Grant Preparation:

Commonly requested information about your agency:

FEIN (Federal Employer ID Number:	
State Tax Exempt Number:	
DUNS Number: http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform	
Tax status: 501(c)(3) or…	
Annual budget:	
Population demographics:	
Other:	

Wish list:

Project idea:	**Needs/Prices** (Equipment; materials; staff/contracts) (Be specific; note dates of price quotes and from where/whom)	**Notes** (possible funders / grants applied for / agencies to partner with / contacts made, etc.)

Tips for creating a wish list / gathering information you'll need when writing a grant:
(It's good to gather this information on an ongoing basis. You may also need to gather or update this information as it pertains to each individual grant you're seeking.)

1) Know what your needs are, and gather details ahead of time. You may learn about a funding opportunity 48 hours before your proposal is due. If you've gathered information in advance, you'll meet that deadline more easily.

2) Gather prices for individual items. Search online and through local stores. Write down or print out: Item name & brand; Price; Location found; Date found/priced. You might not stick with that brand or vendor, but you can easily recheck prices online, and you'll know what amount to budget for in a grant application.

3) Gather prices for services. For example, if you need a new roof, call 3 roofers, ask for a free estimate, tell them you're just gathering prices right now. They may want to meet with you to explain their findings. Take notes.

4) Gather personnel expenses. Sometimes grants will not pay your full-time employees, but will pay for extra hours for a part-timer, or for services contracted to an individual. Research the pay range for necessary positions. Factor in preparation time for any programs they may do. Look up the state mileage reimbursement rate if reimbursing for travel. Calculate payroll taxes and benefits for non-contractual employees.

5) Brainstorm program ideas. Know what you want to do, services you want to provide, and things your agency needs. How do they fit together thematically? Sometimes grants will fund general operations or pre-existing projects; sometimes they'll only fund something new.

6) Find potential partners. Some grants require cooperation between agencies, or the involvement of a certain type of agency. Another example: If you are not a 501(c)(3) organization and a funder requires that status, you might find a 501(c)(3) to partner with. Perhaps that agency will be the fiscal agent and pay you contractually for your services if the grant will fund something they need as well. Some 501C3 organizations (such as the Fund for Illinois Libraries through the Illinois Library Association) will accept and distribute grant funds on your behalf for a fee. Never assume a partnership, even if someone has expressed a general interest in helping you. In writing a grant you may be obliging a partner agency to certain activities and expenses. Contact your partner(s), explain the role you'd like them to take on, and get their support in writing for your records. Some grants require or encourage you to attach letters of support to the application. It's helpful to write sample letters of support for partners to edit and sign. Support may range from direct activities or management to simply promoting your grant-funded activities to their own customers.

7) Secure matching funds: Some grants require matching funds. For example, if your project will cost $1600, the grant might pay half ($800), and you'll need to have the other $800 ready from another source (funds in your reserves; a local donor; a local business; another grant). Do not promise to provide matching funds that you cannot afford. Sometimes in-kind expenses will qualify as a match (personnel, space, and other resources you'll dedicate to the project).

Once you find a potential grant or funder:

1) You'll need answers to the following questions. Answers may be readily available on the application, the funder's web site, etc. Carefully read all the information you've gathered, then feel free to contact your potential grant funder for further information. Ask for the person you'd speak to about grant funding, introduce yourself and your agency, and take notes.

Who you spoke with: _____ date: _____.

Questions to ask / information to gather:

1) Are you currently accepting grant applications?

2) What are the deadlines for the application(s) and (if required) the "letter of intent" to apply?

3) What is the timeline for activities and expenditures?

4) If funded, can we apply again for consecutive or ongoing funding?

5) Is there a grant form to complete? (If you don't yet have the grant form, request one, along with any information they can provide.)

6) What types of projects do you fund? For example, "We are looking for funding for... Building renovation or repairs; educational programs; computers; general operations (that's salary, bills, etc.). Do any of these ideas sound like something you'd be willing to consider funding?"

7) What restrictions do you have on funding? For example, would it be okay to request funds for: general operations; administrative costs; equipment; capital expenses (building maintenance or construction)? Do funds need to support a new project? Do funds need to address the needs of a specific population?

8) What matching funds do you require?

9) What tax status do you require?

10) What other requirements do you have, such as partnerships between multiple agencies, or any other requirements?

11) What is the funding range for the grant(s) you have available? (That's how much $ should we request. It might be a range, such as $2,500-$5,000, or a cap, such as anything under $500,000.)

