

Crafting a Language Bank

Making Grant Writing Manageable

Presented by Shoestring Solutions

June 23, 2026

Name _____

Signature _____

Date _____



Why a Language Bank?

- Gets your narrative and story set
- Uniform, agreed upon language the team can use
- Helps save time during the writing process
- Allows for agility in responses for opportunities to apply

When a funder asks to give your mission, history, and outcomes in 100 words or less



This is reasonable.



Case Study: Fostering Wishes Foundation

Sent: Wednesday, June 17, 2026 12:58 PM

To: Elisha Caplan <ecaplan@shoestringDE.com>

Cc: Lynn Calder <lcalder@shoestringDE.com>; Corinne Belch <cbelch@shoestringDE.com>

Subject: Re: Favor

This is amazing, thank you so much!

To save your magical skills for the larger grants, this language bank allows me to tackle all the little local grants, store requests and community grants, all typically under \$1500, and have continuity throughout our requests.

Not only that, but it has made me a better and more confident public speaker using your concise wording to explain what is often a too-long-to-keep-their-attention explanation. Thanks grant word-limits!

I appreciate absolutely everything you have done for FWF!

Have a wonderful day,

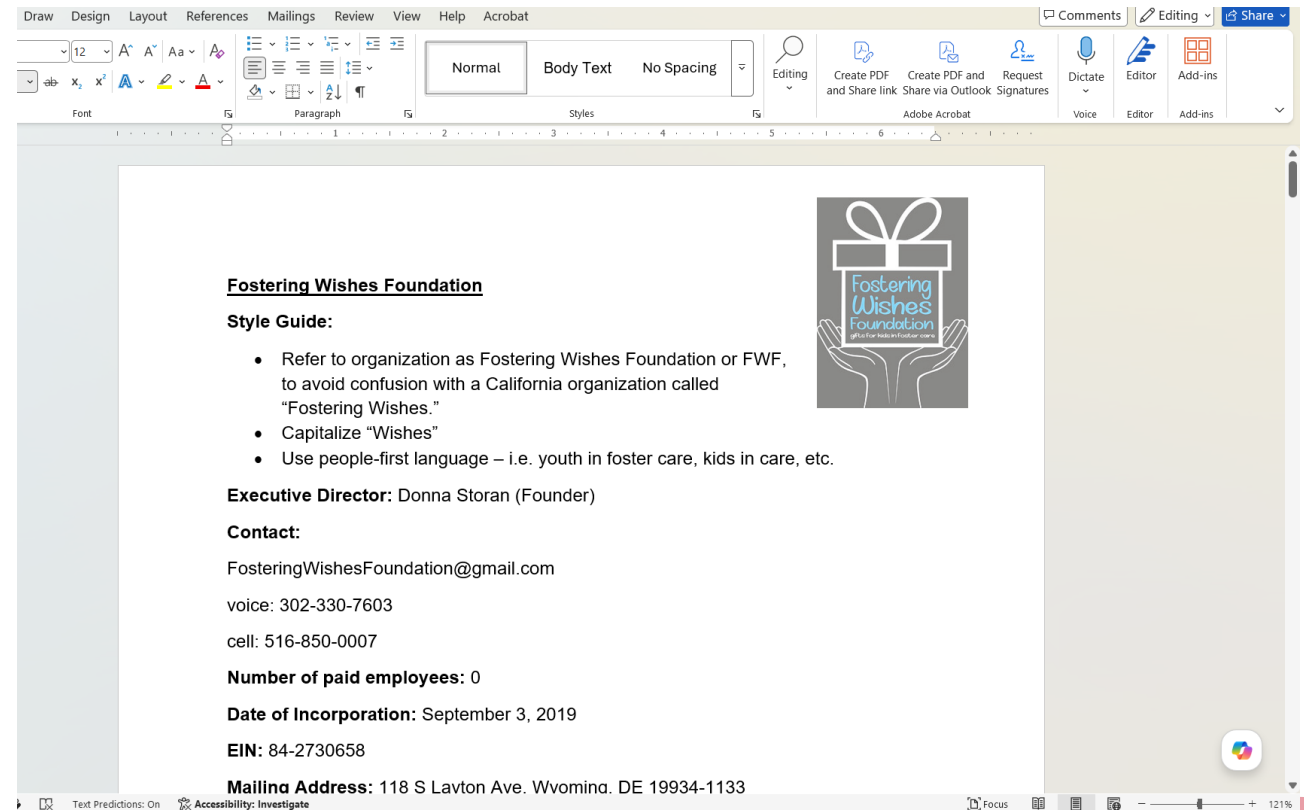
Donna



What are the pieces of the puzzle? Getting Started on the Language Bank

Get the basics down:

- Style Guide
- EIN
- Date of Incorporation
- Contact information
- Social media handles
- Number of employees (full and part-time)



Making an Introduction: Telling the Funder Who You Are

- Mission and Vision
- Organization History
- Organizational Background
- Recent achievements



The Photo by PhotoAuthor is licensed under CCYISA.



