

checklist for writing killer grant applications

Grant writing can be overwhelming and scary. It's easy to become intimidated and put it off forever. But the money is for everyone to access, including you.

I want to encourage you to brave the drudgery of grant applications, overcome imposter syndrome or self-doubt and start reaping rewards for your hard work. You deserve to be supported! You deserve to be paid fairly for your work as an artist.

*To help you over whatever hurdles you're facing, I've created this 15 pt **Checklist for Writing Killer Grant Applications**. For maximum relaxation and benefit, I recommend working through it in this order, one step at a time. You got this. Haley x*

- ☐ 1. **Grant money is your money**
Adjust your mindset. You deserve the money as much as anyone else. Challenge the part of you that worries you're not worthy or not an academic or can't write about your work.
- ☐ 2. **Know WHY you are applying**
Don't waste your precious time applying for money because you think you should, but rather apply when you know exactly what you want to do and why you need funding to do it. In other words, know what phase or phases of a project you want to tackle and why you cannot do it properly without money.
- ☐ 3. **Start early**
Give yourself enough time to avoid last minute stress. If you're already down to the wire, it's okay. Next time, start early.
- ☐ 4. **Read any guidance / guidelines with a highlighter and notepad**
Make notes and write down questions. Get a handle on what the grant covers, collate the things you don't understand and make a list of all the questions you have about the application.
- ☐ 5. **Call and talk to a Granting Officer and ASK your questions!**
It's their JOB to help you out. Don't skip this step out of embarrassment or shame. Don't be shy. Arm yourself with info. Avoid unnecessary stabbing in the dark! Save your precious time and effort.
- ☐ 6. **Create your timeline**
 - ☐ Get CLEAR about the scope of what you're asking them to support.
 - ☐ Work back from the final stage of the project.
 - ☐ Use a calendar to map out how long each step will take.
 - ☐ Remember everything takes at least twice as long as you think it's going to!
- ☐ 7. **Create your budget**
 - ☐ Do NOT inflate your numbers. Be realistic and specific.
 - ☐ If math or numbers freak you out, get help. There are templates online. Use them. (Check out the budget template included at the bottom of this article:
<https://artistproducerresource.ca/tiki-index.php?page=Building-Your-Budget>)

- ☐ 8. **Hammer out concrete answers to these questions:**
- ☐ WHO is my audience?
Ex. *"Women between the ages of 18-35 who work in STEM".*
 - ☐ WHAT am I hoping this show does for me as an artist? And how can I measure that?
Ex. *"To raise my profile in a new city. Therefore I want 3 publications to review it, to attract 70% audience capacity and have 3 ADs I don't know see it."*
 - ☐ HOW do I want to contribute to a greater cultural conversation? Or WHAT impact do I want the show to have on the audience? Or WHAT is the narrative of this grant?
Ex. *"I'm a first time maker doing x for the first time..."* Get a thesis in place and argue for it -- keep coming back to it, proving your case.
- ☐ 9. **Make a marketing plan**
How will you get the word out? Consider social media, print materials, PR, and use numbers to demonstrate how you plan to reach audiences.
- ☐ 10. **Gather your support materials**
- ☐ Do it early.
 - ☐ Get your reviews together, upload and organise your video and photos.
Organise it all in one drive. Set up an easily shareable link.
 - ☐ Test all links.
- ☐ 11. **Line up your collaborators**
- ☐ Email individual artists who you want to work with, get their bios/CVs and permission to include them on the grant.
 - ☐ Do you have organisations on board? Do you need to get them on board? Email and call them. Get those confirmations.
- ** IF you're just starting out and/or can't get any response from the venues, ASK the Granting Officer how you should then proceed. Is there another grant you'd be more suited for? ***
- ☐ 12. **Write in sprints and edit**
- ☐ Give yourself digestible daily tasks. I recommend a vomit draft of each question on the grant one day and clean up and make sense of it a day or two later.
 - ☐ Write how you'd talk to a peer -- no need to be academic or flowery. Be a straight shooter who's thought this through.
 - ☐ Speak in *concrete terms* about what you want to do with the money and how it will support your work. Remember they like deliverables and outcomes.
- ☐ 13. **Have someone else read it**
Choose someone you trust. Ask them to read it for clarity, flow and typos. It's a relief to have someone else's eyes on it. Make sure they understand what it is you're proposing to do and why. It's easy to overestimate clarity when it's your baby!
- ☐ 14. **Remember to be patient**
Annoyingly, writing grant apps is an art-adjacent skill. For most of us it takes time to hone. I've never got my first grant to an organisation. Keep at it with integrity. Remember *"grants beget grants"*... Hang in there. The money will come.
- ☐ 15. **Breathe and stay hydrated**