

West Virginia Grantmakers Association

Common Grant Application Format



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Before You Begin - Strategies for a Successful Application

What is the purpose of the Common Grant Application Format?

West Virginia Grantmakers Association created the Common Grant Application Format in 2006 to simplify the process of requesting and making grants. It is designed to benefit both grantseekers and foundation and corporate decision-makers who review grant proposals. It is not a form to be completed. It is a format to be used as an outline for organizing and writing proposals.

How should you use (and how shouldn't you use) the Common Grant Application?

Grantseekers should contact the grantmaker to which they are applying to confirm the application format preferred. Many West Virginia grantmakers will accept the Common Grant Application and others will have their own application and requirements.

How should you start?

Know your purpose. Clarify your organization's priorities and purpose in seeking funds. Develop a case statement for your project.

What should you do next?

Conduct research to identify foundation and corporations that make grants to your type of organization and in your geographic area. Use the resources of The Foundation Center (as outlined below), visit websites, request annual reports and obtain proposal guidelines. Make certain the purpose of your proposal fits within the funder's guidelines. Now you are ready to consider writing a proposal. But, first, find out about each funder's application process. Some do not want a proposal right away. Many want you to begin by writing a letter of inquiry. Do not write a full proposal if a letter of inquiry is required.

TIP

Do not simply produce a mass mailing of a single proposal. Take care to tailor each request, particularly in the cover letter and the executive summary, to the specific interests of each funder.

The Foundation Center - A Local Resource for Grant Seekers

Local Foundation Center cooperating collections are part of a nationwide network of grants-information libraries. They are affiliates of The Foundation Center, a national clearinghouse for information on philanthropic giving. Library collections include books, periodicals and pamphlets about:

- Grants and funding organizations
- Proposal writing
- Fundraising
- Nonprofit management
- Volunteerism

Foundation Center cooperating collections can currently be found in Charleston, Morgantown, Shepherdstown, Parkersburg and Wheeling. For more information about The Foundation Center or to locate a cooperating collection in your area, please visit www.FoundationCenter.org.

TIP

Define your project before beginning your research. Find the funders that match your project. Don't just chase the money!

Common Grant Application Format Outline

Ensure you submit a complete application

A complete application should include the following items in the order indicated:

- A. Cover Letter
- B. Common Grant Application Format Cover Sheet
- C. Narrative (based on the CGA guidelines)
- D. Attachments (as indicated on page 4)

Further explanation of each item is provided below and on the following pages.

TIP

Submit the correct number of copies. This will vary with each organization. Be sure to check each funder's requirements.

A. Write a cover letter (1 page)

Write a one-page cover letter that includes the following:

- Name of the program
- Purpose of the program
- A strategic reason for the funder to consider the program
- Amount requested
- Time period of the program or project
- Name of the contact person and contact information

The letter should be signed by the executive director, and if the request is for \$5,000 or more, then the board president or chairperson should provide a second signature. If the proposal is a collaborative request, signatures of the participating organizations' representatives must be provided.

B. Complete the Common Grant Application Format Cover Sheet

C. Write a narrative

Write a narrative that follows the CGA outline below, using the headings and subheadings provided. As long as the narrative flows in the designated order, feel free to include information you believe is important to make your case. The questions are not intended to be all inclusive. 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; do not avoid or dismiss it.

Avoid including the same information in different sections of the narrative. Be thorough, yet strive for brevity. More is not necessarily better!

1. Organizational information (1 page)

Provide background on your organization. If you are an affiliate of another organization, please describe.

- State your mission
- Summarize your organization's history
- Outline current programs and activities
- Highlight accomplishments

TIP

Share your passion, your organization's uniqueness and strengths and how you will make a difference through your outcomes.

2. Purpose of grant (1.5 pages)

Provide an overview of your project.

- **Problem and Need.** Identify the problem to be addressed and the needs to be met by the project. What unique service(s) will the community be deprived of if you do not undertake this project?
- **Program/Project Goal.** Describe the goals and overall impact of the project or program.
- **Program/Project Design.** Describe your program objectives, activities, strategies, staffing, partners, timelines and explain how the design will enable you to address the problem or need. Identify the project as a new or continuing program.
- **Sustainability.** If your request is for \$5,000 or more, please specify your plans for financing the project at the termination of the grant. List other financing sources or strategies that you are developing.

TIP

Be clear and succinct. Differentiate yourself from similar or competing organizations.

Common Grant Application Format Outline (continued)

TIP

If a similar program or device has been conducted by your organization or another, 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.

3. Evaluation (.5 pages)

A final evaluation and expenditure report will be required for every grant awarded. It is important to design your evaluation process at the outset and begin to collect data from the beginning of the project.

- **Outcomes.** Describe the proposed project outcomes, with reference to long-range plans of the organization. What outcomes do you want to produce by the end of the first year, second year, etc? If your program is continuing, what intended outcomes have been achieved thus far?
- **Measurement.** Outline your plan to document progress and results. How will you measure expected outcomes and the effectiveness of your activities?

TIP

Set measurable and attainable goals. Be realistic.

D. Attachments

Include the following attachments in the order indicated:

1. **Verification of 501(c)(3) tax-exempt and public charities status.**
2. **Organizational structure** – no more than 1 page
 - List of officers and directors, including professional affiliations.
 - List of key staff members and qualifications.
3. **Financial information.**
 - Program/Project Budget, including amount requested in grant
 - Organization's Current Budget
 - Most recent audited financial statement if request is \$5,000 or more.
4. **Organizational information**
 - Annual report or strategic plan, if available.

E. Budget Format (1 page)

An accurate, detailed budget for proposed projects is a requirement of every funder. Your total budget should be broken down into the items specified below. As long as your budget is typewritten and contains the required information, you may submit it in a format convenient for you. A sample format follows.

■ Budget Heading

- ⇒ Specify the budget period (e.g., January 1, 2006 to December 31, 2006).
- ⇒ Specify the requested amount and the total cost of the project.

■ Revenue

If the requested amount is different from the total cost of the project, itemize all confirmed and anticipated sources of revenue, and provide a revenue total. Also, indicate the amount of funds, if any, for this project that will be drawn down from your operating budget and/or reserve fund.

■ Expenses

Itemize your expenses and provide an expense total. Include any additional items relevant to your particular program or project.

■ Narrative (if applicable)

This section should include

- ⇒ An explanation of any unusual budget items
- ⇒ In-kind expenses and donations or matching funds, including volunteer hours to be leveraged

TIP

If you would like to attach more information about your program or organization, such as newspaper articles, brochures and the like, limit your attachments to one or two small items. Confirm that the grantmaker accepts these types of attachments.

Common Grant Application Cover Sheet

Date of Application: _____

Legal Name of Organization: _____

Year Founded: _____ Current Annual Operating Budget: _____

Contact Person/Title: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Phone: (____) _____ Fax: (____) _____ Email _____

Website: _____

Project Name: _____

Purpose: _____

Amount Requested: _____ Total Project Cost: _____

Project Goals: _____

Beginning and Ending Dates of the Project: _____

Geographic Area to be Served: _____

I certify, to the best of my knowledge, that:

The tax-exempt status of this Organization is still in effect,

This Organization does not support or engage in any terrorist activity, and

If a grant is awarded to this Organization, the proceeds of that grant will not be distributed to or used to benefit any organization or individual supporting or engaged in terrorism, or used for any other unlawful purpose.

Signature(s):

Executive Director

Date

If request is for \$5,000 or more, please also include the signature of the President of the Board of Directors.

President, Board of Directors

Date