

Finding the Funds

**How to Effectively
Secure Funding for Your
School Programs**

“You CAN find the funds.
I know, because I did it!”

— Jan McGee, Librarian

My small and impoverished, K–6, Title I school library only had \$500 in state allotment money for the whole year. I wanted the Accelerated Reader program, but my principal said there was no money for it. I persisted, and by the next year, I eventually persuaded Title I to let me take the initial steps.

I soon realized that I needed more books than what my restricted library budget could ever possibly afford, so I begged a lot, sold pencils and erasers, etc., but all without much luck. It was at this point that I received and began to use the booklet that you are about to read.

To date, I’ve received more than \$100,000 in grants due to the Accelerated Reader program. (I discovered that no one would give me money just because I needed books, but I found that they were glad to fund me in order to implement a computer-managed reading program!) I’ve replaced more than 3,000 old and damaged books from my original collection (which was only 4,000 strong to begin with). I’ve added a file server, 14 networked computers, a CD-ROM tower, laser disks, new reference materials (both hardbound and CD-ROM), and Internet access for our entire network!

This all happened because I had faith and tried. My message to you, the reader of this booklet, is simple: The money is there! All you have to do is go after it. If you follow the advice in this booklet, you can’t go wrong. Good luck!

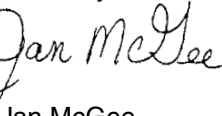


Sincerely,

Jan McGee
(now part of Ouachita Parish School Board, Monroe, Louisiana)
Mitchell Elementary School
West Monroe, Louisiana


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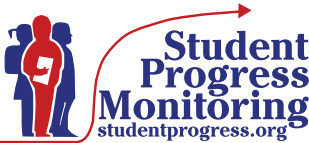
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Many federally funded organizations charged with evaluating educational products support the effectiveness of Renaissance Learning software.
<http://www.renlearn.com/fundingcenter/approvalsearch/>

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How to Use this Booklet

We know finding money to fund your initiatives can be an overwhelming task, but it doesn't have to be. That's why we've created this step-by-step booklet: to guide you through the process of what works, what doesn't, and what steps to take to make your journey as easy and trouble-free as possible.

In this booklet, we'll introduce you to the five proven strategies and methods schools use to find money, each one ranging in difficulty based on the amount of effort needed to obtain the funds:

1. **Existing Funds**
2. **Fundraisers**
3. **Community Donations**
4. **Foundations and Corporate Grants**
5. **Government Grants**

Throughout this booklet, the graphic above will be used to illustrate the step covered in that section. Step 1 represents Existing Funds—the easiest money to get because it may already be available. It also requires the least amount of effort and has the quickest turn-around. Step 5 represents Government Grants, the hardest money to win, because it requires the most effort and a longer turn-around to find out if you've been granted the funding. Starting at Step 1 and working your way up the steps will almost guarantee funding for your projects. Likewise, starting a bigger step before you've made your way there is likely to cause you great frustration and confusion. So, we encourage you to start small and work your way up the steps in your funding journey.

Existing Funds—Step 1

Starting at Step 1—Existing Funds—is the quickest and easiest place to start. What if the funds you were working so hard to obtain were already available in your budget? This is why it's important to start with Step 1, because after examining their existing budget, many customers have found the funds they needed without having to put in a lot of time and effort. In the Step 1 chapter, we'll tell you where and what to look for.

Fundraisers—Step 2

Fundraisers can be an easy, effective way to collect money for lower cost items. We'll cover 12 great fundraising ideas, how to get your fundraiser organized, how to get free merchandise, and much more.

Community Donations—Step 3

Chances are, there are many wonderful businesses and organizations right in your community that would love to help fund your projects. Not only might they receive tax benefits from their donation, but many would also appreciate the opportunity to 'give back' or invest in their community's youth. We'll tell you how to identify them and how to approach them to fund your efforts.

Foundation & Corporate Grants—Step 4

Once you've tried the first three steps to fund your initiative, you may find you're ready to take on something a bit more challenging. Foundations and corporations are a great source of support for schools, though the process of obtaining funds may require a bit more effort than you put into Steps 1–3. Often, though, the effort is worth the larger amounts of money you can obtain from corporate foundations.

Government Grants—Step 5

For the largest amounts of money, schools turn to writing Government Grant proposals. While the payout can be great, more effort and time is required to secure them. These grants are also "competitive," meaning that in order to get awarded, your grant must "beat out" those submitted by others. We'll cover everything you need to know in order to simplify the process for you.

Let's get started!

Starting Your Funding Journey

“A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.” — Confucius



Regardless of what funding options you pursue, the best place to begin is by clearly determining your goal based on the specific needs of your students or school. Without this crucial step, the rest of your funding journey will end up more challenging than it needs to be. As you progress through the process, you'll refer often to this resource, and by using it, you won't have to continually “reinvent the wheel.”

As you begin, remember that you want your goal statement to clearly define your goal. You want reviewers of your donation requests and grants to know exactly what your plan is and how you intend to carry it out. To have a greater success securing funds, you'll need to tie project objectives to your strategies, activities, budget, and your school improvement plan.

1. Goal Statement

A goal statement identifies the reason you are seeking to develop a project and gain the support of your peers, administrators, the community, and a funding source.

For example:

“The book collection in our library is seriously deficient. The average age of the books is over 25 years, 50% of our collection is water damaged due to a tornado eight years ago, and students are unable to identify which books are at their reading level. The result of having a deficient library collection is students who have no interest in reading, students reading books beyond their ability to comprehend, and a selection that is unappealing and possibly unhealthy.”

2. Develop a Team

Armed with your Goal Statement, you should first seek your administration's support to put together a team to help you develop the project and seek funding. Look for community stakeholders, teachers, parents, someone number-oriented who can develop the budget, someone with good writing skills, and someone to gather up data to support your eventual request for money. In addition, identify who will be the project leader. The project leader will be in charge of coordinating your project and creating a plan for evaluating its effectiveness.

3. Goals

Goals are broad, general statements. They're not specific or measurable, but they do describe the planned outcome of the proposed project. In other words, goals describe what your school would look like if the needs described in your Goal Statement would be met through the implementation of your program.

The following is an example of a goal:

“Students in grades two through four improve their math skills.”

4. Objectives

Objectives are specific outcomes of what one's efforts or actions are intended to attain or accomplish; a target. Basically, objectives describe what will be accomplished by the end of your project and what measures will be used to evaluate this success. You can also set benchmarks or measures of success that you hope to achieve during the program's implementation. REMEMBER, objectives must be S.M.A.R.T.: Specific, Measurable, Attainable (or achievable), Realistic, and Time-measured.

Here is an example of an objective tied to a goal for math improvement:

“Students in third grade who have not passed the state assessment in math will increase their scores by 10% by the end of the school year.”

Every objective you write should answer the following four questions:

1. Who will be involved in the change?
2. What is the key area we are seeking to change?
3. How much change do we expect?
4. When do we expect this change to be made?

5. Strategies

Strategies are the methods used to meet the goal. When you are coming up with your strategies, you will want to take into consideration both short-range and long-range planning and development. It's a good idea to include a research-based strategy. Go to your state Department of Education Web site for state-specific information on education and curriculum.

An example of a strategy used to succeed in the goal of improving math skills may include:

“Purchase and implement Accelerated Math as a technology-based program to help teachers make data-driven instructional decisions.”

6. Activities

Activities are your specific plans to put your strategies into practice, meet your objectives, and ultimately accomplish your goal.

An example of an activity is:

“Third-grade classes will begin the Math Improvement program by implementing Accelerated Math software.”

7. Budget

Now that you know what you want to do and how you plan to do it, make a list of all supplies and tools you will need and whether they will be donated, borrowed, or purchased. Your budget should be thorough, but be careful not to “pad” it with unnecessary costs or you risk being rejected for funding. Later, when you must justify your need for money, you should be prepared to explain why each item on your budget is necessary to the success of your project.

Example Outline

- **Goal**—Improve math skills and/or state assessment scores of students in grades two through four.
- **Objective**—Students in third grade who have not passed the state assessment in math will increase their scores by 10% by the end of the school year.
- **Strategy**—Implement a technology-based program to help teachers make data-driven instructional decisions.
- **Activity**—Both third-grade classes will begin the Math Improvement program by implementing Accelerated Math software.
- **Activity**—Teachers will give one-on-one instruction to struggling students during the practice assignments time. Teachers will make instructional changes to address specific math concepts that students are struggling with based on the immediate feedback generated through the Accelerated Math software.
- **Activity**—Accelerated Math dramatically enhances your math curriculum by providing personalized objectives aligned to your existing curriculum and linked to your state standards. Teachers can easily create an endless supply of exercises to give students valuable practice to reinforce the skills they have learned. Just one computer, one laser printer, and one AccelScan reader are needed to turn the classroom into a highly efficient and personalized math center. Teachers will use the data from Accelerated Math to monitor student progress, intervene with struggling students, and make appropriate instructional decisions.

Review the sample *Goal Statement and Resource Sheet* on page 7 (a blank form appears on page 47) to see what a completed goal statement might look like. As you review it, pay attention to the itemized list of resources. Make sure you have a complete list of what you will need and how much it costs. Don't forget to include support material such as books, computers, and software. To plug actual dollar amounts into your goal statement, contact Renaissance Learning at (800) 338-4204. A District Account Manager can provide you with pricing for all Renaissance products to ensure you have adequate software, professional development, and support materials.

