

Grants/Grants Etiquette 101

It goes without saying that prior planning is key to successfully accomplishing tasks and that grant writing and the grant management process is no exception.

Early in the process:

- a) Review the entire grant application package from beginning to end including instructions, application, and final report requirements.
- b) Make notes of questions you have as you go. They may be answered later on in the material.
- c) Develop a checklist of requirements that apply, actions that will need to be taken, and information that will need to be collected if the grant is received.
- d) Print out copies of important pages and underline passages that need to be remembered.
- e) Start a reference file with the above in it as well as passwords, answers from previously asked questions, notes about procedures for using the system, deadlines, requirements, word limits, contacts, etc.

The more you prepare and educate yourself about the grant requirements, the easier the application process will be.

Prepare the narrative and budget in separate programs such as word processing and a spreadsheet and save the information there. By using a word processing program, you can get a word count, do a spell check, and, best of all, be able to copy and paste into the grant application. By saving your responses in these other programs, you are assured that all your hard work is saved in case of a glitch with an online system.

Work on the application as you have time with a goal of completing and submitting it in advance. This will give you time to get questions answered and solve computer problems. It will lessen your stress and that of those who may have to be enlisted to assist you. This can

include the program or grants officer who, at the time of a deadline, will be under pressure themselves due to the number of calls with questions. At a deadline, they may or may not be able to spend the time you require for assistance.

An area of planning that is often overlooked is getting to know and appreciate those people who are critical in helping you get and manage your grant. Remember that those persons who facilitate the funding for your organization are people, too, and you need them. Actually, you both share a common interest of achieving the goal of your grant. Strong business relationships are always mutually beneficial. How are they achieved? It begins by being pleasant, courteous and professional.

When it's time to submit your application, make sure your project meets the criteria, is being submitted in the most appropriate category, adheres to the guidelines exactly as requested in the instructions, and asks for a realistic amount of money. Be clear and concise, proofread for errors, make sure the figures add up, and, finally, and very important—keep a copy.

If you are turned down, be gracious and thank the funder for the opportunity to be reviewed. You may even ask (again, being gracious) for recommendations for future submissions.

If your application receives funding, even if it's less than requested, thank them immediately, use the funds wisely, adhere to the deadlines, and follow the guidelines by turning in all reports on time and in the manner requested.

Should you encounter problems with an online application, try some of the following troubleshooting tips:

- 1) Check to see if there is a limit to the number of words/characters and maybe even spaces for a section such as the narrative.
- 2) Difficulties in entering information in some fields, particularly numerical ones, may result from the use of punctuation, e.g., \$4,000 (omit the dollar sign and comma).
- 3) Some fields may be case sensitive, e.g., the User ID.
- 4) Passwords can expire periodically. As an example, the Oklahoma Arts Council's grant application passwords expire every 90 days. If you change passwords, keep a record of what it is and notify anyone else who may need it. Losing or forgetting it will be time consuming at a deadline.
- 5) If you exit an online form, it may not be saved. Always use the "Save" feature and use it frequently as you work.

6) Don't wait until the day of the deadline to submit your grant application.

7) Prepare support materials early.

If you have questions, write them out before you call or e-mail, try to ask all questions at one time, and be specific as to what it is you want to know. Program officers are more than willing to be helpful, but they are busy people just like you! Respect their time. Be aware of the frequency and types of calls you make to them. Learn from your questions and keep notes for the next time so, hopefully, the process won't have to be repeated. Be courteous and thank anyone trying to assist you even if the grants officer is unavailable, and remember to start filling out the application early so you have plenty of time to receive a call back instead of it being an emergency at the last minute!

Don't be remembered for bad manners. A little prior planning can give you some breathing room and alleviate stress.

A-List Web Sites for the Arts

Americans for the Arts

www.artsusa.org

This site has something for everyone.

Arts Journal

www.artsjournal.com

News from around the world about the arts

Chronicle of Philanthropy

<http://philanthropy.com>

Philanthropy news & an online Guide to Grants

Charity Channel

www.charitychannel.com

Forum discussion lists, e-newsletters, news links, book reviews, job postings, consultants listings, and distance classes

Foundation Center

<http://foundationcenter.org>

"Find funders" feature, online training, topical resource lists and more

National Assembly of State Arts Agencies

<http://nasaa-arts.org>

News, publications, resources, links to state arts agencies across the country, links to major grant makers to arts and culture (www.nasaa-arts.org/aoa/grant_makers.shtml).

BoardSource

www.boardsource.org

An excellent site for information about nonprofit board issues.

National Endowment for the Arts

www.nea.gov

User-friendly Web site featuring grants, resources, publications and research information.

FirstGov.gov

www.firstgov.gov/Business/Nonprofit.shtml

Federal information for nonprofits regarding grants, loans and other assistance, management and operations, and tax information.



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The **Charles Lafitte Foundation's** Arts Program mission is to foster the growth of new artists, invest in established artists, and expand access to the arts. It favors educational programs that encourage students' creativity, learning and achievement, is interested in encouraging emerging artists, and in inspiring the development of new artistic work.

Deadline: No deadlines or standard forms. A brief letter of inquiry is suggested as the first step.

Information: www.charleslafitte.org/applications.html or Jennifer Vertetis at jennifer@charleslafitte.org

The **Payless ShoeSource Foundation** is dedicated to improving the quality of life in the communities where their associates and customers live.

Deadlines: Requests must be submitted in writing at least 60 days prior to the donation's due date. Smaller grant requests (under \$5,000) are considered each month. Larger grant requests (over \$5,000) are reviewed on a quarterly basis. Requests may be submitted any time for consideration at the next scheduled review meeting.

Information: 1-877-452-7500 or www.payless.com/en-US/Corporate/Foundation/Foundation.htm