

Federal Grant Trigger Words Replacement

Workbook



brought to you by:

THE FREELANCE GRANT WRITER
ACADEMY

GRANT PROFESSIONAL
MENTORSHIP

Hi Changemaker!

Thank you for grabbing this resource from Grant Writing & Funding!

If you don't know me, "Hi! I'm Holly!" have been writing grants for nearly two decades, immersing myself in the grant world where I have secured millions of dollars for nonprofits around the world! I am also an Amazon bestselling author, podcast host of Grant Writing & Funding, and regional and national grant speaker.

And I live in the island of Guam!

Through the Freelance Grant Writer Academy and Grant Professional Mentorship. I coach aspiring and seasoned grant writers to replace their full-time income, on flexible hours, writing grants from home. EVEN in today's political climate.

Be sure to dive into our Grant Writing & Funding podcast, YouTube Channel, and enjoy our "Write Grants. Get Paid" Newsletter.

Let's Fund the Resilience Together!

Warmly,
Holly Rustick - Your Future Coach



Get started



TRIGGER WORD REPLACEMENT

seven-step roadmap



STEP ONE

ABOUT and why this is happening



STEP TWO

NSF Leaded Trigger



STEP THREE

How to Position Your Grants



STEP FOUR

#1 - Use Chat GPT and Trigger Word Replacement List



STEP FIVE

#2 - Use your Mission, Vision, and Values



STEP SIX

#3 - Bre Pactical



STEP SEVEN

Advocate

ABOUT

We are moving through a new era in federal grant writing. For access to federal grant funds during this new Trump Administration in 2025, nonprofits need to be more aware of what types of words you are using, and are not using, in your grant applications.

We have always said that grant writing is a word game and the types of words you use play a big part in how you construct a grant.

With the Trump Administration in 2025, though, we have not experienced the sheer elimination of word usage in federal grant guidance before.

Regular Changes in Words in Grants

To put into context, we've been writing grants for more than 20 years, and we have learned to play the wordsmith game of grant writing.

What is normal in federal grant word usage changes is that words are often added to the federal grant cycles when:

- a new administrations start,
- when societal movements and norms enter into the federal mainstream, and
- when priorities of the federal government are identified.
-

Even for foundation grants, we have been training grant writers to connect words with the funding source priority areas, Request for Proposals (RFPs), and website information so that grant writers mimic funding source language.

Then we teach grant writers how to integrate these words into your programs in a way that aligns with what you do.

This ensures that everyone is on the same page with language and what that language means AND helps with consistent language in your grant applications. This approach also helps nonprofits so they aren't mission drifting or scope creeping, but are aligning with funding sources for their specific cause areas. While we still entirely support this approach, the new wrench in the bucket in February, 2025 is the potential sheer number of words to NOT use for the new recommendations from certain federal agencies. (as of 2/10/2025).

NSF LEAKED PROCESS

National Science Foundation Leaked Word Elimination

Much of this elimination of language is based on Executive Order 14151, "Ending Radical And Wasteful Government DEI Programs And Preferencing".