Remember—

A **goal** is your overall statement of intent (i.e. “improve reading skills so that all children are proficient by third grade”).

An **objective** is your specific and measurable outcome (i.e. “increase standardized test outcomes in reading by 10 percentile points by the end of the funded period”).

A **strategy** is your way of accomplishing objectives (i.e. “use a reading management system to manage and monitor reading practice”).

An **activity** is what you are actually planning to do to put your strategies into practice, meet your objectives, and ultimately accomplish your goal (i.e. “students will take a short quiz on each book read to determine their level of comprehension”).

Goal Statement and Resource Sheet
Sample Form

Teachers need the ability to make data-driven decisions regarding instruction through computerized assessments and reports. As a part of the school improvement planning process, our technology resources were reviewed and analyzed. It became apparent that we have a need for additional and updated computer equipment in order to implement an effective school improvement program. In addition, software, professional development, books, and other materials will be needed to implement the reading reform model.

A Goal Statement for Reading:

Improvement in reading skills is needed to increase the number of students performing at the proficient level on the state assessment.

Faculty, staff, and administration are in agreement that reading skills should be the focus of the first year of this grant. For this reason, Renaissance Learning technology with professional development will be the first components implemented. We previously implemented Accelerated Reader and STAR Reading, and we believe that this is the primary reason some improvement has been seen in reading scores over the past three years. Therefore, we plan to build on the foundation of our existing program and fully implement Accelerated Reader and STAR Reading according to best practices. One primary need in this effort is new computers necessary to run Renaissance technology. We believe that this will result in significant gains in reading levels for our students.

One of our greatest needs is access to a system that enables administrators and teachers to make data-driven instructional decisions. Renaissance offers a proven system for data collection and analysis. Renaissance technology provides easy-to-access, reliable data that enables educators to make data-driven decisions for their students, classrooms, schools, and district.

Expenses:	Cost:
Items needed to accomplish our goals include:	
Four computers	\$ _____
Two printers	\$ _____
Printer paper	\$ _____
Four tables	\$ _____
Four chairs	\$ _____
Renaissance Place versions of Accelerated Reader and STAR Reading software	\$ _____
Training	\$ _____
Fiction and non-fiction collections	\$ _____

Note: Renaissance Learning can provide a detailed quote to assist you in developing your expense breakdown.

Keep a copy of your goal statement and resource sheet nearby, so you can reference it as you analyze your funding options. A blank copy of this form appears on page 47.

Existing Funds Step 1

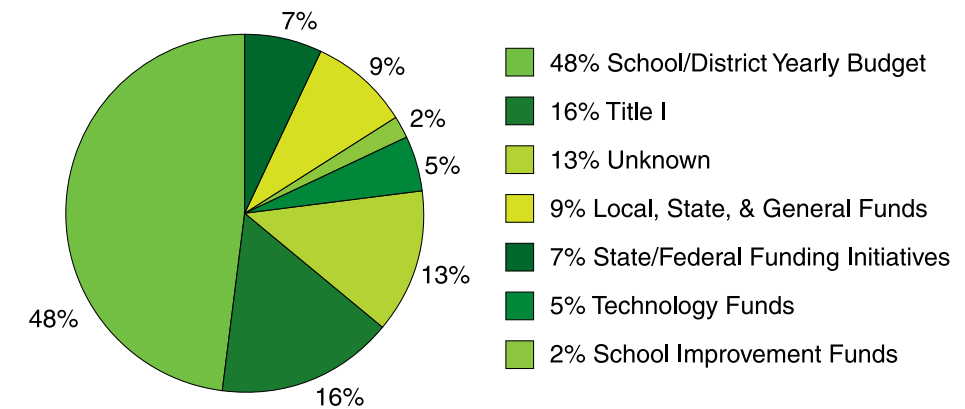
What if the funds you were working so hard to obtain were already available in your budget? Starting at Step 1—Existing Budget Funds—is the quickest and easiest way to secure the funds you need. While this may seem obvious, many educators have found the funds they needed by utilizing the information in this chapter to tap existing school budgets. In fact, 48% of schools fund their purchases of Renaissance Learning products using existing budgets! This is why it pays to investigate what you might already have.



Tapping Existing Budgets Accounts for 48% of Renaissance Funding!

The chart below details how schools typically fund their purchase of Renaissance technology and professional development.

How Schools Purchase Renaissance Programs



Although Renaissance technology and best practices qualify for local, state, and federal funding, many educators find it easiest to fund their program through existing school and district budgets.

13 Budget Sources

An existing budget is the easiest way to obtain the funding you need for your school improvement program. Here are 13 accessible budgetary sources common to most schools and districts. They're "easy solutions" because it won't take you long to look into each of them and determine whether they will be a source for you.

If even a single source can provide you with funds, you will be successful:

1. General Operating Budget
2. Parent Organizations
3. Library Budgets
4. Title I Funds
5. Title II Funds
6. Title III Funds
7. Title V Funds
8. Response to Intervention (RTI) Funds
9. Special Education Funds
10. Gifted and Talented Programs
11. Technology Funds
12. ESL Funds
13. Professional Development Training Funds

Since you may not know which of these funding options exist in your school or district—let alone which ones will work for you—it's best to do research prior to approaching anyone about funding. Information on these programs can be found on state, district, or school Web sites and at www.ed.gov.

More Resources to Help you Find Existing Funds

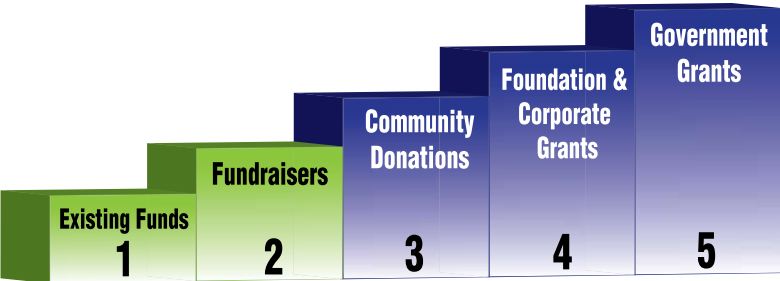
Be sure to visit the Renaissance Funding Center on our Web site: www.renlearn.com/fundingcenter. Here, you'll find additional tools as you investigate Existing Funds for your project, including:

- **How to Create a Project Proposal to your Administration**
Paramount to the success of your project is the complete support of your administration. After all, your administrators will be the ones approving the use of school or district funds to support your project. They are also held legally and financially responsible for the management and distribution of any external funds, materials, or services received in support of your project. Use this document to learn how to draft a short proposal to grab your administrator’s attention.

Visit: www.renlearn.com/fundingcenter and search for [How to Create a Project Proposal to Your Administration](#).

- **Renaissance Programs Qualify for Federal Funds**
This piece gives a summary of nine of the most prominent federal funding programs and gives a listing of Renaissance programs that qualify for each fund.

Visit: www.renlearn.com/fundingcenter and search for [Renaissance Programs Qualify for Federal Funding](#).



Fundraisers Step 2

“Do-it-yourself” fundraisers are a valuable tool for raising small sums of money quickly. In addition to being a fun and easy way to launch your funding drive, “do-it-yourself” fundraisers can help you meet unbudgeted supplemental program costs and will help you create community involvement in your school.

Being a successful fundraiser means knowing a little something about...

- 12 Classic Fundraisers
- How to Organize a Fundraiser
- How to Get Free Merchandise
- Professional Fundraising Companies

12 Classic Fundraisers

Whether you're looking for a good old stand-by, or you're thinking of trying something a little different, the following 12 classic fundraisers have all stood the test of time.



- 1. Food and Craft Sales**—Bake sales, concession stand sales, handmade craft sales, book sales, and clothing sales may seem cliché, but they are educators' number-one picks because they're fun and easy—and because they work!
- 2. Holiday Fairs**—Any holiday is a good time to have a fair. In a classroom, set up tables with inexpensive items for sale. (Make them \$1 or less so kids can take something home for the whole family.) Bring in classes one at a time, and let the kids go wild. The items can be a combination of donated, bought, and handmade things.
- 3. Garage/Rummage Sales**—Collect items through a donation drive, then hold the sale on a weekend in the school gym, the cafeteria, or even someone's home. Advertising through the local paper and with some well-placed neighborhood signs can help ensure a large turnout.
- 4. Product Sales**—From candy bars to wrapping paper, or somewhere in between, there's a company out there that would love to help you raise funds for your school.
- 5. Raffles and Games of Chance**—Raffle tickets, "Las Vegas Night," and Bingo can be very successful fundraisers, but be sure to use lots of donations to minimize operating expenses. Aside from local businesses, an excellent source of high-quality donations are professional sports teams. These organizations often generously donate items that can prove to be immensely popular prizes. Be sure to check both your local and state gambling regulations before proceeding with any sort of promotion of this nature.
- 6. Eating Events**—Pancake breakfasts, spaghetti suppers, chicken stews, ethnic meals, or any change-of-pace foods are always popular. Set up a nacho bar after school for the students who stay late for any reason.
- 7. Exhibition Games**—From a hilarious evening of donkey basketball to a slapstick hockey-style game of broom ball, you'd be surprised what people will do in the name of fun and charity. Simply get a team together and challenge your local police department, news team, college team, or professional team to a game. You'll raise some money and have a lot of fun in the process.
- 8. A-thons**—You can turn virtually any activity into an "a-thon." Some classic ones are read-a-thons, walk-a-thons, jog-a-thons, math-a-thons, sing-a-thons, dance-a-thons, fish-a-thons, and bike-a-thons; or, try shooting free throws, playing an instrument, or even rocking in a rocking chair. Simply make up a set of rules, get some judges, and have your participants start signing up people to pledge them through the event—it's that easy!
- 9. Auctions**—This can be a fun and entertaining event if you start with a good auctioneer—someone who can really energize a crowd. If you can't afford a professional auctioneer, use local celebrities like your police chief, mayor, radio or television personalities, or even the principal of your school. For maximum turn-out, make sure you publicize the event well in advance.

