

Grant Writing Essentials for Artists

ALL THE THINGS YOU WISH YOU KNEW BEFORE APPLYING...



A WORKSHOP SPONSORED BY THE CT OFFICE OF THE ARTS

CREATED FOR THE FUNDING BOOSTER PROGRAM

OFFERED THROUGH THE [CULTURAL COALITION SERVING EASTERN CT](#) & [THE CULTURAL ALLIANCE OF FAIRFIELD COUNTY](#)

2

Top Challenges For Artists Post-COVID

- 1. BUILDING BACK** - “Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation” [jobs](#) dropped from 2.5 to 1.2 million between Feb - April 2020. As of April 2022 arts jobs have rebounded to 2.26M - great news but still down 10%. ([Americans for the Arts](#)).
- 2. STAYING RELEVANT** - Are you READI - Relevant, Equitable, Accessible, Diverse, Inclusive? Do your artistic goals speak to your community/audience, and those you want to attract? Are you thinking “outside the box” for new ways to expand/grow; or are you static, unchanging? Are you mindful of the future that you are co-creating with others?
- 3. COMPETITION** - The pandemic has highlighted how important arts/culture are to connecting people in meaningful ways, but audiences are hesitant to return & inflation pinches all pockets.
- 4. FINANCIAL SECURITY** - How do we survive with extreme challenges to earned income?



3

Let's Talk R.E.A.D.I. Shared Terminology

Click [HERE](#) to review the CT Office of the Arts READI Framework

Relevance - Meaningful or purposeful connection to one's aspirations, interests or experiences in relation to current society or culture.

Equity - Policy and practice that is fair and just; processes and systems designed to ensure that we distribute resources without bias.

Access - Pathways that invite participation and communication and that provide opportunities for constituents from all populations.

Diversity - A mosaic of individuals offering unique perspectives and experience influenced by their ethnic, cultural, social, economic and ability backgrounds.

Inclusion - Active participation by constituents who represent and reflect communities we are all a part of.



4

Why READI?

For your BUSINESS- Being READI is good for your bottom line. Expanding access to your work and programs will boost participation, increase your income, and make you more attractive to funders.

For your ARTISTIC MISSION - Being READI is good as you may be a gatekeeper (in a position of power)! Acknowledging this role and how it can be used to create a more equitable future for our communities is our social responsibility.

For your COMMUNITY - Being READI is good as you are more accurately serving your WHOLE community not simply the ones that have participated thus far.

For your FUTURE - In order to stay competitive you must be relevant! Continually evaluating how you're marketing your business, how you're responding to current needs or addressing current and historical issues, how you're expanding reach by partnering.



5

Authentic Relationships vs. Partnerships “Co-creation”

A partnership sounds limited, and contractual. Organizations and artists should be more interested in creating relationships. Each side must contribute and benefit. The relationships hopefully extend beyond one program, or idea. It should be built by asking: what are your goals, and what are mine, and what can we co-create to satisfy both and raise each other up. Don't come in with a “package wrapped in a bow”. Allow for co-creation, which means giving up some level of control. It involves building trust.

EXAMPLE: Working with schools - Schools are incredibly overwhelmed. Learning the CT curricula goals for the grade level you want to work with, and researching that schools strategic goals/mission so you are addressing their goals is essential. Build relationships with the teachers and administration that allows them to co-create a program to satisfy their goals. PTO/A's often have funds for in-school programming with artists!

Being READI and willing to co-create a program/event to maximize benefit for both parties is key! Building trust and taking time for a relationship to grow will yield a much deeper impact for both sides, and hopefully create a long-standing relationship.



6

Funders Have Missions Too, What Are They Looking For? RELEVANCE & COMMUNITY IMPACT

- **Evaluation & Adaptation** - Do you self-evaluate; synthesize what you learn, and how it will change what you do in the future? Do you adapt as feedback indicates need for changes?
- **Diversity, Racial Equity, Inclusion, Cultural Competency** – Requires review of behaviors, structures, and practices. If you're not having conversations about equity in your business you will struggle to be relevant moving forward.
- **Building Authentic Relationships** – Breakdown silos. Funders are looking for the greatest community impact (make the most of every dollar). Collaboration is a key piece to expanding impact!
- **Fiscal Responsibility** – Is your budget clear? Does it accurately reflect the financial needs of the project? Are funds allocated appropriately to reflect your artistic mission?



