TOP 10 GRANT WRITING TIPS

Follow instructions!
Seems like a no-brainer, right? Every year, we receive incomplete applications. We are here if complications arise but please note that applications that do not follow requirements may be deemed ineligible. So…please adhere to all page limits and work sample requirements so that your brilliant idea has a fighting chance!

Take advantage of organizational services, we’re here to help
Forecast is ready to help. We know what makes a strong application and we can help you with yours. Coming to our grant workshops, meeting with program staff, attending one of our study hall sessions or sending us your application for review are all activities that can help us help you. Please note that applications must be sent more than a week before the deadline.

Speak to the selection criteria
The guidelines offer a roadmap - we are telling you what we want. Addressing each criterion will help the panelists and Forecast staff better understand your proposal.

Make sure your proposal fits the intentions of the program
To make the case that you are a good investment and it’s urgent that you are funded you need to fully understand the program’s intentions. Sometimes they can appear to be a bit broad and all encompassing and it may be tough to find your place within them. Read all available information, look at past funded projects, and ask the program staff for any clarification you need.

Consider your audience, it’s not enough to say The Public
Whenever writing a grant proposal, thinking about the audience - who’s reading your proposal and who will experience your artwork. Panelists look for evidence that you not only know who your audience is but you have worked to identify what they might want or need out of a public art project. The Forecast grant panel is comprised of public art professionals from all over the country, so be sure to add context about site, community, history, collaborators, etc.
Think of your project as an investment and the panel as investors

This is a monetary arrangement and your proposal is an investment. It is therefore important to make a clear, logical case as to why you and your project are a good investment (your proposed work meets stated goals, values and objectives of the grant) and what the outcome or benefit of investing might be. The panelists want to feel sound about the decision they are recommending to the organization. Giving them this reassurance through your proposal language is invaluable.

Establish urgency - why me, why this, why now?

If you were hearing these tips in person you would see me practically jumping out of my chair trying to drum up the kind of excitement in my voice that you will need in your narrative. You are trying to convince the panel that your application is absolutely, positively, the one to fund! Your narrative should tell the panel, “you have to fund this grant because I am the right person to get THIS grant at this TIME!” Try brainstorming about these questions to support your narrative development “why here? why now? why this? why me?” to make your case.

Refine your idea before you start writing

Ever heard of the term “elevator speech”? An “elevator speech” is a condensed, easy to understand version of your idea that could be communicated over the course of the average elevator ride! Developing an “elevator speech” will help you refine both your idea and the language you use to describe it. Try telling your idea to multiple people until you have boiled it down to its essence. Once you have your elevator speech and some main points, share your written narrative and our grant selection criteria with 2-3 people for quick responses. This not only helps you hone your language but it also provides a litmus test. Ask questions like, does this make any sense to you? Do you think I address the criteria areas? Do you understand what I am proposing to do?

Keep it readable

Panelists are reading hundreds of applications; they are busy professionals with packed schedules. This means they may be reading aps at midnight in bed after a long day of work, on an airplane, or in-between meetings at a lunch break. Anything you can do to make their reading experience easier is essential. Clear formatting (no tiny fonts), concise answers and an organized layout will support your successful delivery. If creating concise statements in the page restrictions is difficult, consider simplifying your project idea.