

GRANT

WRITING

TOOLKIT

INTRO TO GRANT PROPOSAL WRITING

The Who, What, When, Where, Why, & How

The purpose of this toolkit is to provide an anchor text that can be modified upon depending on the grant application. Many grant applications may either ask for a proposal or summary, this toolkit will provide text that can fulfill that requirement.

Proposal: An act of putting forward or stating something for consideration.

One thing to ask yourself when writing a grant proposal is:

WHO IS DOING THE CONSIDERING?

Often, a panel is composed of several individuals who are either: experts, former grantees, and/or volunteers. For the purposes of this toolkit, we're going to assume that the panel is composed of individuals from various creative backgrounds. This is true for several grants, particularly in Houston i.e. Houston Arts Alliance (HAA), Idea Fund, etc. Thus, you should write your proposal in common, simple language that can be understood by a room full of people as equally as possible. The exceptions to this rule are grants, fellowships, residencies, etc. that are specifically for one discipline. I.e. a writing residency for writers will most likely have writers on the panel. In this instance, it would be okay to use writing terms.

TO BEGIN, READ THE GUIDELINES FOR THE GRANT YOU'RE APPLYING TO.

From there, you should have an idea of what to propose in mind. A grant organization in Houston will most likely fund a project occurring in Houston. In any case, your idea should be feasible/possible in the context of the grant and fulfill the grant's purpose. For instance, a grant may or may not be used to buy equipment like a \$500 camera because the grant may specify the funds must be for a community event.

BRAINSTORMING



Before beginning, the following questions are a pre-writing exercise to get some proposal ideas out, on paper. Feel free to take your answers to the following questions outside of these pages.

WHO ARE YOU?

How would you define yourself artistically? What experiences have shaped your creative practice?

WHAT ARE YOUR PASSIONS?

How does that affect your creative practice?

**WHAT IS A PROJECT YOU WANT TO DO WITH YOUR ART THAT GOES BEYOND YOUR USUAL PRACTICE?
WHAT DO YOU NEED TO ACCOMPLISH THIS PROJECT?**

Materials? Skills? Space? Do you wish to have your art featured in a non-traditional space? Do you want your work accompanied by other elements?

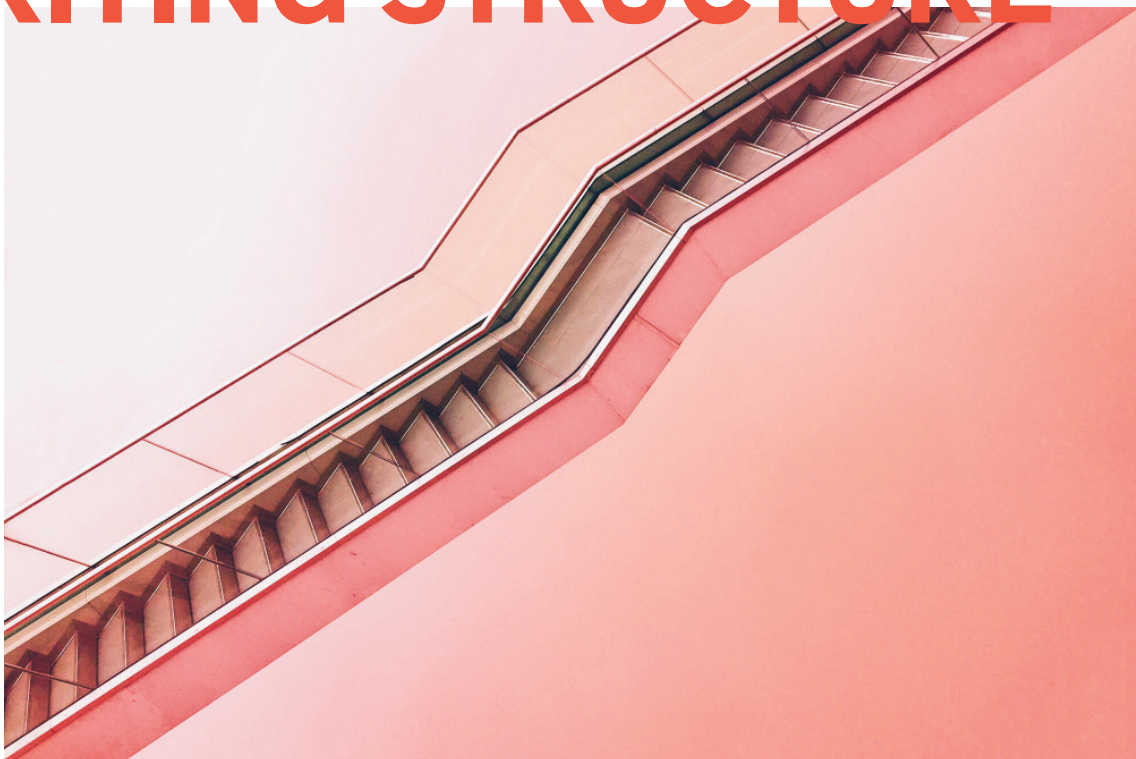
WHAT DISCIPLINE(S) DOES YOUR PROJECT ENGAGE IN?

