grant writing basics

a publication of
queens council on the arts

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contents

Grant Writing Basics is intended to offer basic grant writing skills and techniques of proposal writing to help individual artists and nonprofit organizations who are new to the world of grant writing. If you have a project or a program that needs financial assistance and you need to write a proposal for funding, it is important to have the knowledge and skills to present a competitive proposal. Those interested in private and/or public funding can use this guide as a tool to help them to create a proposal that will have a winning competitive edge. This publication will help you understand the importance of solid planning and developing a project before requesting funds.

Your grant application is a proposal reflecting a well thought out plan.

research funders

- **Develop a list of funders** and the contact person for each funder. It is important to develop a relationship with the funders. Discuss your upcoming projects to get feedback as to whether the project has the potential to receive funding.

- **Check the funding priorities and annual reports** to make sure the funder supports the kind of activities you want funded.

- **Note the deadline of the application.** Some funders offer a rolling deadline.

- **Read the guidelines and criteria carefully.** The guidelines may change from year to year. You may need to send a letter of inquiry before an application is submitted.

- **Check for duplication of services.** Look within your immediate community to determine if similar programs/ projects are being offered. Some funders will not want to fund services that are being duplicated geographically.

- **Consider collaborations.** If similar services are being offered perhaps a collaborative effort with others in your community could increase the effectiveness of the project.

- **Survey your audience.** It is important to know if there is need for the proposed project.

- *Do not wait until the last minute to fill out your application.*

project planning

resources

Use your local resources to research and plan your proposal. Below are some suggestions to get you started.

• Local Arts Councils
• Organizations offering similar programs
• Businesses and corporations
• Newspapers
• Libraries
• Foundation Center

some online resources

• **Arts Edge** www.artsedge.kennedy-center.org
• **Chronicle of Philanthropy**
  www.philanthropy.com/free/resources
• **Council on Foundations** www.cof.org
• **Foundation Center** www.fdncenter.org
• **Foundations.org** www.foundations.org
• **Fundsnet** www.fundsnetservices.com
• **The Grantsmanship Center** www.nonprofits.org
• **Grantswriters** www.grantswriters.com
• **Guidestar** www.guidestar.org
• **Philanthropy News Network** www.pnnonline.org
• **National Endowment for the Arts** www.nea.org
• **New York City Department of Cultural Affairs**
  www.nyc.gov/culture
• **New York Foundation for the Arts** www.nyfa.org
• **New York State Council on the Arts** www.nysca.org
• **For Individual funding opportunities** www.artdeadline.com

education resources

• **The Center for Arts Education** www.cae.org
• **Grants for Educators** www.schoolgrants.org
• **Partners for Arts Education** www.arts4ed.org

fiscal sponsorship

• **Brainstorm** a list of every eligible organization you can think of. Then decide which ones are most appropriate for the kind of work you do.
• **Consider who you already have a relationship with**…i.e., community organizations, religious, social, educational, collaborations with other cultural organizations.
• **Contact the organization.** You will need to be able to convince the organization that your project is worth their participation. One way to do this is to involve them in the project as part of the public service component. Projects that demonstrate a link with the community also have a better chance of receiving funding.
• **Assistance in other ways.** Establishing a relationship with a local organization can be mutually beneficial. Organizations often have space available for rehearsals or shows, or have materials available which you can use in your work. They can be an invaluable resource when it comes to administrative support, marketing and audience-building for your project.

components of a proposal

letter of inquiry

Some funders allow grant applications by invitation only, and require potential grant recipients to submit preliminary proposals in the form of inquiry letters in order to be invited to submit a full proposal. A letter of inquiry is a brief overview of your organization as well as brief description of the project for which you want funds. Be sure to include what the funds will be used for.

A letter of inquiry is designed to convince the grant maker to consider your request. It provides you the opportunity to introduce your organization and proposal to the funder. The letter of inquiry is usually 1-2 pages.

