

“I want a grant. Now how do I go about getting it?”

PRIOR TO BEGINNING WRITING YOUR GRANT:

- Are you using current grant criteria and guidelines?
 - Sometimes grant guidelines change from year to year. You don't want to be disqualified because you were unaware of changes from the previous grant cycle.
- Is your project and organization eligible for funding through this grant program?
 - Study the funding organization to understand its mission and get an idea of the kinds of projects that have been previously funded.
 - Do not begin writing until you know your project and organization are eligible.
 - Contact the granting organization to discuss your project, if you are unsure of eligibility.
- Does your organization have adequate matching funds on-hand?
 - Most grant programs require an in-kind and/or cash match.
- Do you know someone with grant writing experience who could write the grant application for you or assist you with writing it?
 - Examples: chambers of commerce, convention & visitors bureaus, economic development districts, natural resource & development offices, colleges and universities, and local board members.
- Give yourself ample time to prepare the grant application.
 - This includes conducting background research, contacting potential partners, securing the in-kind and/or cash match, writing and reviewing, and submitting the application on time.
- Thoroughly read and understand the application criteria and guidelines prior to writing the grant application.
 - If you are unsure about any portion of the guidelines, contact the grant organization before proceeding.
 - If you don't follow all requirements in the guideline, your grant application will be disqualified.
 - You don't want your application denied because you did not send in the correct number of copies and required documents, you didn't sign your application, or you sent it in after the deadline.
 - Many grant review committee members begin reviewing grant applications by looking for ways to immediately disqualify them, such as (1) requesting funds for ineligible activities; (2) not having adequate cash and/or in-kind match; (3) submitting no supporting documentation; or, (4) not submitting the correct number of copies.
 - Reviewing grants in this manner immediately “weeds out” ineligible applications so committee members can focus more attention on those that do qualify.

WHILE WRITING YOUR GRANT APPLICATION

- DO NOT SUBMIT A GRANT APPLICATION WITH HANDWRITTEN NARRATIVE.
 - Handwritten answers often are acceptable in circumstances such as signature blocks, answering “yes/no” questions, completing cover sheets and filling in blanks.
- Grant applications should look professional and be typed using standard font styles and sizes.
 - An example is font style: Times New roman, font size: 12.
- The grant application's goal and objectives should be summarized in the introduction so that the grant review committee members do not have to search for this information.
 - For example: “This grant application requests \$10,000 to create a marketing campaign that includes revising our existing brochure, improving our website, hiring a professional photographer, and placing advertisements in market publications.”

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- Be clear, concise and succinct in your narrative.
 - Don't assume that everyone on the grant review committee will be familiar with your project.
 - Most grant review committee members read many grant applications during their grant cycles. If yours is short, easy-to-read, and quickly answers key questions, the committee will better understand your project and rate it more favorably.
 - Don't submit a convoluted grant application the “bogs down” the grant review committee with too much detail. It is more likely to end up in the “no” pile.
 - Remain focused and clearly articulate your goals and objectives. A good grant application is easy to understand.

- Do not request items/activities that are ineligible for funding through the grant program.
 - If marketing projects requires multiple entities be included in the project, don't submit an application for a single attraction, festival or businesses.
 - Remain within the required number of pages in your narrative.
 - If grant guidelines request a maximum of four pages, don't submit five. If you are not able to explain your project within the maximum number of pages, you are probably adding too much detail.

- Add supporting materials that will strengthen your grant application, and explain your project and its potential economic and social impact.
 - For example: letters of support, coverage maps for radio and television stations, and bids for grant activities.
 - Submit all letters of support and other supporting material with the grant application. Do not mail letters of support separately from the grant application; they could be rejected by the review committee.

- Raise questions and concerns well before the deadline.
 - Do not wait until the last minute to begin writing your grant application.
 - You don't want serious questions or problems to arise near the deadline and you are unable to readily speak to the correct person who could help you.
 - This goes back to the previous point that you give yourself plenty of time to successfully research, write, proof, and mail your grant application.

- Never ask for a deadline extension.
 - Grantors have a set timeline that must be followed, which includes adequate time for the review committee to read, select and notify grantees if their projects are awarded.
 - Deadlines are “set in stone.”