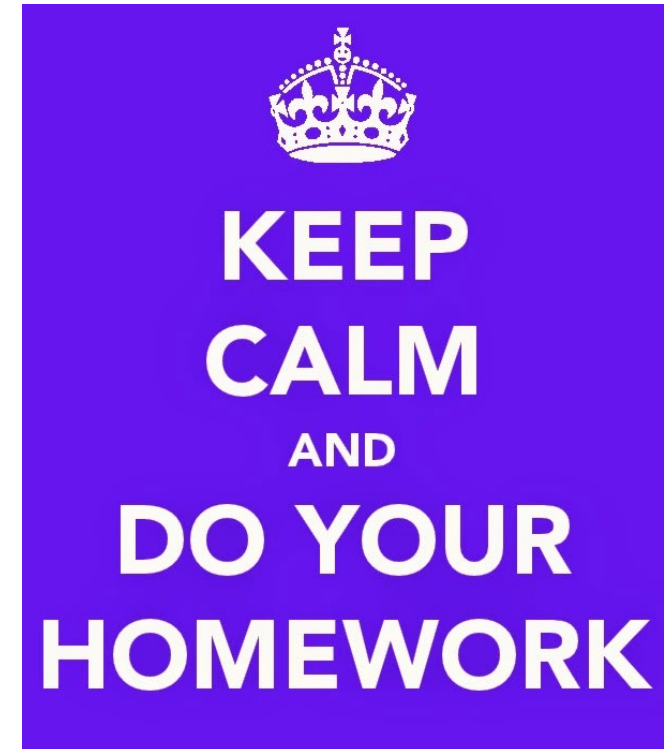
The Heart of Your Work: Core Programs

- Program Descriptions include:
 - Program Name
 - Timing of delivery
 - What are the activities in the program?
 - Program objectives
 - Partners and evaluation methods
 - Outcomes
 - Number of people served by each program (if different)



Evidence is Everything: Proving the Need with Data

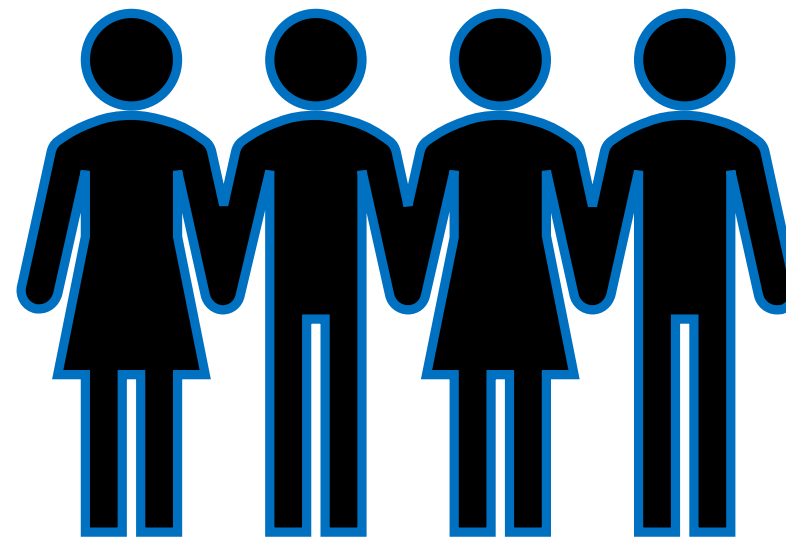
- Do your homework!
- Study up on what supporting evidence there is about the need for what you do, from mission, to programs, to future growth.
- Cite sources
- Update statistics at least once a year, but more for things like housing stats



Who are you Reaching?: Population Served

If you aren't already tracking info about this, start.