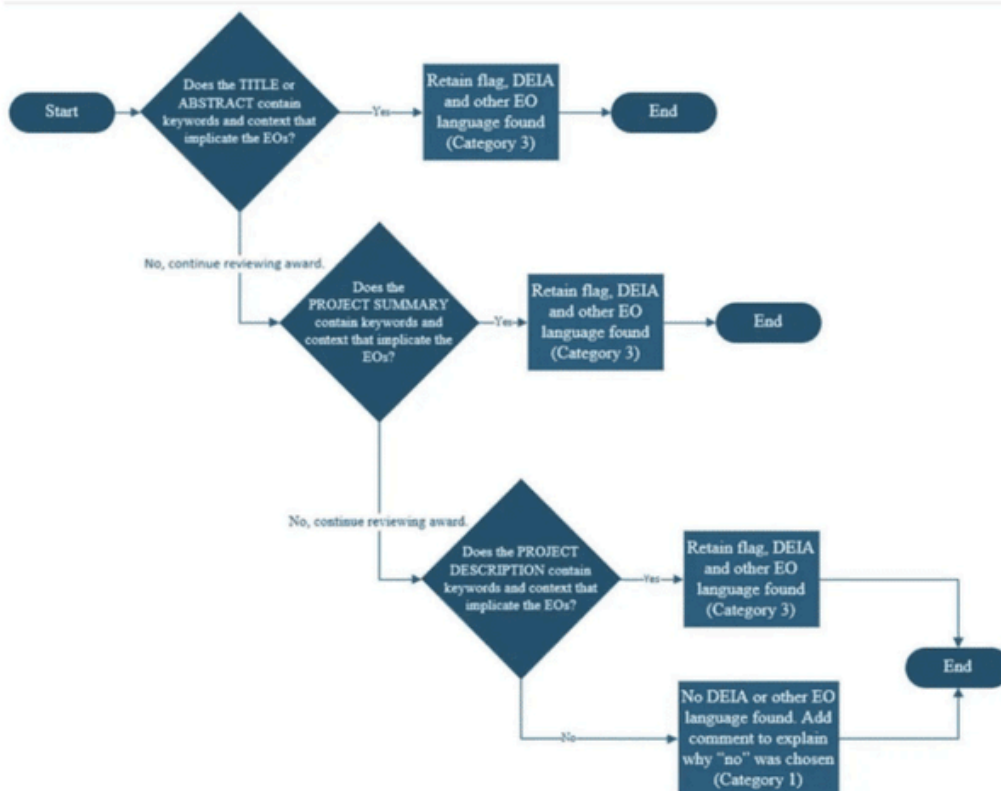
Even if the nonprofit client you have does not have explicit DEI programs, you may have been using certain words that are very common when using grant language or just the English language.

According to our latest information on releases from federal project officers at National Science Foundation, here are words that will trip a wire for more scrutiny (and potential stop order before reviews): To see the whole list of words that are considered forbidden and will prompt a review at NSF[1][5] listen to this weeks podcast episode here.

National Science Foundation (NSF) Trigger Words Review

<https://new.nsf.gov/executive-orders>

The National Science Foundation (NSF) is reviewing research publications and websites for a list of terms that, if found, will trigger further review to determine their appropriateness, in order to comply with President Trump's directive to eliminate 'DEI' (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) from all aspects of American society[1]. This is the decision tree that they are following:



HOW TO POSITION YOUR GRANTS

Do you have to stop using all these words?

No. This is a leak from one agency, the National Science Foundation, and may not apply to other agencies.

However, with the breadth of how this is rolling out from one federal agency, we do recommend that nonprofits contact your project officers at federal agencies, if nonprofits receive federal grant funding.

Some nonprofits and organizations might dig their heels down and not change their usage of words as those words embody their values.

If they choose to do that, they may just realize they will not get funded with certain types of federal agency grants during this current 2025 Administration. In the future, a different Administration could roll back a lot of these Executive Orders and initiatives.

Some nonprofits and organizations may not even be ready for federal grants, so they may look at applying for foundation or corporate grants at this point in time or sticking with non-federal fundraising and individual donors.

Some nonprofits and organizations may choose to play the federal grant game (some may have to as their funding is already allocated or they are really embedded in federal grant funding) and replace these words with the thought that their missions can continue but they may have to change words and approaches to get funding.

There is no right or wrong way with how organizations may want to approach this. If you are looking at how to initially re-word some programs, there are a few different ways you can seek to find the 'right' word.

Know that even if your words don't trip the wire for scrutiny the primary essence of your program might.

HOW TO POSITION YOUR GRANTS

Past Example of Word-Smithing in Federal Grants:

In the past, we have recommended switching out the word 'marketing' to 'awareness' for your budget categories. With this, there is a shift of how you position 'distribution materials' about your programs.

It's more of finding synonyms to switch out the approach to language without changing the end result or impact.

2025 Federal Grant Word Switching Approach:

Some nonprofit programs, even if you change words, may still get denied because of the nature of your mission or programs. Even if your program got to the review panel process it might be blocked.

For example, if your nonprofit provides pro-choice counseling and you replace words to showcase a program that doesn't get initially flagged, when it reaches the grant review panel, it could get immediately denied because of the overall nature of the grant in opposition to a certain Executive Order.