7

Financial Security - Diversify Your Sources *Contributed vs. Earned Income*

Contributed - Given

- Individual Donations - Unrestricted (can be used for anything) unless donor specifies use.
- Grants - Must be used for the purpose in which funds were awarded. Some grants are for general operating (can be used for almost anything). Grants can be cumbersome to apply for and manage but typically yield more \$\$ than sponsorships – \$1-5K for programs.

Earned - Purchased

- Business Sponsorships - Because the Business is “buying” marketing presence. Easier to apply for and manage than grants. Typically supports events or areas with lots of marketing, \$250-\$1K depending on reach.
- Sales, Merchandise
- Program Registration Fees/Ticket Fees
- Special Event Income
- Interest on savings, long term savings, etc.

8

Are You Ready for Grants?

Do you have...

1. A clearly defined **artist statement/bio/purpose statement and outline of your programming**, with descriptions, goals, a way to evaluate if you're successful, and a well-made budget.
2. **Financial Statements.** Do you have an income statement and tax returns for past 3 years? Are your expenses and income sources clear? Do you have a track record of sound financial practices? **TRANSPARENCY IS KEY!**
3. **Capacity.** Arguably the most important. Do you have the capacity and time to complete a competitive grant application? Do you have time to manage the reward and reporting if you get the grant? Start small and build-up.

Grants are competitive at every level. Going in "eyes-wide-open" puts you in a stronger position AND gives you essential copy/verbiage to write grant proposals.



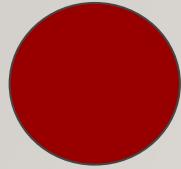
9

Grants Where to Find Them & How to Approach Them

- **Utilize Free Services.** [Designated Regional Service Organization](#) Websites (DRSO) , Bank Foundation Directories, libraries, [CT Department of Economic & Community Development](#). Follow funders on Social Media/FB especially area community foundations.
- **Look Inward.** Where do your customers work? Blanket “Letters of Inquiry” yield VERY little fruit.
- **Start Small & Local.** If you’ve never received a grant try a local bank foundation or sponsorship. Regional banks with foundations/sponsorships. A list [HERE](#) of CT banks.
- **Investigate Your Target.** Funding Priorities Line-up? (CHECK) Guidelines are relevant? (CHECK) Read through FAQ’s? (CHECK) Looked at past awardees? Anyone look like me? (CHECK) (CHECK)
- **Make the Call!** The Grant Officer is not your enemy. Chat them up. Explain your idea. Be passionate about what you do/impact. **Follow their guidance.**



10



Does the Program, Fit the Grant?

You can't fit a square peg into a round hole.

Never sacrifice the integrity of your program to fit into the funding priorities of a grant. Not only is it obvious to the grant reviewer, but you're not staying true to your vision.

HOWEVER, sometimes funding priorities make us think "outside the box" about ways we SHOULD be building relationships, opportunities we might be missing to be more equitable, and ways to reach new audiences and adapt.

Keep an open mind, but always be aware of where you're headed.





General Rules of Grant Writing

Make it hard for them to say no!

- 1. The technical writer vs. the emotional writer** – BE BOTH! Data drives points home, emotion connects the reader to your vision and its impact.
- 2. ANSWER THE QUESTION!** Repeat the question, or provide headers to make sure you're answering everything. Multi-pronged questions are very common.
- 3. Use their words right back at them!!** Repeat key words to support your points. Don't be long-winded.
- 4. Just like in dating... Confidence is a good thing!** As long as it's mixed with a touch of humility.
- 5. Don't show a picture of desperation or provide general information,** funders want to know how your program is going to make an impact/fill an essential need.
- 6. Watch-out for Character/Word Limits** – UGGHHH Character Limits... typically WITH spaces.
- 7. Presentation Matters!** The easier you make it for the reviewer to read the better your chances.

12

Breaking it down... Both Technical & Emotional Writing

- **Tell a story.** Introduce the argument and main players, outline the issue, connect it to the larger world of your community, elicit emotion, and drive it home with data. It should flow like a story!
- **Keep the voice.** Don't "lift" data directly from the web, it feels forced. Make the data fit your narrative and beware of using jargon.