12) Is there a scoring rubric available for applicants?

13) Do you have any other tips or suggestions for applicants?

Tips on writing the grant:

1) Grant writing is all about convincing a funder that you have a project which you are fully prepared to take on, that your project is exactly the type of endeavor they're looking to fund, that your project is necessary and impactful, that you truly need the funding you're requesting. Make sure that your proposed expenses and activities fit the grant's intended audience and purpose.

2) Refer to all the information you've gathered (above). The funder might also provide:
a) A scoring rubric (used by the grant-readers to rate applications). If provided, read your grant with the scoring rubric in mind.
b) A live or recorded webinar or meeting. Attend, or listen to this if it is provided!

3) Show you've done your homework. Unless the funder or application tells you to avoid this, list specific purchase items and prices, people you're considering hiring, etc. However, it may be a good idea to include language that allows for substitutions. For example, you may write that you "will purchase 16 inch Dell Monitors from Best Buy (or comparable technology from a reputable vendor)," because 18 inch Acer monitors may go on sale elsewhere. Show that you've done your research, but don't commit to a specific purchase (unless the grant requires it).

4) List the information where it's requested. If question 5 asks for specific information about how you will publicize your activities, address that in question 5, even though you may have addressed it in question 3 as well. This makes it easier for the grant reviewer, who may be reading hundreds of applications and recommending whether to provide funding.

5) Follow the rules! If they have a word limit for each section (or sometimes even a character limit -- that's letters, symbols & spaces) adhere to it strictly. If they request letters of support or other documentation, provide them. If they state, "We do not fund so and so," write somewhere in your budget or narrative, "funds for so and so are not requested for this project." They really want to know that you're following their rules; their rules may be legal restrictions that they have to follow.

6) Verify and adhere to all allowable expenses and restrictions, and tie all expenses to the grant activities. For example, sometimes you can include 10% for "administrative costs," so if you're asking for $10,000 you can show $1,000 in the budget for administration, which gives your organization a little money for the costs you normally incur. Verify this before including it in the budget. If you're seeking funding for a literacy program, it might make sense to purchase furniture for students and tutors (if allowed). If the primary purpose of your grant is to develop a web site, your funder will likely reject your grant if you request funds to purchase 20 chairs.

7) Write with feeling. Sell yourself and your idea. You are telling a compelling story about a dire need.

8) Share compelling anecdotes. For example: "Anita spent sixteen weeks in our shelter last winter. She arrived feeling nearly suicidal. She left with a full-time job and a new apartment. She told us, 'This shelter saved my life and I've discovered just how compassionate people can be.'" (Write down compliments when you get them, and ask for permission to quote them).

9) Cite concrete evidence whenever possible. Do not make exaggerated or unverifiable statements, such as "If funded, we would be the first and only organization in Illinois to provide this service." (Do you really know what *every* organization in Illinois has *ever* provided?). Instead, find a statistic (and cite your source), or get a quote from someone. For example: "According to our local high school superintendent Sarah Soandso, the demand for free after-school programming is not sufficiently met in our community."

10) Grant deadlines are set in stone. Funders usually won't read an application that arrives even one minute late. Give yourself plenty of time to write a grant; however, if you learn about a grant 48 hours before the deadline, sometimes you'll find you really can do it in 48 hours.

11) Only apply for grants that you have the desire and resources to manage. It's not just free money. If funded, you'll have to do what you promised, manage the finances, meet deadlines, and submit reports.

12) Proofread. Sometimes grant reviewers grade applications as if they are essays. Though your proposed project is their main focus, they may see grammatical errors and typos as evidence that you are not detail oriented, competent and professional. That said, imperfection should not be a deal breaker. Just do your best.

13) Don't expect to get every grant you write, even if it is a masterpiece. It's a competitive process. Keep the grants you write; use the ideas and information in another grant, or submit the same grant again next year. It's good practice. Even if you don't get a grant, your legwork will come in handy.

14) Be confident! It's not rocket science, and some grant applications are really simple. Go for it!

This resource was prepared by the Carbondale Public Library. Additional resources are all available on our website at https://carbondalepubliclibrary.org/research/grant-nonprofit/

We have searchable databases that list grant funders and funding opportunities. These can be searched in-person at the library. Ask any librarian for assistance, and feel free to make an appointment with our Reference Librarian if you need a more intensive tutorial.