Three Proven Strategies to Improve Your Grant Readiness

Shannon McBride
President, Consulting Connections, Inc.
Tammy Tilzey
Director, GrantHub

Three Proven Strategies to Improve Your Grant Readiness

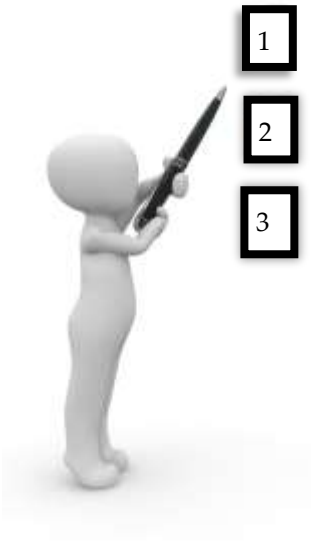
Is grant funding an important potential source of financial support for your nonprofit organization? If you are considering building grant funding into your nonprofit development plan—or if you're looking for ways to increase the return from your existing efforts—you can sharpen your "grant saw" by using effective methodologies and best practices honed by successful, experienced grant seekers.

In this session you will learn three key methods or strategies to help improve your grant readiness:

1. Improve grant funding success by complying with the funder's requirements and guidelines.
2. Develop a grant ready tool kit to streamline the process
3. Use grant management best practices to meet deadlines and influence funders

What You Will Learn

During this brief session you will learn how to build and use a Proposal Compliance Matrix (PCM) to increase chances of funding success. You will identify what documents you already have and what you might need to add to your grant ready toolkit. Once your toolkit is ready to go, you can quickly assemble top-notch funding requests and grant proposals. You will learn proven methods to ensure you keep everything running smoothly by using effective grant management in your organization.



Strategy #1. Improve Grant Funding Success: Comply with the Funder's Requirements and Guidelines

You may have a grant request denied simply because you were not compliant—you didn't follow the grant application word for word. How can you avoid this? Use a requirements checklist to help you respond to submission criteria and instructions to the letter.

To be compliant with the grant application, you must be comfortable you know what the funder is asking for. You capture this information on the requirements checklist. This helps you develop your narrative, abide by page restrictions, and assemble the proposal according to the application's instructions.

You then turn the checklist into a Proposal Compliance Matrix (PCM) —a roadmap to help you navigate through the grant application and to use as a tool for managing the proposal writing process.

Project Information (Complete only for program, project or capital support)

1. What are the timelines for the project and for fundraising_____
2. What is the budget for the program/project? $_____
3. How does this effort address a community need? Please describe the community and clients that will benefit _____
4. Please explain how you have measured or will measure the success of the program/project

III. Required Attachments for All Grant Applicants

Please enclose one copy of each of the following items:

- ☐ 1. Cover letter
- ☐ 2. A copy of your current IRS determination letter indicating tax exempt 501(c)(3) status
- ☐ 3. Board of Directors list, including names, phone numbers and affiliations
- ☐ 4. Annual report, if available, or other material summarizing activities of the organization
- ☐ 5. Current year itemized operating revenue and expense budget for the organization
- ☐ 6. Most recent audited financial statements or IRS Form 990
- ☐ 7. A list of major corporate and foundation donors for the past two years

If you completed Section II, please also enclose one copy of each of the following items:

- ☐ 8. A one-page summary of the organization's three major core programs or activities
- ☐ 9. Budget of program, project, or capital campaign

Excerpt from Grant Application Form. *You will be expected to follow the funder's requirements and guidelines in the order listed.*

Step 1. Prepare a Requirements Checklist on Excel

Take the time to completely "strip" the grant application requirements to ensure you include everything the funder has requested.

The visual below, *From Requirements Checklist to Compliance Matrix*, illustrates how to begin populating the requirements checklist following the exact order of the funder's application form.

Here are the steps to follow to develop the requirements checklist and then convert it to a Proposal Compliance Matrix (PCM)

1. Enter all the requirements word for word from the original application form**.** List everything that must be responded to according to the requirements shown on the grant application. Don't paraphrase or change the order of the requirements. Your evaluators expect to see your proposal follow their order as they review your application.

2. Now add the columns you will use later to convert the requirements checklist into your compliance matrix. Include the name of the team member responsible for each requirement, due date, and completion date (date received). You will add assignments and due dates as you turn the requirements checklist into a Proposal Compliance Matrix (PCM).

1	**Requirement** ❶	**Assigned to**	**Date Due** ❷	**Date Received**	
2	What are the timelines for the project and for fundraising?				
3	What is the budget for the program/project?				
4	How does this effort address a community need? Please the community and the clients that will benefit.				
5	Please explain how you have measured or will measure the success of the program/project.				
6	Please enclose one copy of each of the following:				
7	Cover Letter				
8	A copy of your current IRS determination letter indicating tax exempt 501(c)(3)status				
9	Board of Directors list including names, phone numbers and affiliations				
10	Annual report, if available, or other material summarizing activities of the organization				
11	Current year itemized operating revenue and expense budget for the organization				
12	Most recent audited financial statements or IRS Form 990				
13	A list of major corporate and foundation donors for the past two years				

From Requirements Checklist to Proposal Compliance Matrix. *Note that the order of the requirements shown is the same as those shown in the example on the previous page.*

Step 2. Convert the Requirements Checklist into a Proposal Compliance Matrix (PCM)

Why should you prepare a Proposal Compliance Matrix (PCM)? So you will—

- Save time and avoid rework.
- Address all vital funding requirements. Pinpoint issues that are important to the funder.
- Submit your proposal on time.

