

Grant Application Checklist

Many funders provide a checklist of everything you need to include in your application package so you can be sure you have everything in order. If a funder doesn't give you a checklist, create your own by combing through the application guidelines and noting their requirements. The following is a sample of such a compiled checklist; be sure to follow whatever order a particular funder calls for.

Note: If you add attachments or appendixes, be sure to keep a running list of these documents so you can double-check that they're in place before submitting your application.

Cover materials

- A **cover letter**, if required, typed on the grant applicant organization's letterhead and signed by the president of the board or the executive director.
- All **pre-narrative forms** in place, with empty information fields filled in with the requested information. Examples of pre-narrative forms include cover page fill-in-the-blank forms and federal grant application cover forms (SF-424A and SF-424B).
- The **abstract or executive summary**, which typically has page or word limits, appears on a separate page. This section is merely a brief overview of the application's contents and should be placed before the grant proposal narrative.
- The **table of contents**, which is required by most federal and state grant applications.

Organization background and capability

- History of the organization:** Why it was founded and how long it has been around. Mention the organization's purpose and mission statement as well.
- Major accomplishments relevant to the proposed grant-funded project:** Successful capital campaigns, major grant awards, award-winning programs, and successful outcomes for your target populations.
- Current programs and activities relevant to the proposed grant-funded project:** A simple list of what you do in chronological order with the newest programs and activities listed first and the oldest ones listed last.
- Target population demographics that mirror the types of populations the funder wants to support in its current funding cycle:** A brief look at your service population over the past five years.
- Collaborations with local, regional, and statewide nonprofit and for-profit partners:** The who's who in your stakeholder group.

Statement of need

- The problem within the community in critical need of grant funding
- How you identified the problem
- How the problem looks from national, regional, and local perspectives
- The current national and local research that proves the existence of the problem
- The gloom, doom, drama, and trauma that justify the need for grant funds

Program design

- One concise statement expressing the purpose of the program:** What the program will do for your target population
- Goals that shadow the funder's specific funding goals:** Non-measurable statements that create the vision for what the funding will do for your target population
- SMART outcome objectives written in quantifiable terms:** Specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timebound commitments to show the steps to achieving your goals
- Process objectives:** A list of activities (tasks) that will occur when the grant funding is awarded (timelines)
- Impact objectives expressed in terms of their benefits to end recipients:** The "step away for five years and look back" statements
- The Logic Model, which helps the grant reader connect the dots between goals and objectives:** The road map for lazy readers that is included in the narrative or as an attachment and is a "one page tells the story" document with input, strategy, output, and outcome columns
- The time frame for starting and ending all proposed grant-funded activities:** The timeline table that connects the process objectives to when they will start and end during the grant-funding time frame
- Integration of the evaluation plan into the overall program design or plan of operation:** Accountability language to demonstrate your process for tracking the SMART objectives and to show funders that all of your performance measurements will be monitored and reported
- A dissemination plan:** How you'll get the news out about how your grant-funded program succeeded and share your success with other grant seekers and organizational stakeholders
- A sustainability plan:** How your organization will keep all or a portion of the grant-funded program running when the grant-funding cycle has ended

Evaluation and dissemination

- ❑ **The methods your organization will use to evaluate the progress of your objectives:** Surveys, pre- and post-documentation, observation, and more.
- ❑ **How you plan to share (or disseminate) your findings with others:** In some Common Grant Application formats, the evaluation belongs in the attachments section, not in the grant narrative. You must follow the formatting instructions for what goes in the narrative and what must be added in the attachments.

Management plan, assets, and your equity statement

- ❑ **Key personnel, including each person's qualifications and the amount of time he will allocate to the project:** Experience and education should match position assigned in the grant-funded project. Make sure you include whom each person reports to and thereby demonstrate accountability at every level in your management plan. (*Note:* In most Common Grant Application formats, the key personnel information belongs in the attachments, not the grant narrative.)
- ❑ **Resources that your organization and its partners bring to the program:** Technical assistance, financial, facilities, executives on loan, and more.
- ❑ **A demonstration of equity (fairness/equal opportunity for all) in hiring staff and recruiting program participants:** Proving you can find qualified personnel and follow federal and state equal opportunity legislation.

Budget summary and narrative detail

- ❑ **Double-check your budget summary totals and make sure your formatting follows the guidelines.** Are you supposed to round to the nearest dollar? Are you supposed to omit decimal points?
- ❑ **Write a detailed narrative to support the budget summary's line-item amounts.** You need to defend every line item.