

A NONPROFIT ARTS ORGANIZATION

Tips + Resources for GRANT WRITING

So, you have a great idea for a program? Great. In order to make it happen, you'll need financial support. Where do you look?

What are your funding options?

What is a grant?

What is a grant? A sum of money given by an agency (a government or other organization) for a particular purpose. Writing a grant proposal, or just knowing how to get started, can seem like a sisyphean task, especially if you've never done it before.

The main issues arise because grantsmanship has its own language, its own rules and procedures and these need to be learned in order to see any type of success.



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- research, collecting data on and reviewing areas of need, reviewing resources establishing goals, and then creating a responsive action plan
- capital campaigns (ex. to fund acquiring or renovating a building)
- to fund activities that strengthen and improve organizational efficiency and effectiveness.

*strategic planning, business planning, feasibility studies, fund development planning, marketing and communications planning, planning for reorganization, streamlining, and/or mergers, financial management planning or systems adoption, and transition or succession planning. Remember, it's the goal of funding agencies and private foundations to give money away!

Funding Sources

Funding Sources Government Agencies

the federal government is a huge enterprise that consists of an array of departments, agencies, bureaus and centers. This can make it difficult to navigate opportunities that suit your organization. For the arts, the NEA is the primary federal funder. They offer grant opportunities but also allocate funds to state and local government agencies.

Funding Sources State Agencies

State agencies get funded from the federal agency and it's their role to distribute these funds to local organizations and individuals.

In Rhode Island, RISCA gets much of its funding from the NEA, the <u>Rhode</u> <u>Island Council for the Humanities</u> (RICH) from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), along with individuals, corporations, and foundations

Funding Sources Legislative Grants

Legislative Grants are another funding source.

These come from your local Senators and the House of Representatives

Funding Sources Local Grants

Most municipalities also have discretionary funds that they allocate to local organizations

Funding Sources Private Foundations

Private Foundations are an excellent source of funding for arts and culture organizations. There are nearly 1000 foundations that provide funding to arts organizations in the US, giving over \$3.5 Billion in grants each year.

Foundation Stats

Funding Sources Corporate + Private Industry

often have funds available for small projects Businesses like banks and real estate firms are great sources for seeking sponsorships and other support

Funding Sources

Resources:

<u>grants.gov</u> - for federal government grant opportunities

Grant Gopher - for private foundations (mostly)

Foundation Center - private foundations

<u>GrantStation</u> - a funder database

Grantmakers.io - 990 dataset usable for nonprofit professionals

PND - Philanthropy News Digest - you'll find requests for proposals (RFPs) listed by category.

You've done some research on potential funding opportunities and have identified several that may fit your program.

What's your next step?

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- 3. evaluate your resources by asking "what is my level of expertise, interest and comfort with the topic area" and are others available to serve as collaborators to compliment my level of expertise?
- 4. begin to specify and narrow your area of interest to those agencies whose priorities most closely match your idea and your level of expertise and experience.

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- 7. begin to reshape your ideas based on these conversations.

PRACTICE

- 1. State an idea that you have that you would like to get funded.
- 2. What skills, if any, do you possess that makes you a prepared grant writer.
- 3. Draft an 'Elevator Pitch" about your organization and its programs.
- 4. Find an application kit on the internet and evaluate whether or not you are qualified to complete it.
- 5. What makes your idea important/worthy of funding?
- 6. Go through the seven steps to match your idea with a funder.
 - a. Identify broad topic area(s) (ex. funding for the arts, arts education, community programs)
 - b. Identify potential funding agencies:
 - c. Evaluate your resources how likely are they to fund your idea?
 - d. Develop specific questions and objectives
 - e. Write an Abstract outlining your project
 - f. Contact agency officers to discuss your idea
 - g. Reshape your idea based on conversations and research.

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The LOI should be a brief, one page, informative letter which summarizes your ultimate full proposal. There are times, however, when it can be as long as three pages.

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The structure of the LOI is a business letter. Therefore, write the LOI on business letterhead. Be sure that your company's address appears on the letterhead or add it to the letter on the right-hand side. The recipient's address should appear on the left-hand side of the paper.

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It is important to use the specific name of the recipient. It is best to avoid general terminology such as, "Dear Sir" or "To Whom It May Concern".

