



Application Best Practices

DOs

Do consider funders that you have worked with before.

Good performance, communication and/or press for an existing grant can help unlock future opportunities. Consider funders as thought partners when developing new projects.

Do think about who you know. Perhaps a funder can't give again, but they or an ally can make an introduction to others they know who might be interested in your project or organization.

Do respond to grantor questions as asked. Use key words from the application questions or other materials, and be sure that you respond to all parts of the question. If you're not sure what they are asking for, confirm with their point of contact. Be detailed!

Do describe real, measurable impact. Most grantors are primarily focused on what outcomes you will achieve with their resources. It is important to logically connect your expenditures to the desired outcomes, and clearly explain how you will measure those outcomes.

Do develop an off-ramp. Grants have end dates, and it is important that your grant-funded project does too. Be prepared to explain to funders how you will continue the project and/or what the long-term impact will be after the grant ends.

DON'Ts

Don't keep going back with the same ask if they say no. Ask for feedback when you are not awarded, and use that feedback to rework your proposal. If you can't incorporate their feedback, the funder may not be the right fit for the project.

Don't double-dip. If a funder has already provided funds for a project, any new asks to them should be for additional work – not to complete the original scope.

Don't forget to address their goals. Grantors are usually trying to accomplish specific goals of their own, and are seeking reputable partners with vision to help them do so. Rather than just describing your needs, focus on the impact their funds will have if they give them to you.

Don't focus on the negative. Grantors are much more likely to give when they see a clear, bold, forward-facing vision. While you may need to provide context for your ask, the bulk of your application should be focused on concrete positive outcomes.

Don't treat a funder like a bank. Grantors are partners, and they are trusting you to do good things – the things you promised - with their money. Even once you've been awarded a grant, a grantor is not obligated to provide you with resources unless you perform according to the terms of your grant agreement.