

TIPS FOR WRITING A SUCCESSFUL GC22 ARTS & CULTURE GRANT APPLICATION

Use this as a guide to help your organization submit a strong application.

A grant application is a story that illustrates the who, what, when, where, how and why of your organization. Make sure all the pieces are there to tell a complete and compelling story that reflects the reality of your organization at this particular moment in time. No organization is perfect, and we welcome your transparency in providing a complete picture of how things are going.

Requirements exist for a reason. Bravo receives 99% of its funding from 17 local governments through hotel/motel tax. Bravo must be a good steward of these public funds and gathers application information with this in mind.

Timelines and deadlines are critical. We recommend putting reminders into your calendar now so you have enough time to complete the application by the deadline. Bravo's application is open for three weeks, and late applications cannot be accepted so we can be fair to all applicants.

Start early. Completing grant applications takes time and requires the grant writer to pull information from a variety of sources. Solid applications rarely get started and completed the day they are due.

Meet with Bravo staff by January 14, 2022 to verify eligibility and discuss ways to strengthen your application. This is required for new applicants while returning applicants are encouraged to speak with staff prior to submission so we can help ease the process, provide clarity, and better understand how you define your program.

Ask for help. Really! We exist to support you. Give staff a call, send an email, or set up an in-person or online meeting so we can continue to build a strong relationship. Take advantage of new opportunities to ask staff grant questions on Zoom during drop-in Open Office Hours on [Thursday, January 6 from 4:30-5:30pm](#) or [Wednesday, January 12 from noon-1pm](#). To attend, click on one of the above links or request a virtual meeting invite.

Gather the required documents and information. These details are found within the guidelines and again in the application, and preparation is key. Make sure documents are saved in the right file format and that accounting information is up to date.

Follow directions and answer the question. Limit a response to the question that was posed. Include extra, focused information in optional narratives throughout the application or at the end.

Be clear, specific, and compelling. Write simply and keep it to the point to persuade the reviewer that your organization and proposed program are needed, unique, achievable and impactful. Word counts are in place to keep things manageable for the applicant and the reviewer.

Write with a reviewer in mind. Assume the reviewer knows nothing about your organization and that the only clues and evidence they have access to are found within the submitted application. Don't use jargon or acronyms unless you explain those unique terms.

Build in time to have someone read and review your organization's application, preferably someone who does not have detailed knowledge of your organization. Seriously consider their feedback and make changes or adjustments as needed. If they flag something, chances are a reviewer will have similar questions or concerns so make sure those issues can be refined and resolved before the submission deadline.

Make sure your mission, program, and budget align. Once your grant application has been drafted, review it as a whole to make sure all the parts and narratives support one another. For example, does your organization’s programming align directly with its mission, vision and values? Does the overall budget and program budget echo the stated organizational goals and strategies?

Highlight your organization’s strengths in addition to your needs. Create an application that demonstrates your organization is worthy of funding. Write from an asset-based perspective that shows your organization can provide solutions, address challenges, affect change, and impact the community. Help reviewers see how Bravo’s investment helps your organization overcome barriers to do important work.

Use support materials to illustrate your organization’s mission in action. We want to see carefully selected images or videos of vibrant programming and how your organization is interacting with the community. We know not everyone has access to professional photographers so compelling candid shots or videos are welcomed additions. If you are proud of it, we want to see it!

Financial data demonstrates sound management. We want to see that you have enough cash and resources on hand to offer consistent programming and meet obligations. If things have been bumpy or continue to be, explain why. We value honest reflections about where things are and how your organization is reacting to make sure operations can continue.

Budgets should communicate realistic expenses and show that you can leverage other funds to support your mission and program. Bravo wants to make strong community investments so it’s critical to show that funds are used appropriately and that plans are feasible. Bravo encourages organizations to pay artists, performers, designers, directors and other creatives when appropriate, and this adds validity to the proposal.

Contingencies show us how your organization will thoughtfully respond to unexpected changes and how you will adapt or scale back plans. If you don’t have the details now, help us understand how you will be ready for whatever comes next.

DEAI Actions are not a trend. Statements ring hollow if there are no actions behind it. We want to know specifics on how your organization is prioritizing and actively working to advance Diversity, Equity, Accessibility and Inclusion. We know it is hard to challenge cultural norms and inequities, but even small actions create ripples of change. Doing nothing is not an option.

Understanding your organization’s actual and desired audiences is key. Very few organizations can be all things to all people. It is important to know who your organization is really serving and that you are clear on where expansion and wider inclusion can happen. Audiences should be defined and programming targeted to them. Involve your known audience and invite those who don’t participate to see how your organization could make a bigger impact. What barriers are keeping someone from participating? What steps can you take to remove them?

Strategic marketing should intentionally connect with and widen your audience. Use whatever marketing strategies that work for your organization. Most importantly, get out into the community and develop relationships. This helps you understand the diverse wants and needs so you can adjust programming as needed.

Optional Narratives are strongly encouraged. Remember a grant application tells the story of your organization. We include these sections because we know there is often more to say than we ask. This is an opportunity to tell us the whole story so please consider how best to use these spaces. These can be the most impactful answers on your application.