

CREATING YOUR PROPOSAL STEP-BY-STEP

Below we have outlined a three-step process to prepare you prepare to write the final application. These questions do not always correspond directly with our grant questions, but rather address fundamental questions that will be applicable to this and other funding opportunities.

Step 1 – Outline the Project Components

1. **Write a short description of your project.** Think of this as the “elevator pitch” – if you had to describe your project in 1-2 sentences, what is the essential information you would want to communicate to a potential funder?
2. **List the component pieces.** Think step-by-step through your project. Who will be part of it? What are the steps to get you towards your goal? What resources do you require to accomplish your goals? NOTE: we understand that this grant request might be connected to a larger initiative but limit this list to what you are asking for in your grant request, which may only be part of your whole project.

Step 2 – Outline your budget using the budget worksheet.

1. **Review the component pieces.** Use the component pieces list you created previously to begin to create your grant budget. Your budget might change as you refine your narrative, but our general recommendation is start with the budget and use that to give structure to your narrative.
2. **Sort your expenses.** Put expenses into the four categories – Personnel Expenses, Travel and Lodging, Supplies and Services, and Indirect Costs (i.e., overhead) – using the attached Excel sheet (Section A).
3. **Determine the approximate cost of each expense (Section A).** Expenses should reflect market rates. For calculating staff time, think about what percentage of that person’s time will be devoted to this project and multiply that by their total salary and fringe benefits within the grant period. For the value of volunteer time, we recommend using the following resource:
<https://independentsector.org/value-of-volunteer-time-2021/>.
4. **Determine if expenses are part of your grant request or the required 1:1 match (section B).** Please note that ineligible expenses for grant funding are not eligible to be used for the required match. We do not require that each expense be matched 1:1, but rather the total of the request be matched – all the expenses can be in one category and all the match in another.
5. **Determine whether matching fund are cash or in-kind.** For matching funds, will you use other funding sources (operating funds, other grants, etc.) or will that expense be covered with volunteer time or donations (Section B)? Other funding sources will be your cash match.

Volunteer time or donations will be your in-kind match. We require a total 1:1 match, but the match can be all cash, all in-kind, or a mixture of both.

Step 3 – Outline your narrative.

These questions do not correspond directly with the narrative questions in our application but will help you identify the basic building blocks of your project. It is not necessary to answer these questions in complete paragraphs or even sentences at this point in the process – rather start by quickly jotting down your thoughts and refine them as you go through the process. Being able to answer the questions below will help you prepare to write the full proposal.

1. Who is the project for? How is that community involved?
2. What is the problem you are trying to solve or need you are addressing?
3. Why is your organization the one to do this project?
4. What will you have at the end? What steps will you need to take to get there?
5. What does success look like?