
MAKING A SUCCESSFUL GRANT APPLICATION



STRONG PROJECT DEVELOPMENT, A WELL ARTICULATED NEED, AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT ARE ALL KEY TO A SUCCESSFUL GRANT APPLICATION.

Demonstrate a need for your project.

- Show that it addresses an unmet need in your community.
- Is recommended in a comprehensive, strategic, marketing, recreation or other planning document.
- Is identified as an area of focus in a county, regional or state plan.
- Is a national objective (important in determining State's CDBG eligibility):
 - Benefits low-moderate income persons
 - Addresses slums or blight, or
 - Meets a particularly urgent community development need
- Describe in terms of job creation, if possible.
- Show that you've made every effort to raise funds on your own but that the project won't happen without the funder's contribution.

Show that your project is well planned.

- Write a **Scope of Work** (this will change as you gather more information)- a narrative of the work to be done.
- Technical work that you may need to develop your Scope of Work (hire consultant if needed):
 - Conceptual Designs
 - Maps/ schematic drawings of proposed work
 - Construction drawings
- Opinions from contractors on steps, process and cost
- Work with regulatory agencies to determine permitting needs/hearing requirements (pre-construction analysis)
- Begin or discuss SEQRA (State Environmental Quality Review) process
- Develop a **Schedule of Work**- you don't need to use specific dates yet—e.g. Month 1-3: execute contract with funder; issue Request for Proposals (RFP) to subcontractor (with less complicated projects this can be a very simple timeline)

Prove that your project has public support & has been properly vetted.

- Public informational meetings/ open house
- Make public feedback easy- website
- Included as a recommendation in an adopted plan
- Newspaper clippings
- Letters of support
- Legislator support
- Supporting resolutions
- Favorable questionnaire or survey results

☐ Accurately cost your project.

- Use vendor quotes, if possible (a quote does not commit you!)
- Research the cost of similar projects
- Attach proof and use a known standard of how you calculated in-kind (value of donated materials, borrowed equipment & volunteer time), such as:
 - DOT's equipment rental rate schedule;
 - the potential funder's own standard for valuing volunteer hours;
 - prove actual market rate and explain how you derived it; or
 - document the actual value of professional services (review specific grant guidelines for eligibility).

☐ Provide evidence of good management.

- Talk about how awesome your group is and how its membership contributes to the project.
- Talk up your project manager, grant administrator, and fiscal folks- some grants ask for resumes.
- Briefly discuss past successful projects and grant administration history.

☐ Illustrate how the project will make a difference.

- Provides a unique service or amenity; improve residents' quality of life.
- Spur local economy, capture underserved market demand, create jobs!

☐ Make your project sexy! Many applications are strengthened by the ability of the funder to publicize your project. Some questions to ask your group:

- Is our project unique or a twist or improvement of something already being done?
- Have we solicited unique partnerships and resources?
- Are we sharing a service with a neighbor or streamlining a municipal function?
- Could this be a demonstration project or model for other communities?
- How can we leverage funding through smaller sources, such as local foundations?

☐ Keep your positive attitude! If you do not get funded, get the application score and/or comments, if available. Is it possible to improve for the next round?