The PCM helps you manage the proposal effort and easily track assignments given to your grant team members. The PCM will be one of your essential tools for managing the writing project. Using this tool will help ensure team members are clear about their assignments and the due dates they're expected to provide their input. Your team members will see how on-time completion of their assignments positively impacts on-time submission of the proposal.

Here's how to convert the requirements checklist to a PCM, which you will use to track each step of the grant writing process.

1. List each individual requirement as an action (verb). If the funder doesn't use a verb, insert your own, such as *provide*, *include*, *identify*, *show*, or *describe*.

2. Populate the columns with the names of responsible team members, due dates, and dates of completion. Provide a copy to all members of the grant team with their assignments highlighted in yellow. (Send email reminders to the grant team periodically to remind them of their assignments.)

3. If you use a grant management solution, create tasks for each row in the PCM. Each team member will then get automated reminders for their tasks and the due dates.

Requirement from Application	Assigned to	Date Due	Date Recd
Provide timelines for the project	Ann N.	15-Apr	7-Apr
Provide timelines for fundraising	Roger L.	15-Apr	14-Apr
Provide the budget for the project	Sara C.	10-Apr	9-Apr
Describe the community and clients who will benefit from project	Ann N.	4-Apr	8-Apr
Explain how we have measured and will measure the project's outcomes	Ann N.	4-Apr	11-Apr
Include a cover letter	Sara C.	10-Apr	3-Apr
Include copy of current IRS determination letter re tax exempt 501(c)(3) status	Sara C.	10-Apr	8-Apr
Include list of board of directors with names, phone numbers, and affiliations	Sara C.	10-Apr	8-Apr
Include annual report or other summary of our organization's activities	Ann N.	4-Apr	8-Apr
Include most recent audited financial statements or most recent IRS Form 990	Ann N.	4-Apr	1-Apr
Include a list of major corporate and foundation donors for the past two years (2016, 2017)	Sara C.	1-Apr	1-Apr

Proposal Compliance Matrix. *The PCM helps you manage the proposal effort and easily track assignments given to your grant team members.*

Step 3. Review the Guidelines before Moving Forward

The funder's website will typically have separate links to the grant *application* form and the grant *guidelines*. Read deep into the grant guidelines to ensure you understand the funder's areas of interest.

If you do have questions, you may contact the potential grant maker for clarification. But before doing so, answer the questions listed below. If you answer no to just one of these questions, reconsider investing any more time and effort to pursue grants from this source; focus on those foundations that may promise a better ROI.

> *Q. What about foundations that give only to pre-selected organizations?*
>
> *A. Don't give up! If your program clearly matches that funder's giving interests, you may want to approach them. The funder might not know about your nonprofit. Your best bet is to review the funder's 990 to learn more.*

✓ **Fields of interest**

Are our project activities and target population a good fit within their fields of interest? ☐ Yes ☐ No

✓ **Grant amounts**

Will the grant amount be adequate if awarded? ☐ Yes ☐ No

✓ **Limitations**

Are we located in their area of giving? ☐ Yes ☐ No

✓ **Previous grants or grantees**

Have we ever been awarded funding from this organization? ☐ Yes ☐ No

✓ **Purpose and activities**

Do our organization's values, purpose, and activities match theirs? ☐ Yes ☐ No

✓ **Types of support**

Do the types of support they provide match our requirements? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Anticipate questions not spelled out in the grant application form.

As part of your strategy, continue to exercise foresight. Anticipate questions such as those shown below—all of which relate to issues typically not included as questions in the grant application. Most are merely implied in the "fill in the blank" questions you're expected to answer.

QUESTIONS	SUGGESTED RESPONSES
Has this organization demonstrated evidence of thorough planning and the optimum capacity for seeing the project to completion?	Respond to this question both in your organizational description and in your project description.
Is the need so critical that we should seriously consider funding the project?	Use compelling language to clearly describe what is currently lacking that is causing the need.
Does this grant seeker have a comprehensive and sophisticated approach to solving the problem?	Describe the methodology you used to design the program to alleviate the need or in some way at least mitigate the problem.
If we do decide to support the project, will the grant seeker continue to run the program after our funding ends? If we choose not to fund the project, will they still carry it out?	Make it clear in your statement of sustainability that you have the continued support—both in funding and resources—to ensure the project continues with or without their funding. Describe your plan for generating more financial support.
Does the program budget clearly show how the finances are linked to the statement of need and resolution of the problem?	Provide a narrative section to the budget and specifically link expenses to program outcomes.
Does the grant seeker really understand our major focus for funding projects?	Assure them throughout the narrative you know how your project fits their giving focus.

Grant Makers' Major Areas of Concern. *These areas of concern may be clearly spelled out or merely implied—but your responses must be explicit and clear.*

Conduct an organizational self assessment.

