

# How to make grant applications

[What is a grant and what... How do grant funders work? When to apply for grant...](#)  
[Budgets](#) [Artist's Statement](#) [Supporting materials](#)

Fundraising can be a full-time occupation, so what can you do if you want to get more effective at applying for grants without it taking over your life?

## Be prepared

Every application needs to be tailored to the individual funder and scheme to which you are applying. Most, however, will require at least some of the following which you can prepare in advance, keep up to date, and adapt for specific applications when you need to.

- [Artists' CV](#)
- [Artists' statement](#)
- [Documentation of your work](#)
- Your [daily fee rate](#) and a [budget of main costs](#) that can be included in your project budget
- Testimonials or feedback previous projects: emails, letters or formal evaluations. Get permission to quote people, or quote anonymously
- Reviews or essays about your work to show a wider reputation. Key quotes with links to full articles are often better, since funders may not have time to read a whole article.
- A [website](#) or links to [social networks](#) containing all of the above will save time, and funders increasingly accept this in submission. If you don't have a website, a blog can be equally useful, or you could trade skills with a web designer if you can't build it yourself.

## Your proposal

You're a visual artist, not a writer, but still you need to be able to explain in a clear and compelling way what you are aiming to do, what the benefits are, and how you will make your project successful. A funder will also need to understand what you need the funds to do and how you have researched any costs.

If there isn't an application form to complete, it can be helpful to structure your proposal in terms of a series of questions:

- **What do you want to do?** Make a new body of work, go on a course, do some training etc
- **Why do you need the money?** To experiment with a new way of working, to develop new skills etc. Link this activity to your artist's statement: show how it would help you to answer key questions or themes you are exploring in your work, or address the stage you are at in your career.

- **How will funding help?** What will funding allow you to do? What would happen if you don't have funding?
- **How does your project fulfil the funder's aims?** Link your project to the funder's key criteria and show how your project furthers their aims and objectives.
- **How will you spend the money?** On a very practical level, funders need to know how you will spend the money. Break down your costs into units (for example, total fees should be shown as a number of days and the daily rate). A [project budget](#) with a few lines of explanatory text is often the best way to be clear about what your costs are.
- **When will you do it and how long do will it will take?** For longer projects, break it down into key stages. Make sure the project runs to the same timetable as the funder.
- **How will you know the project has been successful?** Most funders will want you to reflect in some way on what happened in your project and whether you achieved your goals: these are useful questions to ask yourself anyway. Think about how you could collect the information appropriate to your project and offer it back to them.

Avoid art world jargon or too many philosophical concepts: keep it simple and clear.

Most funders will not have had the same art education as you, and prefer to see proposals that clearly say how project activity will meet their aims, not answer academic questions.

Finally, to make sure what you've written makes sense, ask someone who isn't involved with the project to read it for you and see if they understand it.

## Ask other artists and friends

Keeping abreast of different funding opportunities is a major task – but you don't need to tackle it alone. [Peer networks](#) are a powerful tool to share information and experience with other artists, and are very effective in learning about changes in policy, funding or organisations.

You can also make use of our [funder listings](#), [Funding Central](#) and [Guidestar](#) to keep up to date with what's going on, what's coming up, and what's likely to change soon.

## Keep an eye on the competition

It pays to keep an eye on where your peers – and those a few steps ahead of you – get funding. As most funders will insist on being mentioned on publicity materials, it is usually easy to find out how projects get supported. Check [funders' websites](#), [Funding Central](#) and [Guidestar](#) to find out how much other artists have received and what for.

## Use rejections as a learning experience

Everybody gets rejections from grant funders at some time, and while that's sometimes simply because they get more applications than they can support, you can still learn from your mistakes:

- **Ask for feedback-** even if your rejection letter specifies a reason for your rejection, asking for verbal feedback will sometimes bring you a fuller and more open response. Explain that you're asking for feedback to learn and improve your application for next time and not to challenge their decision, to be more likely to get help.
- **Reflect on your approach** – be honest with yourself. Did you rush the application? Did you really think you met the priorities or were you spinning things a little? Are the successful applications from artists more advanced in their careers, or less so? Learn [when to apply for grant funding](#).
- **Find out what did get funded** – funders often publish lists of what they did fund. What do you notice about the projects that got funded? Were the artists at a different stage of their career to you? Were you asking for much more (or less) money than they received? Were you applying for activities that this funder hasn't supported?

If you discover you have a flair for fundraising, your skills will be in great demand. You could sell that skill to others – fundraisers are quite rare in the arts and can be handsomely paid. If you want to get serious about it, find out more about working in fundraising via the [Institute of Fundraisers](#).