

Should I apply for a grant?

For many people, the grant writing process seems complicated, inaccessible, and overwhelming to start. It is perceived as a mysterious, unpredictable art that only certain people can do.

To put it simply, grants are a contract for services. With funds provided by the grantor, the grantee provides a service, which could be coordinating a special project, purchasing/building a capital item, building a community program, etc. Grants can be a great way to meet the needs of your organization, but there are points to consider before applying for grants. Hopefully, this short guide will give your organization ideas on where and how to start the process.

What types of grants are available?

Grants can be divided into two broad categories: government and foundation. The United States government is one of the largest grantors in the world. Federal grants can have extremely lengthy applications with many pieces, so make sure to scrutinize federal grant applications thoroughly to make sure you qualify and understand requirements. To find out more about the system of applying for government grants, visit [*The Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance*](#).

Foundation grants include community, private, family, and corporate foundations. These organizations set their own rules for the distribution of funds and require a considerable amount of research on which grant best fits the projects. The best place to find more information on foundation grants is the Foundation Center (link below). Corporations like Walmart and Fred Meyer are often good resources for anti-hunger and food system related projects. Credit Unions like CU1 in Alaska have giving and small grant programs in Alaska, so shop around on different websites to see what is available. Sometimes, grantors are hiding in unexpected places.

National Grant Resources

- **Grants.gov:** <http://www.grants.gov>
- **Department of Housing and Urban Development:** www.hud.gov
- Grantstation (www.grantstation.com)
- **The Council on Foundations** (www.cof.org)
- **The Foundation Center** (www.fdncenter.org)
- **The Chronicle of Philanthropy** (www.philanthropy.com)
- **Food Safety Outreach Grant Program:** [**The Food Safety Outreach Program grant**](#) is designed to assist those impacted by the Food Safety Modernization Act, through the implementation of food safety training, education, and technical assistance. There is roughly \$4 million in funding eligible for Cooperative Extension offices, NGOs, and community based organizations, to implement these programs. Individual grants will in range up to \$400,000.
- **Rural Cooperative Development Grant Program:** [**This grant program from USDA Rural Development**](#) aids the startup, expansion, or operational improvement of rural cooperatives and mutually-owned businesses. Nonprofit corporations and institutions of

higher education may apply for the program. The maximum amount that can be awarded is \$200,000.

How can I make sure my application is successful?

As the Foraker Group states with a helpful acronym, “Successful proposals are SMART: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-bound”.¹ The best reasons to write a grant are for innovative programs or projects new to your organization, experimentation, demonstration of something new, or funding that helps your programs grow to the next level of implementation. It is important to carefully consider the grant you are applying for, and discuss with your board and staff that it is the right fit for your organization. Smaller organizations should ensure they have the capacity to manage and report on the grant.

→ *Three important steps to keep in mind are:*

1. DO YOUR RESEARCH: The first step is assuring you are applying for the right grant. Does the grant fit your organization’s mission and vision? Does it fit the grantor’s vision and mission? Will you be able to continue the project/position once the grant funds expire? Avoid creating projects or positions just to get funds; have a clear plan of what you need and seek out grants that fit your project. Before you apply for any grant, have a plan for sustainability beyond the grant funding period. Verify the grant is not just providing a quick fix on a problem that needs a systemic solution.

2. FOLLOW THE RULES: It may seem simplistic, but if you can’t follow the rules for the format and presentation that a grantor demands, your application will not get very far. Read the directions carefully, and then read them again. Have someone else read the directions and ensure that you have complied with **all** requirements!

3. KEEP IT SIMPLE: When preparing your grant, make sure you answer all the questions asked, but no more. Flowery, esoteric language is not necessary and may eliminate your application. Keep your writing simple, active, and concise.

What types of documents do you need for your grant proposal?

Most grantors will require a list of the following documents within their grant application requirements. Always review the grant requirements for each individual application. The following is not an exhaustive list of documents you may need:

- 501(c)(3) organization certification
- Federal tax exemption letter
- EIN number
- Mission Statement
- List of current Board of Directors (usually 10 – 15 people)
- Agency Budget (annual) showing multiple sources of revenue and types of expense
- Program Budget(s) for each major program or service of the agency
- Financial Statements showing monthly revenue and expense, year-to-date revenue and expense, compared to the Annual Budget
- Audit (or year-end financial statement for smaller nonprofit agencies)

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- Record of past Foundation/Corporate/Government funding for 1 – 3 years
- Leadership – Staff and Volunteer – their bios need to underscore how strong and stable they are
- Letters of Support, evidence of community partnerships

What do all of these acronyms mean?

- RFP – Request for Proposal
- RFA – Request for Application
- NOFA – Notice of Funding Availability
- SFP – Solicitation for Proposals
- SOQ or RFSQ – Statement of Qualifications or Request for Statement of Qualifications

What are some resources in Alaska for grant writing?

- **Alaska Community Foundation:** An Alaska-based foundation that funds opportunities throughout the year around the state. Their most popular grant is the Strengthening Organizations grant, which supports professional staff and board of directors in their efforts to build the capacity of their organizations. They have a [Community Asset Building Initiative](#) with regional foundations in Chilkat Valley (Haines), Kenai Peninsula, Petersburg, Seward, Fairbanks, Kodiak, Ketchikan, Greater Sitka, and Upper Susitna (Greater Talkeetna). Explore their available grants on their website: <http://alaskacf.org/grants/>
- **The Foraker Group:** This nonprofit aggregator provides professional assistance to growing non-profits in Alaska, including fundraising trainings, educational opportunities, and organizational development. Their [Alaska Funding Guide](#) provides basic information on a wide variety of grantmakers with an interest in funding Alaskan goals. It also provides some useful resources to help you in your funding search

One last thing to remember:

Understand most first-time grant applications are rejected. No might mean “no for now.”ⁱ Grant writing is for those willing to play the long game!

Need more help?

One of the benefits of being an Alaska Food Coalition member is the opportunity to have another set of eyes review your grant applications. Are you unsure if you’ve followed the directions? Do you need someone to review for clarity and purpose? We are here to help you!

ⁱ The Foraker Group, “Alaska Funding Guide”.

<https://www.forakergroup.org/site/products/fundersguide/index.cfm?fuseaction=home.text-whywrite>

ⁱⁱ <http://nonprofitshub.org/grant-writing/when-to-start-nonprofit-grant-writing/>