

Grant Writing for Artists Workshop with Fafnir Adamites 2019

Designed as a primer for artists seeking to pursue grant funds, this overview is based on a workshop led by artist Fafnir Adamites in fall 2019.

CONSIDERATIONS

WHAT KINDS OF PROJECTS?

Move ahead as if you will carry out the project, regardless of funding—solidify locations, partners, timelines, have a gallery show booked, etc.

- Determine whether to apply individually or through your organizational partner
- Community events
- Educational events/workshops
- Art exhibits for yourself or others
- Research projects or preparatory phases of development for long-term projects
- Studio equipment or materials (*included as part of a broader project*)
- Educational or professional development
- Relocation or starting a studio/business

FINDING GRANTS

Look locally and read the publications that will connect you to the art world.

- State arts/humanities/cultural councils
- Local cultural councils
- Community foundations
- Artsake blog—grants in NY and New England
- Assets for Artists—run the residency program at MASS MoCA
- Awesome Foundation—\$1,000 grants for “awesome” projects
- Collegeart.org—open calls, grant and residency announcements
- Hyperallergic
- Artwork Archive Blog

DO YOUR RESEARCH

Read all of the details, deadlines, instructions, FAQs and restrictions.

- Do you qualify?
- Understand what they’re looking for
- Save yourself time and effort if it’s not a good match
- Note the timeline for applications, decisions, and awards
- Find out who is on the jury or panel if possible, consider their perspective
- Look at previous recipients and understand what mediums and experience levels they have funded in the past

APPLICATIONS

FOLLOW INSTRUCTIONS

Don't stray from the grantmaker's expectations.

- Make a checklist
- Submit every document exactly the way they have requested
- Format image files exactly the way they have requested

CONTACT THE ORGANIZATION

Information from program officers & reviewers will lead to a stronger application.

- Ask questions and seek clarity if necessary
- If you know a reviewer personally, reach out to ask for their input

GIVE YOURSELF TIME TO COMPLETE & REVIEW THE APPLICATION

Unfortunate errors can wreck your chances.

- Ask a mentor or colleague to review and edit
- Don't submit your application minutes before the deadline, server crashes are always possible
- Aim to apply early, even with rolling deadlines

HONE YOUR WRITING SKILLS

Project confidence and clarity.

- Avoid jargon - use relatable and accessible language
- Use future tense—keep it positive and concrete
- Use very specific language to paint a precise picture of your project
- Reflect the language used by the funder
- Use powerful action words to describe your project and yourself (see word list)

YOUR PROPOSAL/PROJECT SUMMARY

Spell it out, don't leave things up to interpretation.

- Describe specific efforts you will make to ensure that your program is accessible and inclusive
- Explain how the work will be shared with the general public
- Tell how your program will increase opportunities for underserved audiences
- Tell how your program will offer unique experiences to your audience
- Demonstrate that you have thoroughly considered the logistics of implementing your project
- Provide as much specific information as possible about venue, costs, and collaborators
- Have a marketing plan in place that includes social media
- NOTE: Artist residencies and fellowships won't be focused on the broad impact of your project. The focus will be on your work, your practice, how the opportunity will support your work, and your preparedness for the experience.

IF YOUR PROPOSAL IS TO ADVANCE YOUR OWN WORK

Find a voice for your work.

- How does this project connect to, depart or build on past work?
- How will your work and career advance or develop?
- Why is this project urgent?
- What makes the project important?

- Is there a public benefit?

BUDGET

Be clear on the restrictions and guidelines for what can be included.

- Reimbursement versus unrestricted check
- Don't forget your stipend
- What can typically be funded: marketing, equipment, space rental, materials
- What typically is not funded: food and alcohol, paying personal debts, personal expenses
- Do your research and don't inflate your budget
- When possible, include secured grants, personal fundraising, in-kind contributions, and donations
- Be realistic about the amount of funding you request, and explain what you will do if you receive less funding than you requested

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

Present your best work in its best form.

- Artist Resume/ CV
- Artist Statement
- Portfolio—one of the most important aspects of your application
- Letters of support

IF YOU ARE SELECTED

Plan your finances and keep communication with your funder going strong.

- Send a thank you note/email
- Most grants are considered taxable income
- Be aware of any organizational expectations such as progress reports, donation of artwork, or crediting the funder on marketing materials
- Keep your receipts for documentation
- Inform the organization of any major changes to your proposal

TRY, TRY AGAIN

Rejection is part of the process: if you don't get it, try again (and again).

- Create a grant calendar to stay on top of deadlines and remind yourself to apply
- Ask the organization to give you feedback on your application
- Ask mentors or colleagues to review your application

FAQs

Can I get a grant for a year off to write a book?

Most grants for creatives are under \$5,000 so the kinds of awards that get you a year's salary are typically awarded to creative practitioners who are established in some way and are gaining attention and influence in their medium. Many writers apply to fellowships and residency programs that grant them anywhere from 1 week to 6 months (typically with work space and/or lodging) to immerse themselves in or complete a project.

Can I break a project into component parts and apply for different grants?

Definitely, for long-term or large-scale projects that will require multiple years of work. You could focus on research, execution, public engagement, etc. The key is to be really clear about your process and to convey a detailed understanding of the steps required for each phase.

When I'm applying, do I need to disclose other funding that I've received for the proposed project?

Yes, in your budget you should list the other income you have received for the project, or that is pending (a grant application/funding request you have already submitted). You do not need to include grants you have not yet applied to but are considering for the project.

Do people use personal connections to get grants?

Many grantmaking processes for artists that are connected to larger grantmaking organizations/foundations have been anonymized, i.e. the artists' names are removed from the portfolio and blocked in the application. This is not typically the case for local arts/cultural council grants. An easy way to connect with grantmakers is to simply reach out and ask specific and informed questions about the application process. In the end it's about strengthening your application rather than special consideration, and a lack of personal contact with a grantmaker should not discourage you from applying.

How do you discern how competitive you will be for a grant?

Some of it is about your confidence—push yourself and put your work out there. Look at who the grantmaker has funded in the past and consider where the recipients were in the development of their practice/level of experience. Be sure the grantmaker funds your medium. Some grants and residencies have applications fees which might help you decide which ones you want to pursue.

What should I consider in developing an online fundraising campaign?

Different digital fundraising platforms have different advantages. Look at their terms closely before choosing what's best for your project. Plan to have a strong promotional campaign ready to roll—have a networking email list ready, plan social media posts, ask peers to promote your project, and share your campaign with people you see face-to-face.

**GOOD LUCK!
DON'T GIVE UP!**