10. Services—Often overlooked as fundraisers, services are both fun and lucrative. Popular ideas include car washes, babysitting, housecleaning, mowing lawns, raking leaves, running errands, and food concession stands at sporting events. Just find a service that people need and will use, then promote yourself well, and do a good job. Word will spread fast.

11. Cookbooks—Cookbooks of recipes contributed by your volunteer group or members of the faculty are often very good sellers. Visit our Web site for companies that will turn your collection into a book.

12. Matching Funds—Some companies, such as grocery and department stores, sponsor matching-funds programs for nonprofit organizations that hold fundraisers at their retail location—your presence at their store is an instant boost to their sales. And if stores are willing to provide matching funds, often they will be open to requests for donations as well.

For more fundraising ideas, visit the Renaissance Funding Center at: www.renlearn.com/fundingcenter.

How to Organize a Fundraiser

Having a written, well-organized plan is essential. Many educators have told us fundraising horror stories that could have been avoided completely with the proper planning. The sample Event Planning Guide on the following page provides an easy-to-follow, 15-step plan that will help you completely organize your "do-it-yourself" fundraiser—from start to finish.

Event Planning Guide

Sample Form

Steps to Complete	Notes	Completed (check off)
1) Purpose of Fundraiser	Buy Educator Resources (Renaissance Power Lessons Books grades K–5, sets 3–5 Vocabulary Quizzes, and AR BookGuide)	✓
2) Financial Goal	Renaissance Power Lessons books: 6 x \$XX.XX = \$XXX.XX; Vocabulary Builders: 5 x \$XX.XX = \$XXX.XX; AR BookGuide= \$XXX.XX Total = \$XXX.XX	✓
3) Type of Fundraiser	Concession stand at Homecoming football game	✓
4) Volunteers	Monica Royce, Bob Peters, Angela Johnson, David Price	✓
5) Fundraiser Time/Place	6:30 p.m.–9:30 p.m. on Friday, October 15	✓
6) Event Rules	Hot Dogs = \$1.25, Soda = \$1.00, Popcorn = 75¢, Ice Cream = \$1.25	✓
7) Facility Information	Soda company will drop off concession stand on Wednesday, October 13	✓
8) Special Permits	City Concession Permit: \$50.00	✓
9) Event Materials	Soda supplies come with the stand. Angela is making a food list. Need a pot to boil the hot dogs, tongs, and two crock pots to keep hot dogs warm.	✓
10) Donations	See if Wally's Supermarket will donate cups, napkins, and utensils if we hang one of their banners on the stand.	✓
11) Advertising	1) Put fliers in Homecoming announcements. 2) Make posters for bulletin boards.	✓
12) Volunteer Schedule	Monica and Bob will work from 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Angela and David will work from 8:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.	✓
13) Clean-Up	Bob is bringing trash bags.	✓
14) Calculate Dollar Amount Raised	\$587.64 (remember to subtract expenses)	✓
15) Send "Thank You" Notes	1) Design card on computer and send to volunteers. 2) Put up a "Thank You" poster in the lunch room.	✓

A blank copy of this form appears on page 49.

How to Get Free Merchandise

Donations are a great way to minimize your fundraising expenses, because every item you can obtain for free represents real dollars that will be in your pocket at the end of the event. Donations fall into two distinct categories:

- **Sale Item Donations**
- **Prize Donations**

Sale Item Donations are things that you want to sell for money at your fundraiser (i.e., cookies for a bake sale, used children's clothing for a rummage sale, etc.). Obtaining such items is generally easy because they are things people don't mind donating to a worthy cause. Here are a few general calls to action that have worked for other educators. Try them all, and see which works best for you:

- Challenge your fellow educators for the most items—with the winner getting a free lunch paid for by everyone else
- Send a request letter home with your students
- Post fliers and signs around your community
- Place an ad in your school paper
- Place an advertisement in your local newspaper

Prize Donations are popular or better-quality items that you want to set aside as prizes (i.e. gift certificates, new CDs, bikes, etc.). Of course, obtaining these items is not as easy as sale items because the best prizes tend to be things that cost a little more money. Here is a list of the best sources for obtaining some popular items as prize donations:

- Local businesses are the easiest sources of prizes—they'll love to give your school something because it's tax deductible and excellent advertising.
- While not as versatile as businesses, civic groups can surprise you with really great prizes.
- Sports teams (local and national) can be excellent sources of prize donations because of their extreme popularity with both children and adults.

Professional Fundraising Companies

Sometimes the best way to handle a do-it-yourself fundraiser is NOT to do everything yourself at all—and that's when you want to talk to a professional fundraising company. These companies specialize in offering products, goods, and services you can purchase for your own fundraising effort. They can provide complete materials and all the helpful advice you'll need to get going. Whether you're interested in selling cookbooks, candles, or candy, there are plenty of professional fundraising companies out there to choose from—make sure to shop around for the best contract. You can find a list of fundraising companies to research on our Web site at www.renlearn.com/fundingcenter.

A blank Fundraiser Company Contact Form has been included on page 50. It will help you organize all your information as you look into which company will best suit your needs.



Community Donations Step 3

Another way to secure funding is to directly contact businesses and civic organizations in your community. It's easier than you think, because...

They want to give you money!

Contacting local sources

Who are they?

Your future benefactors are local civic and business community contacts with the resources and inclination to help you. In fact, businesses like banks, restaurants, car dealerships, and even large corporations love to help schools and districts. Local service and fraternal organizations like Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions Club, Optimists, and Jaycees are also good sources for funding. When determining potential donors, a good place to start is with your local Chamber of Commerce. They will have a listing of businesses and industries located in your city and county.

Why will they help?

There are many reasons local businesses and associations will help fund your school improvement needs:

1. Helping education is good public relations—and a great source of free advertising.
2. These organizations are made up of parents and grandparents who understand the importance of supporting local education.
3. Your proposal will go to the heart of a great concern—building a more literate employee and customer base.
4. In most cases, their donations to education are tax deductible.
5. Business people understand and appreciate the benefits offered by progress-monitoring systems because they're already familiar with how management information systems have improved their own workplace.
6. Renaissance technology provides something that most of their other requests can't promise: measurable results that show concrete evidence of the impact their support has made in the community.

Remember—

Be sure to use your school or district stationery for the letter, and always address it directly to the individual at the company instead of simply a title. (Note: If you decide to call or visit someone in person, you might want to consider using the sample letter found at www.renlearn.com/fundingcenter as a script.) In addition, we've included a blank Donation Request Contact Form on page 51 that will help you organize all the information you collect during your donation request campaign.

How can you appeal to them?

Educators across the country have sent us the letters, techniques, and tips they've used to secure money to purchase Renaissance software and bring professional development seminars on site. These successful techniques have been compiled to help you obtain funding:

Present your case

The best way to convince organizations to give you funding is to make a presentation to them. Invite representatives of the group or organization to visit your school. Show them the great results you're already achieving with programs such as Accelerated Reader and Accelerated Math, and tell them about your plans for the future. Because business people are impressed by measurable results, be sure to show reports such as your District/School Report.

Be bold

After the tour, engage your visitors in a discussion about what they've seen. This may seem like the hardest part, but it's time to be bold! Guests are impressed and often ask what they can do to help. Ask outright for funding to continue the program. Explain that the Renaissance Learning software and professional development you would like to purchase will help you and your teachers personalize instruction and effectively monitor performance. The end result will be accelerated learning—which leads to brighter futures for the students in the community.

Recognize their efforts

Show how much you appreciate the efforts of the business or organization by taking the time to write and thank each individual who visited your school or donated funds. Even in the event that your guests declined to give you funding at their visit or on your first request, a thank-you letter can provide the necessary nudge to convince a decision-maker to sit down and write a check.

Sometimes it's not always convenient to invite visitors to your school. Therefore, an alternative method of obtaining funding is to send a letter of request. Use your goal statement to help guide you in crafting your letter. Detail the achievements you'd like to accomplish with specific assessment systems (Accelerated Reader and Accelerated Math). If you are currently using certain programs, be sure to include information pertaining to the success you've experienced with these programs. Include hard data that shows the improvements in your school. Then, tell the recipient about the additional achievements that you would like to accomplish. At the end of the letter, request funding to purchase each item that is needed to attain your goals. Be specific in what you are requesting. See our Web site for sample letters: www.renlearn.com/fundingcenter.

Keep them updated

The people who give you funding want to know that their money has been put to good use. After implementation, write them a letter to once again thank them for their generous contribution. Be sure to include information on what you purchased (or learned at a seminar), how you applied it, and what success and improvements can be tied to their help. The easy-to-understand reports generated by Renaissance software (such as Accelerated Reader and STAR Math) are excellent tools to show the positive impact that the program has had on student achievement in your classroom or school. Providing tangible outcomes for your donors builds civic pride in your school and creates a climate for continued support. You may even discover that civic leaders will contact you in the future to find out if there is anything else they can do to help.

