

Inclusive & Equitable Grant Writing

You or your organization have recognized a need and are hoping to secure funding to support a new initiative, expand programming, develop materials, add additional staffing, purchase equipment, or acquire other resources to help fill the gap. You have identified some potential funding opportunities, but want to ensure that your proposal is crafted in a way that is inclusive and equitable. This guide will provide ideas for you and your team to consider throughout the grant-writing process.

COLLABORATION

Grant-writing should be a team effort. Including different perspectives throughout the grant-writing process will help to ensure that your proposal is thoughtful, relevant, and inclusive.

- Most importantly, do not embark on a grant-writing adventure without consulting with the people/communities who are most deeply impacted by the need your proposal aims to address. They are the experts and can provide their perspectives on the issues and the best ways to address them. They should be included at every step of the grant-writing process.
- Always ask permission from any people or organizations you would like to include in your project and be thoughtful about which partner should take the lead on different aspects of the project, from proposal-writing through project completion. Make sure everyone understands the scope of the project, expectations, and compensation. Consider drafting a Memorandum of Understanding to ensure agreement on each partner's responsibilities and involvement with the project.



Engaging in an equitable and inclusive grant-writing process takes time.

- Make sure your team is diverse and includes people who have different identities and lived experiences to inform the project. Consider race, gender, ability, position within the organization and community, and people with other identities that will contribute diverse perspectives. Be sure to include the people who will be doing the work and the people who will be impacted by the work. Utilize the team's expertise throughout the entire grant writing process.
- How we talk and write about people and communities matters. In your grant writing, use inclusive language and recognize that terminology can change. Don't assume you know the most inclusive or current language or terms to use, even if you are part of the community. Ask your team members and community experts. Be intentional.

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- If you are including people on your team who are not paid by your organization to do grant-writing, be clear about expectations and consider ways to compensate them for their time and expertise. As noted above, you need to include people with some specific expertise, such as lived experience and knowledge of the community need, as well as expertise related to grant writing and budgets, as described below. How will they be compensated for their time? Is it equitable?
- It may seem obvious, but make sure your team includes someone who has experience with writing grants or is willing to do the research to find out if the funder has a history of funding projects similar to yours, what their specific requirements are for the proposals and for grantees who receive funding. Some grants have very specific requests or require a lot of reporting and documentation. Depending on the amount of the grant award, it may be more trouble than it is worth or end up costing your organization more money in staff time than expected. Some funders, especially those that are smaller and/or local, may be able to offer you more support and guidance in the process if you are new to grant writing. Many larger funders will offer webinars or other types of guidance about their expectations and grant-making processes.
- It's also important to include a person with a financial or budgeting background to help put accurate dollar amounts to the team's ideas by ensuring that all direct and in-direct costs are covered within your proposal in a way that accurately reflects the project's expenses and needs, including staff time to account for on-going documentation and report-writing.

TIME INVESTMENT

Engaging in an equitable and inclusive grant-writing process takes time. You cannot consult with experts and constituents, brainstorm solutions and ideas, draft a thoughtful narrative, and put together a comprehensive budget without investing time.

- Often, requests for proposals are released and you may only have a few weeks until the deadline. It is important for you, your organization (staff and board), and your team to consider whether or not the timeframe will allow you to draft the best proposal to fund your project. If not, maybe the funding source has a calendar you can monitor for future opportunities as you work on your proposal? Maybe the funder will allow you to adjust the budget or the grant deliverables throughout the life of the project giving you a little more flexibility as you craft your proposal, and if funded, carry out your project? You don't want to rush a proposal and receive the funding, only to realize that what you were funded to do isn't what is needed or is missing an important component.
- While some organizations have dedicated grant-writers, many organizations rely upon staff members who have additional duties or volunteers to write grants. Honestly consider if this immediate funding opportunity is worth the time, energy, distraction from other work, and additional stress to paid and unpaid staff. It may be! Or maybe not. Or maybe not right now.

Inclusive & Equitable Proposal and Budgeting Checklist

Once your team is ready to start drafting your proposal and creating a budget, there are a number of things to consider and include as a way to ensure that your project can meet as many of the diverse needs of the people or community it is intended to reach as possible. Thinking through all of the possibilities will help you create a more accurate budget of expenses required of an inclusive and equitable project.

CONSULTANTS

Make sure you have enough of them and the right ones to do the job! Include funding to support the work of consultants, including (but not limited to): subject matter experts, presenters, authors and designers of resources, reviewers, and advisory committee members. This includes community members with lived experience that you are asking to contribute to the project.

