



GRANT GUIDE

Your all-in-one guide for everything you need to know about searching, applying, and receiving government grants

Table of Contents

Welcome!	3
Quick Steps to Follow	4
Grant Eligibility	6
Research Process	8
Preliminary Steps to Take for Success	9
Writing Strategies for Winning Applications	10
Grant Administration	12
In Conclusion	13

Welcome!

Congratulations on your interest in looking for grants!

Grant opportunities can change the trajectory of your organization completely. Grants enable you to make big changes, build community capacity, purchase things for your organization, create opportunities for people, and more.

Opportunities can typically be broken up into three categories, **Federal** grants, **State** grants, and **Foundation** grants.



Quick Steps to Follow

STEP
1

Have a Vision

Showing funders that you are tying your plan back to a bigger goal is key. If you have a *Vision Statement*, *Strategic Plan*, or *Comprehensive Plan*, that's great! If not, you should do this first. These things attract commitment, create meaning, establish a standard of excellence, and bridge the present with the future.

STEP
2

Research Grant Applications for You

The most widely used grant search website is www.grants.gov. There are filters that make it an effective search tool. Websites that charge monthly are generally not worth it if you have the time and resources to research this information yourself.

For a really great breakdown of how to research for grant opportunities, here are 4 steps to successful online research: everydayresources.com/posts/4-steps-for-successful-online-grant-research.

Also, it's wise to develop a grant calendar. For more information on a grant calendar, check out this link: instrumentl.com/blog/grant-writing-calendar

STEP
3

Check to See That You Qualify Before Applying

Checking to see that you qualify is key. That way, you won't waste any extra time. This link will show you what groups are typically eligible: grants.gov/applicants/applicant-eligibility.html

If you are at the very beginning and not sure how to structure your business, you can find more here everydayresources.com/posts/choosing-the-best-legal-structure-for-your-business.

It is possible to come across a scam application. More guidance on that how to look for that can be seen here everydayresources.com/posts/how-to-avoid-a-grant-scam-online.

STEP
4

Write Your Application

A carefully constructed and well-written proposal could lead you to a great funding opportunity. This link on how to write grant proposals contains more: everydayresources.com/posts/how-to-write-grant-proposals.

STEP
5

Accept Your Award: Grant Administration

Once your project is awarded, you will enter into the grant administration phase.

This includes the following:

- ✓ Working to ensure expectations and requirements outlined in the agreement are being met.
- ✓ Implementation, monitoring, and closeout of the grant program.

This is a great time to focus on:

- ✓ What worked and what didn't.
- ✓ If your organization hit its goals.
- ✓ If there are any rules or regulations to revisit or add.

Investing the time, energy, and effort into grant research and writing can be very fruitful. However, it's free money, it is not easy money! In this guide, there are some tips and tricks to get you to where you want to be through grant writing.

Grant Eligibility

Determining whether you are eligible for a particular opportunity is very important. It is possible that without properly executing this step, you could waste a lot of time and money by completing the application process when you cannot even receive the grant. The first step to determining eligibility is to know what type of organization you represent.

Grant opportunities are usually available for the following groups:

EDUCATION ORGANIZATIONS

- ✓ Independent school districts
- ✓ Public and state-controlled institutions of higher education
- ✓ Private institutions of higher education

PUBLIC HOUSING ORGANIZATIONS

- ✓ Public housing authorities

COUNTY GOVERNMENTS

- ✓ City or township governments
- ✓ Special district governments
- ✓ Native American tribal governments (federally recognized)
- ✓ Native American tribal governments (other than Federally recognized)

NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

- ✓ Nonprofits having a 501(c)(3) status with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), other than institutions of higher education
- ✓ Nonprofits that do not have a 501(c)(3) status with the IRS, other than institutions of higher education

FOR-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

- ✓ Organizations other than small businesses

Small business grants may be awarded to most industries in the economy. Also, on rare occasions, you can apply for grant opportunities as an individual.

The best way to determine eligibility is to read the entire “Notice of Funding Opportunity.” This is the document that announces that a grant program is available. Often, these forms are exceptionally long. The only way to properly determine eligibility is to read the entire document thoroughly.