Helpful Hint: Try more than one source

Ellie Doster of Castlen Elementary School of Grand Bay, Alabama, encourages you to present your case to many businesses and associations. She went with an all-out fundraising effort entitled, "Star School's Top A+ Reader Search." After approaching numerous local businesses with clear-cut objectives and a wealth of detail on how the money would be used, her school received a series of generous donations, including:

- \$10,769 from AMSouth Bank to purchase library books.
- \$7,000 from Scott Paper Company to buy Accelerated Reader.
- \$4,500 from the Bedsole Foundation to upgrade and network computers.
- \$700 from Alabama Power and Chevron for additional Accelerated Reader materials.

When added to the school's own internal fundraising and budgeting efforts, more than \$26,000 was raised.

Grants: Before You Begin

Once you've tried the first three steps to fund your initiative, you may find you're ready to take on something a bit more challenging. Competitive/discretionary grants are a great source of support for schools, though the process of obtaining funds may require a bit more effort than you put into Steps 1–3. Often, though, the effort is worth the larger amounts of money you can obtain.

The idea of writing a grant can seem daunting, but in reality, it's not as difficult as you think. Thousands of people who have never written grants before have received the funding they needed the first or second time they submitted a grant.

Whether you are planning to write a Foundation/Corporate Grant (Step 4) or a Government Grant (Step 5), this section will help you to identify, locate, and write the grant. Use the Grant Writing Checklist worksheet found on page 52 as you go along to help you through the challenging grant-writing process.

Remember—

Planning is of utmost importance! Before you begin writing a grant, find out what the deadline is and plan enough time to work on it ahead of the deadline. Ensure that you leave five days to mail your grant application! In the world of grants, “postmark” dates are generally not accepted.

Grant Types

There are two types of grants you can compete for—Foundation/Corporate grants (Step 4) or Government Grants (Step 5). Though they're quite different, they both require having a plan that includes measurable goals, objectives, strategies, and permission from your administration. In addition, they both require more planning. Here are the differences between the two types:

● Foundation/Corporate Grants

Competitive foundation and corporate grants are available at community, state, and national levels. The foundation or corporate board members review applications for those that best align to their mission and application guidelines. Boards may meet monthly, quarterly, or annually. In most cases, you must have a school foundation status (i.e. 501(c)(3) to be eligible. For more information about 501(c)(3) status, visit www.501c3.org/faqs.html#top.

● Government Grants

Competitive government grants are available at both the federal and state level. The U.S. or specific state Department of Education reviews applications in accordance with the legislative and regulatory requirements established for each particular funding program. The process gives the reviewers discretion to determine which grant applications best address the program requirements and are the most worthy of funding. Most government grants are available annually. Government grants are submitted using the eGrants System. Before applying for a government grant, you must register with eGrants. The registration process can take up to two weeks so be sure to do it early in the process. You can learn how to register at www.grants.gov/applicants/get_registered.jsp.

Where to Find Grants

The first step in applying for a grant is to find the opportunities.

Searching for Foundation/Corporate Grants:

Visit our Foundation Database Search on the Renaissance Funding Center at www.renlearn.com/fundingcenter to find a list of foundation and corporate grants available in your area. In addition, at the Funding Center, you can sign up to receive automatic email notification when new foundation grant opportunities are available in your area.

Searching for Government Grants:

The fastest and easiest way to get information about competitive grant programs at the federal and state government level is by using the Internet.

- **Federal:** Go to the U.S. Department of Education's Grant Program Title Listing at www.ed.gov/programs/find/title/index.html. You can also search by Subject. Detailed information found there for each grant will help you determine if you are eligible, what can be funded using that grant, provide answers to frequently asked questions, and give you directions on how to apply.
- **State:** You can visit your state's Department of Education Web site for the state-specific grant information. To find a listing of state department of education Web sites, search the Funding Center at www.renlearn.com/fundingcenter. State Web sites can also provide information about grants on listservs or publications that you can subscribe to for information on upcoming grant competitions.

How to Pick the Right Grant for You

When evaluating a grant opportunity, ask yourself, “Can I write an application for this grant that will specifically meet ALL of its qualifying factors?” In other words, if you aren't willing and able to complete all of the requested information, or don't qualify for every part of the grant, you don't want to go through the work of applying.

To help you determine whether or not you can answer the above question, be sure to fill out a Funding Prospect Worksheet. Once you complete the worksheet, the information you compile will give you an obvious answer. See a completed sample on the next page. A blank worksheet can be found on page 48.

Remember—

Before you begin any grant-writing steps, you may want to reread the “Starting your Funding Journey” section of this book—it will save you a lot of time and make grant writing much easier!

Funding Prospect Worksheet

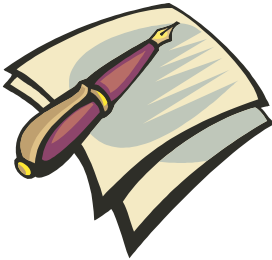
Sample Form

Date	Funder	My Organization
Organization Name Contact Name Web site Address Phone Number Fax Number Email Address	Big Company USA, Inc. Bob Miller (grants rep) www.big.com 123 Main St., Richmond, VA (804) 325-2979 (804) 424-0544 Bob@BigCom.com	ABC School Mrs. Jones www.ABCSchool.k12.AA.org 987 1st Street, Richmond, VA (804) 328-1244 (804) 444-4455 mjones@ABCSchool.net
Funding Mission/Priorities (List in order of importance)	1. Technology Growth 2. 3.	1. Accelerated Reader software 2. Computers for third graders 3.
Total Assets	\$3.2 million	
Total Grants Paid	\$650,000 last year	
Grant Ranges Offered/ Needed	\$1,000–\$25,000	\$8,500
Period of Funding Offered/ Needed	September–December	This fall
Geographic Limits Offered/ Needed	PA, MD, VA	VA Tri-county area
Types of Support Offered/ Needed	Money	Money for AR and computers
Population Offered for/ Needed	K–6 students	Third graders
Past Recipients’ Names and Phone Numbers (Call them for copies of their proposals or project narratives)	1. John Smith – (212) 555-1234 2. Jane Smart – (713) 521-4321 3.	
Important People in the Organization to Know (Officers, donors, trustees, staff, a receptionist, etc.)	1. Doris Nickelson – secretary 2. Jeremy Thorne – trustee 3.	
Does the funder have printed or downloadable guidelines/application forms? Yes		
Initial Approach (letter of inquiry, formal proposal) Send formal inquiry letter		
Deadline(s) June 22 Board Meeting Date(s) July 28, Aug. 14		
Sources(s) of Above Information (annual report, Web page, etc.) annual report, company Web page		
Notes Doris loves chocolate; Jeremy is an avid golfer.		
Follow Up Call July 6 to ask Doris about my letter of inquiry.		

A blank copy of this form appears on page 48.

Top 7 Key Phrases and How to Use Them

After reviewing countless grant requests, we’ve selected the key words or phrases that turn up most frequently. Look over the grant description again. If you find any of these words or phrases, make use of the creative paragraphs we’ve supplied. It’s likely that your letter and grant application will rise to the top of the pile.



1. Technology

If you see this or anything that implies they are interested in computers or technology, take full advantage of it in your letter and your grant application.

Teachers can now use technology to get immediate, individualized, constructive feedback on each student in the class. Never before have teachers had access to such a wealth of valuable data. With it, they can work individually to help students achieve their fullest potential. Renaissance software tools give educators access to the same technology other professionals, like physicians, have enjoyed for years. Informed instruction means better learning.

2. Creativity, Innovation

Many grantors love to fund new, creative approaches.

Our goal is to achieve true excellence in education through the highly innovative technology of Renaissance software tools. Many of the most important and innovative advances in medicine and business are the result of computer-based information systems. The Renaissance daily and periodic progress-monitoring assessment systems requested in this grant application will provide our teachers with the same creative, computer-based tools available to other professionals.

3. Measurable, Proven, Results

These words, or any like them, are a red flag that you should include proof of effectiveness if you want to receive the money. More than 243 research reports currently attest that Renaissance progress-monitoring assessments and best practices are proven by scientifically based research to improve learning. Include one or more research reports in your grant request, as evidence of the effectiveness of Accelerated Math. These reports, and many others, are available on our Web site at research.renlearn.com.

With the implementation of Accelerated Math at our school, we will be able to provide measurable, documented proof of the success of our goal. The attached research at the end of this proposal will show . . .

4. Literacy, Family Literacy

This may be the most common area of interest found in grant descriptions.

A large-scale study of more than 650,000 students, entitled Patterns of Reading Practice, shows that the average high-school senior spends as much time reading as the average kindergartner—only 3.6 minutes per day! Accelerated Reader gets families excited about reading and will encourage parents to become more involved in their child’s education. Using Accelerated Reader, we can plan Community Reading Nights in which we open the school library after hours for families to read together, discuss books, and take Accelerated Reader Quizzes. This program builds strong bonds of learning between families and educators.

5. **At-Risk, ELL**

Phrases such as these generally indicate that your request should help a smaller, specific group of children. Include at least one research report as evidence of the effectiveness of Renaissance programs with the group of students with whom you are working (i.e. at-risk, advanced, ELL, etc.). Research is available on our Web site at www.renlearn.com/research.