It should include the following information:

• Organization's mission/artist statement
• Reason for and amount of funding request
• Needs or problem (including target population, statistics, examples)
• Project or program description
• Other project funders (prospective and committed)
• Request the amount needed for the project/program

project description/narrative

Make sure that your fully developed project is eligible according to the funder's mission and criteria.

Understand the criteria and guidelines, and follow the instructions carefully. Each funder has different application criteria: letter of intent may be all you need until further notice.

Proposals that do not follow the rules are not read!

Answer all the questions carefully and thoroughly.

Include: who, what, when, where, why.

• **Project participants include administrative** as well as artistic: what will the staffing needs be, who will be performing or doing the work; include resumes.
• **Targeted audience,** include age group, race, neighborhoods served.
• **Explain** in clear succinct language what the project is all about.
• **A timeline,** specify if planning already taken place.
• **Venue**. Sometimes an agreement letter between you and the exhibition/performance venue is requested. The funder wants to know where the project will take place. The letter indicates that planning has already taken place.
• **Determine the impact and the need** the project will have on the organization and the community served.

When writing your narrative…

The first sentence is the most important, state how much money is requested and what the money will be used for

• **Do not waste the important first sentence,** state exactly what the requested funds will be used for. Be clear and concise. Do not assume the funder knows about your project, even if you have received funds before, since your proposal may be reviewed by new panelists. Do not let panelists do the guess work. Keep your language simple. Write so that a reader of any profession can understand your proposal.
• **Try not to** project an attitude.
• **Keep** historical and background information brief, funders support future activities not past ones.
• **Create the narrative and the budget** at the same time. Do not include numbers in your budget items that are not included in the narrative.
• **Spell check,** and have someone else look at your application for content and grammatical errors.

components of a proposal

- **Submit each request separately** if more than one request is allowed.
- **Type everything…** the reviewer may not be able to read your handwriting. Your signature should be the only thing handwritten.
- **Present a professional, neatly organized application package.**

evaluation and assessment process

In many cases, funders want to know how their monies are being used and if the programs they are supporting are success-fully accomplishing the goals and objectives proposed. An evaluation will help the funder decide to continue supporting the program monetarily as well as help an organization plan for more effective projects or programs.

An effective evaluation requires a person or organization (preferably one without any personal interests in the program being evaluated) to make an assessment about the quality of the program, using specific research techniques and measurable tools to evaluate goals and outcomes.

Identify how you plan to have your program evaluated and include strategies that will be used for the evaluation.

Components of an Evaluation Plan

Evaluation Process – identify how the program will be evaluated and the methods used:

- **Goals** – what you want to obtain with the grant money
- **Objectives** – measurable steps taken to achieve the proposed goals
- **Measurable tools** – identify how your program/project will be evaluated, and how you will collect data or information that shows how your project reached its objectives.
- **Analysis** – determine from the information gathered, what steps you will take to improve/change your program.

Evaluation Example

Plan of Evaluation
1. **Program evaluator** will be hired
2. **Questionnaires** will be used to survey the audience

Goal
Increase audience interest in multi-cultural performances by 25 percent.

Objectives
1. **Offer** a wide range of musical and theatrical performance series for families
2. **Build** a wider audience base directly from the neighborhood
3. **Introduce** community to different cultural performances and develop tolerance for one another
4. **Hire** press relations personnel

Measurable tools
Survey the audience with a multi-lingual questionnaire about their interest in multi-cultural performances before and after participation in the program.

Analysis
Our surveys show the audience preferred musical performances over theatrical. We will increase musical performances for the next series.

budget

The budget is the financial description of your proposal. It should reflect the proposed project **only**. Be realistic with the budget. Panelist can determine if inflated costs have been projected.