Conduct this self-assessment to ensure you address the funder's concerns in your PCM. Responses could be: (1) No. We haven't thought of this issue; (2) Not yet. We know this is an issue, but are not actively working on it; (3) Developing. We have worked on this issue this year, but have not implemented policies or procedures; and (4) Yes. We currently have policy and procedures in place that we actively follow.

Activity	No	Not Yet	Pending	Yes
Board members have written job descriptions and receive orientation and training.				
Board recognizes role it must play in resource development and is actively engaged.				
Policy, procedures, and plans are in place to ensure diversity in all staff and volunteer personnel.				
Board's finance committee meets at least quarterly and reviews agency budget and interim financial statements.				
Organization has policy concerning amount of operating reserves.				
Board has strategic plan and monitors progress toward objectives outlined in plan.				
Organization establishes an annual plan and objectives consistent with strategic plan.				
Organization has a diversified funding strategy with goals that may include earned income, government sources, foundations, corporations, individuals, and events.				
Organization regularly assesses the market relative to competitors and client need and satisfaction.				
Organization has a public relations plan and process in place.				
Every employee, including the executive director, receives a performance review at least annually; both supervisor and employee review a written assessment.				
Organization has a budget and stated goals for each program.				
Organization has established collaborative relationships with other organizations.				
Organization has adequate technology and information systems that support operations and planning.				

*Source: Metropolitan Atlanta Arts Fund 2006 Finalist Application

Step 2. Include Relevant Documents in Your Grant-ready Tool Kit

What else should you have in your tool kit?

The table below lists major categories and type of documents typically required for any grant application. We've shown where you should file these documents in your Baseline Proposal folder.

To control the chaos, gather this information early in the proposal development process. If you have only hard copy originals, scan them and store in appropriate file folders. (Save all these documents to your cloud backup location as well.)

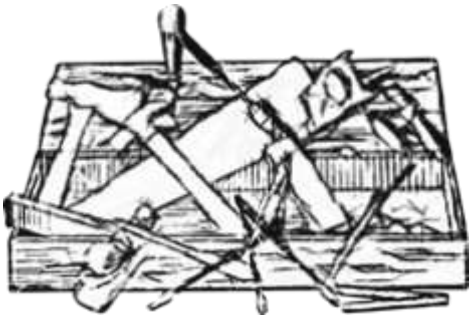
Category	Supporting Documents and Artifacts
ACCOUNTING FILES **BP_Accounting_Financial**	*Copy of IRS exemption letter verifying tax-exempt status, most recent IRS Form 990, audited financial statements, annual operating budget, sources of revenue, program budgets for individual project or program*
BOARD FILES **BP_Board**	*Board member descriptions, affiliations and professions, committee descriptions; board training programs, board member handbook, bylaws, financial statements, board contracts*
Evaluation **BP_Org. Overview**	*Clear description of methodology for evaluation, examples of survey instruments, summary of outcomes*
Funding **BP_Stmt of Funding Support**	*Past funding sources and funding requests pending*
Organization overview **BP_Org. Overview**	*History, date of inception, organization's original purpose, mission statement*
Programs, events, and publicity **BP_Programs**	*Description of major core programs, of sponsored fundraising events including: board and committee involvement, funds raised, and involvement from donors News articles, advertising samples, testimonials from constituents, photographs of individuals engaged in programs*
Research and statistics **BP_Research.Statistics**	*Current verifiable statistics supporting the need for the project and population served (demographics); websites such as Grants.gov, Guide Star, Grant Hub*
Staff and administration **BP_Org Overview**	*Job descriptions, qualifications, areas of expertise*
Standard supporting documentation **BP_Supporting Doc**	*Business entity form for unincorporated nonprofit associations, state sales tax exemption notification, charitable organization permit application*

Components of Your Grant Proposal Tool Kit. ***Do you already have clear, accessible files for all these categories? If not, start gathering these now—before you write that next proposal!***

Strategy #2. Streamline the Process: Develop a Grant-ready Toolkit

When you begin any labor-intensive effort, you need the right tools to ensure the task goes smoothly and efficiently. Most of us keep a tool kit for small DIY household repairs. It makes sense to keep the tools together so you can quickly retrieve them—in a drawer, a basket, a plastic container, or a bona fide toolbox.

To ensure that the challenging task of writing a grant proposal goes smoothly, you will develop a grant seeker's tool kit. The tool kit should contain all the documents required to support your grant proposal writing—including a Baseline Proposal. Once you see how useful the tool kit can be, you'll wonder how you managed without it!



Exactly what should you keep in your tool kit?

- The Baseline Proposal
- Documents required for grant applications
- A logical hierarchy of electronic files
- Your grant team assignments

Step 1. Create the Baseline Proposal File: The Most Important Tool in your Grant Ready Tool Kit

Set up a location on your computer or laptop devoted only to your Baseline Proposal. (If you have a grant management solution, you can store this information in an 'Answer Library'. You will then be able to quickly and easily access these items when creating new proposals.)

This will be an active file, because you'll use it as a tool for creating new proposals. Remember to periodically review the various sections so you can keep the files current!

Whenever you write a new grant proposal, there's a good chance you'll find something to change in the Baseline Proposal such as an improved and clarified need or problem statement, funding information, and other general administrative information.

Step 2. Establish folders in the Baseline Proposal master file or include in your grant management solution.