Let's look at an example...



13

BOTH TECHNICAL & EMOTIONAL WRITING

Typical Grant Question: *What need will your project address?*

Example: I pride myself on my business's ability to adapt, shift, and respond to the needs of the community. Therefore, when the pandemic hit and my business temporarily shut its doors, I didn't miss a beat. The staff, utilizing the resources we had, shifted to working from home and within weeks our programs moved to virtual platforms. Now, almost a year later, when over 96% of arts/culture organizations across the country have cancelled events, and 37% have made either temporary or permanent reductions in staff, my business has remained steady, retained our staff, and continued to offer programming both virtually and in-person when feasible. We have survived and will continue to survive and flourish because we listen to the needs of our community, we adapt, adjust, build deep-relationships, and always strive to remain relevant. However, this does not mean we are without need. During this time when we have pinched pennies to ensure our fiscal stability we are faced with a dire situation where the tools we rely on 100% to function are crashing. Our laptops no longer hold a charge, they cannot perform updates, and they struggle to work with various applications and software that we use on a daily basis. Therefore, we are requesting assistance to address this immediate need....



14

Breaking it down... ANSWER THE QUESTION!

QUESTION: Provide detailed info about how activities will address the stated need and intended impact. Include the # of individuals served and # of hours participants will be involved. If the request is for project support, note whether this is a new or existing program. If existing, how long has it been in operation. (300 Word Max)

The Need: (Emotion & Data!) Can you demonstrate there is a community need? Use demographics, studies, data.

The Impact: (Emotion & Data!) Brag a little about the strength of your program.

Project Details: (Don't be general) This NEW project will run for 8-weeks, two-hours per session, for 16 total contact hours. The project will directly serve 100 community members and indirectly serve the community at large through marketing/culminating event etc....

Steer clear of generalized statements, project “concepts” and outlines.



Breaking it down... USE THEIR WORDS BACK AT THEM!

CT Office of the Arts - Artist Respond Grant Overview

The Artists Respond grant program provides direct funding to CT artists to pursue **community-based projects** that use the arts to **respond to social issues, current events,** and **community needs**.

CT artists may apply for a grant for either \$2,500 or \$5,000 to support artist fees and other project related expenses.

Projects must occur in CT and be **artist-centered initiatives** that use the arts to **inspire, empower, educate,** and **transform our CT communities**.

The Artists Respond program aims to invest in a wide range of community-based programs from large audience events to small group activities. All activities must be **ready to pivot**, if necessary, to comply with the ever-changing social distancing measures implemented at the local, state, and federal levels.



16

Breaking it down... SHOW CONFIDENCE, IT'S OK TO BRAG A LITTLE!!

CT Office of the Arts - Artist Fellowship Grant

Artist Pitch/Fellowship Statement: The artist pitch should provide an introduction of you and your artistic practice and it should touch on the following:

- Your past work;
- Your plans for creating new work;
- How the recognition and funding will impact your artistic career/goals;
- And what you plan to achieve as a result of this award.

Let's look at an example...



Breaking it down... BE SPECIFIC

- Will the reviewer be able to understand the project clearly? Remember, they know nothing about you, your business, or your work!
- Do you elicit excitement so the funder wants to see the project or your work realized?
- Are you providing a clear program OUTLINE and not a program CONCEPT. Answer the who/what/when/where/why, whether they ask it directly or not.
- Don't save the best for last! Make points up-front. Reviewers get overwhelmed. "Hook" them right up-front because by the last paragraph they can be skimming.

Ask someone else to read the grant, like me if you're in Eastern CT or Fairfield County as a part of the FREE Funding Booster Program!

Common Questions: Outcomes, Evaluation, & Defining Success

Some sample questions...

- **What do you plan to achieve as a result of this award?**
- **Why do you believe your project will be of interest to your community and audience?**
- **What difference will this program make to your community?**
- **How will you define success?**
- **Describe the benefits expected from this program, activity, or work?**

Keep evaluations simple -- Survey Monkey, Google/FB analytics, Zip Code analysis etc... Readers can tell when you're "throwing in the kitchen sink" or over-committing. Make sure you can complete the evaluation -- they'll ask for the data in the final report!

What are some simple ways to define success & evaluate your program/work?