- Every line in the narrative that describes any kind of cost must be reflected in the project budget.
- Do not include a budget item not mentioned in the narrative.
- Do not exclude a budget item that IS mentioned in the narrative.
- If a line item is not applicable, place a zero on that line. This way the panelists will not think the item was overlooked.

components of a proposal

Expenses

Include any projected fees incurred for the proposed project including:

- **Personnel** constitutes payments to individuals on the staff of your organization or project, both full and part-time. Costs and number of each personnel must be listed in each category. To calculate your personnel costs, first determine the percentage of time the staff will work on this specific project.

- **Administrative** includes executive/supervisory administrative staff, clerical staff, and support personnel. For example: If your administrator is paid $10,000 annually, and devotes 10% of his/her time to this project, then $1,000 of that salary should be allocated to this project.

- **Artistic** includes artistic directors, conductors, curators, dancers, composers, choreographers, designers, filmmakers, painters, etc.

- **Technical** includes technical directors, wardrobe, lighting and sound crew, stage managers, stagehands, video and film technicians, etc.

- **Outside Professional Services** include services not regularly available within your organization. This includes consultants, guest artists, accounting services, etc.

- **Remaining Operating Expenses** include advertising, postage, printing, space rental, equipment rental, travel and other expenses. Pro-rate expenses for this project only.

Income

Income refers to proceeds earned that will be used for the proposed project.

- **Earned Income** relates to earned proceeds in exchange for services from this project or from other programs your organization operates which will be applied to this project, such as ticket sales or merchandise sales.

- **Unearned Income** is income from other public funding sources, contributions from individuals or corporations (excluding this request) that you intend to apply to this project.

- **In-kind contributions** are donated services or gifts. Some funders want monetary value placed on donated services and included in the budget, others want just the services listed separately.

It is important to show that your program/project has other sources of funding. Most funders will usually not fund 100% of your program. Showing income from other sources indicates that you have researched and found other supporters for your proposal. Be able to explain what will happen to the project if it is partially funded.

CHECK YOUR MATH

If your addition is wrong the panelists will question your financial management and fiscal competence.

components of a proposal

sample narrative and budget

Here is an example of a proposal which needs improvement. Read it carefully with the above points in mind. Then review the improved version of the narrative, then do the same for the budget below.

version 1

Jackson Heights is a neighborhood that is home to many new Americans and full of rich cultural heritage. Jackson Heights is located in the heart of Queens. Our neighborhood has many ethnic restaurants. Last year we held a wonderful outdoor concert in Jackson Heights. This year we would like to hold more concerts to reflect the diverse population of the neighborhood. The Jackson Heights Neighborhood Association wants to have at least four Free concerts and two puppet shows this summer in the local park that is used by many people in the summer months. We plan on having a large audience at each concert. We will hand out flyers in the community to advertise the concerts.

PROJECT EXPENSE	$ AMOUNT	EXPLANATION
Administrative Personnel		
Artistic Personnel	1200	Musicians
Technical Personnel	500	Recording services, photographer
Outside Professional Services	100	Graphic consultant
Facility Rental	500	Jackson Heights Church
Local Travel	500	Car fare for celebrity guests
Advertising/Promotion/Postage	1000	Stamps, flyers
Equipment Rental	200	Sound equipment
Office Supplies	100	Telephone, copy machine
Remaining Operating Expenses	300	Insurance / security officer
TOTAL EXPENSE	**$4900**	

PROJECT EXPENSE	$ AMOUNT	EXPLANATION
EARNED INCOME		
Box Office/Subscriptions		
Tuition/Workshop Fees		
Membership Dues		
Sales/Concessions	400	Ticket sales
UNEARNED INCOME		
Individual Contributions	100	
Corporate Grants		
Business Contributions	100	
Foundation Grants	100	
Government	300	
Other	0	
TOTAL INCOME	**1000**	
TOTAL REQUEST	**$5900**	

