



# Common Grant APPLICATION

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## Before You Begin - Strategies for a Successful CGAF

### WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE COMMON GRANT APPLICATION FORMAT APPLICATION?

Grantmakers of Western Pennsylvania created the Common Grant Application Format in 1996 to simplify the process of requesting and making grants. It is designed to benefit both grantseekers and foundation and corporate decision-makers who review grant proposals. It is not a form to be filled in. It is a format to be used as an outline for organizing and writing proposals.

### HOW SHOULD YOU USE (AND HOW SHOULDN'T YOU USE) THE COMMON GRANT APPLICATION FORMAT?

Read this entire document before you begin. Pay attention to the instructions for preparation that follow. You may duplicate the forms if necessary. Copies can be downloaded at [www.gwpa.org](http://www.gwpa.org), or obtained from the Nonprofit Resource Center at The Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, 4400 Forbes Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15213

#### TIP

*Do not simply produce a mass mailing of a single proposal. Take care to tailor each request, particularly in the cover letter and the executive summary, to the specific interests of each funder.*

### HOW SHOULD YOU START?

Know your purpose. Clarify your organization's priorities and purpose in seeking funds.

### WHAT SHOULD YOU DO NEXT? RESEARCH, RESEARCH, RESEARCH.

Conduct research to identify foundations and corporations that make grants to your type of organization and in your geographic area. Use the resources of the Nonprofit Resource Center (as outlined on page 9), visit websites, request annual reports and obtain proposal guidelines. Make certain that the purpose of your proposal fits within the funder's guidelines. Now you are ready to consider writing a proposal. But, first, find out about each funder's application process. Some do not want a proposal right away. Many want you to begin by writing a letter of inquiry. Suggested guidelines for a letter of inquiry are in the addendum on page 10. Do not write a full proposal if a letter of inquiry is required.

## Common Grant Application Format Outline

### ENSURE YOU SUBMIT A COMPLETE APPLICATION

A complete application should include the following items in the order indicated:

- A. Cover Letter
- B. Common Grant Application Format Cover Sheet (Page 5)
- C. Executive Summary
- D. Narrative (which is based on the CGAF guidelines)
- E. Attachments (as indicated on Page 4)

Further explanation of each item is provided below and on the following pages.

#### TIP

*Submit the correct number of copies. This will vary with each organization. Be sure to check each funder's requirements.*

### A. WRITE A COVER LETTER.

Write a one-page cover letter that includes the following:

- ☐ Name of the program.
- ☐ Purpose of the program.
- ☐ A strategic reason for the funder to consider the program.
- ☐ Amount requested.
- ☐ Time period of the program or project.
- ☐ Name of the contact person and contact information.

The letter should be signed by the board president or chairperson and the executive director. If the proposal is a collaborative request, signatures of the participating organizations' representatives must be provided.

### B. COMPLETE THE COMMON GRANT APPLICATION FORMAT COVER SHEET (PAGE 5).

### C. WRITE AN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE PROJECT, PROGRAM OR CAMPAIGN.

Write an executive summary that includes:

- ☐ Brief description of the project.
- ☐ Outcomes you plan to achieve.
- ☐ Who the project serves and why it is important.
- ☐ Why your organization should receive the funds to implement the project and how the funds will be spent.

### D. WRITE A NARRATIVE.

Write a narrative that follows the CGAF outline below, using the headings and subheadings provided. As long as the narrative flows in the designated order, feel free to include information that you believe is important to make your case. The questions reflect the general interests of grantmakers, but are not intended to be all inclusive. If a question is not applicable, explain. If a problem exists that might detract from the credibility of your organization or project, address it briefly; do not avoid or dismiss it.

Avoid including the same information in different sections of the narrative. Be thorough, yet strive for brevity. More is not necessarily better.

#### TIP

*Share your passion, your organization's uniqueness and strengths and how you will make a difference through your outcomes.*

### 1. ORGANIZATIONAL INFORMATION.

Provide background on your organization. If you are an affiliate of another organization, please describe.

- ☐ State your mission.
- ☐ Summarize your organization's history.
- ☐ Outline current programs and activities.\*
- ☐ Highlight accomplishments.

\*If you are applying for a general operating grant, these items may be similar to the ones indicated on the following page under "Purpose of Grant." Just include them in one place.

#### TIP

*Be clear and succinct. Differentiate yourself from similar or competing organizations.*

## Common Grant Application Format Outline

### 2. Purpose of Grant.

If you are completing a proposal for a project or program or for operating funds, follow “a” instructions below. If you are completing a proposal for a capital campaign, follow “b” instructions below.