- Equitable pay** – Compensate people what they are worth. Do not expect consultants and project partners to donate their time and expertise or to contribute their own resources to your project unless that has been agreed upon in advance. If a partner has agreed to donate their time or resources to the project, be sure to document it as an in-kind donation.
- Accurate assessment of the time the project will take** – Carefully consider the time commitment you are asking partners to make. You may provide a generous hourly rate, but if you do not propose enough hours to complete the task(s), you are still undercutting your partners.
- Travel** (time, cab fare, bus fare, mileage, airfare, car rental, parking, tolls) – Be sure to include compensation for all of the consultants' travel, including for their time spent traveling. Craft your narrative and budget in a way that gives consultants options for how they travel so that they can choose the mode that works best for them.
- Accommodations** – Research which hotels/rentals in your area are accessible for folks with disabilities. For example, a wheelchair-accessible room may cost more than other rooms, budget accordingly.
- Food** – Provide adequate funding for people to nourish themselves in ways that meet their dietary, cultural, and health needs. When possible, allow for flexibility. For example, a daily per diem can offer more options than a meal-by-meal allowance.
- Incidentals** – Cover expenses such as tips for servers, hotel staff, housekeeping, drivers, etc... Not all funding streams will cover these types of expenses. Advocate with funders about the importance of fully reimbursing consultants and ensuring that people who rely on tips for income are fairly compensated. Consider alternative sources of funding or creative work-arounds to cover incidental expenses.
- Supplies** – In addition to their time and expertise, consultants often need additional supplies to do the work you are asking them to do. For example, consider including line items for postage, office supplies, computer ink, or research materials to support their work.
- Documentation of Expenses** - Many funders require receipts for expenses in order for those costs to be covered or reimbursed. Are there creative ways to address situations where receipts may not be provided, such as taking a photo of the tip or ensuring that incidentals are included within a per diem or considered when determining a wage or salary? In some cases, you may need to work with funders to strategize solutions and be sure to budget for these expenses within your proposal, rather than expecting staff or consultants to absorb these expenses.
- Evaluation** – Depending on your project, you may want to include funding to hire consultants who can evaluate the success of your efforts, including how well the project met its inclusivity and accessibility goals.

WRITTEN MATERIALS

- Translation and transcreation** – Identify the most common languages in your service area. Translate or transcreate written materials accordingly. Translation is word replacement from one language to another while transcreation is adapting content from one language to another to parallel tone, intent, and style that will be better received within the culture. If your project focuses on a particular community or population, include the languages that are most common among them. Include funding to translate and/or transcreate project materials.
- Content reviewers** – Not only should you include funding to support content-matter experts when drafting written materials, be sure to include compensation for consultants to review the translated/transcreated materials to ensure accuracy and relevance to the community you are serving. See consultants section.

Consider planning and budgeting for both printed and electronic versions of documents to increase accessibility.

Electronic materials

- 508 compliance** (federal statute that outlines electronic and information technology accessibility guidelines) – Allow time and resources, including compensation for consultant or staff time, to support compliance.

Printed materials

- Printing in multiple languages** – If you are planning to print a resource that you've developed and translated or transcreated into multiple languages, be sure to account for the additional costs associated with running multiple print jobs.
- Font size and line spacing** – Be mindful that font size and line spacing can significantly impact accessibility. Larger print and additional white space enhances accessibility, but can increase page numbers and printing costs. Be sure to budget accordingly!
- Type of paper** – Heavier paper weight/density can make it easier for people to read double-sided documents and can make pages easier to turn, but may increase printing costs.



LIVE, RECORDED, OR VIRTUAL SPEAKER EVENTS

- Speakers** – In addition to considerations outlined in the “Consultants” section, be sure to include compensation to adequately cover the presenter’s time for planning, preparation, and follow-up. This is especially important if they will be expected to attend planning meetings, develop slides or handouts to accompany their presentation, or engage in post-event evaluation. Be sure to cover any related travel expenses.
- Microphones, speakers, screens, and other equipment** – Budget for equipment that will enhance audio-visual accessibility. For larger spaces, more speakers or screens may be needed.
- Interpreters** – Depending upon the length of the assignment, multiple interpreters may be needed or required. See the “Consultants” section for additional considerations.
- Interpretation equipment** – You may choose to use headsets that are specially-designed for interpretation at events. If so, be sure including a line item for equipment rental or purchase. For sign language interpretation, make sure the interpreter can be seen by all participants. This may require the use of live streaming video that can be shown on screens throughout the venue. If hosting a virtual event, make sure you’ve budgeted for a level of service with your virtual-meeting platform/appropriate plan to allow for interpretation.
- Captioning** – Captioning should be provided for all events. Budget to include funds for live captioners (See “Consultants” section.), as appropriate, and the necessary equipment to broadcast the captions to all participants.
- Transcripts** – For recorded events, include funding to cover the costs of having a transcript developed that can accompany the recording, particularly in cases where the original event was not captioned or the captions cannot be used in the recorded version.