- Submit an easy-to-understand project budget.
 - Provide a very detailed budget – more detail is better than less.
 - For example, if you're requesting funds to advertise in five magazines, list the magazines in the budget and how much you plan to spend for each. Do not simply write “Magazine ad placements: \$10,000” in the budget worksheet.
 - See budget example below:

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Activity ⁽¹⁾	Grant Amount Requested	Match (Cash)	Match (In-Kind)	Source of Match	Total Funds
Magazine Ad Placements					
Magazine 1, 1/4 pg color, Spr, Sum & Fall issues	\$2,000	\$500		Organization Budget	\$2,500
Magazine 2	\$1,000	\$250		Organization Budget	\$1,250
Magazine 3	\$2,000	\$500		Organization Budget	\$2,500
Ad layout & design	\$0		\$2,000	Local printer (in-kind)	\$2,000
Totals	\$5,000	\$1,250	\$2,000		\$8,250

⁽¹⁾ This example is used by the Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau. Other organizations use different budget worksheets.

- Don't pad your budget.
 - Judges usually know the average costs of activities and will score an application low if an applicant uses inaccurate or inflated figures.
 - Document all sources of support for the project – cash and in-kind including volunteer time, donated experience and space, and borrowed equipment.

PRIOR TO MAILING YOUR GRANT APPLICATION:

- Re-read the final copy of your grant application slowly and carefully (ask at least two others to review it).
 - Is the grant application presented in a logical order?
 - Have you double checked your spelling and grammar”
 - Do not rely solely on your computer's “grammar/spell check” function.
 - Will the reader understand what you're trying to say?
 - Assume that the reader has no idea about your project. You also might want to have someone unfamiliar with your project read the grant application to see if it is understandable to them.
 - Make sure that your application looks neat and professional.
- Make sure that all copies are complete.
 - Most grant programs are very competitive, and not having all the required information and documentation in your grant application could disqualify you.
 - Never assume that the grant review committee will contact you if you have omitted pieces in one of your application copies.
- Submit the required number of complete grant application copies.
 - Most grant applications are read by a grant review committee. It is the grantee's responsibility to submit the correct number of copies, not the grantor's responsibility to make them for you.
 - In fact, most organizations will disqualify your application if there are insufficient copies.
- Submit your grant application on time.
 - **Important.** Check to see if the application must be postmarked or received by a due date.
 - If your grant application is received after the deadline, it probably will be disqualified and/or returned.

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IF YOU RECEIVED A GRANT:

- Do what you said you were going to do in the grant application in the timeframe in which you said you were going to do it.
 - If you fail to fulfill your commitment in the specified time, the grant organization is within its rights to take away your grant funds.
 - Any funds that have already been spent on the project could be subject to your reimbursing the grantor.
 - If unforeseen circumstances arise that prevent implementation of some or all of the activities in the grant application, contact the grantor immediately to discuss a solution. In some cases, you might be able to request an extension on your grant.
- Submit any documentation or other required materials in a timely and organized manner.
 - If the grant program is on a reimbursement basis, make sure you have proper documentation (For example, receipts and proof of payment) in order to quickly receive your reimbursement.
 - Make it easy on yourself and the grant administrator. Be organized, be organized, be organized!
 - Some granting organization conduct regular audits of past grant recipients.

IF YOU DID NOT RECEIVE A GRANT:

- Contact the granting organization to see what you might have done wrong and how you could improve your grant application for the next grant cycle.
- Do not ask that your grant application be appealed.
- Do not ask others in your community to request that your grant application be funded once the grant recipients have been announced.
 - Once grant funds are disbursed, they cannot be reallocated to a grant application that was not funded. Decisions are final.
- **However, do not despair.** The competition for grants is stiff, and just because you didn't get a grant this time doesn't mean that you won't get one next time.
 - Ask questions, improve your application and submit a new one during the next grant cycle.

IN CONCLUSION, TO HAVE A SUCCESSFUL GRANT APPLICATION YOU MUST:

- Do all necessary research before beginning to write your grant application. Give yourself plenty of time to write and submit a successful application.
- Follow all the requirements (no matter how silly they may seem to you – there's a reason for them). Remember, if you don't follow the guidelines, you run the risk of having your application disqualified.
- Submit a high quality and professional application that fully explains your project and its goals. Send it in on time and with the correct number of copies.
- Finally, if you are asking for \$10,000 worth of funding, put \$10,000 worth of effort into your grant application. The competition is stiff, and everything you do to make your application stand out, the better your chances are of being funded.