



APPLYING FOR PROJECT FUNDS

When applying for any funding, it is essential to provide full details on the community needs, project work plan and expected results. The following checklist provides an overview of the information required in a proposal application process.

Before asking if you even need a grant:

- Identify the need or opportunity that your community wants to solve.
- Decide what to do to solve it.
- Figure out how much that may cost.

1. PREPARE! Get established. Position yourself and your projects to be funded.

	Is the idea or project based in a <u>NEED</u> in the community? Remember, funding shouldn't be about making the project fit the funding, it should be based on an identified need in your community.
	Is there community support? What does this community support look like?
	Define the Project / Focus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What is the scope of work? ▪ What are the broad project goals? What do we want more of ▪ Who will benefit from us receiving this grant?
	Are we allocating enough time and resources to the preparation? Planning is the most important part of the grant process yet it is the step that is most overlooked or rushed.
	Be realistic about the time commitment to develop the funding application (it will include full project work plan). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Can your organization commit to a contract and other legal requirements? ▪ The application process may take several months. Will your project be relevant and ready to go many months from now?
	If you submit a cooperative proposal, make sure that there is both a formal and informal relationship between the grantees (or those who are collaboratively putting the project forward).

2. PREPARE! Cultivate Relationships

	Identify who is or should be involved in the grant process. Bring the RIGHT people to the table! <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Organizationally (Internal) ▪ Community (Supporters / Stakeholders)
	Who should be involved in the application process? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Make sure those involved are aware and committed to their role. ▪ What will my role be in the grant-seeking and proposal writing process? ▪ Who is going to write the proposal application?
	Is there enough people power?
	What is the impact / value of having other partners involved (support, resources, skills, expertise, connections, etc.)?
	Build a relationship with the grant administrator or contact person.

3. Identify what type of funding will match your community's project or need.

	What type of support are you seeking? (project funding, planning grants, partnership grants, start-up funding, technical assistance, capital grants, general operating funds, etc)
	What kind of grantmaker fits with your project, organization, or idea?
	<p>Research! There are many sources of funding out there (such as government, foundations, corporate and associations).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Search grant directories and databases, the Internet, publications, local libraries, and perhaps most importantly...your colleagues and networks.

4. Understand the objectives of the funding organization.

	<p>Learn about the funding organization and understand their funding objectives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Knowing who they are will help you to effectively communicate with them. ▪ Find out what grants have been funded in the past. You'll learn a lot about the desires of the funding organization. ▪ Request information materials – to learn about what is important to the funder. Examples include annual reports, of previously funded projects, etc.
	Analyze the funder's giving patterns. How do they give? Dollar amounts, frequency, etc.
	In return for funds, what are the funding organizations expectations? i.e. a healthy vibrant community
	Contact the grantmaker, <u>before you write your proposal</u> , to be sure you clearly understand the grantmaker's guidelines.
	Find out who reviews the submitted applications.
	Request examples of projects that have been funded recently, and even some that have been rejected.

5. Develop your proposal to align with the funding organizations objectives and eligibility requirements.

	<p><u>Clearly</u> describe the project idea, the identified need and the project implementation process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Are you selling them what they're buying? ▪ Avoid filling your proposal with too much jargon. ▪ Remember the value of simplicity. Funders are looking for a proposal that will succeed, so keep things clear, factual, supportable, and professional.
	<p>Know your budget. It's probably the first thing a funder will look at in your proposal.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It needs to be realistic and give credibility to your entire proposal ▪ Ensure that the budget items are eligible for funding. ▪ Define in-kind contributions
	<p>What is the level of funding and matching funding requirements?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Often only portions of the project fit into the funding organization; <u>so make sure to define how the remaining project activities will be paid for and implemented.</u>
	Be certain that you fully understand the funding organization's objectives and criteria.
	Most importantly, look at your project through the eyes of the funding organization. Often they have support staff that can provide insight and feedback.

6. Get help with the application.

	Engage people to assist with the project development and application.
	Ensure the application is carefully proof read; a poorly written application is a direct reflection on the organization.
	Budgets are not everyone's strength, ask for help and check the adding.

7. Demonstrate strong partnerships.

	Working in partnerships for the betterment of a community makes funders happy. Define the financial and in-kind contributions from all project partners.
	Define the time and expenditures required to implement all aspects of the project including who will receive funds and who will be volunteering.
	Demonstrate project support from partners and stakeholders.

8. Show public support for your project.

	Demonstrate grass-roots support and involvement from your community through project involvement.
	Seek and engage nontraditional community support – individual citizens, youth, businesses, and churches, anyone who can get behind the project.
	Volunteers are the heartbeat of any community – find, engage, and demonstrate them in the proposal.

9. Help the reviewers really see your project.

	Your application should clearly demonstrate passion for the project. Passion sells.
	Most people are visual learners – show and tell by incorporating pictures, charts, graphs
	Speak the language of the funding organization; it will be defined in their literature.

10. Be clear and visual.

	Communicate clearly and fully in your written proposal. Do not use jargon or vague wording.
	It is not necessary to have all the answers, as every project evolves, but communicate what is decided and what is not.
	Use point form, tables, charts and graphs to communicate information. Where applicable, a picture is worth a thousand words.
	If a presentation is allowed, be clear, short and stick to the point.
	Use a reasonable sized font with bold titles for easy navigation.

11. Be concise.

	Respect the time of the application reviewers by being concise.
	Write a clear, passionate description of your project that states in the fewest possible words what it's about and why it's so great.
	Don't include reams of attachments, include only what is critical (and asked for).
	Keep the history brief and focus on the project implementation and expected results.

12. Be complete.

	An incomplete application will most often impact credibility and be rejected. Submit a complete application with all relevant supporting data before the deadline.
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