#### A) Project, Program, and Operating Funds Requests

- ☐ **Problem and Need.** Identify the problem to be addressed and the needs to be met by the project. What unique service(s) would the community be deprived of if you do not undertake this project? Provide supporting data.
- ☐ **Program/Project Goal.** Describe the goals and overall impact of the project or program.
- ☐ **Program/Project Design.** Describe your program objectives, activities, strategies, staffing, partners, timelines and explain how the design will enable you to address the problem or need. Identify the project as a new or continuing program.
- ☐ **Sustainability.** Specify your plans for financing the project at the termination of the grant. List other financing sources or strategies that you are developing.

#### TIP

*If a similar program or device has been conducted by your organization or another, please discuss its impact. Does it represent an expansion or duplication of services in your area? If it doesn't, define its potential to serve as a model program locally or nationally.*

#### B) Capital Campaign Requests

- ☐ **Describe the proposed campaign,** including goals and objectives.
- ☐ **Purpose and Outcomes.** Describe the goals and desired outcomes of the campaign.
- ☐ **Need.** Identify the need/problem to be addressed, target population and number of people to be served.
- ☐ **Status and Timetable.** Define the campaign as new or continuing and provide information on its status. Include a timetable for implementation and completion.
- ☐ **Partners.** If appropriate, identify any other participating organizations in the campaign and their roles.

- ☐ **Leadership.** List the campaign leadership and their affiliations.
- ☐ **Regulations.** Identify regulatory approvals, if required.
- ☐ **Organizational Impact.** Discuss implications of this campaign in relation to the organization's ongoing operational expenses.
- ☐ **Sustainability.** Specify your plans for continuing your progress at the termination of the grant, particularly if operating expenses are projected to increase at completion of the capital project. List other financing sources or strategies you are developing.

#### TIP

*If timing is a critical factor or a “window of opportunity” exists that impacts the success of your capital campaign, please elaborate.*

### 3. Evaluation.

- ☐ Interim and final evaluation and expenditure reports will be required for every grant awarded. It is important to design your evaluation process at the outset and begin to collect data from the beginning of the project, program or campaign.
- ☐ **Outcomes.** Describe the proposed program or project outcomes, with reference to long-range plans of the organization. What outcomes do you want to produce by the end of the first year, second year, etc.? If your program is continuing, what intended outcomes have been achieved thus far?
- ☐ **Measurement.** Outline your plan to document progress and results. How will you measure expected outcomes and the effectiveness of your activities? What will be your criteria for success? What tools will you use to evaluate your program and organization (records, surveys, interviews, pre- and post-tests, community feedback, etc.)?

## Common Grant Application Format Outline

### E. ATTACHMENTS.

Include the following attachments in the order indicated:

#### 1. Verification of 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status and public charities status.

- ☐ Copies of the advance or definitive IRS determination letters indicating 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status and public charities status.
- ☐ Copies of the pages of the most recent 990 showing public charities status and public support.

#### 2. Organizational structure.

- ☐ List of officers and directors, including occupations, places of employment, diversity spread (age, gender, race), and other relevant affiliations.
- ☐ List of key staff members, plus résumés and job descriptions of key personnel involved in the project.

#### 3. Financial information.

- ☐ Program/Project Budget or Capital Campaign Budget. (See Page 7 for sample format.)
- ☐ Organization's Current Operating Budget. Itemize all expenses and revenues.
- ☐ Grant Request (Project) Budget. (Depending upon the request, this could be a subset or the same as the program or operating budget.)
- ☐ Cash Flow Budget. Some funders may ask for a cash flow budget. Check with the organization for its specific requirement.
- ☐ Audited Financial Statements. Include audited financial statements for the most recent year.

#### 4. For capital campaign requests only, also include:

- ☐ Fundraising Strategy. Describe your fundraising strategy by donor categories. List other foundation and corporate funders and the amounts committed or requested. Include all public funds and individual contributions supporting the project.
- ☐ Board Participation. Specify the amount to be raised from your board.
- ☐ Summary of Most Recent Capital Campaign. Outline the campaign goal, amount raised, board contributions, and beginning and ending dates.

#### 5. Letters of support.

If you are collaborating with other organizations or have a need that you want to substantiate, you should include letters of support.

#### 6. Organizational information.

Annual report or strategic business plan, if available. (Please do not send videos or other unsolicited information.)