Think as broadly or specifically as you'd like. Literary arts, poetry, performing arts, dance, clarinet, ensemble, etc.

WHO ARE SOME PEOPLE, EVENTS, OR SPACES YOU WOULD LIKE TO WORK WITH TO PRESENT YOUR WORK?

Now that we have some ideas, it's a matter of forming these thoughts into a proposal i.e. something to be considered for funding. Keep in mind that each proposal should show why you are worth investing funds in by demonstrating your capability to complete a unique, innovative project.

WRITING STRUCTURE



In order to apply for grants, we must first answer some key questions:

- 1. WHO IS APPLYING?**
- 2. WHAT IS THE MONEY FOR?**
- 3. WHEN WILL THE PROJECT OCCUR?**
- 4. WHERE WILL THE PROJECT BE EXHIBITED?**
- 5. WHY IS THIS PROJECT NECESSARY?**
- 6. HOW WILL THE PROJECT BE CARRIED OUT?**

Sample Answers:

1. Reyes Ramirez, Houston-based LGBTQ artists under 35, and Tintero Projects.
2. The publication of a chapbook based on the creation of literary pieces in response to visual art.
3. During LAN.
4. Art League Houston.
5. To inspire future paying partnerships between Latinx artists and writers.
6. By putting on a reading to feature artists and collaborative pieces.

NOW LET'S BUILD OUR STRUCTURE.

Put your answers together in an order to create an anchor text. The x-factor of every proposal is the ability to complete a narrative in such small, concise verbiage.

Sample Anchor Text:

I, Reyes Ramirez, am working with several LGBTQ artists under 35 based in Houston to curate and organize an art exhibition, talks, and projects during LAN at Art League. Tintero Projects, founded and run by Houston writers, have organized and coordinated readings, workshops, and events with Houston writers, such as their efforts with Inprint, MFAH, Stages Repertory Theatre, etc. Together, we plan on pairing LGBTQ Latinx writers and artists to create literary pieces in response to visual art. We wish to put on a reading at said art exhibition and publish a chapbook that will feature the artists, writers, and their collaborative pieces. We hope this chapbook will: create a record of the collaboration amongst Latinx artists, writers, and organizers; inspire future partnerships between Latinx writers and artists; and pay working Latinx writers, artists, and organizers.

Who is applying?

What is the money for? *When will it occur?*

Where? *Who is applying?*

What is the money for?

How will it be carried out?

Why is it necessary?

Why is it necessary?

TIP: Each sentence can serve more than one function and can provide answers without having to say everything. You can be direct, and you may even be incredibly detailed. But keep in mind the word length and the question being asked.

EXPANDING YOUR ANCHOR-TEXT FOR GRANT APPLICATIONS



Not every application is the same. Some applications may ask for the same information but in different ways. Your anchor text paragraph may be expanded upon, whittled down, or broken up.