Include the folders described in the figure below. The files in these folders will vary little among grant applications. If you use a grant management solution, you can create an entry for each item listed in your library of answers and files instead of storing them in folders on your computer.

Whenever you make a change in funding sources or amounts, program focus, staffing support, or issues related to finances or budgets, update the appropriate documents to reflect these changes.

Baseline Proposal Files. *Review these files periodically to ensure significant changes made on grant proposals are incorporated into the Baseline Proposal***.**

How Would you Score Your File Maintenance?

All members of the grant team should be able to find any grant-related document. Try this short self assessment to determine if you're making it easy for everyone to locate such files.

- In the case of the grant writer's absence, would other staff or team members know how to find information related to pending or approved grant applications? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Is the information really up-to-date, or will we have to play catch-up the next time we write a proposal? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Do we maintain proposal-related file folders on a shared drive, or an online grant management system? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Do we have scanned backup for vital one-of-a kind documents such as the Form 990, or our 501(c)(3) approval? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Do we maintain duplicate copies of our important documents in another location? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- In the event of a disaster or security breach, would others in the organization know how to locate these duplicate copies? ☐Yes ☐ No

Step 3. Use a Logical Hierarchy to Maintain Files

Tracking grant applications will become more and more demanding as you continue to fill the pipeline for potential funding and achieve more success in awarded support. How can you help avoid the frustration of keeping your files organized? Easy. Invest in a grant management solution that helps keep your grant documents and records organized. If you don't currently use an online grant

Level One. All Grant Proposals

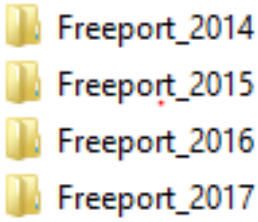
Create one major file to serve as the proposal "vault" for all grant proposals. Label the folder "Grant Proposals_All."

Level Two. All Funding Organizations

Create a separate file folder for all funding organizations—those you've received funding from and those from whom you're currently seeking funding.

Level Three: Annual Files by Funder

The next level of files should include a separate file folder for all years specific to each funder. You now have an excellent overview of several years' activities.



Level Four: File Folders for Major Categories by Funder Year

Establish individual file folders for all major categories of required documentation including financial, annual reports, current year's application, grant proposal, requirements checklist, proposal compliance matrix, and letter of appreciation.

Strategy #3. Use Grant Management Best Practices to Meet Deadlines and Influence Funders

Grant management is often overlooked and underappreciated. But it is a necessary discipline to keep things running smoothly. Using effective grant management in your organization is like putting oil into your car – it keeps everything running smoothly!

And if you are looking to improve results from your grantseeking efforts, you will find the answer is not always finding more funders or sending out more applications. The answer may be to "sharpen your saw" and improve your grant management capabilities.

There are many benefits to having a good system and process to managing your grants—regardless of the specific methods you choose. With a good system, you eliminate these time-consuming administrative tasks:

- Following up with and reminding team members of their assignments and when they are due
- Searching through previous grant applications for elements you want to reuse in another grant

Key steps in grant management best practices

If you incorporate these five major practices in your grant seeking process, you'll be better at managing grants you've been awarded and can continue to fill the pipeline of pending grant applications:

1. Create a grant calendar.
2. Organize your funders and track your grant history.
3. Coordinate your grant team's responsibilities while staying on schedule.
4. Use your toolkit to streamline proposal creation.
5. Track key information about and communication with your funders.

Step 1. Create a Grant Calendar

Once you have your toolkit assembled, you need to build your grant calendar. A grant calendar can help you and your organization keep on track, avoid missing funder's proposal deadlines, and submit your funded grant reports on time.

Selecting a Grant Management Strategy

There are many ways to track your grants. Your grant calendar may consist of a white board or wall calendar, a shared Outlook or Google calendar, a task management system, spreadsheets, or a grant management solution. Or perhaps you depend on a consultant to manage and track your grant calendar. Whatever you use, you should strive to address the following:

- Everyone has visibility to upcoming deadlines.
- Owners receive email reminders when items are due.
- Everyone on the grant team can see deadlines and access grant documents.
- You are continually adding new opportunities to your calendar.
- You ensure you include recurring funding opportunities into your future plan.
- You seamlessly facilitate the communication surrounding your grant plan, progress, and results.

Be sure to reassess your grant management needs and tools regularly. The volume of grants you manage, growth in your grant team, and other factors may necessitate upgrading your system and tools.

One type of grant management solution doesn't fit everyone's needs. You need to consider the number of grants you will be tracking, the number of people you need to coordinate with, who else needs access to this information. Do they need online, remote access; are key funder relationships documented or does this information reside in just one person's head? how much financial information are you required to track, and how much time do you have to spend managing the process and preparing status reports on your grant fundraising efforts? If you apply for only five grants each year, your needs will be different from those organizations who submit 20 or more applications.