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The opening of your LOI should be a concise, executive summary that provides enticing information to inspire the reader to continue. Include the name of your organization, the grant you are applying for, and/or the amount of money you are requesting as well as a short description of the project involved. You should also include how your project fits the funder's guidelines and funding interests.

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Next, give a brief history of your nonprofit and its programs. There should be a direct connection made from what you currently do to what you want to accomplish with their funding. Include a description of your target population and geographic area. It is wise to incorporate statistical facts about what you are doing and hope to do as well as specific examples of successes and needs.

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Elaborate on your objectives. How do you plan on using the funding to solve the problem? Describe the project succinctly. Include major activities along with the names and titles of key project staff.

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If you are requesting funding from other sources, mention this in a brief paragraph. In addition, include any funding already secured as well as how you plan to support the project in the future.

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Briefly summarize your goal. Note that you are open to answering any further questions. Thank the funder for his consideration in your organization.

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You may attach any additional forms which are helpful to present your information. However, keep in mind that this is an LOI and not a full proposal.

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Review the given guidelines for the LOI to assure that you have met all of the funder's requirements. Failing to include all requested information can cause your LOI to be disregarded.

Although foundations usually provide an outline for the LOI, the following tips might help you successfully win grants:

When signing the LOI, use proper business salutations such as "sincerely" or "respectfully". It is best to avoid an overly friendly closing.

The grant proposal package to a foundation or corporate funder will usually contain these three elements:

Cover letter Grant Proposal Additional Materials

Basic Format for Planning ALL Proposals:

Proposal Summary / Abstract

Introduction

Problem Statement / Assessment of Need

Program Goals + Objectives

Methods

Evaluation

• Budget

• Appendix

Basic Format for Planning ALL Proposals:

Proposal Summary / Abstract

the summary is a critical element of any proposal - not just something to be written as an afterthought.

It should succinctly describe who you are, the scope of your project, and the cost.

Basic Format for Planning ALL Proposals:

Introduction

introduce your organization as an applicant for funds. Here, you build credibility and make the case that your organization deserves to be supported.

Introduction

What to talk about in your introduction:

- how you got started your purpose and goals
- how long you've been around, how you've grown, and the breadth of your financial support
- unique aspects of your organization
- some of your most significant accomplishments as an organization; if you are a new organization, some of the significant accomplishments of your board members or staff in previous roles.
- your success with related projects
- the support you have received from other organizations and individuals (accompanied by letters of support)

Basic Format for Planning ALL Proposals:

Problem Statement / Assessment of Need

zero in on the specific problem(s) that you want to solve through your proposed program.

This should:

describe the situation that prompted you to write the proposal

 refer to situation(s) that are outside of your organization (i.e. situations in the life of your community)

Basic Format for Planning ALL Proposals:

Problem Statement / Assessment of Need

The Problem Statement should:

- make a logical connection between your organization's background and the problem or need you propose to address
- clearly define the problems or needs you intend to address.
- demonstrate the existence of the problem or needs by including credible evidence.
- be realistic don't try and solve all the problems in the world over the next six months.

Basic Format for Planning ALL Proposals:

Goals + Objective

Goals are broad statement, such as:

- develop additional resources to provide information to bilingual populations
- reduce underemployment rates among adults
- increase availability of resources to address problems of adolescent pregnancies
- create an environment in which folk art is fully appreciated
- enhance self-images of senior adults

Basic Format for Planning ALL Proposals:

Goals + Objective

Objectives are specific, measurable outcomes of our projects.

Objectives should state:

- who is to change
- what behaviors are to change
- in what direction the changes will occur
- how much change will occur
- by what time will the change occur

Basic Format for Planning ALL Proposals:

Methods

describe, in some detail, the activities that will take place in order to achieve the desired results. There are two basic questions to be answered here:

(1) What combination of strategy and activities have you selected to bring about the desired results?

(2) Why have you selected this particular approach of all the possible approaches you could have employed?

Basic Format for Planning ALL Proposals:

Methods

The proposal reader should be able to gain a picture of:

- exactly how things will work
- what your facility looks like
- how staff are deployed
- how clients are dealt with
- what the exhibits look like
- how the community center recruits and assigns volunteers
- how a questionnaire is administered and the results interpreted

Basic Format for Planning ALL Proposals:

Evaluation

Outcome evaluation is used to determine how effective the program is in reaching its stated Objectives.

