

Tips on Writing a Competitive Grant Application

Application Guidelines

Guidelines can be your key to understanding all of the rules and regulations of the grant – whether you're eligible, what the money can be spent on, how do you apply, etc. While we have attempted to keep them as simple as possible, the materials can seem dense. Before beginning your application, you should carefully study the guidelines. Many people fill out the application without reading the guidelines which can result in an unclear and incomplete application.

Application Submission Process

Applications can only be submitted through the online application system. Paper, handwritten, hand-delivered, faxed, emailed, or mailed applications will not be accepted. Additional guidelines on how to use the system are found on our website.

Application Criteria

Each project is reviewed on the basis of its own merits and against others in the application pool. Limited funds are available and priority will be given to applications that meet the criteria listed in the application guidelines. Review panelists use the criteria to decide whether or not to fund an applicant. Always return to the criteria to see if you're meeting them.

Application Clarity, Completeness, Details

Your narratives and other information directly assist the review panelists in evaluating the merits of your application. It sounds simple, but answer the questions and complete the requested information. Missing, vague, or incomplete information may hurt your chances for funding. Strive for clarity and completeness. The more details you provide, the more fully formed your application will read.

Write directly and use understandable language

An application isn't a personal statement or testimonial. It's a request for monetary support of a project. Be personable, generate enthusiasm and excitement, but don't lose sight of providing information on your grant application. Avoid playing on emotions and focus on the strength of your project. Additionally, try not to use flourishing language intended to impress. Review panels may see through "grant speak". It's better to be clear and get to the point, using simple and understandable language. Also, use active voice and action words. Be positive and confident in your writing.

Write to the Funder

You should be aware of the purpose of your funding. Even if your project will have an impact on tourism or the local economy, don't forget that the primary purpose is for arts and culture.

Multiple Drafts

Your first draft should only be the beginning. It's important to work on multiple drafts of your narrative and have someone else review it. Often you think something is on the page when really you are

subconsciously filling in missing information. You can become too close to your project and it's important to make sure your application makes sense to someone outside the project.

Professional Support Materials

Make sure your support materials, whether artistic samples or marketing materials, look as professional as possible. This doesn't mean you need to hire a professional to take photos, but, just take time and care in presenting all materials in the best manner possible.

Support materials should also add to your application, not subtract from it. Highlight the best materials you have, but limit materials such as flyers and brochures to no more than 2 pages.

Start Narratives as strong and clear as possible

Your Narratives are the opportunity to go into detail about your project. You want to start out as strong and clear as possible, making it very understandable what the project is about. You don't want a reviewer to piece through different parts of the application to get a sense of the whole.

Presentation & Consistency Counts

Use consistent language throughout your application. If you call a class a class, don't later call it a workshop. Being consistent will lessen the chance that a review panelist will not understand your application. Additionally, all the information your application must match up to tell a cohesive, unified story. Inconsistencies could make your application less competitive.

A polished application could be the deciding factor when there are much more funding requests than funds available. Review panelists can tell when an application is completed at the last minute. Have someone else check your spelling, math, punctuation and overall presentation.

Budget Narrative vs Budget Forms

Your budget narrative and your budget provide similar information in two different, but important ways. One lists the expenses and income while the other is a narrative description that details what is found in the budget form. The Budget narrative gives context to the information found in the form. The panel will find inconsistencies and may look unfavorably upon them, making it difficult to properly understand a funding request.

Accurate Expenses & Fees

It's very difficult to fund a project where associated fees are not identified, whether for supplies, a venue, or artists. If you don't know exact fees, give rationale how you came up with your budget. A review panel needs to have confidence that this grant funding will be spent correctly.

Artistic Versus Entertainment Value

Review panelists look for the artistic and cultural value of a project. Artists and their activities should be fully integrated into all programming and applications must demonstrate how an artistic activity is vital to the program and not simply entertainment.

Shop Locally

Applicants are encouraged to use regional artists and partner organizations when implementing their projects. If you are bringing in an artist outside the region, demonstrate the value in this.

Similar or Prior Funding

Support of an organization in the past does not imply or guarantee that an applicant's project will be funded. Applications are reviewed each year in the context of the evaluation criteria and available funding and evaluated competitively against other requests. There is also no guarantee an applicant will receive equivalent funding as an applicant with a similar and/or joint funding request and project. Organizations who partner up with other organizations to implement the same or similar projects should apply under one application.

Review Panel Prior Knowledge

You shouldn't assume the review panelists will know your organization, project, or opportunity. Write the narrative so someone unfamiliar with the project will easily understand it. Applicants also shouldn't assume the review panel will read between the lines of an application. The information you provide in your application should be enough for the committee to make their decision.

Application Help

Application and project help is available prior to the deadline. Applicants are highly recommended to submit an application draft up to one week before the application deadline via email at grants@eARTS.org so the Grants Manager can make recommendations on how to improve an application.