
SCOPE • STRUCTURE • SUBMIT

PROPOSAL WRITING SERVICE GUIDE

Test a bounded offer.

Define scope before writing.

Protect the client and margin.

DISCOVER | DRAFT | REVIEW | DELIVER

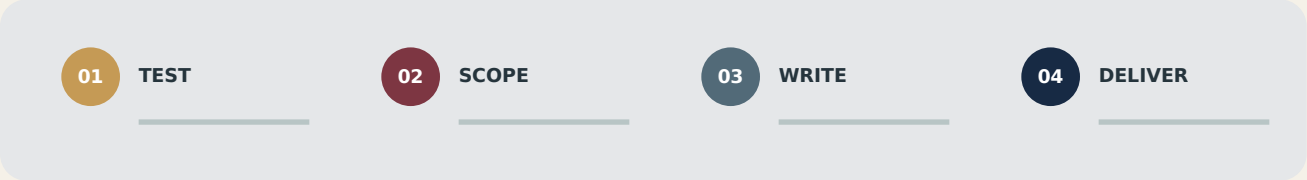
Veteran's Strategic Solutions LLC



START HERE

How to Use This Guide

Read the core guide before promising a funding outcome, setting prices, or accepting a full proposal. Then use the worksheets to test demand, plan tools, define scope, estimate and invoice work, track jobs and leads, build a portfolio, and control ethics, confidentiality, revisions, and payment.



DISCOVERY MEETING | Start with the organization’s real draft, deadline, objective, and decision-maker.

PIECE	USE
Core guide	Test the market, identify paying buyers, start with one document rewrite, control scope, price by document, and plan the first 90 days.
Operating kit	Use the startup, budget, estimate, invoice, scope, job-log, lead-tracker, portfolio, and compliance tools.

CORE GUIDE 01

1. The bet

01

OUTSOURCE

02

DEADLINE

03

BEFORE / AFTER

04

TEST

The core assumption that must be true: organizations that need well-written documents will pay an outsider to write them, rather than assigning it to whoever on staff writes best.

The question is whether the people who need it will pay rather than muddle through.

The fastest zero-budget test: pick three organizations you already know — a veteran nonprofit, a small contractor, a church or civic group — and ask to see something they wrote and submitted recently. Rewrite the first page of one, free, and send it back. If the response is “can you do the rest?”, you have a business. If it is a polite thank-you, they are content with what they have and will not pay.



RESPONSE PLAN | Requirements, proof, ownership, and deadlines become a visible writing map.

The three biggest reasons it fails:

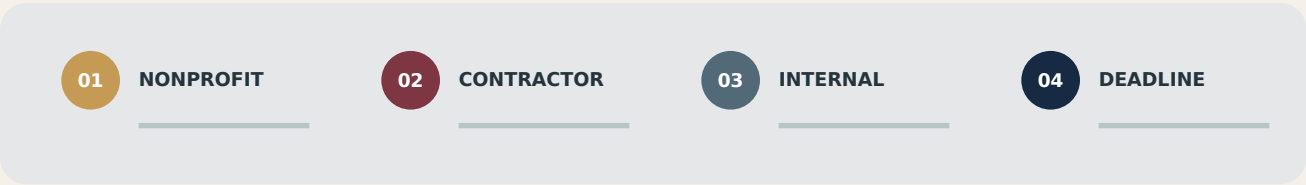
Nobody budgets for writing. Organizations budget for programs, staff, and equipment. Writing is what someone does on a Tuesday. You are often creating a line item that does not exist, which is a much harder sale than filling one.

The work is invisible until it is done. A customer can picture a clean parking lot. They cannot picture a document they have not read, which makes the sale abstract and the price hard to anchor.

Grant writing carries an expectation of results. If you write proposals and the money does not come, clients blame the writer even when the cause was the funder's priorities. This is the trap that eats freelance writers.

CORE GUIDE 02

2. Who pays, in their own words



Three buyers, ranked by how easily they can actually pay you.

