that posts all sorts of informational questions.
- Attend the GPA annual convention held in early November each year. It is an intense 2 ½ days of education that includes sessions on launching a consultant business.

Business launch mechanics - Steps you'll need to take to legally start your business:

- Decide your unique niche. Will you offer just grant writing or grant writing and marketing? Or grant writing and capital campaign support? Determine your strengths and decide what would make you most happy.
- Create a name for your company.
- You need to obtain a business certificate from your county, or incorporate with your state. It is advisable to talk to your accountant about which option is best for your family situation.
- With your certificate or incorporation papers in hand, open up a dedicated bank checking account. It is *not* recommended to merge your business and personal banking. You will initially have to fund the account with \$1000+ to pay for printing, website, subscriptions, etc.
- Obtain an EIN number for the IRS. It is *not* advisable to use your own personal social security number.
- Start immediately using QuickBooks or other accounting software to track your expenses.
- Make business cards and a brochure via VistaPrint, etc.
- Create a website.
- Create a press kit.
- Obtain GPLH's sample price quote and client contract.

Marketing your business - How to get the word out:

- Engage in networking at industry events such: the [United Way of Westchester and Putnam Nonprofit Leadership Summit](#); [Volunteer New York's](#) Annual Volunteer Spirit Awards; [Association of Development Officers](#) (ADO) meetings, [Association of Fundraising Professionals](#) (AFP) meetings, etc.
- Attend seminars presented by ADO and AFP Westchester, and hand out your card.
- Tell everyone you know about your new business.
- Watch for the job/consultant listings GPLH distributes via email.
- Create a consultant profile on the Grant Professional Association's [website](#).
- Consider joining [Upwork.com](#) or other similar "consultants for hire" websites.

We're here to help! [View our website](#) for additional information, including details on how to reach out to ask questions or to set up a professional consultation with one of our Board members.