

# GRANTWRITING HANDBOOK

for Alaska Native Artists  
& Organizations





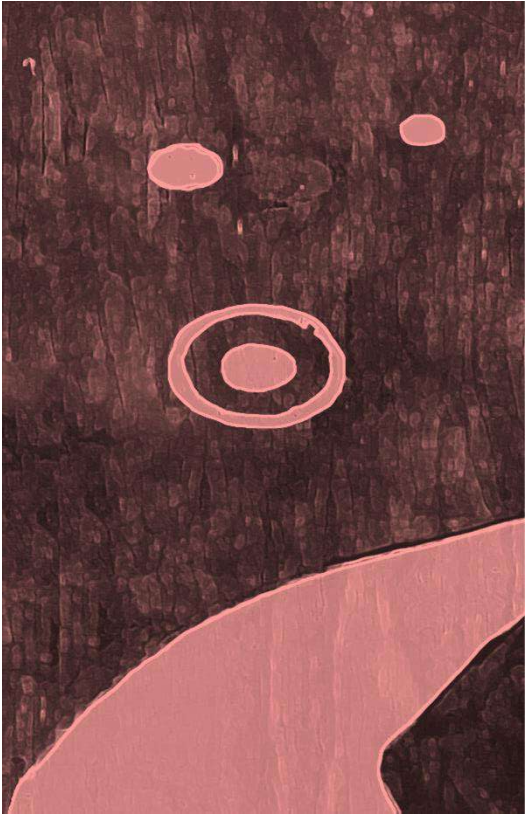
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Artwork included in this handbook is by Holly Nordlum  
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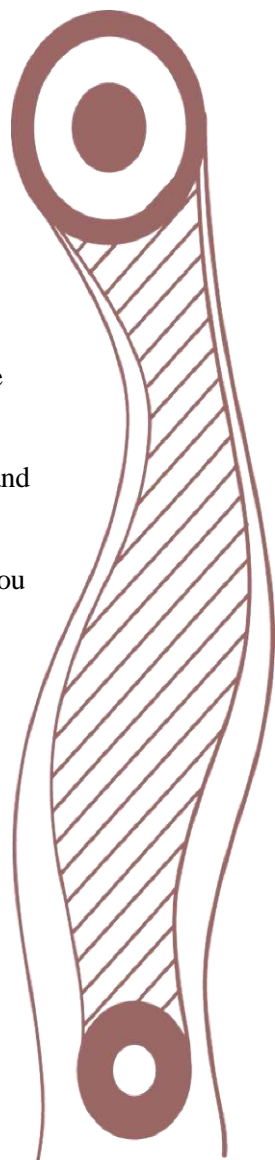
# INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Grant Writing Handbook for Alaska Native Artists and Organizations! This text was originally developed by the First Peoples' Cultural Council (FPCC), a British Columbia Canada based organization whose mandate is to support the revitalization of Aboriginal language, arts and culture.

The FPCC very generously agreed to share their workbook with The CIRI Foundation (TCF) to be adapted to provide information and resources specific to Alaskan artists. Lena Jacobs of Benozadleyo Consulting, LLC assisted in the research and editing to create this revised Alaska version of the handbook. TCF is grateful for this partnership and collaborative spirit enabling us to increase our resources to perpetuate and promote the unique artistic and cultural traditions of Alaska Native peoples!

The purpose of this handbook is to offer suggestions and clarify the process of writing a grant proposal for arts funding. This handbook will explain the nature of arts funding and help identify organizations to apply to. You will be introduced to the common contents of an arts grant application form and provided with advice on how to create a clear and strong proposal for your project.