BUYER	IN THEIR OWN WORDS
The small veteran-serving nonprofit. Two or three staff, a board, and a grant deadline they are behind on.	"Our director is writing the grant at midnight and she's not a writer." "We got denied and they didn't really tell us why." "We know what we do, we just can't put it on paper."
The small government contractor. Chasing set-aside work and losing on the written response.	"We're technically qualified and we keep losing to better paperwork." "The past performance section is killing us."
The organization that needs internal documents. Handbooks, SOPs, onboarding material, safety plans — the things everyone needs and nobody wants to write.	"We've never actually written any of this down." "Our handbook is from 2014."



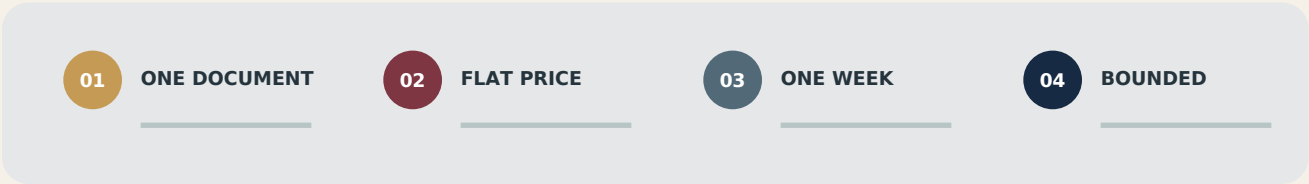
DOCUMENT CONTROL | Structure, version review, and a visible change record turn writing into a concrete service.

Where they are: your existing employer and organization list, local chambers, veteran service organizations, and LinkedIn. Not on freelance platforms — Upwork and Fiverr are a race to the bottom on price and you should stay off them.

What triggers the buying decision: a deadline or a loss. A grant closing in three weeks, or a proposal that just got rejected.

CORE GUIDE 03

3. The smallest version you can charge for



One product: the document rewrite. They send what they have. You send back a cleaned, restructured, submission-ready version with a short note on what changed and why.

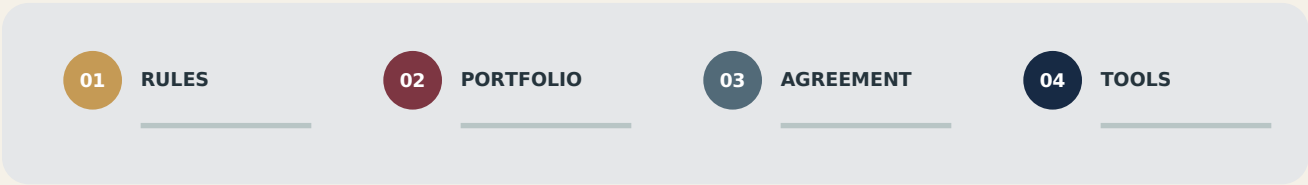
Not “grant writing services.” Not a retainer. One document, one flat price, one week. It is bounded, the client can see the before and after side by side, and it does not put you on the hook for whether a funder says yes.

Fastest path to the first paying customer: the organization that just got told no. A rejection is the single strongest buying trigger in this business — they have a deadline coming around again, proof that what they did last time failed, and a reason to try something different.

OFFER	BOUNDARY	PROOF
One rewrite	Existing draft supplied	Before / after
One flat price	Defined page count and deliverable	Signed scope
One week	Deadline and review calendar	On-time delivery
Short change note	What changed and why	Visible value
No funding promise	Quality of work, not award outcome	Protected expectation

CORE GUIDE 04

4. What it actually takes



Check licensing, zoning, and tax rules for your own city and state before starting.

The credential question. There is a Grant Professional Certified (GPC) credential through the Grant Professionals Certification Institute, and there are grant writing certificate courses through university extension programs. Verify current costs directly — I do not have figures I would state as fact. Buy neither until clients ask for it. In this trade the portfolio is the credential; build yours from work you are permitted to show [VERIFY].