Budget Formula: Expenses minus Income equals Project Request

components of a proposal

revised version

The Jackson Heights Neighborhood Association is requesting funds for "Summer Nights in Jackson Heights," a series of six free concerts. The concerts will be held in the Jackson Heights Park which can accommodate about 400 people. Everyone will be encouraged to bring chairs and blankets. The concerts will be held July 3, 17, 24 and August 7, 14 and 21, at 7:30 PM. Our goal is to enrich the lives of families in the neighborhood allowing them to share cultural experiences. Being that Jackson Heights is so culturally diversified, JHNA has programmed music that reflects that diversity. Funds will be used to pay the performers and the sound technicians fee as well as marketing the concert. The coordinator and the graphic designer for the JHNA concert series has agreed to offer their services in-kind. The program will include music from India, Eastern Europe, Latin America and Asia, (See attached resumes). Two Jazz concerts have been scheduled as well. The NYC Parks Department is sponsoring two puppet shows in conjunction with the concerts on 7/13 and 8/14. We will advertise the concerts in the local papers and flyers that will be distributed to the local businesses and listings on Cable 1 News. In the event of rain, JHNA has arranged with the Jackson Heights Church for use of their community center that holds about 150 people and is accessible to all.

PROJECT EXPENSE	$ AMOUNT	EXPLANATION
Administrative Personnel	0	See in kind contributions
Artistic Personnel	6000	Six concerts x $1000 ea.
Technical Personnel	500	Sound technician
Outside Professional Services	0	
Facility Rental	0	See in-kind contributions
Local Travel	50	Subway fares for musicians
Advertising/Promotion/Postage	400	Stamps, flyers
Equipment Rental	500	Sound equipment
Office Supplies	200	Telephone, copy machine
Remaining Operating Expenses	300	Insurance/security officer
TOTAL EXPENSE	**$7950**	
PROJECT EXPENSE	$ AMOUNT	EXPLANATION
EARNED INCOME		
Box Office/Subscriptions	0	
Tuition/Workshop Fees	0	
Membership Dues	1000	JHNA members
Sales/Concessions	800	Soda @ $1.00/tshirts @ $10.00
UNEARNED INCOME		
Individual Contributions	1000	Community members
Corporate Grants	200	Community Bank
Business Contributions	500	JH Business Development
Foundation Grants	0	
Government	500	JH City council representative
Other	0	
TOTAL INCOME	**$3500**	
TOTAL REQUEST	**$4450**	

Budget Formula: Expenses minus Income equals Project Request

components of a proposal

attachments

Individual Artist Statement

This document is an explanation that will help the reviewer better understand the content of your work. It should not be a narrative version of your resume, but addresses what you want to communicate or accomplish through your work.

An artist statement includes relevant information such as theme, style, genre, and influences, explanations about materials or process, etc., if applicable.

• Do not feel compelled to pad it with language or social relevance if such things do not really pertain to your work.

• Be clear and concise.

• If you have a basic artist's statement, it then becomes easier to tailor it towards a specific application.

• This document needs periodic updating as your work, career and style evolve.

Resume/curriculum vitae

This document is an overview of your professional accomplishments.

• Keep it updated, include your background directly related to arts activities, education and training in this area, include cultural philosophy.

• Whenever you have a significant achievement, show, event, etc. drop a note about it into the file. The next time your resume requires updating, you'll be prepared to enhance it with your most recent accomplishments.

• List your accomplishments first and then your education, with your most recent achievements first. Make sure the important points stand out and are not drowned by unimportant details.

Organization Mission Statement

This statement should clearly and concisely define the purpose of your organization.

The mission statement should briefly state what services and programs are offered, what audience and geographic area is being served as well as the vision of the organization and what goals it is trying to achieve.

This statement should be broadly worded so that it can be used year after year. It will need periodic updating as your organization changes and grows.

Additional attachments are usually required at the funder's discretion. Typical attachments generally include:

• Verification of tax-exempt status (IRS determination letter).

• Listing of officers and Board of Directors.

• Financial statements for last completed fiscal year (audited, preferred).

• Current general operating budget and special project budget.

• List of other current funding sources and uses.

• Biographies of key personnel or resumes.

• Support letters or endorsements (limited number).