Please visit our website to learn about additional resources and opportunities for artists. You can also download a free electronic copy of the Alaska Native Artist Resource Workbook, developed in partnership with the Alaska State Council on the Arts, to assist Alaska Native artists in furthering their artistic careers: [www.thecirifoundation.org/project-grants/resources-for-artists](http://www.thecirifoundation.org/project-grants/resources-for-artists)



## WHAT IS ARTS FUNDING?

Arts funding helps to sustain the practice of the arts across the country. If you are an individual artist, grants can be an important resource to help maintain your artistic practice. If you are a representative of an arts organization, grants can be a source of funding to support the arts in your community.

Grants for artists, arts organizations, and arts collectives available to Alaskans are found in the contact information and links listed below. Please note that this not an exhaustive list, but will give you a start. Once you connect with funders, we strongly encourage you to ask them for referrals to other funding sources and/or non-financial resources that may suit your project.

### Alaska Funding Opportunities:

The Alaska Community Foundation  
3201 C Street, Suite 100  
Anchorage, AK 99503  
T: (907) 334-6700  
[www.alaskacf.org](http://www.alaskacf.org)

Alaska Conservation Foundation  
911 W. 8th Ave., Suite 300  
Anchorage, AK 99501  
T: (907) 276-1917  
[www.alaskaconservation.org](http://www.alaskaconservation.org)

Alaska Humanities Forum  
421 W. 1st Ave, Suite 200  
Anchorage, AK 99501  
T. (907) 272-5341  
[www.akhf.org](http://www.akhf.org)

Alaska State Council on the Arts\*  
161 Klevin Street, Suite 102  
Anchorage, AK 99508  
T: (907) 269-6610  
Toll-free: (888) 278-7424  
[education.alaska.gov/aksca](http://education.alaska.gov/aksca)

The Atwood Foundation  
301 West Northern Lights Blvd #440  
Anchorage, AK 99503  
T: (907) 274-4900  
[www.atwoodfoundation.org](http://www.atwoodfoundation.org)

The Foraker Group  
161 Klevin Street  
Anchorage, AK 99508  
T: (907) 743-1200  
[www.forakergroup.org](http://www.forakergroup.org)

Rasmuson Foundation  
301 W Northern Lights Blvd. Suite 400  
Anchorage, AK 99503  
T: (907) 297-2700  
Toll-free: (877) 366-2700  
[www.rasmuson.org](http://www.rasmuson.org)

The CIRI Foundation  
3201 C Street, Suite 506 |  
Anchorage, Alaska 99503  
T: (907) 793-3575  
Toll-free: (800) 764-3382  
[www.thecirifoundation.org](http://www.thecirifoundation.org)

*\*As of July 15, 2019, ASCA has been defunded.  
Please check with the State of Alaska to determine the status of ASCA.*

## National Funding Opportunities:

- ArtPlace: [www.artplaceamerica.org](http://www.artplaceamerica.org)
- Bill Holm Center: [www.burkemuseum.org/research-and-collections/bill-holm-center/grants](http://www.burkemuseum.org/research-and-collections/bill-holm-center/grants)
- First Peoples Fund: [www.firstpeoplesfund.org](http://www.firstpeoplesfund.org)
- Grant Station: [www.grantstation.com](http://www.grantstation.com)
- Indian Arts Research Center, SAR: [www.artists.sarweb.org](http://www.artists.sarweb.org)
- Longhouse Education and Cultural Center: [www.evergreen.edu/longhouse/grantprograms](http://www.evergreen.edu/longhouse/grantprograms)
- National Endowment for the Arts: [www.arts.gov](http://www.arts.gov)
- National Endowment for the Humanities: [www.neh.gov](http://www.neh.gov)
- NEFA Native Arts Program: [www.nefa.org/grants\\_programs/native-american-arts](http://www.nefa.org/grants_programs/native-american-arts)
- Native Arts and Cultures Foundation: [www.nativeartsandcultures.org](http://www.nativeartsandcultures.org)
- Smithsonian Institution's Native American Awards Program: [www.smithsonianofi.com/fellowship-opportunities/native-american-community-scholars-awards/](http://www.smithsonianofi.com/fellowship-opportunities/native-american-community-scholars-awards/)
- Potlatch Fund: [www.potlatchfund.org/grants/art.html](http://www.potlatchfund.org/grants/art.html)
- Seventh Generation Fund: [www.7genfund.org/apply-grant](http://www.7genfund.org/apply-grant)
- The Awesome Foundation: [www.awesomefoundation.org/en/chapters/alaska](http://www.awesomefoundation.org/en/chapters/alaska)