MARKETING AND OUTREACH

The success of any project or event can hinge on successful marketing. Identify experts who can help you plan effective ways that align with possible grant restrictions on advertising to reach your target audience or potential attendees, including members of those communities. Plan and budget accordingly to support their efforts.

Venues and equipment:

- Accessible space** – If your project involves meetings, gatherings, or events, be sure to plan for the venue by considering not only the number of people you hope to include, but the amount of space per person that the venue needs to have in order to be fully-accessible. For example, a meeting room may be able to accommodate 50 participants when chairs are placed right next to each other, but only 25 when space is allowed for people and mobility devices. Larger rooms tend to be more expensive to rent; plan and budget accordingly. Also, make sure that your furniture is accommodating to all sizes.
- Equipment rental** – As noted in previous sections of this resource, your event may require microphones, speakers, screens, and other equipment to ensure accessibility. Some venues may include certain options within their pricing or for an additional fee. In other cases, you may need to budget these expenses separately. Either way, be sure to include these costs in your proposal!
- Lighting** – Depending on the venue’s lighting, it may be necessary to supplement it or adapt it with lamps or additional sources of light. Again, these may be costs that are included within the venue’s pricing or may need to be accounted for separately.

- Bathrooms** – Be sure that the venue provides easy access to bathrooms for people with all types of bodies. Consider both disability and gender. If the venue is not able to provide accessible bathrooms for all people, identify alternative options. A different venue? Renting portable bathrooms?

- Parking accessibility** – If the venue does not have sufficient accessible parking, include funds to provide alternate options, such as an accessible shuttle service, within your proposal.

PARTICIPANTS

As you are planning and drafting your funding proposal, think about the barriers that might be faced by event attendees or program participants. How can your project be designed to reduce those barriers? You can plan an amazing event, but if the intended audience is unable to attend, you will not have met your goal. Similar to the considerations for consultants, think about how you can make it easy for participants to take advantage of the services you're offering or to attend the event you're planning. Consider the following list of options you may be able to include within your funding proposal:

- Travel** (mileage, cab fare, bus fare, gas cards, airfare, car rental, parking, tolls)
- Accommodations** (hotel, vacation rental properties, other rentals)
- Food** (meals, snacks, gift cards)
- Scholarships** (full- or partial scholarships to reduce costs to participate)

- Barter** (For example, invite participants to volunteer at the event in exchange for free registration.)
- Childcare or adult care** (Provide free on-site care or reimbursement. Plan for any related safety and liability protections.)

ACCURATELY REFLECT THE TIME YOUR PROJECT WILL TAKE

Planning, developing, and implementing equitable and inclusive projects takes time. Be sure to account for the hours your team will spend ensuring that the resource, program, or event you are planning reaches those it is intended to reach. It's worth the investment! In your narrative and budget, attend to:

- Additional staff time** - Include an increased percentage of staff time to cover the additional hours necessary to arrange for accessibility needs.
- Staff development** – Budget for staff to attend trainings, workshops, and conferences that will build their long-term capacity to create equitable and inclusive programs and practices.
- Follow-up** – Build in time for staff to de-brief after the project is complete. Document those processes that worked well, lessons learned, and suggestions for improvement.
- Timelines** – Make sure your timelines are realistic. Build in additional time for development and adequate review of materials. Account for the time translators, editors, captioners, printers, and other partners need to do their work.

ADVOCATE WITH FUNDERS

Grant-making is serious business. Funders strive to be good stewards of their assets, putting parameters and restrictions in place with the goals of making sure precious resources are being distributed and used in ways that are honest, transparent, and in line with their mission and values. Despite good intentions, these rules and required documentation can put these funding opportunities out of reach for many potential applicants, particularly smaller, grassroots organizations, community-specific organizations, and organizations and individuals who provide services for marginalized people and communities. Share with funders your ideas for reducing barriers to funding that will allow a more diverse pool of applicants to partner with them. Consider developing partnerships with other organizations that can help to overcome these obstacles.

RESOURCES

[Resources on Equitable Language](#) from Grants Plus

[Embracing Equitable and Empowering Language in Grant Writing](#) from Grants Plus & Re:Charity

[Designing Accessible Resources for People with Disabilities and Deaf Individuals](#) from Vera Institute of Justice

[Inclusive Event Planning](#) from The National Center for College Students with Disabilities (NCCSD) Clearinghouse

[Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Event Planning Checklist](#) from Columbia School of Business

[Grant-Making with a Racial Equity Lens](#) from Grantcraft

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