

Before Applying:



- Do your research.
 - Who are the funders in your area? Keep in mind that local funders may be less competitive than larger, statewide or national funders.
 - What are the areas/topics your funder likes to support, and what values do they express as an organization? Are those aligned with your own project and organization?
 - What other organizations and projects have they funded in the past few years? Remember, 990s are public information and can be found online for pretty much any funder. They list each year's funded organizations, projects, and amounts.



- Meet with the funder in advance of your application, if possible.
 - Try to glean any insights they may have into funding priorities, application recommendations, competitive odds, etc.

While Applying:



- Make sure you fully review the grant guidelines.
 - Especially for longer guidelines (like federal RFPs!), I often print them and mark them up with highlights and notes. Make sure to note what questions you may need to ask in advance, what salient points you need to remember while drafting your app, what additional documentation/research you may need to gather, etc.



- If the funder shares their grant evaluation metrics (like Maritime Washington does), use them in building your grant application. Put the most effort into the sections that count for the most points!
- Be as brief and concise as possible, while still presenting a cohesive, polished narrative.
 - Bullet points can be great!



- Try to reference your knowledge of the funder in your app.
 - Use language like "Given the Foundation's priority funding areas of X, Y, and Z, our project is a strong fit because..." It'll make your app look less like boilerplate and show that you're paying attention to them as a partner in this endeavor.



- Never assume your readers know anything about your organization, your cause, or your project.
 - Explain who you are and why your work is important. Avoid jargon or overly technical language.



- Always ask someone else (whether a manager, coworker, or friend) to review a grant application before you submit.
 - Ask them to keep an eye out for typos/errors, unclear arguments, etc.

After Applying:



- Once you get the grant, don't forget about your funder!
 - Thank them. The more public the acknowledgment, the better.
 - Consider your relationship with the funder like a major donor relationship—cultivate it. Make them want to work with you again.
 - Provide the funder with regular, detailed grant reports. Take photos throughout your grant project, and use those photos to create short, visually appealing reports where you show off everything you achieved with their funding.
 - Don't underestimate the time needed to generate regular, detailed grant reports. Some of them (e.g., for federal grants) can take a lot of time, and you don't want to take shortcuts or be rushed to complete them.



- If you don't get the grant, seek feedback. This will help you get a better glimpse into the funder's priorities, metrics, etc., and ensure a stronger application next time.

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