Process evaluation is used to make appropriate changes or adjustments in your program as it proceeds.

Basic Format for Planning ALL Proposals:

Budget

Requirements for Budgets vary widely. But, overall, your budget should be based on your Goals and Objectives otherwise you run the risk of developing unrealistic or impractical requests.

Suggested structure might include: personnel costs, non-personnel costs, and indirect costs.

Basic Format for Planning ALL Proposals:

Budget

Personnel:

- Salary and Wages. Full- and part-time staff who will be working on the proposed program.
- Fringe Benefits. These vary from state to state as to what is mandatory and may include state disability insurance, unemployment insurance, FICA, etc.
- Consultant and Contract Services. Paid consultants and unpaid consultants (volunteers).

Basic Format for Planning ALL Proposals:

Budget

Nonpersonnel:

- Space
- Rental, Lease, or Purchase of Equipment
- Supplies
- Travel
- Other Costs

Basic Format for Planning ALL Proposals:

Budget

Indirect Costs:

costs not readily identifiable with a particular project or activity, but nevertheless are necessary to the general operation of the institution and the conduct of the activities performed

- operating and maintaining buildings and equipment
- depreciation
- admin salaries
- supplies

Basic Format for Planning ALL Proposals:

Appendix

Funding sources will usually stipulate the specific attachments they want you to include.

- Financial statements
- IRS Determination Letter
- Indication of nonprofit corporation status
- Board roster
- Organizational budget
- Letters of support or endorsement
- Résumés / Curricula Vitae

PRACTICE

- 1. What are you proposing to do?
- 2. Why is it significant and innovative?
- 3. What will you plan to do?
- 4. How will you do it?
- 5. What will it cost and why?
- 6. Why are you the best one to do it?

Talking the Talk

Like it or not, the grant world has its own language specific to itself; terms that are used by foundations and government agencies.

Call for proposals - a notice of an opportunity to submit a proposal on a specific topic. Also referred to as a request for proposal (RFP), a funding opportunity, a program announcement (PA), or request for applications.

LOI - Letter of Intent; Letter of Interest, Letter of Inquiry. A document that is designed to generate interest from a grant provider. It typically outlines the primary activities and projects of the organization that is applying for the grant and how it fits within the grantor's interest.

Grantee/grantor - the grantee is the institution or individual who submits the grant application and (hopefully!) receives a grant award. A grantor is the agency providing the grant funds.

Peer-review panel - a group of experts selected by an agency to evaluate grant proposals to that agency. Serving on a peer-review panel is an invaluable experience in that it provides a great opportunity to learn about the characteristics of successful and unsuccessful grants and enhance your own skills.

Funding cycle - most agencies and foundations follow a schedule for receiving, reviewing, and awarding funds. These typically occur at the same time each year. For example, RISCA's Arts Access Grant (AAG) is offered in two cycles each with its own deadline: April 1 and Oct. 1.

Form 990 - IRS Return of Organization Exempt From Income Tax. For foundations, these outline who they fund and for how much.

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Annual Report - for foundations, the annual report provides detailed information on projects that are supported each year. Nonprofit organizations also publish annual reports that show the work they've accomplished each year, who their funders and supporters are, etc.

Goals - broad statements about what you want to achieve. For example, a goal for an organization might be to increase your donor base.

Objectives - objectives are the measurable steps that your organization will be taking toward the goal. It is best to use SMART Objectives: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Results Oriented and Timed.

Outcomes - the change you expect to see as a result of providing your program or service. We know that most issues are complex and have many pieces to them; thus, there are many factors that lead to the accomplishment of the goal. It is important to ensure that the change you identify is the direct result of your program or service.

DUNS Number - Data Universal Number System is a unique nine-character number used to identify your organization. The federal government uses the DUNS number to track how federal money is allocated.

Fiscal Sponsor - a non-profit organization offering their legal and tax-exempt status to groups—typically projects—engaged in activities related to the sponsoring organization's mission.

Quantitative vs Qualitative Analysis - quantitative analysis involves looking at the hard data, the actual numbers. Qualitative analysis is less tangible. It concerns subjective characteristics and opinions – things that cannot be expressed as a number