Improving the Odds

A Beginners Guide To Grants

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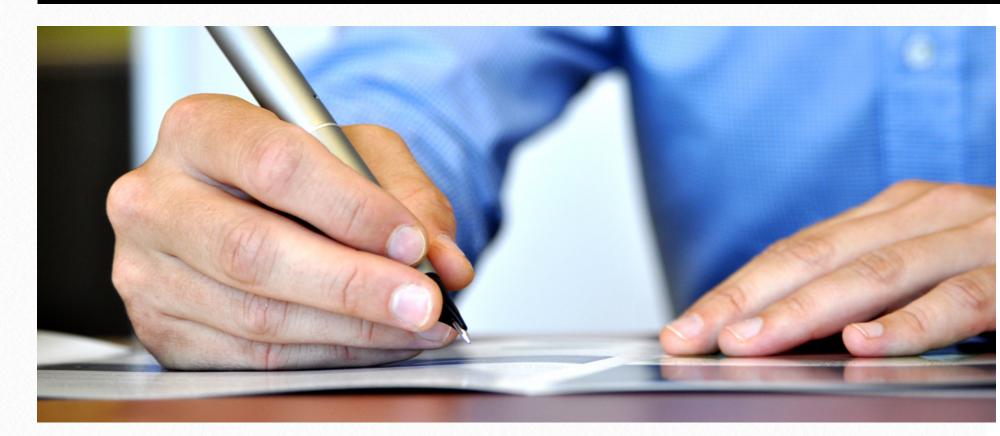BRITISH COLUMBIA/
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Step by Step

So you have an idea and you need money for that idea, either all or most of it. What you do next will directly impact if your idea ever gets off the pages and into reality.

Language and terms are important

Language is critical!

1. What is a grantor?
2. What is a grantee?
3. What exactly is a grant proposal?
4. What is an activity, deliverable, funds?

You, the grant seeker, must understand the basic requirements, application forms, information, and procedures vary among grant-making agencies and foundations. Federal agencies and large foundations will have formal application packets, strict guidelines, and fixed deadlines with which applicants must comply, while smaller foundations may operate more informally and even provide assistance to inexperienced grant seekers. But the one thing they all have in common is language.

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The Project

This is your idea, the vision, this is the big picture you see. But:

> Is there a *social need?*

> Are the *objectives* and *goals* of your project clearly defined?

> Will it have a *positive impact* on your community?

Language and terminology commonly used among grantors and funders is fairly consistent. It's very important to understand this language so your application stands the best chance of being successful. The following are only a few of the terms commonly used in a grant process. If you find yourself in a situation where you need clarification do not hesitate to contact the funder, typically they will do what they can to help you.

Grant Proposal

The entire process that eventually leads up to a *well-formed application*, one that is carefully prepared, thoughtfully planned, and concisely packaged.

A Grant

Basically speaking, a grant is a monetary award of *financial assistance*. The principal purpose of the grant is to transfer dollars from a funding agency or entity (grantor) to a recipient (grantee) who undertakes to carry out the proposed activities (set forth in an application for funding, in most cases) to fulfill a public purpose.

A Grant Award

A grant award is a *contract* between the funding agency and the recipient (you), with the grant supporting the activities and deliverables detailed in the proposal/application (and as solidified during the process of confirming the grant award).

Grantor

A grantor (also known as a grant maker or funder) is the organization or agency that *receives* your funding request and decides to fund it or reject it. This can be a local community group or the federal government.

Grantee

The organization or individual designated to receive a grant award. All grants require

the grantee to use the funds as promised in the grant application.

This is you!

Outcome

Outcomes are the changes in individuals and groups that your project will bring about or influence if the planned activities are undertaken in the proposed way. Unlike objectives that describe what you want to achieve, a good outcome describes the activities of your project.

What change has occurred for those individuals or groups

Activity

What you do to create change. Under this heading, you can write short paragraph(s) describing what the project will be DOING by using key words such as:

- Promotion/Public Relations
- Mentoring
- Facilitation
- Education
- Training
- Partnership Building

The following is a brief list of some of the most common activities funded by grantors.

Annual campaigns

Grants to support annual operating expenses, infrastructure improvements, program expansion, and, in some cases, one-time-only expenses

Building/renovation funds

Grants to build a new facility or renovate an existing facility. These projects are often referred to as bricks-and-mortar projects. Building funds are the most difficult to secure; only a small percentage of foundations and corporations award grants for this type of project.