CONSIDER THIS PROPOSAL AS A GUIDE AND/OR JUMPING-OFF POINT.

For example, a grant application may ask for a timeline, which is hinted at in the above sample proposal; I can take that hint and expand upon it more specifically. In other words, you can take a piece of information from the anchor text and adapt accordingly. HAA asks about community impact; the final sentence, the why, can be expanded upon to answer that question. The how sentence can provide a basis for a budget narrative. Different applications may even ask for a longer description which, again, can be built from this anchor text.

In closing, this anchor text is a paragraph summary that can quickly tell the story of your project to a room of people who will then decide if it is to be funded. There is no perfect application, and many factors play in deciding what projects may be funded ex. Diversity of disciplines/backgrounds, alignment with grant's purpose, the panel's holistic experience and background, etc.

INSIDER TIPS

From HAA Grants Manager, Yeiry Guevara

REGARDING THE GRANT NARRATIVE:

1. Toot your own horn.
2. Strong work samples: Let your work speak for itself.
3. Demonstrate commitment to project and community impact.
4. Words count.

REGARDING THE BUDGET NARRATIVE:

1. Research all associated costs.
2. Accuracy/guesstimate.
3. Pay yourself.
4. List in-kind, additional sources of income.
5. Explain any projected deviations or fluctuations.

IN GENERAL:

1. Be concise.
2. Make sure the links you provide work.
3. Estimate wisely.
4. Complete the application.
5. Edit profusely.
6. If rejected, get feedback.
7. Comply with all requirements.
8. **Tell your story.**

From Leslie Contreras Schwartz

Houston Poet Laureate 2019-2021

BE SPECIFIC AND BE TRUSTWORTHY

1. Show you are qualified to complete this project.
2. Show evidence that you are able and prepared.
3. Ensure the project is specific and detailed and shows deep engagement.

MAKE SURE YOUR PROJECT FITS THE GRANT'S PURPOSE

1. Explain how your project fits the scope of the grant.
2. Connect themes and scope to the grant's purpose.

PLAN AND MAKE OUTLINES

1. Research and outline a thorough marketing plan and budget.
2. Look up the estimated costs of all rentals, venues, etc.
3. Budget for what you need & take into account other income / grants.

GIVE GOOD WORK SAMPLES

1. Include as many samples relevant to your proposed project as possible.
2. Make them easy to access and view.

EVALUATE YOUR APPLICATION

1. Have people evaluate your application before you submit.
2. Compare your application to other successful applications. **We've provided a completed application sample at the end of this toolkit!**
3. Consider how the grant panel will evaluate your application, and edit.
4. Highlight what is unique and exciting about your work.

GRANT WRITING TIPS BY LESLIE CONTRERAS SCHWARTZ CONTINUED

EXCERPT FROM THE 2019 FRESH ARTS SUMMIT

BE SPECIFIC.

The grant should focus on a specific creative project with a well-thought out timeline and a detailed budget. **Have a clear, focused idea of what the project is—and describe it well.**

CONVINCE THE PANEL THAT YOU ARE QUALIFIED, ABLE, AND PREPARED TO COMPLETE THE PROJECT.

The proposed project should be in a field you have already demonstrated professional mastery with relevant work samples, and you should have a sample of the proposed project or something close to it.

SHOW THAT YOUR PROJECT FITS THE PARAMETERS OF THE GRANT'S PURPOSE.

Consider what the grant is for, and how your project fits within that scope. Consider how your project specifically engages with themes or concepts that would be important to the intended audience.

MARKETING AND BUDGET—RESEARCH AND OUTLINE, MAKE IT REASONABLE AND THOROUGH.

Ensure your marketing and descriptions show an understanding of appealing to a wide audience.

Create a detailed budget, including artist's fees to cover income, venue rental fee and event manager fees, marketing materials including advertising and flyers, web site maintenance, and equipment rental or purchase. **Ask for things you need to complete the project.** Many people ask for less than they could, or do not give enough specific information about how the money would be used.

