

Common Grant Application Format

Introduction

Grantmakers of Western Pennsylvania created the *Common Grant Application Format* to simplify the process requesting and making foundation grants. The *Common Grant Application Format* is designed to benefit you, the grantseeker, and the foundation decision-makers who review, evaluate and act on the grant proposals you submit.

What it is

The *Common Grant Application Format* is a proposal format. Participating foundations affiliated with Grantmakers of Western Pennsylvania will accept this format when nonprofit organizations apply to them for funding. The format should be used as an outline and guide for organizing your grant proposals.

How it benefits you

Nonprofits that apply to several foundations for funding will save time using the *Common Grant Application Format*. Even though foundations ask for the same type of organization and financial data, each has had its own forms or format for grant applications. As a result, grantseekers have been required to rewrite, reorganize or reprocess the same information in different forms for different foundations. By providing an orderly, consistent arrangement of proposal elements, the *Common Grant Application Format* eliminates these redundancies so nonprofit organizations can spend more time fulfilling their missions and less time applying for funding.

The *Common Grant Application Format* will also help you write effective proposals. Designed by foundation executives, the *Common Grant Application Format* solicits the type of information foundations need to evaluate your request in a way that makes it easy to read and digest. This should enable you to focus on the content of your proposal rather than the form.

The logical order of the *Common Grant Application Format* invites a clear, concise communication of the unique character and merits of your organization or project. It encourages you to build a case for your request that will enlighten foundation executives, engage them in a meaningful discussion of the issues and lead them to well-informed decisions on grant applications.

How to use the Common Grant Application Format

Please read this whole document before you begin to use the *Common Grant Application Format*. Pay close attention to the Suggestions for Preliminary Preparation. Keep in mind that grantmakers have different guidelines and priorities, timetables and deadlines. Consequently, it is imperative to research and contact every potential funder. ***Please note: funders who accept the Common Grant Application Format may still request additional information at any stage in the grantmaking process.***

Remember, the *Common Grant Application Format* is not a form. As long as the narrative flows in the designated order under the designated headings and subheadings, you can feel free to include all of the information you feel is important to make your case. It is necessary, however, that you address the applicable questions in every category. ***Please note: there are separate formats for program funding and capital campaign funding.***

There is one exception. Each proposal to a participating foundation should include a completed copy of the *Common Grant Application Cover Sheet*. Copies will also be available by calling Grantmakers of Western Pennsylvania, the Foundation Center or a participating foundation.

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The final product

A completed grant application and proposal should include two components: the cover letter (which is different than the Common Grant Application Cover Sheet) and the proposal itself. The proposal should contain, in the following order:

- *Common Grant Application Cover Sheet*
- Executive Summary
- Narrative (outlined in the *Common Grant Application Format*)
- Attachments (outlined in the *Common Grant Application Format*)

How NOT to use the Common Grant Application Format

The *Common Grant Application Format* offers flexibility and the opportunity to make your grant proposals the best that they can be. Designed to maximize the efficiency of nonprofits' fundraising efforts, it eliminates the need to rewrite and reorganize the same information for different foundations. *However, sections of your proposals may still need to be customized to address the specific concerns and goals of the foundations you target.* To that end, avoid the mass mailing of proposals. Take care to tailor each request - particularly in the cover letter and executive summary - to appeal to the specific interests of each grantmaker.

Suggestions for Preliminary Preparation

1. Be clear about your organization's priorities and your purpose in seeking funds.
2. Identify and research the foundations and corporations that make grants to your type of organization (*see Resources*). Make sure the purpose of your proposal fits within the foundation's guidelines concerning the types of programs that are eligible for funding and the geographic area to be served. A misplaced proposal may undermine your credibility.
3. Contact your best prospects to identify application deadlines, funding cycles and any additional application requirements, such as number of copies the grantmaker requires.
4. Include in your proposal a one-page cover letter that conveys in simple terms the following information:
 - Name of the program
 - The program's purpose
 - A strategic reason for the foundation to fund the program
 - Amount requested
 - Time period of the program or project
 - Name of the contact person
5. The letter should be signed by the board president or chairperson and the executive director. (If your proposal is a collaborative request, signatures of participating organization representatives must be provided.)
6. Include a one- or two-page Executive Summary of the project. The Executive Summary should focus on the major points of the proposal, including a brief description of the proposed project, whom it serves, why it's important and why your organization should receive the funds to implement it. The Executive Summary should excite and inspire the reader to review your full proposal. It should also provide the essential information, in a concise manner.
7. Adhere to the guidelines of the *Common Grant Application Format* so your proposal is not delayed during the review process. Anticipate a funder's concerns. If a question is not applicable, explain; if a problem exists that might detract from the credibility of your organization or project, address it briefly, but do not dismiss it.
8. Submit the number of typewritten copies each grantmaker requests. Do not send videotapes or unsolicited information.