Be wary of a common grant management trap nonprofit organizations fall into. At the start of your grant efforts, you may be just fine using a manual process and applications you already have on hand. But soon you find you are spending more time maintaining your solution and having less time for building relationships with funders and engaging in other fundraising activities. Be sure you reassess your needs and tools at regular intervals. Having the right grant management solution for your needs

*Source: Metropolitan Atlanta Arts Fund 2006 Finalist Application

Step 2. Organize Your Funders and Track Your Grant History

After you settle on a process and the tools you will use, you job is not done. You also need to determine WHAT you should track. After conducting hundreds of interviews with grant professionals, we have a good starting point of what information you might want to track. In your training kit, we've included two spreadsheets to get you started:

Funder Details Spreadsheet: Tracking key information about the funders you work with is a good practice. Often this information resides at best in someone's email folders or at worst, in their head. This puts your organization's fundraising capabilities at risk. It is vitally important that you document key contact information, past results, and funding priorities, and make it accessible to those who need the information.

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
Funder Name	EIN	Deadlines	Description, past results, decision process	Funder Type (Foundation, Governement, Corporation, etc.)	Programs & Areas of Interest	Geographic focus	Phone	Email	Website	Minimum Funding Range	Maximum Funding Range

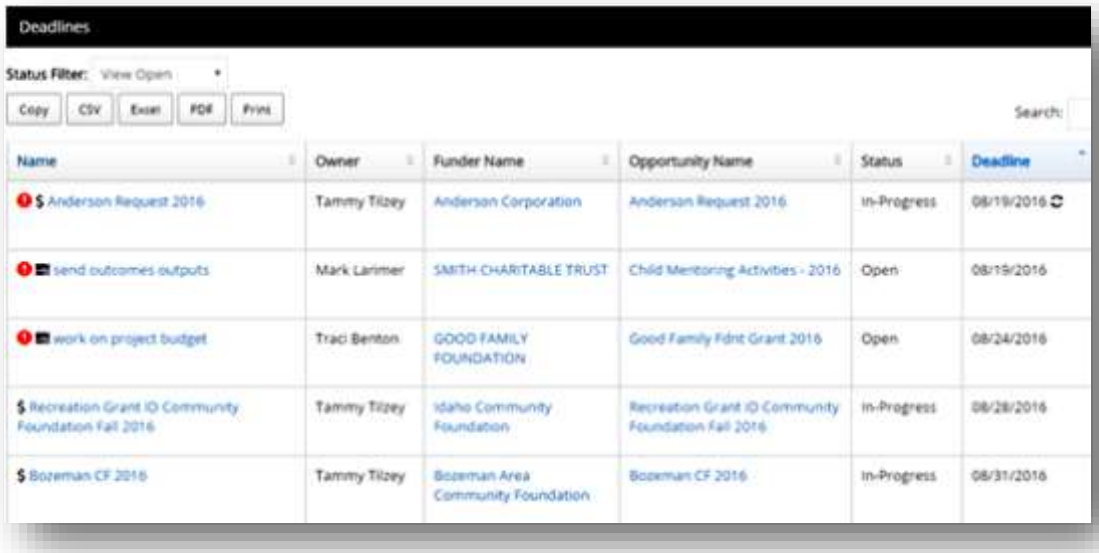
Grant Details Spreadsheet: Knowing details on your past, present, and future grant requests is a key part of grant management. The ability to track and access dates related to the funding request can make the difference between having a sustainable grant practice and one in which you are constantly running behind, apologizing for missing dates. and losing out on funding opportunities. Examples of important dates to track include submission of letter of inquiry and proposal deadlines, expected notification dates, date submitted, decision date, and grant term start and end dates. The capability of recording the amount of funding you requested vs how much you expect, the amount of the final award and how

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P
Funder	Grant Name	Description	Owner	LOI Deadline	Proposal Deadline	Open or Rolling Deadline?	Amount Requested	Amount Expected	Amount Awarded	Notification Date	Date Submitted	Decision Date	Status (researching, Planned, In-progress, submitted, awarded, denied)	Funding Restrictions (general operating funds, program, capital)	Application Submission Details

much was received is also vital to reporting and projecting the funding you receive from grants.

Step 3. Coordinate Your Grant Team Responsibilities while Staying on Schedule

Earlier in this session you learned how to create a Proposal Checklist Matrix (PCM) to organize and track all the elements that are required to apply to a funder. Now that you have this list, you can enter tasks into your grant management solution.



Deadlines

Status Filter: View Open

Copy | CSV | Excel | PDF | Print | Search:

Name	Owner	Funder Name	Opportunity Name	Status	Deadline
$ Anderson Request 2016	Tammy Tilzey	Anderson Corporation	Anderson Request 2016	In-Progress	08/19/2016
send outcomes outputs	Mark Larimer	SMITH CHARITABLE TRUST	Child Mentoring Activities - 2016	Open	08/19/2016
work on project budget	Traci Benton	GOOD FAMILY FOUNDATION	Good Family Fdnt Grant 2016	Open	08/24/2016
$ Recreation Grant ID Community Foundation Fall 2016	Tammy Tilzey	Idaho Community Foundation	Recreation Grant ID Community Foundation Fall 2016	In-Progress	08/28/2016
$ Bozeman CF 2016	Tammy Tilzey	Bozeman Area Community Foundation	Bozeman CF 2016	In-Progress	08/31/2016

List of Upcoming Proposal Tasks and Deadlines. *Your grant management solution can keep you on track, highlight tasks that are falling behind schedule, and remind team members of upcoming items that are coming due. Being able to quickly see what is coming up in the next two weeks or out a few months is critical to keeping the process running smoothly.*

Some grant management solutions can assume responsibility for sending out reminders, pulling together all the deliverables into one place, and tracking any tasks that are past due.