Also, make sure you have an understanding of what kind of income you would get from tickets sales [or other sale items], or a day job that will help cover costs, and show that you understand that not all of the project's funding depends on an unpredictable factor (i.e. Ticket sales).

FOCUS ON THE PROJECT, NOT JUST YOUR WRITING.

Write a readable, edited application in which the panelists can focus on the project and not your writing itself.

Write a well-written narrative, a detailed and concise description of your project and describe the concepts it engages with or addresses, use proper grammar and spelling. If you are unsure how to do this, look up the way other artists in your field describe their work and specific projects. Use the correct terminology specific to your field.

Have someone proofread your entire application. Also, have a person who understands finances and budgeting look over your budget.

MAKE SURE SAMPLES ARE EASY TO VIEW AND UNDERSTAND.

CREATE A REASONABLE TIMELINE.

That shows knowledge and understanding of your art form. (You have done this before or have thoroughly researched all the aspects of the project and how long each phase will take.)

CREATE A ROBUST MARKETING PLAN.

Include press releases, push-cards, flyers or brochures, social media campaigns, hashtags, newsletter announcements, and explain how many people you expect to reach for each activity and when you would do it on a timeline.

EVALUATE YOUR OWN PROJECT.

From an outsiders' eyes, evaluate your own project and work. How is your work necessary or unique? How does it fit within the scope of the grant? How will artists in other genres view your work, and how could you convince them of its merit?

If you are unsure how to answer a question on the application, call the grant organization. **If they offer pre-evaluations before the deadline, take advantage of that opportunity.**

GRANT OPPORTUNITIES



Fresh Arts Artist Opportunity Board

<https://fresharts.org/succeed-as-an-artist/artist-opportunity-board/>

Glasstire

<https://glasstire.com/classifieds/browse-listings/1/grants/>

Houston Arts Alliance

<https://houstonartsalliance.com/opportunities/grants/>

The Idea Fund

<https://theideafund.org>

Mid-America Arts Alliance

<https://maaa.org/grants/>

TERM

GLOSSARY

Anchor Text – a text that is read, used and referred to often to change and edit because it can be used as a model to create answers to a variety of application questions.

Artist Fees – Payment for the time, ideas, labor and skills that an artist expends in creating works and making them available to the public.

Artist Statement – an artist’s written description of their work. The brief verbal representation is for, and in support of, their own work to give the viewer understanding.

Bio or Biography – A short biographical profile of someone.

Budget – a plan for using the awarded money.

Budget Narrative – Explains how the costs were estimated and justifies the need for the cost.

Cultural Tourism – The journey of people to specific destinations that offer cultural attractions, including historic sites and artistic and cultural events and shows, with the aim of acquiring new knowledge and experiences that meet the intellectual needs and individual growth of the traveler.

Fellowship – Short-term opportunities lasting from a few months to several years that focus on the professional, creative, and/or academic development of the fellow and are sponsored by a specific organization seeking to expand expertise in their field.

Fiscal Sponsorship or Fiscally Sponsored – A formal arrangement in which a 501(c)(3) public organization sponsors a project that may lack exempt status. Note: Some grants require a fiscal sponsor and some do not; please read the guidelines of the grant you are applying to see if you require a fiscal sponsor.

Grant – a sum of money given by a government or other organization for a particular purpose.

In-Kind Donation – Donation consisting of something (such as goods or commodities) other than money.

Project Summary – A succinct and accurate description of the proposed project’s broad objectives and specific aims.

Project Narrative – Oftentimes much longer than a summary, the project narrative includes a statement of the problem or purpose, the objectives of the project, background information about what’s already known and information on any research and/or history that supports the project’s feasibility and/or necessity.

Public Component – How the general public will experience and/or access the project.

Residency - Artist-in-residence programs give artists the opportunity to live and work outside of their usual environments, providing them with time to reflect, research, or produce work.

Timeline – A chronological order of a project’s start, progress, and completion that provides: what phases of the project are already in the past; what is in progress now; and what is supposed to be finished in future.