Renaissance progress-monitoring assessments are proven to be effective with “at-risk” students, including those in special education and ELL students. In fact, enclosed is a study of . . .

6. **Inclusion, Helps Everyone, Equality, Community**

These phrases are usually a hint that your request should assist a broad group of children, not just a few.

Renaissance progress-monitoring assessments are proven to be helpful in School Improvement planning, Response to Intervention, and general classroom monitoring. Advanced children will be challenged and struggling students won’t get frustrated. Students will improve their reading and math skills, and the achievement gap will be narrowed.

7. **Positive Values, Character**

Many associations have strong interests in developing the character of young people.

It has been proven that Renaissance progress-monitoring assessments improve students’ performance in reading and math, as well as other school subjects. With guidance from the teacher, students set individual goals for themselves, which they attain—leading to positive values, increased confidence, a sense of accomplishment, and control over their future. Not surprisingly in schools and districts implementing Renaissance programs, there are fewer discipline problems and better attendance, and students feel good about themselves and their accomplishments. Students who learn to love reading succeed in life.

Endorsements

There are three kinds of endorsements—each serves the same purpose, but they come from different sources. Ideally, you should include at least one of each type along with your grant application for each product or service for which you’re trying to get funding.

The three varieties are:

- **Personal Testimonials**—Quotes from others who are already using the product or service.
- **Citable Research**—Published research about the products or services.
- **Awards/Honors**—Acknowledged honors for the products or services.

Personal Testimonials

Personal testimonials from people already using the programs and training are very useful in drafting a successful grant request. As experts in the solutions you’re looking to implement, their testimonials will carry a lot of weight in your grant application. Including these powerful testimonials along with your application can mean the difference between success and quick dismissal.

Example of a Personal Testimonial:

“Using Accelerated Reader this year for the first time has been one of the best experiences I’ve had in my 25-year teaching career. I’ve seen eighth-graders actually ask for books to read! I can’t get books re-shelved fast enough in my sixth-grade classroom library. It is WONDERFUL. Kids come in at 7 a.m. to read in our ‘Early Bird’ reading sessions. Our principal is thrilled with the 55% increase in comprehension in 27 weeks of school. Thanks to Accelerated Reader, kids are REALLY reading at Westminster Middle School.”

From a grant written by: Gail Harbin
Westminster Middle School
Westminster, South Carolina

To find personal testimonials, go to www.renlearn.com/Profdevel/success/ or you may request one by email at answers@renlearn.com.

Citable Research

Because of Renaissance Learning’s dedication to scientifically-based research, many of our tools have been favorably reviewed by various federally funded groups, including What Works Clearinghouse (www.whatworks.ed.gov).

The following excerpts are a good example of how citable, scientifically based research can be used to “build” an effective endorsement letter:

“...the study found that students in Accelerated Math classrooms experienced more components of effective instruction than students in Everyday Math classrooms. The study also found that greater achievement gains on two measures of achievement, the Northwest Achievement Levels Test (NALT) and the STAR Math test, were made by students in Accelerated Math classrooms than students in Everyday Math classrooms.”

—Spicuzza, R., J. Ysseldyke, A. Lemkuil, S. McGill, C. Boys, & E. Teelucksingh. “Effects of Curriculum-Based Monitoring on Classroom Instruction and Math Achievement.” *Journal of School Psychology* 39, no. 6 (2001).

“Teachers completing Accelerated Reader training were significantly more effective than control teachers who had not completed training.”

—K.J. Topping & W.L. Sanders. “Teacher Effectiveness and Computer Assessment of Reading: Relating Value-Added and Learning Information Systems Data.” *School Effectiveness and School Improvement* 11, no. 3 (2000): 305–337.

To obtain copies of any Renaissance research (including the pieces mentioned in this section), call (800) 338-4204 or visit www.renlearn.com/research.

Awards/Honors

Awards and honors are equally impressive endorsements when they are properly assembled. Through the years, numerous magazines, organizations, and associations have recognized Renaissance software and hardware.

Example Honors Statement:

- *The National Center on Student Progress Monitoring reviewed Accelerated Reader, Accelerated Math, STAR Early Literacy, STAR Reading and STAR Math for Scientific rigor.*
- *Florida Center for Reading Research favorably reviewed Accelerated Reader.*

For additional information on the honors listed, search on www.renlearn.com/fundingcenter.

To be most effective, we recommend including more than one type of endorsement with your proposal. Just as most people would say that one of these types of endorsements is inherently stronger than another so, too, will grantors. So for best results, include at least one example of each.

Grants: Final Touches

Before you Mail your Grant Application

There are two important tests to run before mailing your application for either foundation/corporate or government grants:

- **Grant Proposal Score Sheet**
- **Checklist**

Grant Proposal Score Sheet

What if you could know how your application was going to be rated before you even mailed it?

You can! The following grant application score sheet is an example of what many grant-request appraisers typically use in their own grant-review processes. The reviewer’s score sheet is included in the application for many grants to help applicants prepare. If there isn’t a score sheet with the grant you are applying for, use our blank Grant Proposal Score Sheet found on page 54.

Here’s how to use it:

1. Make several photocopies of the blank Grant Proposal Score Sheet.
2. Find at least two “practice” reviewers who were not part of your team. These could be colleagues, parents, community members, etc.
3. Distribute the score sheets, along with a clean copy of your completed application, to your reviewers. Keep one for yourself.
4. Sit down and read the entire application in one sitting as if you’ve never seen it before. (You may even want to read it out loud.)
5. After you’ve read the grant application, take out your score sheet and rank each category with respect to the maximum number of points available for each section. Be objective! (For example, a clearly defined project goal is worth between 0 and 10 points. If the goal isn’t even stated, give it a 0. If the goal is well-stated and defined, give it a 10.)
6. Once each reviewer has ranked the grant application in each category, add up the scores and compare them.
7. A perfect score is 100. If your grant application scored 70 or better, you may wish to go back and refine the areas where your score lagged. If your average score is below 70, consider making some fundamental changes to your entire application. In the competitive world of grants, you should strive for every point. In most cases, grants will not be funded unless the score is 80 or above.
8. After making any changes, repeat the review process using both the same people as before and one or two additional reviewers.

Checklist

It's easy to jump for joy once you've gotten your grant application to the point where you're ready to mail it—but don't send it just yet! Before you mail your grant, make one last check using the list below. It may seem trivial, but these few last-minute details could mean the difference between winning and not winning the grant.

Answer “YES” to all before you mail:

- ___ Did you occasionally use bold type, bullets, and dashes so the reviewer can easily find your main points?
- ___ Were you neat, and did you follow ALL of the grant’s stated requirements exactly?
- ___ Did you have a professional editor check your copy for grammar, typos, continuity, and clarity?
- ___ Has everyone cited in your grant application as a contributor signed in all the appropriate places (i.e., cover letter, application forms, etc.)?
- ___ Have you included the requested number of copies (most applications are reviewed by 5 or 6 people)?
- ___ Do you have complete copies of everything you submitted and all backup and reference material handy and organized?
- ___ Did you make a note on your calendar to contact the granting agency about receipt, or any further information you can furnish?
- ___ Was everyone who contributed to the grant application mentioned by name? (Grantors love to see their money or materials being shared—so team-writing is a plus.)

Once you've answered “YES” to all of these questions, you are ready to mail your grant application. Good luck!

Remember—

Mail your application at least five days before the deadline.

After you Mail your Grant Application

There are four important points to remember after mailing your application:

- Staying in Touch
- If You Don't Receive Funding
- If You Do Receive Funding
- Showing Appreciation

Staying in Touch

When requesting funds, it is a good idea to stay in contact with the funder. Contact the person or department that your request was sent to, to ensure they received it. Now is also a good time to refer to your list of contacts that you developed while seeking the initial information on the funding source you ultimately applied for—an established relationship with someone in the funding program’s main office can be very beneficial to you.

If You Don't Receive Funding

If you are turned down for a grant, make it a learning experience. First, contact the funder to find out when the next funding opportunity will be available. Then, inquire as to how you can strengthen your application.

Remember to always thank your contact for discussing your application with you. In addition, check with the organizations that received funding to see if you can read their winning applications. This information will help you learn more about what the funder was looking for and may make your next grant application a winner!

Always revise your application and send additional information (if necessary). **Never submit the same application twice**—if it didn't work the first time, it will not work for subsequent submissions.

If You Do Receive Funding

If you do receive a grant, developing a relationship with the grant-maker becomes even more important. So it's important to make sure:

- Everyone at your school expresses their thanks for the grant.
- You understand all disbursement and reporting procedures before you start issuing purchase orders.
- You provide a steady flow of feedback to the grantor about the progress of your project and its accomplishments. You may find that the combination of your application’s success and your personal willingness to meet the information needs of the grantor smooth the way for additional grants in the future.

Showing Appreciation

June Najjum, a library media specialist, won a \$9,995 grant from a private family foundation in Antietam, Virginia.