FILE MESSAGE

GrantHub <no-reply@granthub.com>

Opportunity for: Idaho Foundation of the Arts Grant 2016 due in 5 day(s)

You have an upcoming GrantHub Opportunity that is due in 5 day(s)

Name: Idaho Foundation of the Arts Grant 2016
Description:
Deadline: 8/31/2016
Organization: Getting Grants for Good Demo
Funder: Idaho Foundation of the Arts

Click here to view this opportunity

Email Notifications and Reminders. *Grant management solutions can be configured to send notifications to team members when they are assigned a task and also send reminders of deadlines when they are approaching.*

Step 4. Use Your Toolkit to Streamline Proposal Creation.

By following the steps discussed under *Strategy #2, Streamline the Process: Develop a Grant-ready Toolkit,* you may be able complete up to 80 percent of the effort to create a funding proposal before you even know what funder you will be applying to. Once you have your toolkit assembled, you can complete more applications in less time. And the time saved can then be spent in higher value activities that will set your proposal apart from others.

Below is an example of an "Answer Library." This is an online repository that allows you to collect important documents, templates, boilerplates and answers to common questions. Since it is online, everyone on your grant team can easily locate, access, and use the best and most current information for their grant work. What's in it for you? You don't have to hunt to find past applications, copy and paste and risk sending something outdated to the wrong funder!

With a system to keep all this information accessible and in one spot, you can easily:

- Select answer templates to quickly create a first draft
- Access elements available in your GuideStar profile
- Track answers with different character counts for use in online applications
- Tag answers by program name so you can quickly find the appropriate one to use.
- Accumulate stories of how your organization has impacted the population you serve
- Track statistics that show the need for your service and programs

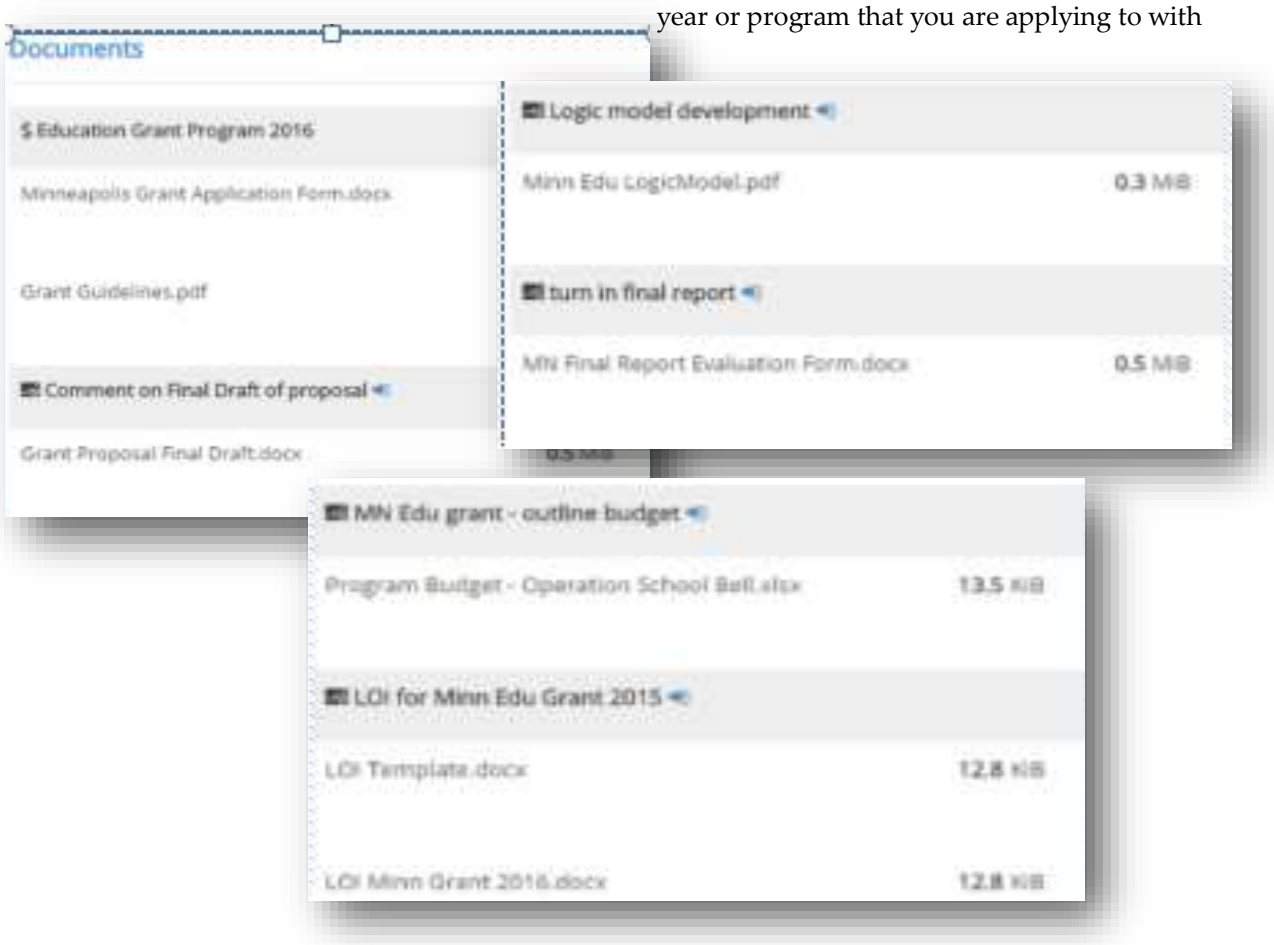
Now when you sit down to write, you will have all the ingredients easily accessible, thus streamlining