Eligibility is not simply determined by the type of organization that you have. You will want to decide if your project fits with the funding requirements and if you are at the right stage in your process to apply for funding. For example, some grant programs will cover the operating costs of existing programs or projects. Other grant programs will only offer funding if the process has not yet been started. If you are unclear whether you are eligible for a unique project or circumstance, oftentimes a number to a grant contact person is available and you may call them to get further clarification.

Tip:

If you need to fundamentally change your project to suit the grant provider, it is the wrong grant program for you. Keep looking and the right opportunities will come! It's better to not force things in this regard.



Research Process

If you are new to finding grant opportunities, you may be wondering what the secret ways are to find excellent grants. You might wonder if the companies that charge to send you opportunities are worth it.

Here are some tips and tricks to find the best opportunities for you.

Firstly, check with your local government officials for opportunities. They are familiar with what will be most appropriate for you at the local, state, and potentially the federal level. Networking with people in your niche can be a great way to find out what opportunities are available for you.

The most widely used grant search website is www.grants.gov. As mentioned earlier, there are filters that make it an effective search tool.

Additionally, it is wise to use Google to search for grant opportunities. By typing in many keywords relevant to your project along with the word “grants,”

you can find rare opportunities that you may have never been aware of before. While it sounds relatively simple and straightforward, this research strategy is widely overlooked as many are looking for the quick and easy way to find opportunities.

Also, it's wise to develop a grant calendar. A grant calendar helps you keep track of opportunities that you find that perhaps are not available at the time you are looking. However, these opportunities may become available in the future. For example, if a program has previously released an opportunity in May and it is currently the month of February, this is a great thing to document so that you can be ready should the opportunity open again.

Developing a grant calendar takes time but it will keep you motivated and on schedule. It will also help you to stay focused on your program initiatives and goals. Additionally, hiring a consultant to create a calendar for you is an option.



Preliminary Steps to Take for Success



There are some things that you can and should be doing independent of, of a formal grant application to prepare. The great news is that now there are more federal and state dollars than ever are floating around out there, but even though the State and Federal funding sources have more money than they've had in recent memory, funders want to be part of a strategy.

They're not just writing checks for every good idea that comes along. Most funding sources and most funding agencies want to be part of something bigger. So if you just have an idea, if you can't tie it back to the overarching strategy, then your chances of winning a grant will not be not as great as someone who has this information ready to showcase.

Build a Strategic, or a Comprehensive Plan.

You are encouraged to think strategically. It takes several steps to make sure that's that you are ready to roll. And you really don't need a consultant to do a lot of these things. You need to clarify your vision. It is good to be clear on where your organization is headed for the next 20 years. This could be evident through a strategic plan or a comprehensive plan. This really helps to bridge gaps and show the true connection between your project goals and a bigger picture.

If you do not have a strategic plan or a comprehensive plan, that is okay too.

You may want to develop a vision statement. It can be long or short but once you have refined it and narrowed it down to something that you can get excited about, then place it everywhere. It is good to make sure that every staff member has a copy of it.

Therefore, clarifying your vision is far removed from the grant application process. It should be something you are doing so that you are not scrambling when an excellent opportunity comes along and you are not prepared. The best time to be working on a vision statement does not come with potential changes. What does expansion particularly look like for you and are you all on board with your plan? Those things can influence your thinking. Ice cold, removed from the conversations of impending action is probably the best way to go.

So now you've got a vision statement in hand, you can do an assessment of where your organization and your community stand in relation to that vision statement. How far off are you from what investments need to be made in time, effort, and money, and what investments need to be made to move you closer to your vision statement?

Do you have the staff resources that you need and if you don't, what are you going to be looking for? Are your programs in shape to get you where you want to go? Do you need to refine this? Do you need to stop doing some things so that you can prioritize your resources moving forward? What capital investments need to be made to make all of this work? Focus will be your friend moving forward.