- Race
- Ages
- Gender
- Geographic area
- Numbers served
- Income (for instance LMI)



Measuring it Up: Talking about how you Evaluate Success

- Metrics for your programs
- Methods of evaluation
- Long-term or short-term tracking
- Internal processes: Board review



Financials: Money Matters

- Organization Total Budget Listing
- Project Budget Totals
- Percentages of different Funding Sources
- Budget justification



Show You've Got What it Takes

- Sustainability
- Fundraising Plans
- List of Top Funding Sources (optional)



You Can't Do it Alone: Partnerships and Collaborations

- Keep a list of collaborators
- Know who else does work like yours
- Keep up-to-date MOUs and have those ready to list
- Articulate what sets your work apart



Promoting and Sharing Success (Yours and the Funder's)

- Marketing and Promotional Opportunities
- Testimonials
- Links to Photo Albums for easy access

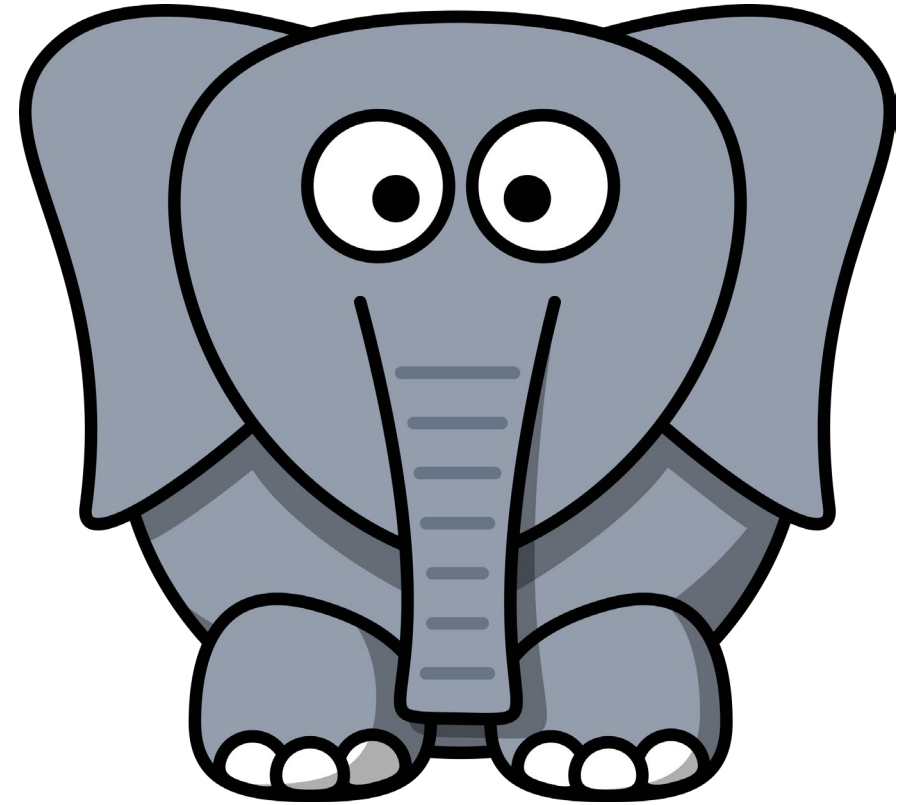
“JY,” a 14-year-old male who recently entered foster care, was provided with a Chick-fil-A gift card and hygiene products to help support him during this difficult transition. Coming into foster care can be overwhelming, emotional, and uncertain, especially for a young person who may suddenly find themselves in an unfamiliar environment away from everything they know. While no gift can take away the challenges that come with entering care, we hoped that providing JY with a few comfort items and essentials would help brighten his day and remind him that there are people who care about his well-being. The hygiene products were provided to help him feel comfortable and prepared, while the Chick-fil-A gift card allowed him to enjoy something familiar and comforting during a stressful time. These small gestures can go a long way in helping youth feel seen, supported, and cared for during moments of uncertainty.

From Fostering Wishes Foundation



Elephant in the Room: AI for Grant Writing

- Generating ideas and titles
- Reworking language
- Formatting budgets
- Cutting down word count
- Remember: use your own voice – Not AI's
- Privacy and confidentiality



Craft Your Own Language Bank

- Google Form
- Template
- Questions?



Shoestring Solutions Language Bank Template

Instructions: Fill in each section with organization-specific language that is typically used in your grant applications. If a section is not applicable to your organization, you can skip it.

1. Style Guide

Organization Name Usage (capitalization of name, etc.):

Voice & Tone (examples: asset based language, using first or third person)

Language Guidelines:

2. Basic Organizational Details

Legal Name:

DBA:

Founded:

EIN:

Address:



Thank you for joining us!

Lynn Calder

lcalder@shoestringde.com

Ellisha Caplan

ecaplan@shoestringde.com

www.shoestringde.com