This might mean that alternative forms of grants (such as foundation grants) might be a better use of your time than applying for certain federal grants. But if you are writing grants, and have been using words that have been prioritized in past Administrations but now will be trip-wired, how do you know what those words are or how to replace them?

Replace Potential Trigger Words Using ChatGPT

I ran all the words listed in ChatGPT to find alternative words. While this was helpful to get ideas it was not entirely efficient.

For example, ChatGPT had a hard time finding another word for female that wasn't women or woman and vice versa.

Which would be hard even for humans, no?

Because of some of these ridiculous mandates, some of these words may be eliminated from the list.

#1 - CHATGPT REPLACE WORDS

Some of these words might work, for example going from socioeconomic to financial conditions. These may still be 'trigger' words off -the-page, but at least this gets your brain going!

NSF Trigger Word	CHAT GPT OTHER	OTHER
1. activism	1. social engagement	
2. activists	2. change agents	
3. advocacy	3. support efforts	
4. advocate	4. supporter	
5. barrier	5. hindrance	
6. barriers	6. impediments	
7. biased	7. prejudiced	
8. bias	8. inclination	
9. BIPOC	9. Americans	
10. Black and Latinx	10. African and Latin American	
11. community diversity	individuals	
12. community equity	11. variety in groups	
13. cultural differences	12. fairness in communities	
14. cultural heritage	13. distinct customs	
15. culturally responsive	14. legacy	
16. disabilities	15. context-aware	
17. discrimination	16. impairments	
18. discriminatory	17. unfavorable treatment	
19. backgrounds	18. unjust	
20. groups	19. personal histories	
21. diversified	20. collectives	
22. diversify	21. varied	
23. enhancing	22. broaden	
24. equal opportunity	23. improving	
25. equality	24. fair access to resources and positions	
26. equitable	25. uniformity	
27. ethnicity	26. balanced	
28. excluded	27. cultural background	
29. female	28. omitted	
30. fostering	29. Child Bearing Age	
31. gender	30. nurturing	
32. hate speech	31. sex	
33. Hispanic minority	32. derogatory language	
	33. Latino community	

#1 - CHATGPT REPLACE WORDS CONTINUED

Continued...

NSF Trigger Word	CHAT GPT OTHER	OTHER
1. historically	1. traditionally	
2. implicit bias	2. unconscious preferences	
3. inclusion	3. integration	
4. inclusive	4. all-encompassing	
5. increase	5. augment	
6. indigenous community	6. native population	
7. inequalities	7. discrepancies	
8. inequities	8. imbalances	
9. institutional	9. organizational	
10. LGBTQ	10. sexual orientations	
11. marginalize	11. diminish	
12. minorities	12. smaller demographics	
13. multicultural	13. more than one culture	
14. polarization	14. separation	
15. political	15. governmental	
16. prejudice	16. preconceived notion	
17. privileges	17. benefits	
18. promoting	18. supporting	
19. race	19. ethnic group*	
20. racial	20. ethnic*	
21. justice	21. fairness	
22. sense of belonging	22. feeling of connection	
23. sexual preferences	23. sexual orientationS*	
24. social justice	24. fair treatment in society	
25. sociocultural	25. social and cultural	
26. socioeconomic	26. financial conditions	
27. status	27. standing	
28. stereotypes	28. generalizations	
29. systemic	29. foundational	
30. trauma	30. emotional injury	
31. underappreciated	31. undervalued	
32. underrepresented	32. inadequately depicted	
33. underserved	33. insufficiently catered to	
34. victim	34. affected person	
35. women	35. Adult Girls or Child-bearing age	