Writing Strategies for Winning Applications

Writing a grant application is an art, regardless of the topic at hand. There is both a technical and non-technical side to grant writing. The technical side of proposal writing includes having a comprehensive understanding of the requirements of the application such as the budget, the approach, and the plans for the completion and evaluation of a project. To be successful, grant writers must familiarize themselves with the grant guidelines, both those found in the program announcement and the more general grant guidelines that cover all applications submitted to an agency.

The artsy side of proposal writing refers to the need to pitch a project in a way that is convincing to the recipients. Grant writing must be both persuasive and factual. You will have the most success by making your grant application clear, easy to read, and easy to find information. Think about how your project fits into the bigger picture for the sake of the application and for your community.



When speaking about your topic, it is best to write in the first and third-person.

First-person language will sound more relatable, personal, and collaborative.

Balanced with the third-person perspective, you will come across as very professional, yet human. Writing in just the third-person can seem a bit too informal and a blend is key.

How do you talk about a program that you have not yet implemented? You can say “we aim,” but also feel free to say “we will” or “we are.” For example, “we will build out our program to offer more services.” Although this may be dependent upon funding, it is okay to refer to the project as moving forward.

For the first couple of grant applications that you take on, you may want to hire a grant writer. What this does is alleviate the stress of the process while allowing you to gradually understand the ins and outs of grant writing. Hiring a grant writer is beneficial because they are trained to scour for all parts needed to make an application successful. Therefore, if you

GREAT GRANT APPLICATIONS CLEARLY STATE:

- ✓ What is going to happen?
- ✓ Who will benefit?
- ✓ Where is it going to happen?
- ✓ Why does it need to happen?
- ✓ When is it going to happen?
- ✓ How is it going to happen and how much will it cost?

take on an application on your own and you miss one document, you can receive a letter that your application has not been selected. A skilled grant writer knows what to look for and can also help you pitch your project in a way that is favorable to funders. Grant writers usually work on an hourly or lump sum basis. Although some grant writers accept a commission if a grant is awarded, this is considered unethical and not advised.

If you decide to hire a grant writer, it is important to remember that while everyone is hopeful that you win the award, they are not hired to secure you an award. Grant writers are hired to produce high-quality content, not to determine the outcome of the grant application. A stellar grant writer will certainly increase your odds of success and provide you with the best chance at getting funding but they can not guarantee it. There are many variables that go into grant writing selections. Paying for a skilled professional means you are alleviating yourself from the rigorous process and giving yourself the best opportunity for success.



Grant Administration

(Once the funding is awarded)

Once your project is awarded, you will enter into the grant administration phase. It is important that you follow all steps provided by the funder for grant management. Primary components of grants management include coordination with key contacts, taking record of proper dates, and costs.

If you can master the grant administration process, it may enable you to leverage standardized content and data that you collect that will help you when you go to apply for new grants.

On the other side, a lack of policies and procedures is one of the most frequently cited areas of noncompliance. When you take time to put in solid policies and procedures for grant management, you are following the rules and communicating to the funding agency that you would be a great candidate to manage money for the next funding cycle.

However, a lack of documentation can indicate that an organization is not taking grant management seriously enough, which could ultimately lead to a funding shortfall.

For proper documentation, it's always appropriate to get the right data into the correct system. Your funding contact will tell you what the system may be. There are different electronic portals and other



ways to track the information. These will all be dependent upon your funding authority. The typical things recorded are expenses (including purchasing and expense reimbursement); labor (payroll allocation and time tracking) and sub-award expenses. This will require cooperation within your organization. Also, you can consider hiring a professional for assistance.

The more awards you receive, the easier it will be to navigate the unique grant administration requirements. By designing and implementing strong processes, you will collect some great data and you will be positioning yourself well for opportunities in the future.

In Conclusion

Grant writing can create massive change and have a massive impact on your organization. The key to grant writing is to stick with it and partner up with an industry professional to fast-track your way to success. If you complete an application and do not receive funding, all is not lost. You have well-crafted text that will help you when you go for your next application. If you are not sure if your proposal is any good because it did not get awarded, in certain situations, you can ask for feedback. With all of this knowledge, you are well prepared to take the plunge into grant writing and we wish you the best of luck on your journey!

