



Grant Basics for Hometown Pride Volunteers

Grants are an essential part of the funding equation for most Hometown Pride committees. Hometown Pride volunteers, with the help of their coaches, have secured millions of dollars in grants to complete community improvement projects.

What is a grant, who gives them and why?

- A grant is a sum of money given for future expenses for a specific purpose. It does *not* need to be paid back.
- Grant givers include private foundations, nonprofit organizations, governmental entities and others. They have a vision and set of priorities for what they wish to fund. Common purposes of grants include:
 - support charitable work, provide public services, enhance public spaces, stimulate the economy

Am I eligible to receive a grant?

Each grant has different eligibility requirements that are explained in the grant guidelines. Always check your eligibility before starting to work on a grant. Common eligibility considerations include:

- *Type of organization*
Many grants are for non-profit organizations with 501(c)3 status and/or governmental entities such as a city.
- *Geography*
You may need to be located in a certain state or region. Or be in a town of a certain size.
- *Mission*
Your funding request will need to fit with the grant-maker's funding priorities

If your organization does not qualify to receive a grant, you may be able to apply by partnering with a “fiscal sponsor.” A fiscal sponsor is an organization that is qualified to receive the grant and has agreed to accept and manage the money on your behalf. Check the grant guidelines or call the grant maker to see if this is an option.

What can grants be used for?

Grant makers decide what their grant money can be used for, and each one is different. The most important thing is that your project must match the grant guidelines, and you must use the money for exactly what you said you were going to.

You will probably notice that it's easier to find grants that want to fund tangible items that are a one-time expense (e.g. playground equipment or an entrance sign) and harder to find those that will fund on-going or overhead expenses such as staff time. However, there are many grant makers out there – look for one that matches your goals and needs.

How do I apply for a grant?

Each grant-maker has their own application process. A common process would look like this:

- The grant-maker announces they are accepting applications for a grant – they release a set of guidelines, instructions on how to apply, and a deadline.
- Grant seekers gather all the necessary information and submit their application by the deadline
- The grant-maker reviews applications and scores them based on a set of pre-determined criteria (typically these criteria are included in the grant application).
- Applicants are notified if they were selected and how they will receive the money
- The recipient must use the grant as intended within a certain time period (one year is common) and provide documentation of how funds were used.

What information do I need to include in my grant application?

Each grant will have its own application guidelines. Common components of a grant application include:

- Contact information of the applicant and entity responsible for receiving funds
- Explanation of how the funds will be used and what benefits they will provide
- Detailed budget, including source(s) of “matching funds” (see below)
- Timeline and method for how the funded project will be implemented

What are “matching funds?”

In addition to the funds being requested, the applicant may be asked to provide their own funding from other sources. This is called a “match” or “matching funds.”

- It is common for a grantor to have a percent match requirement, such as a 50% match (your matching funds equal 50% of the grant request), or a 1:1 match (your matching funds are equal to the grant request). Often they will require that you have this money secured *before* you apply for the grant (though not always).
- For example: Let’s say you are applying for a \$10,000 grant to fund a project, and your organization has \$5,000 in the bank that will go toward the project too (For a total project cost of \$15,000). The \$5,000 is your “match.” It would be called a 50% match since your match equals 50% of the grant request.

Where do I find grant opportunities?

- All counties in Iowa have at least one local foundation. Find yours on the Iowa Council of Foundations website: <https://iowacommunityfoundations.org/>
- Use the “Iowa Grants Guide” to search for options - <https://inrc.law.uiowa.edu/iowa-grants-guide>
- Many corporations give grants to projects in communities where their offices/stores are located. What large/chain businesses or agencies have a presence in your community – your local gas station, energy provider, retailer? Look up “[business name] grants” or “[business name] foundation.”
- The State of Iowa offers many grants – look up funding opportunities from the Iowa Economic Development Authority, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Iowa Department of Transportation, or whatever department best matches your project.
- There are several paid grant databases – try asking your local library if they have a subscription you can use. Librarians are expert researchers – ask for their help!
- Sometimes a simple google search like “grant for parks in Iowa” can turn up what you need. There are many private foundations and nonprofit grants that could turn up if you plug in the right search terms.
- Your Hometown Pride coach can help you find grant opportunities that fit your project!

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