



*Educational
Tours*

EF Educational Tours Fundraising Guide

Seeking Sponsorship, Effective Letter Writing and
Grant Writing Tips

Sponsorship and grants

Whether you are raising money individually or as a group, there are many sponsorship and grant programs available to help fund your tour—from national education organizations to service clubs. With a little extra research and effort, the rewards can be substantial. You can also reach out to your personal network for support. Sending out sponsorship letters is a quick and simple way to seek out donations.

In this guide, you'll find tips and tricks for the most effective letter writing campaigns, as well as resources for seeking sponsorship and writing grants.



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Seeking sponsorship

There are a lot of scholarship and grant opportunities out there. You just need to have a look!

Stay on topic

- Search for organizations that have a vested interest in your goal—to get your students abroad to experience other cultures! For example, one group leader approached the local VFW to sponsor the cost of the students' optional to Dachau Concentration Camp. Some of the members were involved in liberating this specific camp and others like it. They were glad to sponsor the opportunity for the students to see this firsthand.
- Many scholarships at the high school level must be applied to post-secondary education. Be sure to check out the specifics before going through the application process!

Keep it local

- Many grants and scholarships are region specific. Keep this in mind when searching for opportunities.
- Don't forget to contact your local service clubs, such as the Lion's Club and Rotary Club, to see if they have an applicable scholarship or would be willing to sponsor your students. If they are unable to provide a monetary donation, see if you can piggyback onto one of the club's events.
- Approach businesses in your community for sponsorship. In exchange, offer them advertisement on a group T-shirt the students wear at fundraisers and on tour. Or offer to display an advertisement with their business information at your public fundraising event.

Non-profit resources

http://www.managementhelp.org/strt_org/strt_np/strt_np.htm

<http://www.ctnonprofits.org/pages/NonProfitResources/StartNonProfit.asp>

<http://www.snpo.org/resources/startup.php>

<http://www.wikihow.com/Start-a-501c3-Nonprofit-Organization>

Non-profit status

- You may find that some grants require non-profit status. Albeit a bit tedious, we've heard reports from group leaders that the process to become a non-profit is not actually difficult. It just requires some time. This is especially helpful if you plan on establishing a long-term travel program at your school.
- Some benefits are access to venues, such as concessions, designated for non-profits only and tax exemption on the supplies you purchase.

Think outside the box

- Your group is full of talented students! Encourage them to use their talents to help raise funds. Look for photography, essay and art competitions. These usually have cash prizes that the students can apply to their tour while doing something they enjoy!
- Travel for Education state tax write-off. Some states allow a tax write-off for contributing towards an educational travel program fee. Check with your tax professional to find out if this exists in your state!

Effective letter writing

Basic tips

- Keep it short! People's time is their most valuable resource, so don't waste it on words that don't ultimately matter.
- Assume that people won't respond or even read your letter. Your chances are better if you hand deliver it or can in some way make the info more personal.
- Offer something in exchange for their donation. (A photo or postcard is nice, but free advertising or publicity is probably going to elicit a better reaction.)
- Make sure you know what will happen to the donations if the trip is cancelled. (You don't need to bring this up, but be prepared to answer.)
- Effective messages do not come in one-size-fits-all packages. Know your audience!
- Be very transparent in regards to what your total goal is. Goals should be concrete, measurable, achievable and worth doing.
- Be bold. It's absolutely necessary if you want to catch someone's attention.
- Make sure your letter is centered on the donor. What will motivate them to act?
- Write from one person to another. Your letter should sound like it came from a friend or family member.

How to start your letter

- Tell a story. Is there someone whose life has been changed by travel? Could you paint the picture of someone who is experiencing Rome for the first time? Start with an inspiring or provoking story to pique your reader's curiosity.
- Write an overline. This is a short phrase at the top of the letter that serves to catch the reader's attention. For example: How can I describe the look on a teenager's face when he sees the Colosseum up close? It shouldn't say anything about needing money or supplies donated. Save that for later!
- Ask a provocative question to engage your reader
- Quote someone or find a one-line zinger. Think of it as bait!
- Present an interesting fact. For example: A recent poll by the National Study of School Evaluation found that 94% of students said their international experience increased their enthusiasm for learning.
- Get right to the point. Remember: You want to keep this letter as short as possible.
- Don't start your letter with "Dear friend."

Basic questions to address

- Who is your target audience?
- What do you want them to do?
- What's in it for them?

Additional questions to consider

- What doesn't the reader know? (Probable answer: everything.)
- Why should they care about us and our mission?
- How will they respond? (Make it easy for them to donate.)
- What's the first thing they'll see and read? (What's the "hook"?)

Your goal

Convince people of two things:

- Educational travel is important (and why)
- Their donation, regardless of what it is, WILL make a big impact in these students' lives.

Customizing the message

- Have a template, but resist the urge to use it! You will end up saying the same info over and over again, but you will want to customize your message as much as possible. Templates are usually too generic and your readers will see that.
- Segment. Divide everyone into smaller, more manageable target audiences. Each group should share certain traits.
- What's the big message? Make sure your letter has one clear, big message. If you can get the recipient to hear and understand the big message, you will be more likely to gain his or her support and donation. An example of a big message: "Educational travel and experience are critical for a child's growth and success in today's globally focused world".
- Make sure you say "you" a lot. This can be used in place of the more general "the community" in many cases and is much more effective in establishing a personal connection.

Who to approach?

- Any business where you have a connection. Check with the group and parents in early fundraising meetings to see where you might have an in.
- Any local business or individual with an interest in supporting community programs, local schools, etc.
- Anyone in the education field
- Local leaders

Grant writing tips

Grants are sums of money that are awarded to fund a specific activity or organization. Grants can provide you with a large sum of money to pay for your group's trip. However, they are not always easy to come by. If you have the time and dedication to locate grants that will support your cause and the patience to write grant proposals, they are great ways to fund your group's travel.

How to begin

- Define your goal and search for a funder who supports it. You need to be able to explain why you are traveling with your students and seeking funding to do so. Your mission and goal are important to your funder. EF's mission is "to inspire the next generation of global citizens by breaking down barriers of language, culture and geography." What is your mission?
- Research. When you begin your search for grants, you will need to be sure they believe in the mission of educational travel. Begin researching online for grants that are related to education and travel.
- Do your homework. Once you have found some grants, be sure they fit your needs. Study their application guidelines and even call them to clarify your understanding of the guidelines.
- Find continuing support. Grants can range in the type of support they give. You may be lucky enough to find a continuing support grant that can ensure years of traveling with EF and your students.

Things to remember

- It is important to remember that grant writing and final approval can take a significant amount of time, so it is important to plan ahead!
- Ask for help! Finding time in your already busy schedule to write grant proposals may be difficult. Look for someone to volunteer to start your proposal. Grant writers in your area may be willing to donate their time and knowledge to help you and your group.
- Some grants require non-profit status, but this doesn't have to stop you from applying. Get creative and start your own non-profit to support your educational travel plans. There are many online resources that can help you get started, as well as guidebooks.
- Don't get discouraged! Remember what motivated you to give the gift of travel to your students. Seeing your students experience a new culture firsthand will be worth the work!

Non-profit status

For more information about acquiring, non-profit status, turn to page 6.

Links and resources

School grants <http://k12grants.org/>

Grants.gov <http://www.grants.gov/>

Foundation Center <http://foundationcenter.org/>

U.S. Department of Education <http://www.ed.gov>

Grant information for public schools <http://www.edutopia.org/grantinfo>

Workshops, links and resources <http://www.schoolgrants.org/index.htm>

Grant search <http://www.grantsalert.com/>