



## Writing Strong Grant Proposals Workshops Common Questions regarding Cultural Partners Funding

### Getting started/initial planning

#### **I have a lot of ideas. How do I begin?**

Determine where your projects fall in the overall goals of the organization. For example, you want a new display case to showcase newly acquire artifacts/art work and you need a new roof because it is leaking right into your main exhibit hall. Which of these is the highest priority for your organization? Once you've chosen your project/initiative for the coming fiscal year, look at the grant guidelines for funders you think might be a good fit for your project. Once you've read through the guidelines, you'll know if you are meeting that funders' funding priorities or not.

#### **How do I know if my idea is worth pursuing?**

If you can explain why it's important to your community to do this project RIGHT NOW, then the idea is worth pursuing. Be sure to determine what the impact will be beyond your organization. Your next step is to assess if the project is feasible. Be able to answer the question, "So what?"

If we're a rural organization with few resources, how can we be competitive in the matching funds category of the grant application, where applicable?

Emphasize your use of in-kind resources, including volunteer hours and donations of space and materials for your project. These also indicate local support for your project to funders.

#### **How can we include community partners in our proposed project when our local economy is so depressed?**

Be specific about what they bring to the table if it is not resources or time. For example, an organizational partner might contribute expertise on quilt making to the local historical society quilt show.

#### **We have a great project that will earn revenue for our organization. Does that make it a strong project to propose for grant funding?**

Identify the priorities of the organization first. Seeking funding for the work that is most urgently needed at this time and that project that without which nothing else would happen. For example, if the roof is leaking, don't buy a fancy display case for the great new artifact that was recently donated to the museum. Fix the roof first. Find the funder whose priority it is to fund roof repairs.

Then, while the roof is being repaired, plan your strategy for getting visitors to the museum to see the new artifact once it's on display. Then you'll be ready to seek funding for the display project when it's time.

Be careful of creating a project just to earn revenue. It should also align with your organization mission and serve the community beyond the organization for full impact.

### **What is capacity?**

It's like a water bottle. The bottle is your organization. What's inside (the water) is your capacity – the staff, the board, the volunteers, your facility, available resources in the community. If your bottle is full of water, you're at full capacity and may consider increasing your organization (the bottle) by offering more services as demand increases. If your bottle is half full, then you may be looking to increase capacity by adding more staff, recruiting new board members, increasing your volunteer base. If your bottle is close to empty, then you should get a smaller bottle by decreasing the programs offered, letting go of unused space, or taking other steps.

### **How can a new organization (or one that's small and would like to stay small) be successful in seeking foundation funding through grant writing?**

Be clear about your priorities as an organization. Stay true to your mission. Being successful in seeking foundation funding isn't about how big you are, it's about how well you manage the resources you have. If you have a project that is more than your overall operating budget for the previous year, the question is whether or not you have the board and staff/volunteers to be successful in planning and implementing this project. If you are clear about how you are capable, give strong examples of how you will use the project to further your mission, and cite ways that you will be able to raise the money - showing community support - then you'll be successful.

Basically size doesn't matter. Ability to do the project matters.

### **How can I translate need for operational support into a good project proposal?**

Start with an organizational work plan for the year/fiscal year. Determine one or two or three main initiatives or projects that need to be done. Each of these initiatives or projects might ultimately be a project (i.e. Need to increase diverse audiences this year: project is to create and implement a marketing plan to bring in new audiences; outline clear steps in your process to do this). These are operating expenses but they are part of your organization workplan and isolated as an individual capacity project.

### **What level of strategic planning is required?**

For larger requests, explaining to the funder how your project is part of a strategic plan can be beneficial. For smaller grants, details about strategic planning are generally not requested on grant applications. However, as stated in previous answer, having a plan for the year/fiscal year, can help you prioritize your organization initiatives/projects helping you better approach a funder for specific projects that are operation related.

### **What is a realistic ask?**

This depends on the funder and the scope of your project. It is best practice to seek multiple funders rather than one or two major funders, because this demonstrates broad and diverse community support for your project. If you rely too heavily on one funding request and you are not awarded a grant, your project is at risk. Best practice: ask for what you need, that is realistic in relation to the funders guidelines in regards to matching funds, or percentage of project.

## **Finding the right funder/better understanding the funder**

**If we are a nonprofit seeking to connect to the community through the arts, which of the grant programs is the right fit for me?**

Arts Builds Communities is the best place to start.

**What is the Oregon Cultural Trust looking for?**

Significant projects that have a broad and deep public impact. Projects should meet one or more of the Cultural Trust's main goals:

- Protect and stabilize Oregon cultural resources, creating a solid foundation for the future.
- Expand public awareness of, quality of, access to and use of culture in Oregon.
- Ensure that Oregon cultural resources are strong and dynamic contributors to Oregon's communities and quality of life.