Understanding Outcomes Vs. Outputs

Outputs = How many people attended my event, how many tickets were purchased, seats filled? The numbers behind the program.

VS.

Outcomes = Did we IMPACT our community/audience? How much? Did we make a difference or “move the needle” on the larger community issue we were working to impact? Did we achieve the goals of the program?

Common Questions: MONEY QUESTIONS

Some sample questions...

- How would you secure the remaining funds or modify this program or project if a partial award were approved?
- What other steps have you taken to raise funds for this activity or program?
- What alternative plans have you made in the event you don't receive the full amount?

Remember... Confidence is a good thing! As long as it's mixed with a touch of humility.

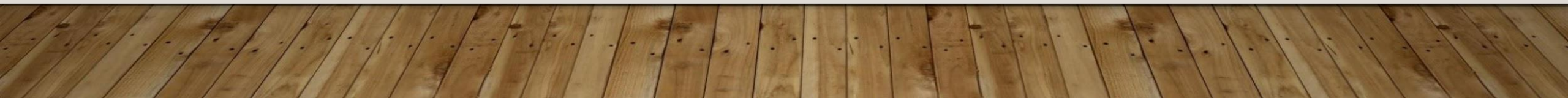
Example: "X program can not operate without these needed funds, but {ORG} has successfully raised funds for programming for 10 years and we're committed to securing what is needed. If funds are not received the program will be postponed or reduced in scope until funds are identified."



21

Additional Materials – Project Budget

*** Example ***

-
- Separate income into **Contributed vs. Earned vs. In-kind** (volunteer hours, donated goods/services). In-kind must cancel itself out/be reflected in both income & expenses.
 - Project Budgets should **show a real picture of program expenses** - including all YOUR TIME, and portions of overhead. You don't necessarily charge these expenses to the grant.
 - Are your **line items clear** or are several expenses mixed into one category?
 - **Limit “miscellaneous”** income or expenses. What are these incomes and expenses?
 - **Matching grants** – Can you use in-kind? Where are the matching funds coming from?
 - **Typically you “zero-out” program budgets.** Operating Budgets SHOULD show surplus! If there's a deficit, find space to explain either in budget narrative (if one is provided) or include in another answer.
- 

Helpful Hints

- Formatting matters!! Make sure fonts/sizes, spacing is consistent, spelling/grammar etc....
- Most applications are submitted online. Be sure to create a template OFF-Line and copy/paste when you're ready to submit. Otherwise you might lose your work if system crashes/forget to save.
- Always have another set of eyes look it over for inconsistencies. Sometimes you're too close to the program/grant to see that pieces of information are missing.
- If anything is left unclear, the reviewer may be left with doubt. Include a cover letter clarifying. It's OK if they call with questions... That means they're being thoughtful.
- All attachments included?? Double/Triple Check.
- Was Grant Awarded – YES! Great, don't forget to send a thank you! Acknowledge foundation on website and in all marketing, invite them to relevant events. Keep the relationship positive.

The “What If’s”

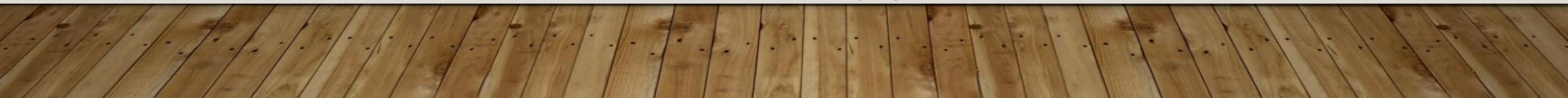
What happens if...

- You didn’t receive funding... Call. Are there comments? A Scoring Rubric?
- The program changes during the funding period...
- You don’t receive the other funding needed...
- A key partner backs-out...
- The project doesn’t achieve any of the stated objectives...
- A global pandemic occurs and you have to shut-down... (What are the odds!)

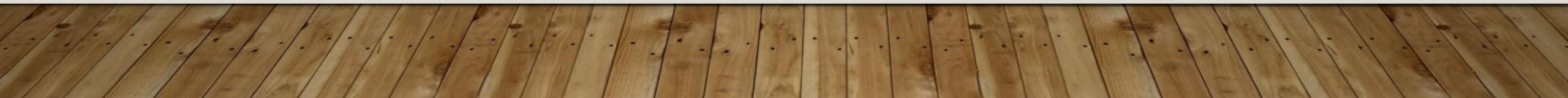
Call them!! Be honest.