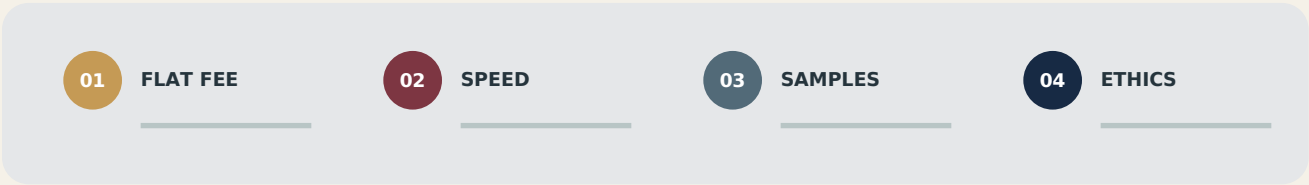
What you should protect yourself with: a written agreement on every job that defines scope, revision limits, and payment terms, and states plainly that you do not guarantee a funding outcome. Two revision rounds included, additional rounds billed. Scope creep, not pricing, is what kills margin here.

Equipment and services, cheapest source each:

ITEM	PLAN / SOURCE	YOUR COST
Computer	Use equipment appropriate for the documents and meetings [VERIFY].	
Word processing	Your selected word-processing tools	
Document templates	Your own branded template	
Grant opportunity research	Grants.gov, free; state and foundation portals	
Contract templates	Use a services agreement reviewed for your business [VERIFY].	
Video meetings	Your selected meeting tool	
Invoicing	Your selected invoicing tool	
Portfolio	Work you own or have written permission to display	
Professional liability / E&O insurance	Compare coverage and obtain a current quote [VERIFY].	

CORE GUIDE 05

5. Pricing



Never bill hourly. You write faster than a novice, and hourly billing punishes you for being good at it. Flat fees per document capture the value of speed instead of taxing it.

Which maximizes early revenue: the mid tier, but only after two or three low-tier rewrites have given you samples and a name to reference.

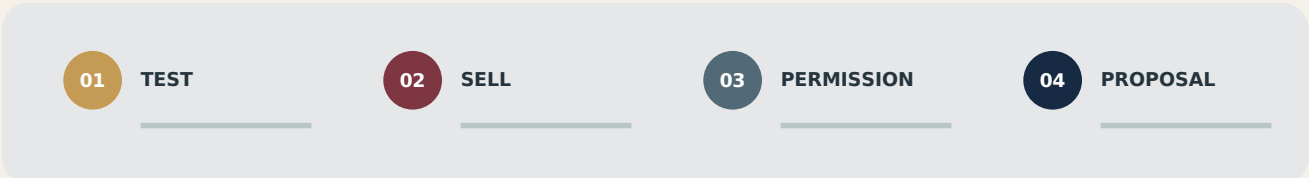
TIER	OFFER	YOUR PRICE
Low	Document rewrite and cleanup, up to 10 pages	
Mid	Full grant or proposal written from scratch	
Premium	Retained writing support — a set number of documents per quarter	

PERCENTAGE-OF-GRANT PRICING

A word on percentage-of-grant pricing: do not. Charging a percentage of awarded funds is considered unethical by grant professional associations and is disallowed by many federal funders. Flat fee or hourly only. Getting this wrong can disqualify your client’s application, which is a far worse outcome than a lost sale.

PRICE INPUT	RECORD
Document type, page count, deadline	
Discovery, research, writing, review, revisions	
Client-supplied facts and approvals	
Risk, complexity, and delivery format	

6. First 90 days



WINDOW	ACTION
Days 1-30	Three free first-page rewrites. Count how many ask for the rest. Build a one-page portfolio from documents you already own.
Days 31-60	Sell three rewrites at your tested flat price. Get written permission to reference each client by name.
Days 61-90	Land one full proposal at mid-tier pricing.

THE ONE METRIC

The one metric: proposals accepted as a share of proposals sent. Below one in five, the problem is your pitch or your price, not the market.