### TIP

*Budgets should reflect the financial contributions of other funders and potential funders, with amounts committed or requested, and including public funds, individual contributions, and other sources of income supporting the project or capital campaign.*



## Common Grant Application Cover Sheet

Date of Application: \_\_\_\_\_

Legal Name of Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

(Should be the same as on IRS determination letter and as supplied on IRS Form 990)

Year Founded: \_\_\_\_\_ Current Annual Operating Budget: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Executive Director: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Person/Title (if different from Executive Director): \_\_\_\_\_

Address (principal/administrative office): \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address, if different from above: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

Website: \_\_\_\_\_

Project Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Purpose: \_\_\_\_\_

Amount Requested: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Total Project Cost: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Project Goals: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Beginning and Ending Dates of the Project/Campaign: \_\_\_\_\_

Geographic Area to be Served: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### **I CERTIFY, TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE, THAT:**

1. The tax-exempt status of this Organization is still in effect,
2. This Organization does not support or engage in any terrorist activity, and
3. If a grant is awarded to this Organization, the proceeds of that grant will not be distributed to or used to benefit any organization or individual supporting or engaged in terrorism, or used for any other unlawful purpose.

*Signatures:*

\_\_\_\_\_  
President, Board of Directors

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Executive Director

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



## Common Grant Application Budget Format

An accurate, detailed budget for proposed projects is a requirement of every funder. Your total budget should be broken down into the items specified below. As long as your budget is typewritten and contains the required information, you may submit it in a format convenient for you. A sample format with suggested revenue and expense categories follows.

### A. BUDGET HEADING

- ☐ Specify the budget period (e.g., January 1, 2010 to December 31, 2010).
- ☐ Specify the requested amount and the total cost of the project.

### B. REVENUE

If the requested amount is different from the total cost of the project or campaign, itemize all confirmed and anticipated sources of revenue, and provide a revenue total. Refer to the following example for possible revenue categories. Also, indicate the amount of funds, if any, for this project that will be drawn down from your operating budget and/or reserve fund or endowment.

### C. EXPENSES

Itemize your expenses and provide an expense total. Include any additional items relevant to your particular program, project or campaign.

### D. NARRATIVE

This section should include:

- ☐ A list of assumptions on which the budget was based.
- ☐ An explanation of any unusual budget items.
- ☐ The percentage of overhead applied to the project should precede the itemized listing, if applicable.
- ☐ In-kind expenses and donations or matching funds should also be described.
- ☐ If your organization has affiliates and/or subsidiaries, please explain.

See next page for sample project budget format and categories.



# Common Grant Application Budget Format

## E. SAMPLE PROJECT BUDGET FORMAT AND CATEGORIES

REVENUE	Committed Funds	Pending Funds
1. Grants/Contracts/Contributions		
Local Government		
State Government		
Foundations (itemize on separate lines)		
Corporations (itemize on separate lines)		
Individuals		
Other (specify)		
2. Earned Income		
Events		
Publications and Products		
3. Membership Income		
4. In-Kind Support		
5. Other (specify)		
TOTAL REVENUE		
EXPENSE	Amount Requested In This Proposal	Total Project Expenses
Personnel		
Salaries and Wages * (see Example below)		
Payroll Taxes		
Benefits		
Consultants and Professional Fees		
Travel/Professional Development		
Operations		
Rent		
Utilities		
Telecommunications		
Postage/Messenger		
Printing and copying		
Equipment		
Supplies		
Other		
TOTAL EXPENSE		
*(Example) <u>Full-Time Personnel</u> Executive Director ..... \$ _____ Staff Position #1 ..... \$ _____ Staff Position #2 ..... \$ _____ Staff Position #3 ..... \$ _____ <u>Part-Time Personnel</u> Staff Position #4 ..... \$ _____ Staff Position #5 ..... \$ _____ Staff Position #6 ..... \$ _____		
<b>SURPLUS (DEFICIT)</b>		
TOTAL REVENUE		
(TOTAL EXPENSE)		
TOTAL SURPLUS (DEFICIT)		

## Participating Foundations, Corporations and Organizations

Following is a list of foundations and corporations that accept the CGA as of Summer 2009. For the most up-to-date listing, visit [www.gwpa.org](http://www.gwpa.org), section, "Grantmaker Resources."

**Note:** Many funders do not want to receive a complete proposal initially. Instead they may ask you to submit a letter of inquiry as the first step. (Suggested guidelines for writing a letter of inquiry are contained in the Addendum on page 10.) Be sure to research each funder's preference.