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Common Grant Application Cover Sheet

Date of Application: _____

Legal Name of Organization Applying: _____

(Should be the same as on IRS determination letter and as supplied on IRS form 990)

Year Founded: _____ Current Annual Operating Budget: \$ _____

Are you currently receiving United Way Program Funding? Identify programs and amount:

_____ \$ _____

_____ \$ _____

_____ \$ _____

Executive Director: _____

Contact Person/Title

(if different from Executive Director): _____

Address (principal/administrative office): _____

Mailing Address, if different from above: _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number: _____ Fax Number: _____

Project Name: _____

Purpose of Grant (one sentence): _____

Beginning and Ending

Dates of the Project/Campaign: _____

Amount Requested: \$ _____ Total Project Cost: \$ _____

Geographic Area Served: _____

Signature:

Board of Directors Chairperson _____ Date: _____

Typed Name and Title _____

Signature: Executive Director _____ Date: _____

Typed Name and Title _____

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Please structure your proposal to provide the following information in the order indicated. Use the headings and subheadings provided. Then, in your own words, address the questions and issues posed in the outline. The questions reflect the general interests and concerns of grantmakers, but are not intended to be conclusive. Additional information pertinent to your project should be included. Please be thorough, yet strive for brevity. Although tightly written proposals are preferred, take the space you need to make your case.

A. NARRATIVE

1. Organization information

- Summarize your organization's history.
- State your mission and goals, future challenges, and long-range plans.
- Outline current programs and activities.
- Highlight accomplishments.

TIP: Differentiate yourself from similar or competing organizations

2. Purpose of Grant

- Describe the proposed program or project.
- Identify the needs/problems to be addressed, target population and number of people to be served by the project.
- Describe the project goals and objectives, and your plan to meet them.
- Define the project as a new or continuing program.
- Identify other organizations, partners or funders participating in the project and their roles.
- Provide a timetable for implementation.
- Identify long-term funding resources.

TIP: If a similar program or service has been conducted by your organization or another, please discuss its impact. Does it represent an expansion or duplication of services in your area? If it doesn't, define its potential to serve as a model program locally or nationally.

3. Evaluation

- Describe your plan to document progress and results. Interim and final evaluation and expenditure reports will be required for every grant awarded.

TIP: Set measurable goals for the program and specify your plans to communicate with the foundation during the grant period.

B. ATTACHMENTS

Please include the following attachments in the order indicated:

1. Copy of the current IRS determination letter indicating 501 (c)(3) tax-exempt status.
2. Statement verifying payroll tax payments.
3. Organizational structure, including:
 - List of officers and directors, including occupations, places of employment, and relevant affiliations
 - Description of board responsibilities, including committee assignments
 - Resumes and/or job descriptions of key personnel involved in the project

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4. Finances, including:
 - Grant budget
 - List of other funders, potential funders and amounts committed or requested, including public contracts, individual contributions and other sources of income supporting the project
 - Current board-approved annual operating budget, including expenses and income
 - Most recent audited annual financial statement
5. Letters of support (optional) that substantiate need for the project and collaboration with other organizations
6. Annual report, if available

Common Grant Application Budget

An accurate, detailed budget for proposed projects is a primary requirement of every grantmaker. This portion of your proposal should break down the total budget into the specific items listed below. A narrative description explaining unusual budget items and, if applicable, the percentage of “overhead” applied to the project should precede the itemized listing. “In-Kind” expenses and donations or matching funds should also be spelled out. As long as your budget is typewritten and contains the following information, feel free to submit it in a format comfortable and convenient for you.

A. HEADING

Please specify the budget period (e.g. January 1, 1996 to December 30, 1996).

B. EXPENSES

Please itemize the following expenses. Be sure to include any additional items relevant to your particular program. Provide an expense total.

- Salaries and wages by individual position, specifying full- or part-time positions
- Payroll taxes
- Fringe benefits and related fees
- Consultant and professional fees (e.g. accounting, legal, etc.)
- Travel
- Equipment
- Supplies
- Printing and copying
- Telephone and fax
- Postage and delivery
- Rent
- Utilities
- In-kind expenses
- TOTAL EXPENSES

C. INCOME

Please include all confirmed and anticipated sources of revenue, and indicate their status. Provide an income total.

- Government grants and contracts
- Foundations

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- Corporations
- Earned Income
- United Way, Combined Federal Campaign or other federated campaigns
- Individual contributions
- Fundraising events and product sales
- Membership income
- In-kind support
- Additional revenue
- TOTAL INCOME

Common Grant Application Format—Capital Campaign

Please structure your proposal to provide the following information in the order indicated. Use the headings and subheadings provided. Then, in your own words, address the questions and issues posed in the outline. The questions reflect the general interests and concerns of grantmakers, but are not intended to be conclusive. Additional information pertinent to your particular capital campaign should be included. Please be thorough, yet strive for brevity. Although tightly written proposals are preferred, take the space you need to make your case.