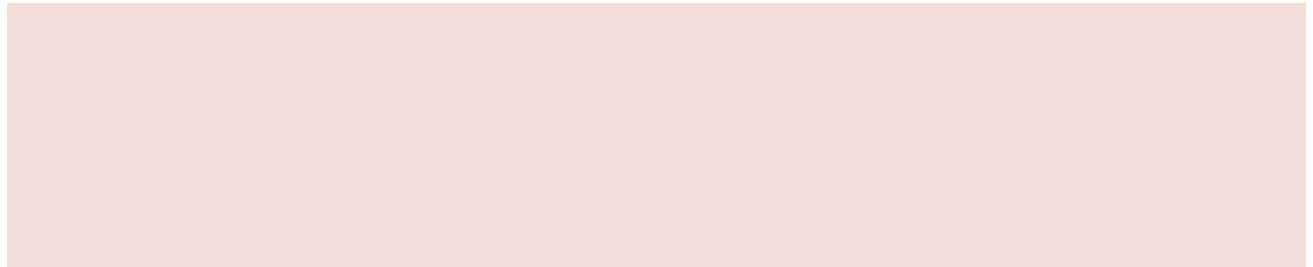
#2 - USE YOUR MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES

Go deep into your mission statement, vision statement, and values.

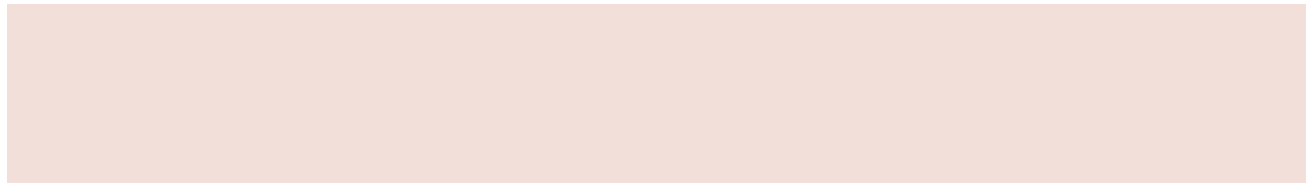
Are there any words that might exemplify the work you are doing in a different way without losing the heart of your work?

Are there 'trigger' words that you may want to change without losing the essence of your nonprofit's values and work?

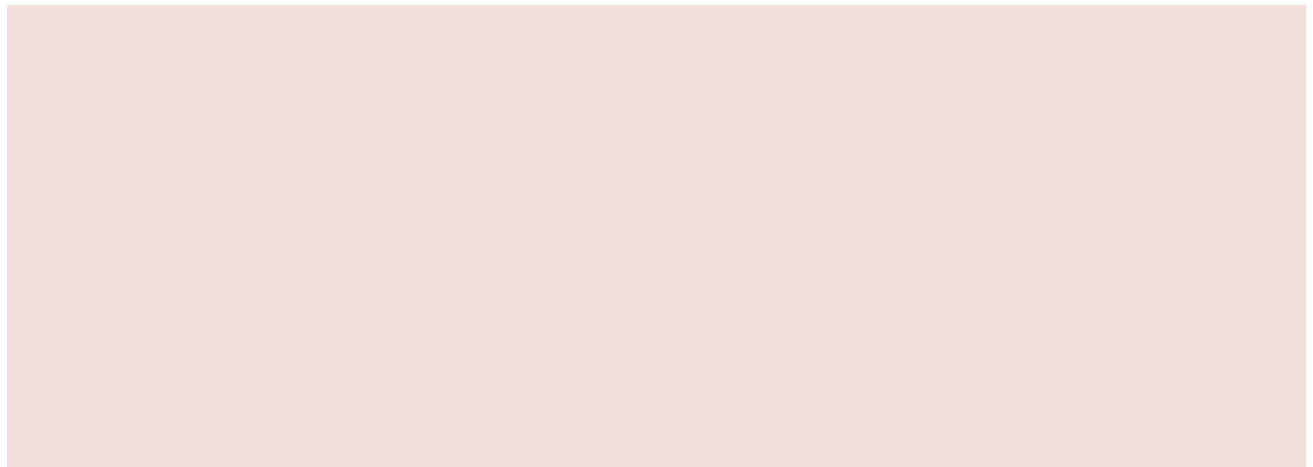
Mission Statement



Vision Statement



Values



#3 - BE PRACTICAL

At the end of the day, words are important.