The Answer Library. *This method of tracking allows you to collect and store documents pertaining to proposal creation and grant management and to share such information with all grant team members.*

Step 5. Track Key Information About Your Funders and Related Communication

As you continue to grow more successful in your grant efforts, you will need a place to track and record your conversations, recommendations, and past grant history with funders.

On pages 9–11, we discuss using a shared file system for the grant proposal toolkit. You can also use an online grant management solution to help organize and track documents, commitments, and future recommendations from funders. Storing and organizing your grant related documents in a grant management solution allows you to easily organize them with the correct funder, and with the specific year or program that you are applying to with



Grant Document List. *This is an example of the documents you can archive for any specific grant proposal using an online grant management system.*

Three Proven Strategies to Improve Your Grant Readiness

You should also be prepared to pull together summary reports that can effectively communicate to your organization and Board the status and progress of your grant seeking efforts. Depending on the type of grant management solution you use, this can take a few clicks—or hours of time manipulating spreadsheets every month. The figure below illustrates some sample grant status reports and metrics

Sample Summary Reports: *Above are some samples of reports you should provide your team on a regular basis, such as Grant Opportunities by Status, Grant Awarded/Denied Summary, Upcoming Grant Deadlines by Month or Top Funders List.*

An excellent link to a recent blog post that discusses the different types of metrics and reports that can help you build a sustainable grant practice is http://www.granthub.com/metrics-to-drive-grant-

Grant Management Assessment and Planning Worksheet

Why worry about grant management? A grant management solution helps you stay organized and prepared to answer questions like these:

- What do we need to do to increase the success rate of our grant efforts?
- If we had more money, what investment (in people, tools, training, skills, consultants, etc.) would we want to make?
- What is involved in successful grant seeking, and why does it take time to do well?
- What would it take to get our organization ready to apply to more funders?

When you are prepared, organized, and have the data you need, you can be depended upon to provide your organization with solid advice. You will become recognized as a grant professional and others will listen to your recommendations, and be more likely to take your advice. You can show the results of your efforts and investments, and make data-driven decisions. If you want to get the best return on your grant seeking efforts, you will want to follow processes and use tools that help save you and your

An exercise in using the Grant Management Assessment and Planning Worksheet (GMAP)

Turn to the next page to locate your Grant Management Assessment and Planning GMAP worksheet. You can use this worksheet in :

1. Assessing what you are doing well, and defining areas in which you can improve.
2. Developing a checklist of responsibilities that could be part of someone else's job requirements.

It takes time and effort to develop the grant capacity of your organization. Start working on this today. Use the GMAP worksheet to help you determine which elements you should focus

If you choose to invest in a grant management tool—or upgrade your current system—you can use the list to compare various solutions by merely adding elements such as pricing, training/onboarding, and support to the list).

Grant Management Assessment and Planning Worksheet

Why worry about finding an effective grant management system? Because such a management solution helps you stay organized and prepared to answer questions like these:

- What do we need to do to increase the success rate of our grant efforts?
- If we had more money, what investment in people, tools, training, skills, and consultants would we want to make?
- What is involved in successful grant seeking, and why does it take time to do well?
- What would it take to get our organization ready to apply to more funders?

When you are prepared, organized, and have the data you need - you can be depended upon to provide your organization with solid advice. You will become recognized as a grant professional and others will listen to your recommendations, and be more likely to take your advice. You can show the results of your efforts and investments, and make data-driven decisions. If you want to get the best return on your grant seeking efforts, you will want to follow processes and utilize tools that help save you and your organization time and increase the amount of funding you receive as a result of your efforts.

Instructions for Completing the GMAP Worksheet

1. **Rate your current performance using the stars.**
   - 1 star = Disagree / not doing now.
   - 3 stars = Doing some of the time, but not consistently.
   - 5 starts = Agree / consistently doing this.

2. **Go through your list and rate the importance of these items to the success of your grant seeking efforts:**
   - Top priorities = A
   - Mid-level importance = B
   - Less important - C
   - Not currently relevant to you and your organization = D

3. **Assign an "effort to implement" score of 1–10 for each area.**
   - Easy/inexpensive to implement = 1
   - Requires some investment of time and/or money will be needed = 5
   - Requires focused effort over time and/or a significant amount of money = 10

4. **Select the items you will focus your efforts on.**
   - Find the items with a low number of stars. These have the most room for improvement.
   - Select the ones on the list that are rated the highest priority (an A or B).
   - Determine how strategic it is to your organization to improve your grant funding success this coming year; i.e., how much effort or how many items can you effectively work on this year?
   - Identify items that will get you the best return on your efforts, but won't exceed the amount of effort/resources you can apply to them.