A. NARRATIVE

1. Organization information
 - Summarize your organization's history.
 - State your mission and goals, future challenges, and long-range plans.
 - Describe current programs, activities and accomplishments.

TIP: Differentiate yourself from similar or competing organizations

2. Purpose of Capital Campaign
 - Describe the proposed campaign, including goals and objectives.
 - Identify the need/problem to be addressed, target population and number of people to be served by the project.
 - Define the campaign as new or continuing.
 - Identify other participating organizations in the project and their roles.
 - Provide a timetable for implementation and completion.
 - List the campaign leadership, their strengths and affiliations.
 - Identify regulatory approvals, if required.
 - Discuss implications of this campaign in relation to the organization's ongoing operational expenses.

TIP: If timing is a critical success factor or a "window of opportunity" exists that impacts the success of your capital campaign, please elaborate.

3. Evaluation
 - Describe your plan to document progress and results. Interim and final evaluation and expenditure reports will be required for every grant awarded.

TIP: Set measurable goals for the program and specify your plans to communicate with the foundation during the grant period.

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B. ATTACHMENTS

Please include the following attachments in the order indicated:

1. Copy of the current IRS determination letter indicating 501 (c)(3) tax-exempt status
2. Statement verifying payroll tax payments
3. Organizational structure, including:
 - List of officers and directors, including occupations, places of employment, and relevant affiliations
 - Description of board responsibilities, including committee assignments
4. Financial information, including:
 - Capital campaign budget
 - Describe your fundraising strategy by donor categories; list other foundation and corporate funders and the amounts committed or requested. Include all public funds and individual contributions supporting the project.
 - Specify the amount to be raised from your board.
 - Current board-approved annual operating budget, including expenses and income
 - Most recent audited annual financial statement
5. Letters of support (optional) that substantiate need for the campaign and collaboration with other organizations
6. Annual report, if available
7. Summary of most recent capital campaign, outlining the campaign goal, amount raised, board contributions, and beginning and ending dates

Resources

The Foundation Center at the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh is the local resource for information about foundation, corporate and government grants available to nonprofit organizations and individuals. As an affiliate of The Foundation Center, a national clearinghouse for information on philanthropic giving headquartered in New York City, The Foundation Center at The Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh is part of a nationwide network of grants-information libraries. The collection includes books, periodicals and pamphlets about:

- Grants and grantmaker organizations
- Proposal writing
- Fundraising
- Philanthropy
- Nonprofit management
- Volunteerism

A sample of directory, index, book and periodical titles includes:

- *Directory of Pennsylvania Foundations*
- *The Foundation Directory*
- *Foundation Grants Index*
- *Foundation Fundamentals*
- *National Directory of Corporate Giving*
- *Getting a Grant in the 1990s*
- *Getting Funded: A Complete Guide to Proposal Writing*
- *The Proposal Writers Swipe File*

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The Foundation Center collection also contains annual reports from local and national foundations. For more information, call or visit:

The Foundation Center at the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh
612 Smithfield Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15222
(412) 281-7143
foundation@carnegielibrary.org

Participating Organizations

(This listing is accurate as of April 1996)

Alcoa Foundation
Allegheny Foundation
Aristech Foundation
Armco Foundation
Bayer Foundation
Beaver County Foundation
Bell Atlantic
Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation
Buhl Foundation
Calgon Carbon Corporation
Consolidated Natural Gas Company Foundation
Columbia Gas of Pennsylvania Inc.
Community Foundation serving Bedford, Cambria and Somerset Counties
E. R. Crawford Estate
Dollar Bank
Duquesne Light Company
Eat'n Park Restaurants
Equitable Resources, Inc.
The Grable Foundation
The Heinz Endowments *
The Hillman Foundation, Inc.
Roy A. Hunt Foundation
Integra Financial Corporation
The Mary Hillman Jennings Foundation
Jewish Healthcare Foundation
Laurel Foundation
McCune Foundation *
Mellon Bank Corporation
Richard King Mellon Foundation
National Endowment for Community Renewal *

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The Peoples Natural Gas Company

The Pittsburgh Foundation *+

PNC Bank, N.A.-Charitable Trust

PNC Bank Foundation

PPG Industries Foundation

Robinson Family Foundations (Donald & Sylvia; Alex & Leona)

Scaife Family Foundation

The Shore Fund

Stackpole-Hall Foundation

Staunton Farm Foundation

USX Foundation

Westinghouse Foundation

** These Foundations request preliminary letters of inquiry.*

+ Excluding the A.W. Mellon Fund and special initiatives.