Capital support

Grants for equipment, buildings, construction, and endowments. This type of request is a major undertaking by the applicant organization because this type of large-scale project isn't quickly funded. An organization often needs two to three years to secure total funding for such a project.

Conferences/seminars:

Grants to cover the cost of attending, planning, and / or hosting conferences and seminars. You can use the funding to pay for all the conference expenses, including securing a keynote speaker, traveling, printing, advertising, and taking care of facility expenses such as meals.

Continuing support/continuation:

Grants additional funds to your organization after you've already received an initial grant award from that same grantor. These monies are intended to continue the program or project initially funded.

General/operating expenses:

Grants for general line-item budget expenses. You may use these funds for salaries, fringe benefits, travel, consultants, utilities, equipment, and other expenses necessary to support agency operations.

Program development:

Grants to pay for expenses related to the expansion of existing programs or the development of new programs.

Seed money:

Grants awarded for a pilot program not yet in full-scale operation. Seed money gets a program underway, but other monies are necessary to continue the program in its expansion phase.
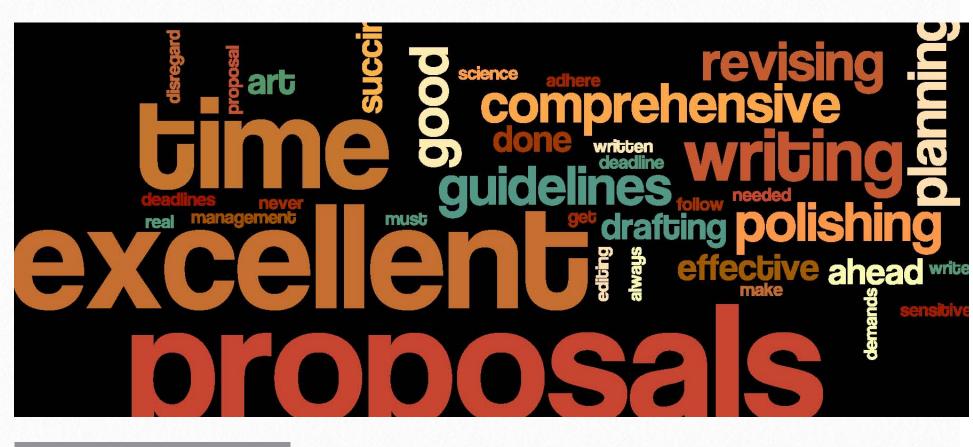
Technical (consulting) assistance:

Grants to improve your internal program operations as a whole (versus consulting on one specific program).

Often, this type of grant is awarded to hire an individual or firm that can provide the needed technical assistance. Alternatively, the funding foundation's personnel may provide the technical assistance. For example, a program officer from a foundation may work on-site with the applicant organization to establish an endowment development fund and start a campaign for endowment monies. In some instances, the funding source identifies a third-party technical assistance provider and pays the third party directly to assist the nonprofit organization.

Taking your idea to a grant proposal

Highlight

1. Clearly define your idea
2. Seek community support
3. Review the grantors philosophy

The very first step is the development of a clear, concise description of the proposed project. Then you must check to make sure the project fits into the philosophy and mission of the grant-seeking organization or agency you are hoping will fund this project. Typically, funding agencies or foundations will want to know that a proposed activity or project reinforces the overall mission of an organization or grant seeker, and that the project is necessary.

Clearly define your idea

To make a compelling case (typically if you have the space on the application), the following should be included in the proposal:

- Nature of the project, its goals, needs, and anticipated outcomes

- How the project will be conducted

- Timetable for completion

- How best to evaluate the results (performance measures)

- Staffing needs, including use of existing staff and new hires or volunteers

- Preliminary budget, covering expenses and financial requirements

Seek community support

For many proposals, community support is essential.

Once a proposal summary is developed, an applicant may look for individuals or groups representing academic, political, professional, and lay organizations which may be willing to support the proposal in writing. The type and caliber of community support is critical in the initial and subsequent review phases. Numerous letters of support can and will influence the grantor.

An applicant may elicit support from local government agencies and public officials. Letters of endorsement detailing exact areas of project sanction and financial or in-kind commitment are often requested as part of a proposal to a federal agency. Several months may be required to develop letters of endorsement since something of value (e.g., buildings, staff, services) is sometimes negotiated between the parties involved. Note that letters from Members of Congress may be requested once a proposal has been fully developed and is ready for submission.

