



National
RTAP

2021 Preconference Training

“Operational Rural and Tribal Strategies
for a Connected Network”



Date: October 19-21, 2021

Practical Grant Writing

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Overview

- Identifying Project Need
- Seek Opportunities
- Plan your Grant Proposal
- Write Your Grant Application
- Submit and Follow Up
- Tips
- Resources
- Questions?
- Examples



Identifying Project Need

Think of the specific project, not your whole program

- What is the need?
- Does it fit with regional transportation goals?
- How does it fit with other plan goals?
- Do you coordinate with other entities?
- Who could provide match?



Seek Opportunities

Steps include:

- Look for agencies and organizations that provide grant funding
- Search for entities whose mission aligns with the purpose of the project
- Determine if the grant opportunity specifics encompass the project's need
- Ensure the organization and project request meet all eligibility requirements of the grant
- Request a grant application



Seek Opportunities

FHWA

- Multimodal Planning
- Active Transportation
- Transportation Demand Management
- Federal Lands Access Program

EPA

CCAM

State Infrastructure Funding
Economic Development

Private Foundations

- Ford Foundation
- Frey Foundation
- Pew Charitable Trusts
- McKnight Foundation
- WK Kellogg Foundation
- Charles Steward Mott Foundation

Other Resource Examples

Foundation Directory Online
The Grantsmanship Center



Seek Opportunities: FTA

State-Managed, Rural Eligible

§ 5310

Varies by state. Contracted Service, Vehicles/Capital Assets, Mobility Management, may include Operations

§ 5311

- General Public in rural area (including rural tribes): Administration, Operations, Capital
- Intercity: Private Match, Administration, Operations, Capital

§ 5339

Vehicles, facilities, including electronic equipment and software



Seek Opportunities: FTA

Direct Federal

Access and Mobility Partnership Grants

- Competitive funding to support innovative projects for the transportation disadvantaged that will improve the coordination of transportation services and non-emergency medical transportation services

Tribal Transit Program

- Annual competitive program



Plan Your Grant Proposal

Determine project cost

- What resources are required?
- Is local match required?

Determine community impacts

- Who will benefit?
- Who will be impacted without this project?

Determine project support

- Who could write a letter, come to a Council meeting, etc.?
- Does the application require commitment letters or support letters?



Write Your Grant Proposal

Once you have identified an appropriate grant to apply for, follow these grant writing steps to complete the application:

- Gather information
- Organize your ideas
- Develop a need statement
- Outline proposal
- Provide narrative detail



Gather Information

Read all grant guidelines and requirements

- Check for a preapproval process or required meetings

Determine information needs

- Break out tasks for different partners

Pay attention to scoring criteria; ask if not given

Collect applicable and supporting information for your project, such as:

- Current transportation options and ridership data
- Demographics and other [U.S. Census data](#), visualized on [On the Map](#)
- Geographical data, Google maps, route maps
- Accessibility of health care, employment, and education



Organize your Ideas

Re-read grant guidelines and make notes

Identify main points, concepts, or themes

Determine how your project meets the goals of the funding source

Develop broad concepts (e.g. senior mobility, access to employment, etc.)



Develop a Need Statement

This is the thesis statement supported by entire grant proposal

Present facts and evidence to support the need of the project proposal

- Qualitative data: descriptive, conceptual, collected via surveys, observations, interviews
- Quantitative data: measured, in numbers or counts

Establish your organization as capable of addressing this need



Outline Your Proposal

This initial outline will serve as guidance in writing the narrative detail and adding the supportive data:

- Determine the main sections of the proposal
- Create proposal checklist with internal dates and assign to partners
- Craft brief statements for each section, make sure you hit key themes
- Check off completed sections of the outline

Follow format requirements for the grant you're writing



Narrative: Scope

Craft a clear project scope.

Issue: We need to replace two vehicles to keep our fleet safe and reliable

Background: Two of our vehicles are three years beyond their FTA useful life and using our state fleet analysis they need to be replaced

Project Need: Two 16 passenger body-on-chassis with two lifts, system communications, and bike racks

Ask: We need \$136,000 for two new vehicles and will provide \$17,000 in local match



Narrative: Project Details

Always support the project need statement and scope of work.

- Provide a complete and coherent funding strategy with budget breakouts
- Provide details on the project benefits and community impact
- Provide a project timeline
- Include human interest stories about real events and people (if requested)
- Demonstrate your knowledge, experience, and technical capacity
- Include letters of support from the community, local delegations, and businesses



Submit

Be ready before the deadline

Understand the application submission process

Register in any online grant system well before the deadline

Confirm that everything is complete before you submit

If something is entered incorrectly, it may disqualify the application



Follow up

Stay in contact

- Check the funder's website for updates, clarifications, or other announcements

Ask for feedback if your project was not funded

- Incorporate the suggestions into your next proposal



Grant Writing Tips

Give yourself enough time

- Leaving things to the last minute doesn't give you a chance to respond to unforeseen issues.

Simplify, but don't generalize

- Concise answers with relevant detail are the key.

Avoid repeating exact phrases from grant guidelines

- There's a balance between using key words and repeating whole phrases or sentences. Be sure to follow the instructions and keep the funder's mission in mind.

Revise, edit, and clarify

- Put it aside, then go back and reread. Does it make sense? Are there gaps? Get a second reader, especially someone not familiar with the project.



Don't go alone

- Share relevant data with partners and peers
- When you find articles or sources of useful data, share it
- Share RFPs and grant opportunities
- An opportunity that's not right for you may help another organization
- Offer to provide feedback on grant proposals
- If you know another organization is applying for a grant that you have experience with, offer to help read through their proposal and provide feedback and encouragement
- Share templates and documents
- Help save time and energy

Adapted from Nonprofit AF, <https://nonprofitaf.com/2019/04/20-simple-things-you-can-do-to-help-end-the-nonprofit-hunger-games/>



Common problems

Not reading the instructions

- The response doesn't address the question
- Not enough information to understand the project
- There's no data to back up the project need

Unclear description of current service related to the project

No evidence of coordination or community support

No plan for sustainability

Budget has wrong or missing information

Copying and pasting within the same application

Submitting the same application every year

Resources

[National RTAP Grant Writing Technical Brief](#)

[Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance: Grant Writing - How to develop and write a federal grant proposal](#)

[Foundation Center](#) - Information and resources about philanthropy, including the Foundation Directory Online database of grants and grantmakers

[Grantsmanship Center](#) - Training and publications for non-profits, grantmakers database, and a list of the top foundations and corporate giving programs

[Grants.gov](#) – A website for federal agencies to post discretionary grant opportunities and for grantees to find them and apply

State and Federal Grant Programs - [USDOT](#), [State DOTs](#), [FTA](#), [FHWA](#), [HUD](#), [EPA](#), [USDA](#)

[Technical Assistance Coordination Library \(TACL\)](#)

[Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility \(CCAM\)](#)

Examples



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