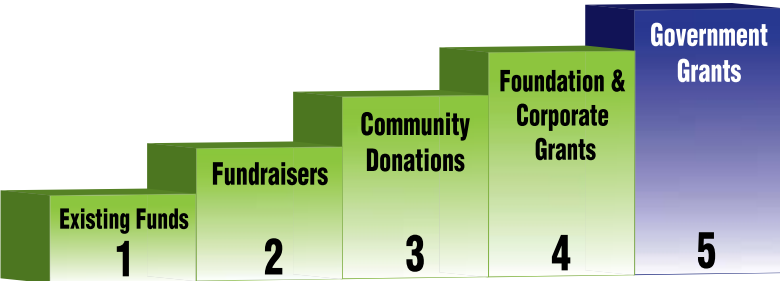
In appreciation, she did the following five things:

- Sent the grantor copies of the parent newsletter detailing their Accelerated Reader program.
- Put together a special Accelerated Reader Yearbook for the grantor, with photos of the kids at computers, descriptions of the incentives awarded, and other material, showing how the money was spent.
- The fourth- and fifth-grade Video Club made quarterly videos that featured book reviews, kids discussing Accelerated Reader, and other related material.
- Arranged for the high school to broadcast the student videos on the local public-access cable system so the entire community could see them.
- Alerted the granting agency to the time of the broadcasts and then sent the agency copies of the videotapes. They even asked for an extra copy to show at their board meeting.

When asked why she went to such great lengths, June Najjum said simply:

“Too many people who win grants just take the money and run. That’s just plain discourteous. We wanted the grantors to see how their gift was being used, and how much our 700 kindergarten-through-fifth graders benefited from it. As a result, the foundation accepted our proposal this year for \$6,000 ... giving us four networked Macintoshes in the computer lab.”

Conclusion: it pays to stay in touch and show continued appreciation!



Foundation and Corporate Grants
Step 4

Now that you’re familiar with the world of grants, it’s time to focus on the information you need to know specifically about Foundation and Corporate grants.

Building on what you already know, use the following tips and examples to write a successful Foundation or Corporate grant.

- How to Write a Successful Foundation/Corporate Grant
- Sample of a Successful Foundation Grant Proposal
- Sample of a Successful Corporate Grant Proposal
- Proven Cover Letters and Endorsements

How to Write a Successful Foundation/Corporate Grant

The structure for foundation and corporate grants is usually not as defined or rigorous as it is for government grants. The key elements for writing a successful grant proposal are listed below:

Narrative

School information—This section should be no longer than one page and include:

- Brief summary of school's history, mission, and goals.
- Description of current programs and past accomplishments.

Purpose of the grant—Describe the following in no more than two to four pages:

- School and community needs to be addressed and what target population will benefit.
- Project goals for which funds are being requested.
- Project, including objectives, activities, timeframe, number served, and frequency of utilization/operation. Outline the strategy/methodology and timeline to be used in the development and implementation of the program.
- How the people expected to benefit from this project have been or will be involved in its development and implementation.
- How this project/program enhances the existing services in the school and community.
- Your plan to evaluate the success of the project, including outcomes and results.
- How evaluation results will be used for program planning.
- Long-term strategies for how the school intends to fund this project beyond the grant period.

Budget

Budget Narrative

Each item you are seeking funding for should be tied to your Needs Statement. If it isn't necessary for the success of your project, remove it from your budget.

Budget Detail

In a table, break out all project expenses by subject. Be sure to check your numbers.

Funding Sources

List other funding sources being used or solicited for this project, including donations and volunteer time.

School Facts/Highlights

Give the reader a clear vision of whom the project will serve. Include school, teacher, and student demographics.

Supporting Materials

The following supporting materials are required for many foundation grants.

School Improvement Plan

It's important that your project helps meet the goals of your school's Improvement Plan. The funder wants to know that you have a plan and strategies for accomplishing your goals.

Key Project Personnel

List the qualifications of key members of the project. Key members should specialize in the areas of the project for which they will be responsible.

Organizational chart

This is simply a list of your school's administration.

Board membership

List the names and affiliations of each member of the board.

IRS Documentation

A copy of your IRS determination letter and/or explanation of your tax-exempt status will be required. Most often this refers to a 501(c)(3).

Letters of agreement

If the project is the result of a partnership with another school or community organization, a letter of agreement will be required outlining the responsibilities of each.

Remember—

Start your Step 4 grant search close to home! Your district may have a foundation that provides grants to its teachers or schools for special projects. Contact your district office to see if there is a school foundation in your area.

Sample of a Successful Foundation Grant Proposal

Submitted by Oak Ridge Elementary School, the following represents a winning submission for the Dollar General Grant. This sample should give you solid ideas on how to position your request for the funding at your school. Notice that, unlike a simple request for a specific product, the writer of this proposal focused on a complete writing curriculum and how it was to be implemented to help students reach the highest levels of achievement.

Submitted by: Oak Ridge Elementary School, Tallahassee, Florida

1. Project name

Writing Our Way Up!

2. What grade level(s), number of students and number of teachers will be impacted by your project?

Writing Our Way Up! focuses on our fourth and fifth grades. We have 149 students and eight teachers who will be directly impacted by Writing Our Way Up!

3. What subject area(s) will your project include?

Our program focus is improving students’ writing proficiency.

4. Project Design: (20 points)

Describe your project, including the theme, key activities of both teachers and students, and how you will use the technology specifically for instructional purposes.

Our theme is “Writing is a launch pad to success in all areas.” Currently, Writing Our Way Up! uses a variety of instructional methods. We use Open Court Reading (SRA), Razzle Dazzle Writing, CraftPlus, and High Performance Writing: A Structured Approach for our curriculum instruction. In addition, we use district prompts, student profiles, and Writes Upon Request monthly assessments to monitor our students’ progress. We plan to use a classroom laptop called NEO by AlphaSmart/Renaissance Learning to integrate technology into our writing program. Educational software included with the NEO will allow students to use word processing, receive keyboarding instruction, and complete writing lessons. The teacher can assign a writing project or prompt and each child can use their NEO to work independently on that project. The teacher can also choose, on a case-by-case basis, to allow them to share their work with other students for collaborative learning and group projects. Many students develop poor keyboarding habits at an early age. In our technologically based world, this makes the writing process itself more difficult. This software will allow students to use their NEO to learn the correct way to type and do so at their own pace.

5. Curriculum Focus: (20 points)

Describe specific ways that the content focus will be better taught through the selected technology.

Our world is becoming increasingly dependent on the use of technology. We have a responsibility to help our students become familiar with and comfortable using technology in their everyday lives. In addition to this, children enjoy technology; they view it as fun and exciting. Using a technology-focused approach to teach the writing process will help get even the most reticent student interested and excited about writing. As we all know, if a student is actively engaged in the learning process, greater academic gains are seen. It has been found that in using NEO laptops, “third- and fourth-grade urban students showed significant gains in writing proficiency and quality. Writing samples were coded using the Six Traits rubric. Pre- and post-test results show gains in all six traits. The greatest gains were in word count, revision, and editing; indicating that students wrote more with NEO laptops.”

(Hagerman, S. (2001). Writing with Technology. Technology in Education Conference, June 23, 2001)

6. Project Timeframe: (5 points)

a. What is the approximate date during the school year that your project will begin actively engaging students?

This could happen as early as the second week of November, dependent upon funding.

b. What is the approximate date during the school year that you will be able to assess impact of this instructional technology on student learners?

A preliminary assessment could be performed in early-to mid-December with daily use of the NEO for different activities. Impact could be fully assessed by the end of the third quarter.

7. Evaluation: (10 points each)

What will your students know and be able to do by the end of this project? Be specific.

Students will write more, edit and revise their own work more accurately, progressing toward our school improvement plan goal of “All students will write at or above grade level.” They will know and use correct basic keyboarding skills.

a. How will you measure the impact of this project on student learning in the classroom?

We will use our monthly Write Upon Request assessments, FCAT scores, teacher-made tests, and student portfolios to demonstrate growth.

b. How will you use the awarded technology to support the teaching process (rather than teaching students to use technology)? Please give at least two examples.

Teachers will be able to create instructional aids, grading checklists, rubrics, and assignment guidelines and electronically attach them to students' work, promoting student achievement by allowing them to review and edit their work based on the teacher requirements prior to submitting it for a grade. NEO also allows students to send their work to the teacher electronically, or the teacher can retrieve student work electronically, rather than having all students trying to scramble at the last minute to get a paper copy to the teacher's desk. Students will be actively engaged in writing using a medium they find exciting and fun. They will be able to learn basic keyboarding skills at their own pace. Being able to get their thoughts down without struggling allows more focus and increases the flow of ideas.

c. How will you measure the impact of this project on the teaching process?

The teaching process will be observed during Classroom Walk Throughs; teachers will be asked to complete a brief anecdotal summary of gains in student interest level, participation, and comfort level; and students will be polled as to their experience in Writing Our Way Up! as compared to previous writing programs.

8. School Improvement: (10 points)

Explain how this project supports a significant need addressed by School Board Goals, Sunshine State Standards, OR your school improvement plan.

Our school has a Title 1 schoolwide program. We are not currently meeting Adequate Yearly Progress and are identified as a school in need of improvement. Our student population is comprised of 90% African Americans, and of our 544 students, 520 of them are enrolled in the Free and Reduced-Price Lunch Program. Our school improvement plan goal is, "All students will write on or above grade level." Over the past three years, FCAT scores show that we have been making steady progress toward this goal. Getting students more interested in and excited about writing will help us continue to grow toward full proficiency in this area.