While money is the primary concern of most grant seekers, thought should be given to the kinds of non-monetary contributions that may be available. In many instances, academic institutions, corporations, and other nonprofit groups in the community may be willing to contribute technical and professional assistance, equipment, or space to a worthy project. Not only can such contributions reduce the amount of money being sought, but evidence of such local support is often viewed favorably by most grant-making agencies or foundations.

Many agencies require, in writing, affiliation agreements (a mutual agreement

to share services between agencies) and building space commitments prior to either grant approval or award.

Two useful methods of generating community support may be to form a citizen advisory committee or to hold meetings with community leaders who would be concerned with the subject matter of the proposal. The forum may include the following:
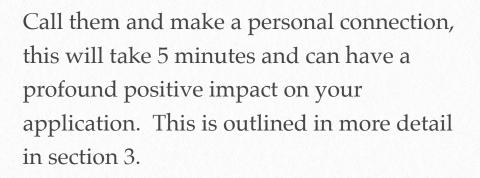
- Discussion of the merits of the proposal,

- Development of a strategy to create proposal support from a large number of community groups, institutions, and organizations, and

- Generation of data in support of the proposal.

Locate suitable granting agencies

- Review file

Review the grantors philosophy

This can be done in many ways, the simplest and least time consuming is to do a google search. This is typically the first step but this is a good opportunity to connect personally with the grantor.

Call them and make a personal connection, this will take 5 minutes and can have a profound positive impact on your application. This is outlined in more detail in section 3.

A large percentage of grant applications are currently submitted online, making this process much easier but there are a few setbacks.

The first is space, and this is done on purpose because they do not want to be reading a large amount of material for a small grant. This is why it's incredibly important to be as concise and clear as possible using the least amount of words. But don't let this deter you from attaching additional information such as letters of support.

If the online application process does not have the capacity to do this then email the additional information to the grantor. This will require a few phone calls to find out exactly who should be receiving this additional information.

Identifying and how to use identified funding sources

Be methodical!

1. 3 Rules
   - Use a Targeted Approach
   - Review Restrictions
   - Connect Personally
2. Sources of Funding
   a. Municipal Government Granting
   b. Local Service Clubs
   c. Community Foundations Granting
   d. Regional District Granting
   e. Corporate and Business Granting
   f. Provincial Granting
   g. Federal and National Foundation granting

You're searching for perfect fit between what you need and what the funder wants to fund. So it's important to be thorough in your search from the very beginning. This will save you a lot of time and effort.

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3 Rules of Grant Searching

It's time to begin the search to find funding for your idea.

The first rule is:

Use a Targeted Approach

It is generally not productive to send out proposals indiscriminately in the hope of attracting funding. Grant-making agencies and foundations whose interest and intentions are consistent with those of the applicant are the most likely to provide support. However, this doesn't mean you shouldn't cast a wide, but targeted, net. Many projects may only be accomplished with funds coming from a combination of sources, among them federal, provincial, or local government and grants from private or corporate foundations.

The second rule is:

Review Restrictions

The grant seeker (you) should carefully study the eligibility requirements and restrictions for each government/ foundation/private program under consideration. Websites generally include additional information about eligibility requirements but applicants should direct questions and seek clarification about requirements and deadlines from personnel in the agency. Questions about eligibility should be discussed in great detail to avoid confusion and unwanted surprises.

A review of the government or private foundation's program descriptions' objectives and uses, as well as any use restrictions, can clarify which programs might provide funding for an idea. For example many federal grants do not go directly to the final beneficiary (you), but are awarded through "block" or "formula" grants to state or local agencies which, in turn, distribute the funds. Many grantors also only provide grants to registered nonprofit organizations.

The third rule is:

Connect Personally

Once a potential grantor agency or foundation is identified, an applicant should contact it and ask for a grant application kit or information. Later, the grant seeker may ask some of the grantor agency or foundation personnel for suggestions, criticisms, and advice about the proposed project. In many cases, the more agency or foundation personnel know about the proposal, the better the chance of support and of an eventual favorable decision.

Sources of Funding

Your project is now clearly defined, so now it's time to locate appropriate funding sources. Both the applicant (you) and the grantor agency or foundation should have the same interests, intentions, and needs if a proposal is to be considered an acceptable candidate for funding.

The best funding resources are now largely available on the Internet.

Municipal Government Granting

The search should begin here, typically these require the least amount of effort. Three common assistance programs offered by many areas (but not all) are:

1. Property tax exemptions

   a. Council may choose to grants property tax exemptions to local community groups or local non-profits. They may or may not advertise this on the community website so it's important to locate someone within the council administration to begin the process.