MONTH	PROPOSALS SENT	PROPOSALS ACCEPTED	ACCEPTANCE SHARE	NOTE
1				
2				
3				

WORKSHEET 01

Startup Checklist

01

VALIDATE

02

DEFINE

03

PROTECT

04

PROVE

DONE	ACTION	OWNER / DATE / NOTES
☐	Offer three free first-page rewrites and count requests for the rest.	
☐	Check licensing, zoning, and tax rules for your own city and state before starting.	
☐	Define the one-document rewrite offer, page limit, deadline, and deliverables.	
☐	Create a written agreement covering scope, revisions, payment, and no funding guarantee [VERIFY].	
☐	Confirm portfolio rights and written client-name permission before use.	
☐	Set document, file-security, version, and delivery rules [VERIFY].	
☐	Sell three rewrites at a tested flat price and track actual hours.	
☐	Build a one-page portfolio from work you may display.	
☐	Pursue one full proposal only after the rewrite offer is proven.	

WORKSHEET 02

Equipment and Budget Worksheet

01

TOOLS

02

RESEARCH

03

INSURANCE

04

CASH

ITEM	NEEDED?	ESTIMATE	ACTUAL	NOTES
Computer / monitor / backup				
Word-processing / PDF tools				
Secure storage / file transfer				
Templates / document system				
Research portals / subscriptions				
Video meeting / scheduling tools				
Invoicing / payment tools				
Credential or training [VERIFY]				
Professional liability / E&O [VERIFY]				
Marketing / portfolio / contingency				

BUDGET CONTROL

TOTAL ESTIMATE: _____ TOTAL ACTUAL: _____ CASH RESERVE: _____

WORKSHEET 03

Pricing and Estimate Template

01DOCUMENT

02SCOPE

03REVISIONS

04PRICE

CLIENT	DOCUMENT / OPPORTUNITY	ESTIMATE #	DATE

INPUT	BASIS	AMOUNT
Service tier	Rewrite / full proposal / retained support	
Page count / required sections	Client documents and solicitation	
Discovery and research	Expected time and sources	
Writing and restructuring	Defined deliverable	
Review and revisions	Included rounds	
Deadline / rush	Calendar and client approvals	
Meetings / coordination	Defined sessions	
Delivery format	Files and change note	
Tax [VERIFY]	Applicable local rule	
Total flat fee		

WORKSHEET 04

Scope and Acceptance Template

01

INPUT

02

OWNER

03

DEADLINE

04

SIGNOFF

Invoice Template

01

SCOPE

02

MILESTONE

03

TOTAL

04

DUE

BUSINESS	CLIENT	INVOICE #	DATE / DUE

DESCRIPTION	MILESTONE / QTY	RATE	AMOUNT
Document rewrite			
Full grant / proposal			
Retained writing support			
Research / discovery			
Additional revision / change order			
Other			

SUMMARY	AMOUNT
Subtotal	
Tax [VERIFY]	
Total	
Balance due	

Job Log and Lead Tracker

01

LEAD

02

SCOPE

03

SUBMIT

04

FOLLOW UP



PROPOSAL HANDOFF | Delivery includes the final document, approval record, submission responsibility, and next step.

DATE	LEAD / SOURCE	DOCUMENT	QUOTE	STATUS / NEXT STEP

JOB	DEADLINE	FEE	REVISIONS	RESULT	PORTFOLIO / REFERRAL

ONE METRIC

PROPOSALS SENT: _____ PROPOSALS ACCEPTED: _____ ACCEPTANCE SHARE: _____ DECISION: _____

WORKSHEET 07

Compliance, Ethics and Client Protection

01

VERIFY

02

SCOPE

03

ETHICS

04

RECORD

Check licensing, zoning, and tax rules for your own city and state before starting.

CHECK	CONTROL	INITIALS / NOTES
☐	Credential, portfolio, client-name, result, and experience claims are accurate [VERIFY].	
☐	Agreement defines scope, revisions, payment, delivery, and no funding guarantee [VERIFY].	
☐	Client owns and approves every factual statement supplied for the document.	
☐	Confidential files use a defined access, storage, transfer, and deletion process [VERIFY].	
☐	Pricing is not a percentage of awarded grant funds.	
☐	Solicitation or funder rules were reviewed before work begins [VERIFY].	
☐	Final version, client approval, submission responsibility, and deadline are documented.	
☐	Portfolio use and client-name references have written permission.	

STOP RULE

If a credential, client fact, rule, permission, deadline, or funding claim cannot be confirmed, stop and mark it [VERIFY] before submission or publication.