• Commitment letters from project/program participants, consultants and or venues.

components of a proposal

Supporting Documentation

Documentation includes any press and or promotion of your work, photos, slides, videos, and any printed information.

Find out what documentation is accepted and how many copies of each sample are to be submitted.

Never send your only copy of anything. Make and save good copies of exhibition announcements, performance programs, newspaper/magazine articles or reviews. Save the original clippings and make multiple copies.

• Edit your documentation to include what represents you the best.

• Keep your documentation easily accessible so you do not have a problem finding what best suits the project for which you are requesting funds.

• Keep track of what you send with the application, when and what you were applying for.

• Document rehearsals and the final performance/exhibition. This shows the development of your programming

• Clearly label any materials with who, what, where, when.

• Always get your documentation back, include a self-addressed stamped envelope, **WITH SUFFICIENT POSTAGE.**

• If you find that the same set of materials keeps getting rejected, it is time to either change your samples, or apply for different opportunities.

Audio

Poorly recorded tapes and CD's are a disadvantage to a grant applicant.

• Clearly label what is to be reviewed

• If you are using a CD, mark what track you want reviewed. If you are using an audio cassette, cue it to the section to be reviewed. Cue your tapes for a 3-5 minute review. Panels review the documentation for **no more** than 5-10 minutes.

Literary

Manuscripts and creative writing samples can be submitted. Each funder has their requirements as to how many pages to send. Clearly label your submission.

Video

A poorly done video is worse than no video submitted. Instead of taping during a performance perhaps tape a dress rehearsal.

• Try to capture the best part of the performance, not the entire production. Use close-ups. Have adequate lighting. The reviewer wants to be able to see what is happening on the stage.

• Cue your videos and tapes for a 3-5 minute review.

Visual

Slides and/or prints are usually accepted. Make sure they are clearly labeled with your name and arrows indicating correct viewing for projector. Digital forms are becoming more common. CD's are also an efficient way to send images. The images should be in JPEG format.

When photographing artwork avoid shadows, lights or distracting backgrounds. The image should be as close to the original as possible.

Press and marketing materials

Include any printed materials in which you or your organiza-
tion's programs have been highlighted.

Include announcements of programs, postcards, program flyers,
calendar listings, newspaper reviews, catalogues, etc.

Provide a translation if printed materials are not in English.

Make clean copies of all of your printed materials. You should
keep several copies of each so you may use them for a few years.

If applying for the same funding year after year, try to send new
materials.

Before you submit your proposal, make a folder with the
organization's name to which you are applying. This folder
should include the completed application and a list of all
documents you have submitted.

Once your proposal has been submitted, it goes through a
review process. Below is an example of what to expect once
your proposal has been submitted.

• Screened for eligibility.
• Acknowledgment sent on receipt of application, if further
  information is needed this is the time to send it.
• Site visits may be requested by funder.
• Recommendation for funding. Here the application is discussed
  and the documentation is reviewed by a panel.
• Final approval of panel recommendations might be sent to
  an executive board.
• Notification of panel decisions are mailed.
• Contact the funder and ask for panel comments. It is impor-
  tant to find out what the panelists liked or did not like about
  your proposal. Panel comments will indicate your application's
  weak or strong points, and will help you prepare stronger
  applications in the future.

Responsibilities of a Funded Proposal
• Retain a copy of the award letter for your files.
• Sign a Contract.
• Follow instructions for credit of funder.
• **Credit the funder** in **ALL** printed materials and mention
  support at **ALL** events.
• Contact funder if project needs to be adapted.
• Know if and when Interim and Final reports are due. Submit
  these reports by the deadline.

If rejected

• Retain a copy of your rejection letter for your files.

• It could take a few tries before your application is accepted for funding. Panel members may change from year to year. What one panel may find interesting this year, they may not the next year.

• Keep planning your project. If you feel strongly enough about your project, and continue the development, you will find someone who will want to help support it financially.

• Do not be discouraged.

• Be patient.

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