**If my project is not humanities at its core, but it has a humanities component (i.e. we're building a new storage facility for our museum's artifacts and we're hosting a lecture by a known historian about the value of preserving a community's artifacts) do we qualify to apply for an Oregon Humanities grant?**

Yes. Oregon Humanities regularly funds specific humanities-based elements of larger projects that are not solely based in the humanities.

**How do we apply for Oregon Heritage Commission and Oregon Cultural Trust Development grants if our preservation project has already started?**

See previous answer regarding planning. A successful preservation project will be well planned, usually in stages, for best practice. For example, a house restoration: phase one may be foundation, phase two may be porch, etc. If a preservation project has only one phase - i.e. repairing the porch - and the work is already started, then this would not be a fit for the Heritage Programs or the Cultural Trust.

**What is the CLG? And why is it a funding opportunity for rural communities?**

The Certified Local Government (CLG) program is designed for communities that appreciate their authentic local character and want to maintain it by preserving historic properties. Once certified, the community is eligible for non-competitive grants to promote and facilitate preservation of historic building. The CLG program is an excellent opportunity for rural communities to help promote economic development through preservation.

**How do we know if the project we're proposing is a good fit for the grant program to which we are applying?**

Understand what the grant givers are looking for in project types and application information regarding project eligibility and funder priorities.

**When do we seek a grant from your local county or tribal cultural coalition versus seeking a Cultural Development grant?**

Since the Cultural Development grants are for significant projects preserving, and enhancing Oregon's diverse arts, heritage, and humanities efforts. If your project is a significant project, and your funding request is between \$5,000 and \$50,000 then apply for a Cultural Development grant.

The Cultural Participation grants, also called cultural coalition grants, are determined by the cultural priorities of your county or tribe, as outlined in the local cultural coalition plan. If your project encourages people to experience and appreciate local cultural resources, fosters the development of a community cultural identity and your funding request is less than \$5,000, then you should apply for a grant from your local county or tribal coalition. Their deadlines vary so see <http://www.culturaltrust.org/coalitions> and click on your county or tribe for more information.

In general, Cultural Participation (coalition grants) are great for planning which is a much needed aspect of grant writing. Being able to outline the overall goals, actions and outcomes/outputs sought in embarking on the project. And a Cultural Participation grant can help your organization do this. Many Cultural Coalitions do not require a 501c3 nonprofit status to be eligible to apply, this is another reason this may be the grant opportunity for you.

### **What is the financial outlook for the granting organizations?**

This varies greatly by funder. You can ask funders directly. The Chronicle of Philanthropy is a good general resource.

### **How can I find additional foundation support?**

- Oregon Foundation Book
- Foundations.org
- Local Community College Resource library
- Nonprofit Association of Oregon – for organizational development assistance

### **Are Arts Standards for education federally mandated?**

Yes.

## **Preparing the grant proposal and budget**

### **How can I be sure I answered all of the questions clearly?**

Have someone from outside your organization critically review your application. Contact the grant manager to clarify any questions that you don't fully understand.

### **How do we include in our budget funding that we've already received which is designated/earmarked for our project and is a funding source that will reimburse us once the work is done?**

A budget is a piece of the project planning, and you should include all information that demonstrates that the proposal is feasible with the resources you have dedicated to the project. Most applications provide - and many expect - the opportunity to include a description about funding source(s). For example, you can identify the funds as pending or committed.

## **Info on building the strongest grant proposal**

Before you read a foundation application and guidelines, be able to answer the 5 W's of journalism: Who? What? Where? Why? When? and How? Because there are so many worthy projects out there, make sure you answer the question "so what?" In other words, why is this project important for those it will serve? Summarize your answer in 2-3 sentences. Once you've

drafted this, you'll be more fully prepared to answer all grant application questions.

**How should the project budget and operating budget interact in the application?**

This depends on what the application requests. Quite frequently, a project budget is all that is required. If you are using funds that are already built into the operating budget of your organization you will typically identify them as applicant cash.

**What makes a good evaluation and assessment of the project?**

Define your goals. Assess what steps you'll need to reach those goals. Define how you will measure whether or not you've reached your goals. This is your evaluation and assessment process.

**Grantwriting 101**

- Find a funder to match your idea, not an idea to match a funder.
- Know who you are as an organization and how the project connects to your mission.
- Make a clear outline of your project from start to finish. It will help you prioritize and find a funder fit.
- Be specific and concise.
- Be sure your project budget tells a story that matches your narrative.
- Share a draft of your application with someone outside your organization and outside your discipline. They will tell you right away whether your project plan makes sense and if there are any holes.
- Read every word on the guidelines and application before you call a grants manager. That way you can use the time effectively with specific questions.
- Call a grants manager.