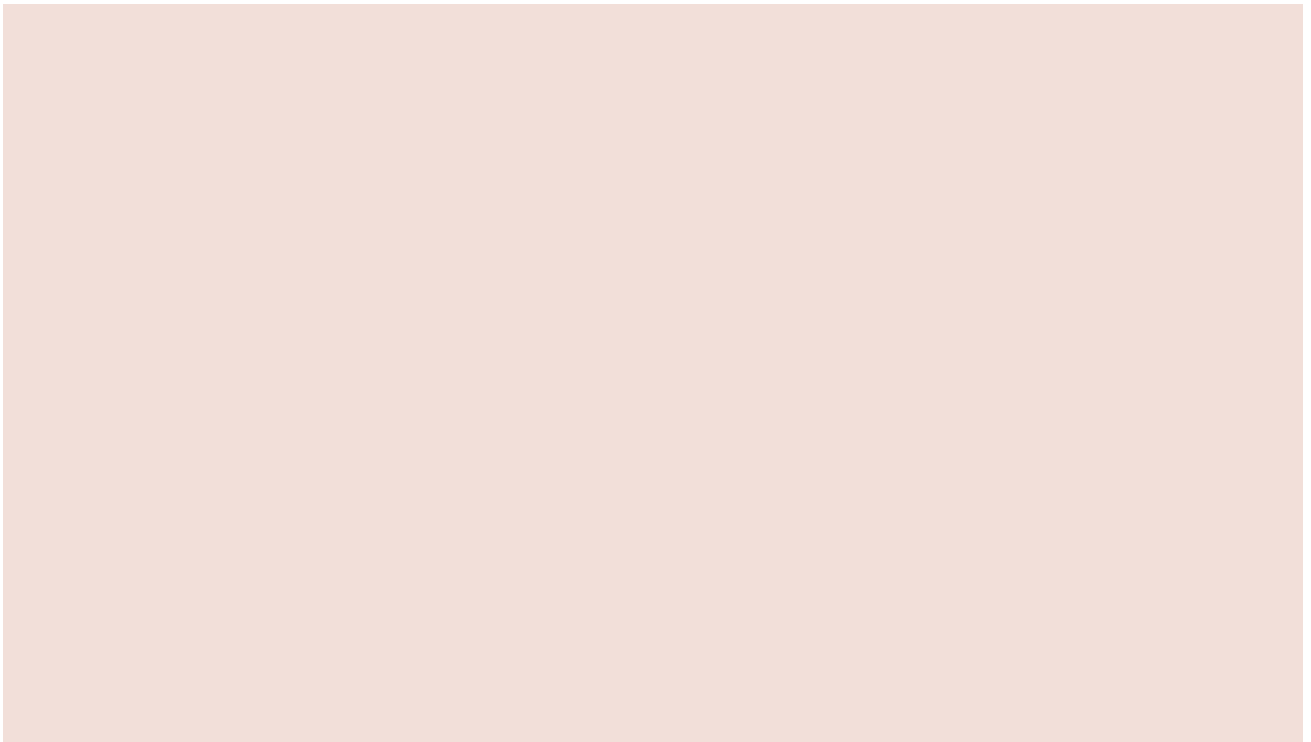
Don't chase words to just get funding when the funding source is essentially not aligned with your priority areas.

Even if you get a grant and if the funding is not aligned, the grant monies could be frozen, revoked, or not reimbursed in the future.

Even if this is against the contract, you may have to hire a lawyer to fight this cause.

That is playing out in real time.

NOTES - Am I Being Practical or Chasing the Money? Is it worth the risk, or should I turn to Foundation Grants, Corporations, Donors, etc.?



#4 - ADVOCATE

If federal grants are still vital to supporting your work, and you feel that it is compromised with any of the Trump Administrations Executive Orders, then it's important to advocate for legislators that can support your cause.

At the end of the day, federal grants are political. And nonprofits and freelance grant writers that access federal grants understand this.

Even though nonprofits with certain 501 status cannot lobby in certain ways, they can still share their programs, priorities, and concerns with lawmakers.

They can vote as individuals in elections. They can sign petitions and be members of larger nonprofits groups, such as the [National Council of Nonprofits](#) or Nonprofit umbrellas in their local communities.

Who can I Send Letters to or Call for Support?

Local and Federal Lawmakers:

Nonprofit Umbrella:

Chambers of Commerce:

Other: