

# Need Funding? Get Started! Tips and Tricks for Successful Grant Writing

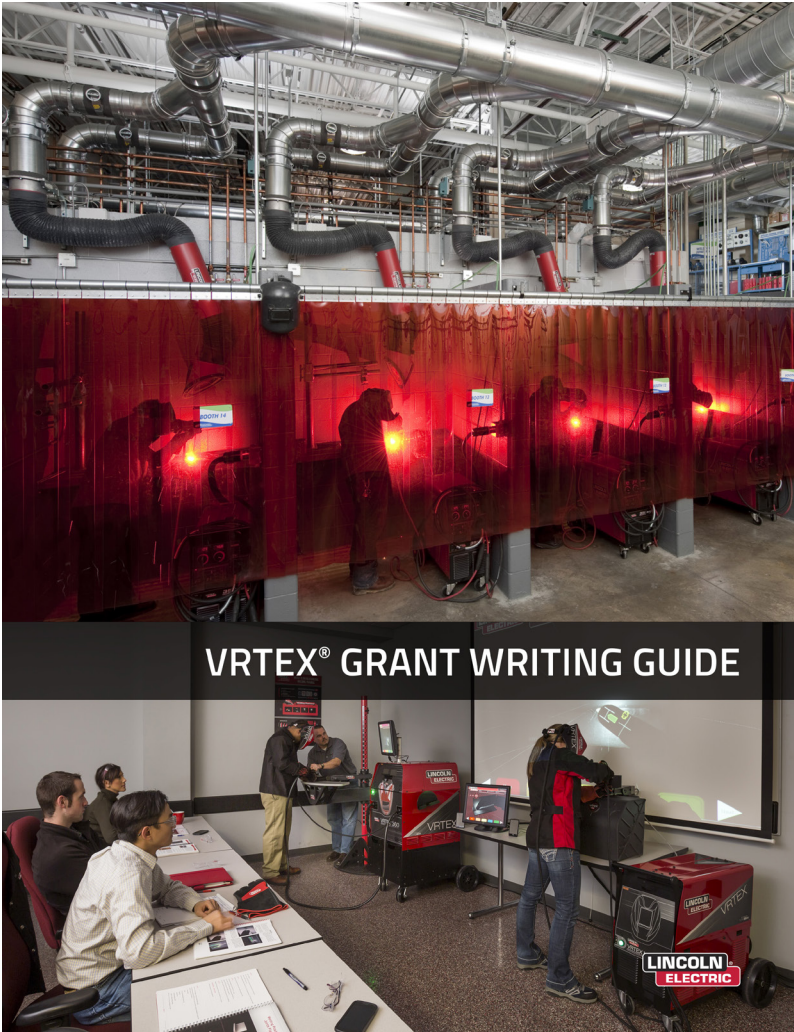


*Grants make it possible to equip a school with everything from central fume systems, welding equipment, CNC plasma cutting equipment and even robotic welding cells.*

**By Bob Vidos and Sarah Evans**  
**Workforce Institute Inc. and Lincoln Electric**

The race for educational grants is competitive, but funds do exist. In fact, there are at least \$7.9 billion in federal grant funds set aside for assisting training programs, and that's not even counting the monies available from private and corporate foundations.

The question is: How do you create a grant proposal that stands out and ensures landing dollars for developing and growing your welding education or other career technical education program?



**VRTEX® GRANT WRITING GUIDE**

Lincoln Electric offers a Grant Writing Guide specifically designed to aid schools seeking grants for its VRTEX® Virtual Reality Welding Simulation Trainers. Request Bulletin MC14-53.

There is no magic in grant writing. It takes the right mix of strategy, research and good writing to create a proposal that not only gets attention but also the funds you need to get your training program off the ground.

It all comes down to concrete research that supports the rationale behind your request to making sure you have targeted the proper funding agencies. Knowing how to develop the best proposal for your needs will seem like magic when the proposal gets a green light and you begin your first steps to fire up your program. Lincoln Electric has grant writing guides available to help you with the research aspect of your proposal.

**Who provides funding?**

The pool of potential funding agencies for welding and other CTE programming reaches across a wide spectrum, from government programs to corporate and private foundations. The kind of funds available and the way you secure money varies from agency to agency.

On the public side, grant seekers can reach out to both federal government agencies and ones affiliated with state and local governments. The following federal agencies offer numerous opportunities for potential educational funding:

- U.S. Department of Education (ED)
- U.S. Department of Labor (DOL)
- U.S. Department of Defense (DOD)
- U.S. Department of Commerce (DOC)
- National Science Foundation (NSF)
- U.S. Department of Energy (DOE)
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA)

There are many federal agencies supporting training initiatives. For example, the U.S. ED's Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education supports programs and grants of approximately \$1.9 billion annually. These funds assist programs in the high school, career technical education, community colleges and adult education and literacy programs. And that's just one federal avenue for funding.

An increased motivation in developing the country's base of knowledgeable, skilled workers also has affected state governments. Increasingly more states are passing laws and creating programs to help expand the accessibility of career and technical education for residents and boost economic development.

In the Midwest, for example, such states as Ohio, Kansas, Illinois, Michigan and Iowa, to name just a few, have enacted funding measures to help increase the visibility and use of career technical education programming both at the K-12 and higher education levels. This holds true for many other states, too.

At the corporate and private foundation level, numerous organizations offer education programming funding. These include, but are not limited to, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Bank of America Foundation, Lockheed Martin Foundation, Boeing Foundation and State Street Corporation, among others.

The foundations often can be more selective about which proposals they'll consider than those making decisions on a public funding level. Foundations often only fund projects in their own geographic region or location or ones that

demonstrate true potential for longevity and sustainability. Often they won't fund ones they haven't discussed prior to proposal submission or approve proposals that fall outside of their guidelines and priorities. The actual proposal process, however, tends to be far less complex than that of federal agencies.

Relationship building well before you develop and submit your grant proposal goes a long way. It's good practice to connect with local economic development initiatives; partner with local businesses and industry and/or community-based organizations and non-profits; and establish partnerships with key educational institutions at the secondary, vocational or post-secondary levels.

Such networking with like-minded potential partners could help you build connections with the various funding organizations. Getting to know board members and project officers at corporate and private funding agencies also is a good idea. The more visible you are about your mission, your project and the role you can play in the community at large, the better known and credible you will be to funding agencies.

### Identifying the right funders

As you research grants and funding agencies, keep a running list of prospects that best suit your needs. The best way to identify these is to consider such things as geographic restrictions, deadlines and dollar ranges of grants being offered.

For example, use keywords relevant to your location, project and organization. If you're looking to upgrade your existing welding lab or build a new one in Ohio, for example, you'd want to search such things

as "welding education," "welding grants," "skilled workforce funding," "advanced manufacturing funding," and similar search terms.

To keep your search organized, create and maintain a spreadsheet that tracks prospects, their processes, timelines/deadlines and appropriate officers and contacts.

### Creating a winning proposal

Once you identify the appropriate grants, it's time to start the grant-writing process. Each funding organization typically outlines specific steps for proposal submission, review and approval. Before you start drafting a proposal, identify those requirements and follow steps precisely. Again, it all depends on whether or not you seek public or private funds.

Before starting work on an actual grant request, we recommend creating an internal "concept paper" that your own stakeholders can review and discuss. This abstract allows everyone involved to determine the proposal's content direction by outlining the request's goals and objectives. It also ensures all interests will be represented in the final draft. A concept paper and review also allows you to determine who will assist in the writing.



Exposure to career pathways in welding and engineering can begin in the classroom at even the junior high level.

# BLENDED WELDING TRAINING

## 2010 IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY STUDY OVERVIEW

11

PARTICIPANTS TRAINED USING 100% TRADITIONAL WELDING  
 PARTICIPANTS TRAINED USING 50% TRADITIONAL & 50% VIRTUAL WELDING  
 22 TOTAL PARTICIPANTS



80

TRAINING HOURS OVER TWO WEEKS

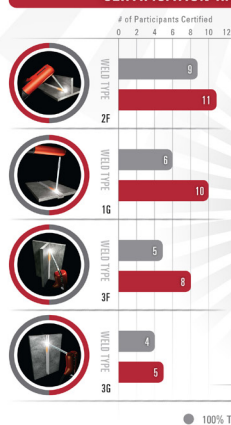
### THE VIRTUAL WELDING GROUP EXPERIENCED

Significantly **HIGHER** levels of team learning and interaction

Greatly **REDUCED** training costs  
 Total savings equate to \$2,680\* / \$243\* per student

Significantly **GREATER** amount of welds

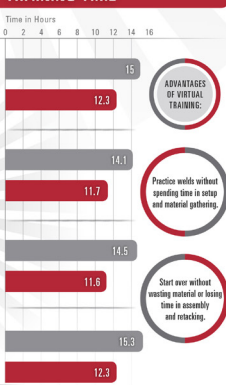
### CERTIFICATION RATE



AN INCREASE OF **41.6%**  
 IN OVERALL CERTIFICATION FOR THE VR GROUP

A DECREASE OF **23%**  
 IN OVERALL TRAINING TIME FOR THE VR GROUP

### TRAINING TIME



ADVANTAGES OF VIRTUAL TRAINING:

Practice welds without spending time in setup and material gathering.

Start over without wasting material or losing time in assembly and reworking.

FOR PRODUCT INFORMATION AND TO VIEW THE STUDY, VISIT [www.vrtex.com](http://www.vrtex.com)

**LINCOLN ELECTRIC**  
 THE WELDING EXPERTS™

Iowa State University has conducted a series of research studies indicating that there are benefits to 'blending' traditional welding training with virtual reality training, including reduced training time and costs, higher certification rates, greater practice time and higher levels of team learning.

Competition for any type of funding grows fiercer as programs, both public and private, become successful and more visible. One way to catch the eye of those who make grant decisions is to demonstrate throughout your proposal how your program aligns with the agency's own strategic plan for education, training and economic development. Doing this allows you to make a solid case for how your program fits into the funding agencies' vision and ensures their future ROI.

Many agencies, especially foundations, require you to first submit a letter of intent (LOI). The agency will review this letter and determine whether or not to issue an invitation to submit a proposal. Having a concept in place upfront also will assist with developing this LOI.

Some organizations go so far as to specify the format you should use, i.e., 1-inch margins, 12-point font and double-spaced text, not to mention page limits. Today, many agencies offer the ability to submit a proposal online. Much of this information will be available in any organization's Request for Proposal (RFP) or Solicitation for Grant Applications (SGA).

All well-crafted proposals should state the project's purpose and the target audience. This section should address beneficial impacts – social, community and economic. It also should address the return on investment being made by the potential funding source. What gains will local industry see from this program? How will this program assist growing a national skilled labor workforce in the future?

It's also important to craft a distinct needs statement that notes why the project is needed, what gap it fills, how it addresses a need or future community/economic/talent need, what technology it will involve and what makes it unique or different. Why does it stand out? Why does it merit those funds?

For example, you want to build a state-of-the-art welding education lab from scratch at your school, installing the latest technology. You feel that by adding an educational robotic cell, virtual reality and real-time welding training software programs, the latest multi-process power sources and fume control technology to the lab, you'll help educate a strong base of not only skilled welders but knowledgeable ones that can help you provide true workers of the future. A needs statement will help you succinctly sum up all of these crucial considerations and how the equipment needed plays a role in the objectives.

Funding organizations also will want to know if the project can be implemented and managed by your institution alone or if you will be relying on the support of carefully targeted partners. It's also good to note such things as how you will use human, plant and fiscal resources in this project and also how the project will be funded once the requested grant funds are exhausted.

The section reviewing budget needs and plans should look at staff costs, including wages and fringe benefits; project-related costs; equipment and consumable supply (typically anything under \$5,000) costs; consulting fees and other external expenses; and any indirect costs that could be incurred. Most funding agencies require the budget to be presented in an accounting format, such as a spreadsheet. You can prepare an accompanying written narrative to offer a more detailed explanation of that document.

Once you send the proposal, accompanied by a cover letter from your CEO, you likely will have to wait. It's the nature of the funding beast, as difficult as it will be to do. It's fine to do a small bit of follow up by email or telephone with the funding agency's specified contact person, but too much contact can hurt your chances. Don't be a pest.

### Funding secured? Now what?

Let's say you receive funding. Here's where things get busy, as the real work starts AFTER you receive approval. Once you receive notification your grant request is approved, take these initial steps to launch your project:

- Notify internal staff and administration about the award.
- Ask for a letter of intent.
- Begin the hiring and purchasing processes immediately.
- Ask for a contracting package.
- Schedule contract negotiations.

If you receive word that the funding agency denied your request, it's appropriate to send an email to the designated contact person to ask for reasons for the denial and any reviewer comments he or she is willing and able to share. Once you understand the reasons for denial, request a conference call with the funding agency to discuss. You will want to inquire about the potential for reconsideration with edits to the proposal. Also ask about ways to strengthen the proposal for resubmission.

The funding to help you launch a new welding education program or any other career technical education program exists. Finding it might take some legwork and some creative brainstorming and content development, but if you take the time to do this process correctly, you'll reap the financial benefits and get your program off the ground.

---

Robert J. Visdos is the president of the Workforce Institute, Inc., a workforce and economic development consulting firm located in Portland, Oregon.  
<http://workforceinstitute.com>

Sarah Evans is the Business Manager, Training Solutions at Lincoln Electric, a leader in arc welding equipment, consumables, automation and education headquartered in Cleveland, Ohio.  
[www.lincolnelectric.com/education](http://www.lincolnelectric.com/education)

### Helpful Information Sources for Grant Seekers

- Foundation Center  
[www.fdncenter.org](http://www.fdncenter.org)
- U.S. Department of Education, Office of Career, Adult and Technical Education  
<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/grmtpgrm.html>
- Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration  
[www.doleta.gov](http://www.doleta.gov)
- Technology Grant News  
<http://technologygrantnews.com/grant-index-by-type/k-12-grants.html>



*Regional employers are starting to demand more advanced skills from graduates of the high schools and technical colleges that prepare their prospective employees.*