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Book Review: *Successful Grant Writing for School Leaders: 10 Easy Steps*

Hal Blythe, Eastern Kentucky University

Henson, Kenneth T. (2011). *Successful grant writing for school leaders: 10 easy steps*. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson.

K. Anders Ericsson, Florida State University Professor of Psychology and international authority on creativity, claims that to become an expert in a given field, an individual must devote 10,000 hours of deliberate practice in that field. If Ericsson is correct, Kenneth T. Henson certainly qualifies as an expert in the field of grant writing. Over a career that spans more than three decades, Henson has published among his 50 books *Grant Writing in Higher Education*, authored over 200 journal articles, delivered grant-writing workshops on several hundred college campuses, and, most importantly, written and contributed to proposals earning over one hundred million dollars!

Successful Grant Writing for School Leaders is “a tool to help leaders improve their own grant-writing skills and to instruct others on how to write successful grants,” and, Henson claims in the “Preface,” the book’s information is appropriate for both first-time and experienced grant writers. He cautions that to achieve optimum success, one should follow the book’s 10 steps “faithfully and in order.”

What are These “Easy Steps”?

In the first seven chapters, Henson takes the reader from developing the right attitude about grant writing and dispelling the myths surrounding “its potentially straightforward and easy process” though setting up a grant-writing library equipped with the right tools and designing each part of a proposal, including the budget, to developing a personal grant writing style.

Chapters 8 – 10 treat the important steps of identifying good grant sources for a proposal, including grant-finding tips from several successful grant writers, developing grant-writing partnerships, including five actual grants with comments on strengths and weaknesses, and making your grant work, along with ensuring its refunding.

Each chapter appears with an “Introduction” that outlines the chapter’s content and suggests its importance. This section is followed by a crisp narrative filled with practical tips and complemented by several sidebars containing real-life grant-writing stories, easy-to-understand tables and graphs, and examples of such things as flowcharts and proposal abstracts. Chapters end with a succinct summary, a recap of major ideas, and a list of additional practical tips.

Perhaps the book’s most engaging aspect is its use of actual grant proposals drawn from a mix of urban, suburban and rural schools across the country. The authors of the grants explain why they write their grants, how the grants helped their schools and what they learned from the experience.

Henson supplements the chapters with almost 100 pages of appendices in which he stores “the backup tools, including a glossary of grant terms, several full-blown grants, and some grammar exercises to help develop a crisp writing style and avoid the most common grammatical mistakes.”

In a not-often-offered invitation, Henson encourages readers to provide feedback in the form of experiences and sample grants “to make future editions of this book better serve its audience.” What

more could we ask from such an expert in
the field?

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