Aircast Foundation  
 Alcoa Foundation  
 Allegheny Foundation  
 American Eagle Outfitters Foundation  
 Bayer Foundation  
 Beaver County Foundation  
 Beckwith Family Foundation  
 Birmingham Foundation  
 Buncher Family Foundation  
 Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation  
 Community Foundation of Fayette County  
 Community Foundation of Greene County  
 Community Foundation of Westmoreland County  
 Dollar Bank  
 Dominion Foundation  
 DSF Charitable Foundation  
 Duquesne Light Company  
 Eat'n Park Hospitality Group  
 Eden Hall Foundation  
 FISA Foundation  
 Maurice Falk Fund  
 Grable Foundation  
 Hillman Foundation  
 Roy A. Hunt Foundation  
 Mary Hillman Jennings Foundation  
 Jewish Healthcare Foundation  
 Earl Knudsen Charitable Foundation  
 Laurel Foundation  
 The Glenn R. Logan and  
   Rhea Jean McCandless Logan Trust  
 Massey Charitable Trust

McCune Foundation  
 Katherine Mabis McKenna Foundation  
 Richard King Mellon Foundation  
 National City Bank of Pennsylvania  
 Pittsburgh Child Guidance Foundation  
 PNC Advisors Charitable Trust Committee  
 PNC Advisors Private Foundation Management Services  
 PNC Foundation  
 Pitcairn-Crabbe Foundation  
 POISE Foundation  
*Post-Gazette* Charities  
 PPG Industries Foundation  
 Rust Foundation  
 Staunton Farm Foundation  
 St. Margaret Foundation  
 The Buhl Foundation  
 The Donald & Sylvia Robinson Family Foundation  
 The Forbes Funds  
 The Stackpole-Hall Foundation  
 United Jewish Federation  
 United Way of Westmoreland County  
 United States Steel Foundation, Inc.  
 Wagner Family Charitable Trust  
 Washington County Community Foundation  
 Hilda M. Willis Foundation

**Note:** Many other foundations may welcome it if you follow the Common Grant Application Format. You may wish to contact them and ask if this is appropriate.

## The Nonprofit Resource Center – A Local Resource for Grant Seekers

The Nonprofit Resource Center at the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh is part of a nationwide network of grants-information libraries. It is an affiliate of The Nonprofit Resource Center, a national clearinghouse for information on philanthropic giving headquartered in New York City. The library's collection includes books, periodicals and pamphlets about:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grants and Funding Organizations | <input type="checkbox"/> Philanthropy         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Proposal Writing                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Nonprofit Management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fundraising                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteerism         |

A sample of directory, index, book and periodical titles includes:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Directory of Pennsylvania Foundations | <input type="checkbox"/> National Directory of Corporate Giving                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The Foundation Directory              | <input type="checkbox"/> Getting Funded: A Complete Guide to<br>Proposal Writing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Foundation Grants Index               | <input type="checkbox"/> The Proposal Writer's Swipe File                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Foundation Fundamentals               |  |

The Nonprofit Resource Center also:

- ☐ Offers low-cost seminars on a variety of topics related to grantwriting and grantseeking
- ☐ Has annual reports from local and national foundations
- ☐ Monthly e-news (log on to web site below to register)

### TIP

*It is advisable to call The Nonprofit Resource Center and make an appointment with an advisor who will assist you in conducting a search for potential funders.*

### ***For information, call or visit:***

The Nonprofit  
Resource Center  
The Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh  
4400 Forbes Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15213  
Phone: (412) 622-3158  
<http://carnegielibrary.org/locations/foundationcenter>



## Addendum

### LETTER OF INQUIRY - SUGGESTED GUIDELINES

Many foundations request that interested applicants send a letter of inquiry (or letter of intent) before submitting formal grant proposals.

**Before submitting such a letter, be sure to conduct research to identify foundations and corporations that make grants to your type of organization and in your geographic area. Make certain that your purpose for seeking funds fits within the foundation's guidelines. Check each organization's website or annual report for an outline of its letter of inquiry and its grant guidelines.**

Letters of inquiry should be concise, generally one to three pages and should be signed by the organization's Executive Director or Board Chair. Below is a list of suggested information to be included:

#### Organization

- ☐ Brief description of organization
- ☐ Address, telephone number, fax number, email address
- ☐ Name of contact person

#### Project or Program

- ☐ Summary – one sentence statement of proposed project or program
- ☐ Overview – purpose, objectives, goals, how project relates to funder's priorities
- ☐ Description – target population, specific action plan, timeframe and duration
- ☐ Implementation (and results) – qualifications for executing proposed project, expected outcomes, how effectiveness will be monitored and evaluated, plan for continuance at conclusion of requested funding
- ☐ Cost – amount requested, total project cost, private and public funding sources (pending and received)

#### Attachments (each funder may have specific preferences for information to be included)

- ☐ IRS 501(c)(3) determination letter
- ☐ Mission Statement
- ☐ Board of Directors list

In addition, many funders request that their application sheet or the Common Grant Application Cover Sheet be attached to the letter of inquiry. Be sure to check with the respective funder for its preference.