9. Professional Development: (20 points)

Action	Responsible Party and Trainers	Date of Implementation
Introduce teachers to NEO laptops and accompanying software	Renaissance Learning personnel/Dr. Jan Bryan	November
School-level support and guidance using NEO laptops	Instructional Technology Teacher/Sylvester Thompson	November

10. Project Budget: (15 points)

Hardware	
Computers (desktop and/or portable)	\$2,500
Hardware Subtotal:	\$2,500
Professional Development	
Technology Integration or Training Specialists (local district staff)	\$2,400
Stipends, Release Time for Teachers, Substitutes	\$ 100
Professional Development Subtotal:	\$2,500
May not exceed \$2,500	
Requested Project Total:	\$5,000
May not exceed \$5,000	

Remember—

Creativity is the key to putting your request at the top of the list. Your cover letter and proposal need to stand out from the crowd. The winner of the grant will be the one who does the best job of telling the grantor what they most want to hear, and that takes creativity.

Sample of a Successful Corporate Grant Proposal

On the following page is an example of how Betty Teague of Blythe Academy of Languages in Greenville, South Carolina, used the “How to Write a Successful Grant” format to write her successful proposal to fund Renaissance Learning professional development at her school. Betty attached an implementation timeline to fully detail how and when she planned on implementing Accelerated Reader Best Practices into her school’s existing curriculum. She also included an itemized budget containing the breakdown of how the professional development grant would be spent. This gave her the opportunity to highlight the fact that her school was planning to supplement the grant with additional fundraising efforts.

Dear (Title/Last name):

Are you interested in helping kids at (school/community name) become better readers?

If so, the faculty of Blythe Academy of Languages is committed to improving the reading skills of our students and instilling in them a lifelong love of reading. In January 2006, we implemented Accelerated Reader, a computerized reading management program, in grades three through five. In this program, students select books in their reading level that they read during scheduled class time and at home. Then, they take a computerized comprehension quiz of these books by answering multiple-choice questions. The computer handles all scoring and record-keeping automatically. We want to expand our project by implementing Accelerated Reader according to Renaissance Learning’s Best Practices. They are designed to combine the reading curriculum, an intensive regiment of reading practice, proven motivational techniques, and state-of-the-art technology. Our goals are to improve our students’ reading comprehension skills and to instill in them the value of reading for enjoyment.

The key to the success of Accelerated Reader is the balance between reading instruction and accountable, individualized reading practice. Studies show that the average American school provides only seven minutes a day in accountable reading practice. Data from more than 600,000 American students in the report, *Patterns of Reading Practice*, states that students who receive an hour of reading practice time achieve comprehension growth at twice the rate of national norms—an effect that is even more pronounced among students who begin the program with below-average reading ability. As students’ reading competency improves, they are motivated to read more and better books, establishing a continuing pattern of recreational reading.

Example of an Objective

Example of Documentation

Because the success of Renaissance Learning progress-monitoring assessment systems for reading is well-researched and documented, and because our short pilot project using Accelerated Reader software brought enthusiasm from students, teachers, and parents, we want to launch a full-fledged effort in the 2006–07 school year. With the \$5,000 from this Trust for Teaching Grant and \$1,500 supplemented by local projects, the Blythe Academy faculty will participate in professional development by Renaissance Learning. All teachers at Blythe want to be trained in motivational techniques that inspire students to read, and in diagnosis and intervention strategies to help spot student problems quickly, so that they will be better able to direct every student toward success.

Blythe’s classroom teachers are dedicated to using an innovative program that will improve our students’ reading scores. Twenty-six percent of current fourth-graders and 41 percent of current third-graders scored below expected levels of achievement in reading comprehension on the 2005 standardized test scores. (Test data for current second-graders will not be available until summer 2006.) Accelerated Reader is a powerful tool that helps teachers efficiently manage a literature-based reading program. New research proves that students using the program improve their scores on standardized reading tests faster than average students. Using existing classroom computers through school-wide networking will maximize the program’s proven results of improved reading and comprehension skills. Student success will stimulate a greater enthusiasm for reading.

During the 2006–07 school year, this reading project will focus on the third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade students at Blythe Academy (approximately 250 students). Eleven classroom teachers, two special-education teachers, the reading teacher, and the resource teacher will be actively involved in the program during the first year. However, since we plan to add the lower-grade levels during the next school year, all of the primary-level classroom teachers will be included in this training. If any of these teachers want to begin immediately, they will be able to do so. This includes ten additional teachers and 250 more students.

We anticipate that third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade students will show a significant gain on their standardized reading comprehension test scores in 2007. We will compare the results of the Metropolitan Achievement Test of 2006 and 2007 to determine the impact of this program. Students will also show enthusiasm for reading as indicated by a 10 percent increase in the circulation statistics of the school media center by comparing the 2006 and 2007 annual reports.

Example of Budget

Example of Implementation

Example of an Evaluation

Proven Cover Letters

Don't make the mistake of thinking your cover letter is merely a formality—it can, and should, be much more than that. Your cover letter sets the tone for your entire grant application, and has the unique ability to deliver potentially decision-altering information that may not fit anywhere else in your foundation or corporate grant proposal. It will be the first thing a potential grantor will read, so if you lose them here, your proposal may never recover. For that reason, spending some time to carefully craft your cover letter could pay off in big dividends. You may want to include some of the key words and phrases we outlined on page 6.

When written effectively, a good cover letter will:

- Convey additional information that didn't fit anywhere else in your proposal's format.
- Create a sense of excitement for your proposal—this is where you get the chance to be creative!
- Offer recognition to the grantor (especially if it's a corporation), so long as there are no rules against it.
- Ensure anonymity if that is what the grantor wants.
- Provide biographies of personnel if they are called for in the grantor's requirements.
- Explain how you intend to share your successful program (your program, not the awarded money) with other educators, schools, or districts in your area—grantors love people who share!

The following excerpt from one educator's cover letter is an excellent example of how a strong or unique argument can be made in this important first document. In the case that follows, the letter provided a framework for consideration of the entire grant because it focused the grantor's attention on a powerful benefit of Renaissance technology.

“Enclosed is our proposal seeking funds to purchase a reading/testing program and other supplies and material that we feel will help close the educational gap between the suburbs and the inner-city schools, beginning with Davison Elementary School. Inner-city school systems are thought to have poorly educated children when compared to suburban school systems ... we are convinced the enormous educational gap between the education received in the inner cities and the suburbs can be summed up in two words: test scores. Many inner-city children don't know how to take standardized tests. At Davison Elementary School, we have found an outstanding reading assessment program that we feel can narrow the gap between test scores in the inner cities and the suburbs. The program is called Accelerated Reader. After reading books at their own reading level, pupils take a computerized comprehension quiz.”

*From a proposal written by: Jacquelyn Sweetner Caffey
Davison Elementary School
Detroit, Michigan*

The Checklist

Are you ready to submit your foundation/corporate grant? Be sure your Step 4 grant includes:

- ✓ Your Goal Statement
- ✓ Endorsements (at least two)
- ✓ Budget
- ✓ Implementation Plan
- ✓ Evaluation Plan
- ✓ Cover Letter
- ✓ Have you reviewed the *Grants: Final Touches* chapter again on page 27?



Government Grants Step 5

Government grants are the last step for a reason: they're the most rewarding in terms of dollars, but they're also the most challenging and time-consuming. Government grants include both state- and federal-level grants, and they're competitive, which means that in order to get awarded, your grant must "beat out" other schools' grants.

If your school is considered high-poverty, Title I Schoolwide, and labeled In Need of Improvement, you may be able to win a government grant.

Once you've tried Steps 1–4, read the following tips to simplify this often-complicated process:

- **Determine your eligibility.** One of the most important factors in considering a government grant is whether or not your school is even eligible to win the grant. Carefully review the grant's criteria to determine your eligibility. Some states also provide a list of schools that meet specific eligibility criteria. Do yourself a favor—don't go through the process of applying if you aren't eligible. No matter how compelling your case is, if you're not eligible, you won't win the grant.
- **Obtain all grant materials.** When you find a government grant you're eligible for, download the application from the Web site, or request an application package. The grant application will provide specific instructions, forms, and details you must follow exactly in order to be considered for the grant. Generally, you're required to complete and submit standard forms, a narrative description of your proposed project, and an estimated budget.
- **Pay attention to the deadlines.** The deadlines listed on government grants are firm—a grant application received even one minute past the deadline will not be accepted. If you don't meet the deadline—even by minutes—all of your hard work will be wasted. If you find a grant due in less than 15-20 days, seriously consider whether or not you can pull together your application in time. If you already know what you want to do with the grant, have sufficient time to dedicate to writing it, and you meet eligibility requirements, then go for it!
- **Utilize a team approach.** Organize a team of individuals who will contribute to the grant proposal. Team members can carry out pieces of the work, such as conducting the needs assessment, interviewing school staff and community members, and brainstorming ideas for objectives and activities. Assign one team member to do all of the writing and compilation of the team's input.
- **Follow instructions.** Government grant applications are well written and provide very detailed instructions on how to describe your project needs and strategic plans, as well as how you plan to manage and evaluate the project if you're funded. Follow these instructions exactly and stay within page limits.
- **Complete each section accurately and thoroughly.** Organize your proposal according to the grant instructions, using each section as an outline heading. Using headings where you cite the instructions helps grant reviewers clearly understand your plans and how well they meet the guidelines. Be careful not to misrepresent your data or your project—if you receive the funding, you'll be legally responsible for the contract with the government agency. It's best to be honest throughout the process.
- **Review and revise.** Be sure to turn to page 27 for important tips on preparing your proposal.

