What is a grant?

A grant is predominately money given to your organisation as a result of an application made to a grants program offered by a state or federal government authority, or from some other organisation offering assistance.

It is very important that the criteria for grant funding and any priorities identified by the funding body are understood by the applicant and that the application demonstrates clearly how you comply. Your organisation must meet the criteria for eligibility to be funded for the program you are applying under.

An applicant for a grant is competing against every other eligible applicant within the State or across the nation for a limited amount of available funds. You must put your case for receiving a grant persuasively, but clearly and concisely.

Your application must be completed and sent to the funding body so that they receive your application by the Closing Date and time.

Conditions of grant:

A grant is offered on conditions that may include:

a)   A specific purpose (e.g. capital improvements, purchase of equipment, or to run an event)

b)   The purpose could not be funded in any other way than through the grant offered

c)   The funds are properly expended for the stated purpose within a specific time frame

d)   A report is provided to the funding body at the end of the funded project or works, including an audit on the expenditure of the funds

e)   Your organisation is properly insured to cover staff, contractors and other relevant factors

In addition, there may be a requirement that the organisation must make a contribution towards the costs involved, from their own funds and/or from another community source.

It is important that you read and understand the conditions of grant. If you have a question, contact the organisation offering the grant program for clarification.

Things to be aware of:

Will GST be deducted from the grant paid to you? If so, you may need to adjust the amount you request.

What are the implications for your organisation's financial arrangements or personal Taxation returns? Check with your financial advisor or auditor.

Grant Awareness – Knowing what grants exist. You need a strategy to find them and be prepared early.

Grant Matching – Matching your organisation with appropriate grants. You need a good understanding of the eligibility criteria, your chances of success and the time you'll need to invest in the application process.

Grant Writing – It is not as complicated as you may think but, a certain amount of skill and experience certainly helps. You need to describe your business and activities in short and succinct manner and make a convincing case as to why you should receive funding.

Ongoing Reporting – Once you have received a grant there is more work to do with ongoing reports and audits often required. Reliable and accurate reporting may increase your chances for future funding

Do and Don't of Grant Writing

Do	Don't
Create a catchy title	Use personal pronouns
Include index or table of contents	Make your reviewer wander aimlessly through your proposal
Clearly state conclusions	Trust that the facts will lead reviewers to your conclusion
Write for the educated layperson	Ladle out the jargon and acronyms
Intro the PI/PD to the reviewers	Rely on "trust me to handle the $" to offer credibility
Describe how your organization is uniquely qualified	Minimize in-kind contributions
Propose a program that is less than 1 year	Ask for a fraction of the money needed without rationale
Prepare a work plan matrix with a timeline	Include attachments without referring to them
Consider the funder's priorities	Write a proposal solely for funding purposes
Practice truth in asking	Inflate budget figures to get more $
Give a detailed, line-by-line explanation of the budget request	Propose cost without considering recurring expenses
Know the field: Demonstrate collaborative efforts	Duplicate efforts of other area programs
Toot your own horn	Assume the funder knows what you do/have done
Use key, scientifically-based research	Include statistics that are irrelevant
Describe your evaluation tools	Say you are going to measure something without a record-keeping plan to do so
Present clear, realistic goals	Overstate your expectations
Remember that appearance matters	Forget to check grammar, spelling, spacing or font
Be concise	Length ≠ Strength
Hire an outside reviewer	Send it off before proof-reading 3x
Include a 1-page, stand-alone summary	Use a cover letter as a substitute
Allow plenty of time	Wait till the last minute and have to pay overnight fee$
Thank the funder for the opportunity to apply	Think of a decline response as a program failure

Grant Submission Checklist

Is your grant submission up to the mark? Does it cover everything it needs to? Is it well written, clear and easy-to-understand?

Before you send your submission away, work through the points on this list.

Language

- Ensure the title makes a positive statement and is not a neutral descriptor.
- Check the language - is it specific, accurate, concise, and clear?
- Is the proposal written in active voice, with positive language and in the first person?
- Does the proposal avoid bureaucrat-style language, jargon, clichés or weasel words?
- Is the proposal written mainly in short simple declarative subject-verb-object sentences?
- Has it been checked for typos and bad grammar?

Layout

- Are the pages numbered?
- Does the proposal follow the grant giver's guidelines - margins, spacing, type size, paper size, proposal length - to the letter? Does it look professional?
- Has the layout got plenty of white space, and is it broken up by charts, tables, headings, bullet points, etc.
- Are charts easy to understand and clear?
- If there are forms to be filled out, have all the blanks been filled in?
- Are statistics and statements are documented and properly referenced?
- Are any acronyms spelled out in full, at least at first use?

Content

- Do you address all items in the grant giver's guidelines?
- Does the proposal assume too much knowledge of the area or too little?
- Does it have a clear one-page executive summary?
- Is there a cover letter describing how your project would further the grant maker's mission?

- Does the submission have a project schedule, information on methodology, any project partners and their roles - as well as the roles of those in your group?
- Is there a proper conclusion at the end?

Budget

- Does the proposal contain a detailed budget that is accurate and adds up?
- Does it explain the sustainability of the project?
- Does the budget factor in administrative overheads, and are you prepared to defend any budget estimates for salaries, goods and services?

Message

- Does the budget contain a contribution from your own organisation, to demonstrate your belief and commitment?
- Do you in your submission adequately demonstrate the existence (and significance) of the issue you wish to address through your project?
- Does the proposal specify realistic and measurable project objectives? Does it contain a rundown of benefits to beneficiaries and the grant maker?
- Do you explain project reporting procedures in your submission?
- Do you show that your group can deliver the project, and why it is the best group to do so?
- Does the proposal show why this project is unique, innovative, and different from (and an improvement over) existing programs?

And finally

- Has the final version of the submission been reviewed by an objective third party?

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