FIND, GET, MANAGE GRANTS

Tips from the State Library, April 2024

Finding Grants

- Develop your program/project *before* you start looking for grants. Having a clear idea of what you want to do will help you search for funding more efficiently.
- Use your professional networks - find out where others have had success.
- For small grants, local organizations are great sources and likely have some giving budgets, or even formal grant programs: social clubs like Rotary, Kiwanis, or Lions; local banks and other businesses; medium-to-large corporations in the area; local foundations; and sometimes even city or county governments.
- The Oregon Foundation Databook lists Oregon-based foundations, including their giving areas, recent grants, and other information. There are great indexes so you can find funders based on areas they give in (e.g. arts, education, etc.). You can likely find a copy at your local library.
- Candid's [Foundation Directory](#) is similar to the Oregon Foundation Databook but is national. It's typically a subscription resource, but some local organizations, including public libraries, may offer free access. You can find such locations on [Candid's website](#).
- The American Library Association has a [list](#) of grants and awards they give out in various areas.
- Consultant Stephanie Gerding maintains the [Library Grants Blog](#), which lists grant announcements for libraries.

Applying for Grants

- Read the grant application, grant guidelines, and the organization's mission & vision in detail before you even start writing an application. It's important for your project to meet the requirements and goals that the funders have established for their grant programs.
- Writing (and managing) a grant is a team effort. Be sure project staff, finance, and administration are all included in conversations from the beginning.
- Don't try to make your project "fit" into a grant program that has different goals than you. Funders have specific aims in mind, and if you try to come up with a hard-to-track rationale for why your project fits their very different goals, you'll just end up wasting your time and theirs.
- Don't be afraid to ask questions of the funders, early and often. It's beneficial to both parties if your questions are answered before you submit an application.

- If your project focuses on communities that are underserved or under-resourced, have a defined plan for how you will involve and reach out to those communities. The strategy will be different for each group. The "if you build it, they will come" mantra rarely works with underserved communities. You need to make an effort to understand them and meet them where they are, not expect them to come to you.
- Since library staff are so busy, it is sometimes easy to discuss how a project saves us time or effort. However, funders are more interested in how your project impacts the people you're serving. Always frame the benefits and goals of your project on who you ultimately serve.
- Don't assume that grant reviewers know anything about your library, community, or even the library profession itself sometimes. Write your narrative as if you're explaining it to a person on the street.
- Think about how you're going to measure success of the project from the start of the project; don't make it an afterthought.
- Before you submit the application, have someone outside else read your application (preferably someone who does not know anything about the project or your library). Do they understand what you are hoping to accomplish? Does it sound clear and compelling to them?

Managing Grants

- Check-in on how things are going with your grant team and other interested parties regularly. This will help keep you on track.
- Communicate with the funder early and often! An open line of communication will help you stay ahead of issues, should they arise.
- Don't be afraid to shift focus or change course if you learn things executing the grant that lead to different ways to achieve your goals. Communicate with your funder if that happens. And if circumstances are such that you're not able to fulfill the grant, be honest with yourself and the funder about it.
- Spend *all* the money you're given. To the penny. Most funders do not want you to return funds to them.
- Acknowledge the source of your funding in publicity and on grant-related products. This not only gives credit to your funder but also demonstrates support for the work you are doing.
- Try to mix in both statistics and anecdotes when describing how your project went. You're telling a story, and it will be fuller if you explain all aspects of how your project went. And send pictures! Funders like to see what you're doing, in addition to just reading about it.
- Tell about your mistakes and lessons learned, too. Funders aren't only looking for success; they're also looking for learning that can help future grantees be more successful in their projects. And writing down those lessons learned will help you in future endeavors, too.