

# Tips for Writing a Strong Grant Application

## Prepare

- Sign up to attend an AHCMC workshop or webinar.
- Make an appointment with AHCMC staff to review your previous year's panel comments.
- Read all guidelines, requirements and evaluative criteria before starting (even if you have applied before - guidelines are updated annually).
- Contact AHCMC staff with any questions you have about navigating FluidReview or about your application (but please don't wait until the last minute!)
- Don't plan to write the entire application in one day, stronger grant requests are clearly articulated.
- Pay close attention to the deadline, grant applications will not be accepted once the deadline has passed.



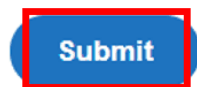
## Write

- Write clearly and concisely and make sure your application can stand on its own (don't assume knowledge of your organization on the panel's part).
- Don't use jargon. Explain acronyms.
- Don't make panelists hunt for information.
- Avoid repetitiveness; make good use of the space provided.
- Be sure to pay attention to all the areas you will be scored on and refer to them in your narrative, create a link between the evaluative criteria and your answers.
- Focus on Montgomery County even if you serve other jurisdictions.
- Use demographics and other data to talk about how your programming or your project is accessible, how you reach your target audience.
- Describe how your programming or project invites or increases audience participation.

- Explain how your programming or project is innovative, unique and compelling. It is up to you to make the case for funding.
- Describe any goals you have established and any progress you've made towards achieving greater diversity when describing your Board and staff, as well as your programming and audience composition.
- Focus on the quality and impact of your work, but don't neglect to fully describe your Board and how it functions as well as leadership and staff roles (paid and unpaid) and overall organizational capacity. The panel will want to know your organization can administer a grant successfully.
- Discuss how you evaluate your programming, how do you know you are engaging audiences, having an impact? Use storytelling and testimonials as well as numbers and statistics. How do you determine your benchmarks for meeting goals? How do you get and respond to feedback?
- Talk about your fundraising efforts and revenue streams; make the case for your organization's sustainability. Explain your financial protocols and how effective oversight is provided. How do you ensure transparency and accountability?
- If you make a claim for example, that attendance is trending up, provide evidence for that statement. Don't make statements you can't substantiate. Make sure your narrative and attachments are in alignment and don't provide contradictory information.
- And finally - it's more than okay to acknowledge challenges, areas where you are aware your organization has room to improve. Panels would prefer to see an awareness of challenges and plans to address those challenges, as opposed to an organization that appears to have its head in the sand.

## Review and Submit

- Proofread your application.
- Ask someone who is not familiar with your organization to read your application for clarity. Was anything confusing?
- Make sure you have uploaded all the required attachments. Submit all documents and excel spreadsheets as PDFs.



- If you are applying for a project grant and have been asked to complete a budget chart - is the budget balanced? Does anticipated revenue equal expenses? Have you included the AHCMC grant in your anticipated revenue? Have you asterisked the expenses you would use the AHCMC grant for? Are they allowable expenses? Have you used the budget narrative space to explain your budget?
- Do not wait until the last minute to submit! You want to avoid any last minute technical issues. BUT - don't be afraid of the submit button either. If you submit early you can still edit - up until the deadline when your application will be locked.
- Make sure you get a confirmation email when you do submit. If you do not get a confirmation email your application may not have been successfully submitted. Contact AHCMC staff ASAP. *(Please note: staff will be handling many funding opportunities and applications and will not be able to track who has submitted and who has not).*
- Make sure to download and keep a copy of your application outside FluidReview.

## For Individual Artists and Scholars

- Follow the guidelines above where applicable. Also:
- If you are collaborating, share that information. If you will be working with a master artist, describe what makes that person someone you want to learn from or upload their CV. Use a quote from or about the artist if that might be helpful.
- Describe how the project and/or professional development opportunity will strengthen or broaden your skills as an artist.
- If you are asking for funding for one phase of a larger project, describe the overall project but primarily focus your application on the phase for which you are applying for funding.
- If relevant, talk about how you share your talent in the community, even if it's through volunteer work or another seemingly unrelated activity.
- Pay attention to the work sample you submit, it's a critical piece of your application.
- Don't be afraid to brag!

Good luck! 😊