2. Grants-in-Aid Program

   b. Council may choose to allocate annual funding providing financial assistance to local community groups that provide a valuable service within the municipality.

c. Typically these are not part of municipal granting programs, therefore the application process may be different, requiring a separate form.

d. This funding may or may not be a one time source so it's important to find out as many details as possible prior to beginning the application process.

3. Community Grant Program

   c. Many municipal governments offer local grants to local groups or non profits that provide a valuable service within the municipality.

   d. Typically this is separate from the Grant-in-Aid process but not always so it's important to ind out prior to beginning the application process.

Local Service Clubs

A service club or service organization is a voluntary non-profit organization where members meet regularly to perform charitable works either by direct hands-on efforts or by raising money for other organizations. Examples include:

The Lions Club,

The Rotary Club

The Elks Club, etc.

Community Foundations Granting

Community foundations are not charities supporting their own programs, nor do they compete with other agencies for funds. Rather, they pool the charitable gifts of many donors to cultivate and grow permanently endowed legacy funds to provide lasting support for local priorities.

The most visible and well-known function of a community foundation is to make financial grants to local groups, non profits or charities.

There are many types of foundations: national, family, community, corporate, etc. As a general rule, it is a good idea to look for funding sources close to home, which are frequently most concerned with solving local problems.

Regional District Granting

Municipalities within BC are partitioned into regional districts, as a means to better enable municipalities and rural areas to work together at a regional level. Regional districts are governed by boards of directly and indirectly elected directors therefore are separate from local municipal governments.

Similar to local opportunities they may offer community grants or community

grant-in-aid programs. The application process and requirements will be more demanding so it's important to connect with the grantor first.

Corporate and Business Granting

There are corporations and businesses committed top supporting local groups and non profit organizations, typically providing funding in the community they serve. The focus of each varies so it's important to see if your idea fits in with their giving philosophy and this information can be found on their website.

The application process will be more challenging and typically they require a lot more in terms of reporting. It's very important they understand exactly how their funds are being spent and how they are impacting the community they serve.

Provincial Granting

The most common provincial funding program available to Legion branches is the Community Gaming Grants. Many branches have successfully applies for this funding but the process is challenging.

Government gaming grants allow eligible organizations to apply for gaming

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revenues to support a broad range of programs and services. To receive a grant, your organization and the program offered must meet certain eligibility requirements.

Responsibility for the gaming grants program lies with the Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development; the Gaming Policy and Enforcement Branch distributes the grants. The branch determines which organizations will receive grants, the grant amounts and makes grant payments to approved applicants.

Organizations receiving community gaming grants must use their grant funds for approved, eligible purposes.

Eligibility

Programs must have been in operation for at least 12 months prior to application. (In other words, a grant will not be awarded for a program that is being offered for the first time.) To receive a grant, the program must fall into one of the following sectors:

- Arts and Culture;

- Sport;

- Environment;

- Public Safety

- Human and Social Services;

- Parent Advisory Councils and District Parent Advisory Councils. (These organizations are aligned with schools.)

Other provincial sources of funding do exist however these ideas are typically larger in scope and the application process is incredibly stringent.

Federal and National Foundation granting

Funding programs through the federal government and national foundations are also typically meant for larger projects, ones that are provincial or national in scope.

Getting Organized to Write the Proposal

All ideas must have:

1. Summary
2. Organization Information
3. Problem/Need/ Situation Description
4. Work Plan/Specific Activities
5. Outcomes/Impact of Activities
6. Other Funding - Leveraging Opportunities
7. Evaluation
8. Budget
9. Supplementary Materials

Now it's time to write out a full proposal regardless of where you will be applying. Do this first then all you will need to do is cut and paste the information into the relevant application. supplementary

1. Write a Summary

At the beginning of your proposal write a two- or three-sentence summary of the proposal. This summary helps the reader follow your argument in the proposal itself. For example:

"Central Command requests $5,000 for a two-year, $50,000 job training program for Veterans of BC. Training will be offered at four rural areas and will include basic clerical skills, interview techniques and job seeker support groups."

2. Organization Information

In two or three paragraphs, tell the funder about your organization and why it can be trusted to use funds effectively.

Briefly summarize your organization's history. State your mission, whom you serve and your track record of achievement. Describe where you are located and who runs the organization and does the work. Add other details that build the credibility of your

group. Even if you have received funds from this grantmaker before, your introduction should be complete. Funders sometimes hire outside reviewers who may not be familiar with your organization.