Grant Management Assessment and Planning Worksheet

Grant Preparedness ☆☆☆☆☆ (Assessment) Importance: _____ ('A', 'B', 'C', 'D') Effort: _____ (1 - 10)	☐ We follow a process to keep our funder, grant, and contract records backed up, accessible, and available. ☐ We have our baseline proposal, boilerplates, and answer templates written and accessible to the team. ☐ We have all standard documents and attachments typically required for grant applications organized and available to the team. ☐ We have a common file directory or other type of document repository that organizes all our important grant and funder information. ☐ We are able to use a variety of team members (interns/ coordinators/ volunteers) for grant tasks because our processes and toolkit are assembled and organized.
Search, Research & Manage Pipeline ☆☆☆☆☆ (Assessment) Importance: _____ ('A', 'B', 'C', 'D') Effort: _____ (1 - 10)	☐ We have a list of funders we've received funds from in the past. ☐ We have a list of current grants, with deadlines and report due dates. ☐ We have a list of opportunities we plan to apply to this coming year. ☐ We have access to prospect research tools, grant search databases, lists of grant maker funding opportunities from regional and/or cause-specific sources. ☐ We regularly search for new opportunities (quarterly or yearly). ☐ We set up future deadlines in our tracking calendar as soon as we know we will be applying to the funder again, sometimes over a year in advance. ☐ We have a place to record notes of past conversations with funders, their recommendations, and other important information for future reference. ☐ We can classify and group our funders by categories such as repeat funders, strategic candidates or lower probability opportunities. ☐ We can tell which funder deadlines are hard (set), vs. soft (rolling, open) ☐ We glean critical information from funders' websites, 990's and other resources before we apply. ☐ We are selective on the grants we apply for, using a checklist or Matching Matrix' to evaluate if potential funder aligns with our mission, programs, geographic area, etc. ☐ We can easily filter the funder list on the type of program/area of interest they fund.
Grants Planned & In-Process ☆☆☆☆☆ (Assessment) Importance: _____ ('A', 'B', 'C', 'D') Effort: _____ (1 - 10)	☐ We organize our grants and funders using a spreadsheet and a list of grant management tool and keep it up-to-date. ☐ We have in place a process to reassign tasks/grants to someone else. ☐ We have a work plan/calendar where everyone on the grant team can see what deadlines, report due dates and other tasks are coming due in the next two to four weeks. ☐ Everyone gets automatic email reminders when grant deadlines, reports, or other tasks are approaching. ☐ We have the time and resources needed to effectively apply to grants that are in our plan/budget. ☐ We follow a procedure for who approves proposals before they are submitted. ☐ We follow a defined procedure for signing and approving the grant acceptance letters and other gran- related contractual obligations. ☐ We can easily access items in our grant toolkit where ever and whenever we need them.

Grant Management Assessment and Planning Worksheet

Submitted Grants ☆☆☆☆☆ (Assessment) Importance: _____ ('A', 'B', 'C', 'D') Effort: _____ (1 - 10)	☐ We know which proposals are pending and reach out if we haven't heard from the funder when expected. ☐ We have a place and process to store what we submitted to funders, record when we submitted it, and keep any other important communications, documents or dates. ☐ We know what type of grant documents we need to keep archived, where we save them, and for how long to maintain them.
Awarded/Denied Grants ☆☆☆☆☆ (Assessment) Importance: _____ ('A', 'B', 'C', 'D') Effort: _____ (1 - 10)	☐ We track grant award letters and other documents/contracts. ☐ We know what level of financial tracking is required for our grants and have systems to help track expenses against appropriate grants. ☐ We track amount awarded, amount received, amount spent by budget category, and other financial information required to close out a grant. ☐ We know our reporting requirements and we have a tracking method to ensure they are completed on time. ☐ We send out all our grant reports on time. ☐ We submit end of grant reports even if not required by the funder. ☐ We follow up with all funders when requests are denied, and record reason in a system we can refer to in the future. ☐ We acknowledge both awards and denials with an immediate letter of appreciation.
Grant Reporting & Metrics ☆☆☆☆☆ (Assessment) Importance: _____ ('A', 'B', 'C', 'D') Effort: _____ (1 - 10)	☐ We can easily report on important metrics that summarize our grant fundraising status: — Top funders — Quantity and dollar amounts of grants awarded/denied — Quantity and dollar amounts for a particular program (planned, awarded) — Quantity and dollar amounts of grants that are pending a decision — Dollar amounts requested vs dollar amounts awarded — Of the amount that was awarded, how much has been received — Grants awarded, but not yet closed out ☐ We can quickly and easily pull information together when it is needed, such as the following lists: — Top funders — Grants that are pending a decision — Grants that were awarded, but not closed out yet — Summary of upcoming or past due deadlines/tasks

Grant Management Assessment Work Plan
Date: _____

1. List areas with a low number of stars (most room for improvement)	
2. Which areas on this list above rated the highest priority (an 'A' or a 'B')?	
3. Assess how strategic it is to your organization to improve your grant funding success this coming year; i.e., how much effort or how many items can you effectively work on this year?	
4. Identify items that will get you the best return on your efforts, but won't exceed the amount of effort/resources you can apply to them.	