They DO NOT want to take the money back and can typically be flexible.

Don’t make this a habit – says you’re unreliable.



Comments From Grant Reviewers

- Not a clear articulation of how this project fits the guidelines.
 - Appreciate the data and numbers, but the narrative needs more humanity to it – the emotion gets lost in it.
 - Budget is too general and the ask is not in-line with funding priorities. They did not read grant guidelines -- the ask is more than the total budget.
 - The project would benefit if it's rooted in the community. Where's the collaboration?
 - Just don't see how they're going to reach this community. They have no relationship with them and no plans to create one? Where's the promotional plan?
 - More thought into how you will effectively evaluate the impact of your event.
 - There is no real connection to the audience. The program only goes skin-deep – doesn't reflect the voices of, and participation directly with, the organization's community.
- 

Comments From Grant Reviewers

- Needs more information/thought about how this aligns with the funding priorities.
- The budget does not correspond to the narrative.
- Wanted to hear more about how they were measuring outcomes.
- The program is operating outside the timeline for the grant funding period.
- I don't see how this program is connected to their vision?
- This is a wonderful program and I can see the authors deep emotional connection, but the narrative questions are simply not answered.

**** BE A REVIEWER! That's the best way to improve your own applications. ****



Some Resources for Artists

- [CT Office of the Arts](#)
- [Dept Economic & Comm. Dev.](#)
- NEA/NEH/IMLS: [National Endowment for Arts](#), [NE for Humanities](#), [Inst. Museum & Library Services](#)
- [Americans for the Arts](#): Great data!!
- [CT Humanities Quick Grants](#) (MUST talk to them first. 6x/year; Up to \$5K; Only if there's a humanities component)
- [Bank of America \(BOA\) Searchable Database](#)
- [Assets for Artists](#) - VIA MassMOCA, open to CT artists for FREE
- [CT Women's Business Council](#) - Not just for women!! Great workshops and assistance for FREE
- [COA - Directory of Teaching Artists](#) - Applications will open soon and will be rolling.
- [The Talking Artists](#) - Cultural Series through COA

Some Resources for Artists, Continued

- [Artist Communities Alliance](#) - Directory of Artist Residencies (RI)
- [Artworkarchive](#) - Subscription tool to help artists, guide to artist opportunities; call for artists
[Call for Entry](#) - Find Calls for artists, manage entries, apply.
- [Massachusetts Arts Council](#) - ArtSake Calls to Artists
- [Creative Ground](#) - NEFA/New England's Directory of Creative Enterprises & Artists
[Creative Capital](#) - Funding for ground-breaking projects by artists.
- [Hyperallergic](#) - Newsletter with opportunities for artists
- [New York Foundation for the Arts](#) - Classifieds/Opps/Jobs
- [Springboard for the Arts](#) - Artist Opportunities
- Artists Thrive: <https://www.artiststhive.org/>
- [CT Lawyers for the Arts](#)

Thank You!

CT Office of the Arts

The Funding Booster Program (FBP) is a FREE support for artists and organizations alike. The aim of FBP is to strengthen the creative community in Connecticut by guiding artists, businesses, and organizations on how to capitalize on funding opportunities of all types and at all levels.

1. **Monthly Drop-in Clinics** - Monthly, free, open sessions to connect with members of the creative community.
2. **One-on-One Consultations** - Customized support for you and your organization/business on best practices, and how to maximize your mission. All experience levels and all stages are welcome to schedule an appointment.
3. **Funding Strategies & Application Review** - Help identifying funding sources, getting ready to apply, and providing feedback on your draft application/budget so you put your best foot forward!
4. **Workshops & Panel Discussions** - Throughout the year from Grantwriting 101, Funder's Panels, and NEA Workshops
5. **Help Getting R.E.A.D.I.** - Take steps to ensure your mission and programming is R.E.A.D.I.

Jessica Morozowich: Funding Booster Program Manager, Professional Grant Writer & Consultant

Cultural Coalition of Eastern CT: fundingbooster@culturesect.org

Cultural Alliance of Fairfield County: jessica@culturalalliancefc.org