3. Problem/Need/Situation Description

This is where you convince the funder that the issue you want to tackle is important and show that your organization is an expert on the issue. Here are some tips:

- Don' t assume the funder knows much about your subject area. Most grant making staff people are generalists. If your topic is complex, you might add an informative article or suggest some background reading.

- Why is this situation important? To whom did your organization talk, or what research did you do, to learn about the issue and decide how to tackle it?

- Describe the situation in both factual and human interest terms, if possible. Providing good data

demonstrates that your organization is expert in the field.

- Describe your issue in as local a context as possible. If you want to educate people in your county about HIV / AIDS, tell the funder about the epidemic in your county — not in the United States as a whole.

- Don' t describe the problem as the absence of your project. " There aren't enough jobs for our former and current Reserve Forces and Regular Forces Canadian military members" is not the problem. The issue could be a sudden increase in members needing retraining to access civilian careers and we do not have the capacity within our Legion Military Skills Conversion Program to accommodate the sudden increase in demand.

4. Work Plan/Specific Activities

Explain what your organization plans to do about the problem. What are your overall goals? You might say:

"The goals of this project are to increase the understanding among BC High school students about the

impact of smoking on their health, and to reduce the number of students who smoke."

Then go on to give details, including:

Who is the target audience, and how will you involve them in the activity? How many people do you intend to serve?

Some projects have two audiences: the direct participants (the musicians in the community band, the kids doing summer clean-up in the parks) and the indirect beneficiaries (the music lovers in the audience, the people who use the parks). If so, describe both. How will you ensure that people actually participate in the program?

What are you going to do?

Describe the activities. Tell the funder about the project' s " output," or how many " units of service" you intend to deliver over a specific time period: how many hours of nutrition counseling to how many pregnant women; how

many HIV/AIDS hot-line calls answered by how many volunteers. Be sure you don't promise an unrealistic level of service.

What project planning has already taken place?

If you have already done research, secured the commitment of participants or done other initial work, describe it so the funder can see that you are well-prepared.

Who is going to do the work and what are their credentials?

Some funders ask for the name of a project director: the person most responsible for the project, whether volunteer or paid. Demonstrate that the staff or volunteers have the expertise to do a good job.

When will the project take place?

Some funders ask for the project start date and project end date. In general, a project can be said to start when you start spending

money on it. If the project is long, consider including a timeline.

Where will the project take place?

You may not know the answers to all these questions when you submit your proposal. But the more you know, the better the proposal will look. Apply the " mind' s eye test" to your description. After reading it, could the reader close his eyes and imagine what he would see if he came into the room where your project is happening? Many project descriptions are too vague.

Remember: You can continue to submit updated information to foundation staff almost until the date the board actually reviews the proposal.

5. Outcomes/Impact of Activities

Tell the funder what impact your project will have — what will change about the
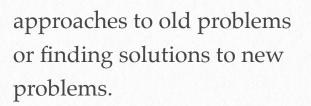
situation as a result of your project.

Impact can be difficult to measure. The desired impact of a smoking cessation program is clear, but the desired impact of a leadership program for teenagers may be ambiguous and difficult to quantify.

To add to the difficulty, few nonprofits can prove conclusively that a given impact was caused directly by their project. Your clients' babies may weigh more, but the cause may not be your nutrition program. Nevertheless, you must do the best job you can to define your intended impacts.

6. Future Funding

If you continue this project in the future, how will it be supported? Most funders don't want to support the same set of projects forever. Many funders see their niche as funding innovation: supporting new approaches to old problems or finding solutions to new problems.

What the funder really wants to see is that you have a longterm vision and funding plan for the project, that the project is " sustainable," especially if it is a new activity. If you don' t have such a plan, start thinking about it — if not for your funders then for the success of your project or organization.

7. Evaluation

How will you know whether you achieved the desired impacts? If you have done a good job of defining them (see above), all you need to do here is describe the information you will gather to tell you how close you came. Will you keep records of incoming hot-line calls? Will you call your counseling clients six months after they leave the

program to ask how they are doing? Explain who will gather the evaluation information and how you will use it. Be sure your evaluation plan is achievable given your resources. If the evaluation will cost money, be sure to put that cost in the project budget.

8. Budget

How much will the project cost? Attach a one- or two-page budget showing expected expenses and income for the project, if applicable.

9. Supplementary Materials

Funders may ask for a variety of materials along with the proposal itself.

- Community letters of support

- Feasibility study

- Multiple quotes

    - etc.