"It's all about teamwork—brainstorm within your team for ideas, share grant drafts with the team, and encourage each other."

Dr. Jody Woodrum, Brooklet Elementary School, Brooklet, Georgia



Renaissance Funding Center

Whether you are stopping at Step 1 or you are proceeding all the way through Step 5, you will discover resources of great value at Renaissance Learning's Funding Center: www.renlearn.com/fundingcenter.



Steps 1 through 5 (Existing Funds through Government Grants)

- **Adoption, Approval, and Awards**—Discover which Renaissance Products have been adopted, approved, or awarded in your state.
- **Citations**—Find national citations and accreditations from organizations such as What Works Clearinghouse, National Center on Student Progress Monitoring, and The Florida Center for Reading Research.
- **Product Descriptions and Correlations**—If you are looking for the best way to write about a Renaissance product or how to correlate it to your program, go to the Funding Center for this ready-to-use copy to save yourself some time.
- **Research**—On our Web site you will find both peer reviewed and independent research studies. You will find experimental and quasi-experimental, as well as correlational, case study, and psychometric (reliability and validity) research.
- **Response to Intervention (RTI)**—Learn how Renaissance tools have always helped educators address the key ideals of RTI.
- **State Standard Alignments**—On our Web site, you may view how Renaissance products align to your state's standards.

Steps 1 through 3 (Existing Funds, Fundraisers, and Community Donations)

- **Funding QuickTool**—The QuickTool was created to help you through the first three steps. Answer a few short questions and the QuickTool will provide you with recommended strategies for going after existing funds, fundraisers, and community donations.

Steps 4 and 5 (Foundations/Corporate and Government Grants)

- **Foundation Database**—A comprehensive listing of foundations offering grant opportunities.
- **State Department of Education Web sites**—From Alabama to Wyoming, every state's Web site is listed here for your convenience.
- **Grant Search Sites and Listservs**—From facts about your area's poverty level to what grants are available at the Federal Department of Education, you'll find resources for writing your grant here.

Remember—

At any step of your funding journey, turn to the Renaissance Learning Funding Center for a wealth of helpful resources: www.renlearn.com/fundingcenter.

Appendix

Sample Forms

The forms on the following pages may be reproduced. In addition, copies of these forms can be found at the Funding Center at www.renlearn.com/fundingcenter.

Goal Statement and Resource Sheet

Goal Statement				
Itemized List of Needs				
Item	Notes	Quantity	Cost/Item	Total
Summary of Required Resources				
Financial Resources Total				
Human Resources Total				

Funding Prospect Worksheet

Date	Funder	My Organization
Organization Name Contact Name Web site Address Phone Number Fax Number Email Address		
Funding Mission/Priorities (List in order of importance)	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.
Total Assets		
Total Grants Paid		
Grant Ranges Offered/ Needed		
Period of Funding Offered/ Needed		
Geographic Limits Offered/ Needed		
Types of Support Offered/ Needed		
Population Offered for/ Needed		
Past Recipients' Names and Phone Numbers (Call them for copies of their proposals or project narratives)	1. 2. 3.	
Important People in the Organization to Know (Officers, donors, trustees, staff, a receptionist, etc.)	1. 2. 3.	
Does the funder have printed or downloadable guidelines/application forms?		
Initial Approach (letter of inquiry, formal proposal)		
Deadline(s)	Board Meeting Date(s)	
Sources(s) of Above Information (annual report, Web page, etc.)		
Notes		
Follow Up		

Event Planning Guide

Steps To Complete	Notes	Completed (check off)
1) Purpose of Fundraiser		
2) Financial Goal		
3) Type of Fundraiser		
4) Volunteers		
5) Fundraiser Time/Place		
6) Event Rules		
7) Facility Information		
8) Special Permits		
9) Event Materials		
10) Donations		
11) Advertising		
12) Volunteer Schedule		
13) Clean-Up		
14) Calculate Dollar Amount Raised		
15) Send "Thank You" Notes		

Volunteer Organization Sheet		
Name	Contact Information	Task Assigned/Schedule

Fundraiser Company Contact Form

Organization	Contact
Name	Name
Type of Business	Title/Position
Phone Number	Phone Number
Mailing Address	Cell Number
	Fax Number
	Email Address
Date of Initial Contact	
Notes	

Donation Request Contact Form

Organization	Contact
Name	Name
Type of Business	Title/Position
Phone Number	Phone Number
Mailing Address	Cell Number
	Fax Number
	Email Address
Date of Initial Contact	
Notes	

Grant-Writing Checklist

Before You Begin	Date Due	Done (✓)	Date Done
A. Learn your internal guidelines for seeking outside funding. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Who must approve it? _____• How long does the approval process take? _____• Who will sign documents? _____			
B. Develop a Needs Statement, identifying the reason you want to obtain funding.			
C. Convene a grant-writing team to guide project objective, mission, and goals. Include those who will help gather information and prepare a proposal, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Administrators • Students• Teachers • Community & Business Leaders• Parents			
D. With your team and Needs Statement, develop: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Goal Statement • Activities • Strategies• Objectives • Budget			
Finding the Right Grant	Date Due	Done (✓)	Date Done
A. Research and identify possible grant sources, such as foundations and corporations, or government sources.			
B. Utilizing the Funding Prospect Worksheet, evaluate the sources you identified above.			
C. Make preliminary contact with funders to determine interest level in your project and obtain guidelines.			
D. Review the grant opportunities to determine: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do we qualify? • Are applications available?• What are they funding? • Is pre-registration required?• When is the due date? • Where do you send your proposal?			
E. Prepare a timeline for your submission.			
Preparing to Write the Grant	Date Due	Done (✓)	Date Done
A. Collect all supporting data to meet the criteria and other information you will need for your project and your chosen strategies.			
B. Familiarize yourself with how you will be required to submit your grant proposal. If you're working on a Government (Step 5) Grant, get your eGrant passwords and registrations now.			

Writing the Grant	Date Due	Done (✓)	Date Done
A. Prepare each grant section entirely, as instructed in the application.			
B. Write a compelling narrative description, including budget justification.			
C. Describe the need for your project using your Needs Statement.			
D. Share your project goals, objectives, strategies, and activities. Tell a compelling story.			
E. Describe project management and staff qualifications.			
F. Describe project accountability measures and evaluation procedures.			
G. Describe how you will sustain the project after the grant period ends.			
H. Assemble supporting materials, such as endorsements, cover letters, and if required, your schoolwide or school improvement plan.			
Finishing Touches	Date Due	Done (✓)	Date Done
A. Double check your budget numbers to make sure they are calculated properly.			
B. Have an objective third party review your proposal and provide feedback.			
C. Make sure you've secured the proper signatures throughout the application.			
D. Make the required number of copies.			
E. Upon award notification, send a thank-you note to the funder, acknowledging the award and assuring them you will fulfill your goals.			
F. Notify school and community via press releases and begin planning a project orientation and kickoff event.			
G. Follow up with the funding agency staff, whether or not your grant is funded, to get input on your proposal's strengths and weaknesses.			

Grant Proposal Score Sheet

If you rate your grant proposal using the following questionnaire, and achieve a score approaching the 100-point maximum, you will have an excellent chance of winning the grant.

A perfect score is 100. If your proposal scores:

- **86 to 98**—your proposal is pretty good. Try to revise any parts you think may need help, but be careful not to undo the good work you've already done.
- **70 to 85**—you are on the right track. Go back and refine the weak areas identified by your questionnaire.
- **Below 70**—your proposal is missing something. Consider making some fundamental changes to your entire proposal.

Focus	Criteria	Your Score / Max
Creativity	Is your project creative and innovative? Does your project represent a worthy idea for improvement of the educational experience? Is your project challenging and stimulating to students?	____ / 10 ____ / 10 ____ / 10
Goal	Is the goal of your project clearly defined?	____ / 10
Potential	Can your project be accomplished through the design submitted and are the procedures, schedule, and objectives clearly stated and reasonable?	____ / 10
Resources	Are methods, resources, materials specified?	____ / 10
Student Involvement	Are students directly involved in the project, and does the project maximize their participation?	____ / 10
Evaluation Procedure	Are the plans for evaluating the project appropriate and adequate?	____ / 10
Budget	Is the budget request reasonable and sufficiently detailed?	____ / 5
Educational Value	Does the project enhance the learning experience of the students in an educationally sound fashion?	____ / 15
TOTAL		____ / 100

After you score your grant proposal, don't forget to review the "Before-You-Mail" checklist on page 28.

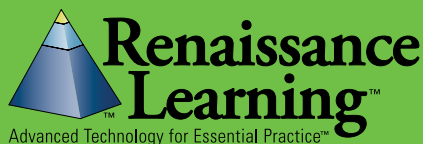
Notes:

[illegible]

Notes:

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Renaissance Learning is the world's leading provider of computer-based assessment technology for Pre-K–12 schools. Adopted by more than 75,000 North American schools, Renaissance Learning's tools provide daily formative assessment and periodic progress-monitoring technology to enhance curriculum, support differentiated instruction, and personalize practice in reading, writing, and math. Renaissance Learning products help educators make the practice component of their existing curriculum more effective by providing tools to personalize practice and easily manage the daily activities for students of all levels. As a result, teachers using Renaissance Learning products accelerate learning, get more satisfaction from teaching, and help students achieve higher test scores on state and national tests.



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