**CaFÉ:** [www.CallForEntry.org](http://www.CallForEntry.org) is a tool for artists to apply online for calls for art. Artists create a free profile online and then use their digital portfolio toward applying to hundreds of applications quickly and easily. It is also a great database of different opportunities that exist for Alaskan artists locally and nationwide!

## **Arts Funding for Individual Artists**

Grant opportunities are available to individual artists related to projects such as:

- The creation and/or production of new works;
- Professional development opportunities;
- Artist in residency opportunities;
- Travel relevant to your art practice;
- Teaching and mentoring;
- Cross-cultural awareness.

### **Examples include:**

- A designer or painter wants to create a body of new work (perhaps experimenting with a new subject matter or a new technique);
- A singer/composer wants to compose new songs based on traditional songs or legends;
- An emerging fabric/textile artist wants to learn more about traditional garment-making, including how to prepare fibers using traditional techniques.

## **Arts Funding for Organizations**

Many grant programs are designed to support arts organizations. Funding for arts organizations can include support in the form of:

- Advocacy for the arts and arts programming;
- Organizational operating funds;
- Organizational development assistance;
- Project assistance;
- Presentation and dissemination assistance.

Grant making organizations offer many programs to support the work done by artists and arts organizations. Since there are so many funding possibilities, it is important to be sure that you are applying to the arts program that best suits your project and your needs.



Applying for a grant is not a guarantee that you will receive funding, and even if you do receive funding, it might only be a portion of what you requested. This doesn't mean that your project doesn't have value or that you shouldn't continue pursuing funding for your project – applying for arts funding can be very competitive and sometimes there isn't enough funding to support everyone's ideas. If you don't receive funding, request feedback from the Program Officer to improve your next application.

***It is important to note that arts funding programs do not fund business ventures.***

If you think that your idea may qualify as a business concept, rather than an arts project, there are business specific resources that may be a more appropriate source of support.

Business support can be found through the following organizations:

- Alaska Growth Capital: [www.alaskagrowth.com](http://www.alaskagrowth.com)
- Alaska Small Business Development Center: [www.aksbdc.org](http://www.aksbdc.org)
- North Slope Marketplace: [www.northslopedmarketplace.com](http://www.northslopedmarketplace.com)
- Techstars Anchorage: [communities.techstars.com/usa/anchorage](http://communities.techstars.com/usa/anchorage)
- US Department of the Treasury, Community Development Financial Institutions Fund: <https://www.cdfifund.gov/Pages/default.aspx>
- US Small Business Administration, Alaska District Office: <https://www.sba.gov/offices/district/ak/anchorage>
- US Small Business Administration, Office of Native American Affairs: <https://www.sba.gov/offices/headquarters/naa>

# SELECTING AN ARTS FUNDING SOURCE

## Finding the Best Fit for Your Project

There are several factors to keep in mind as you select the arts funding program to which you will apply. Specifically, your choice of grant program will be influenced by your artistic discipline(s), the nature of the project you wish to undertake and your level of experience.

### Artistic Disciplines

Arts funding opportunities can be categorized into the following disciplines:

- Visual arts
- Dance/choreography
- Music/sound/composition
- Theatre/performing arts
- Writing/storytelling/literary arts
- Media arts
- Interdisciplinary arts
- Folk and traditional arts

In order to avoid disappointment, it is important to make sure that the grant program you apply to is geared towards your specific artistic discipline. You should review the grant programs' descriptions and guidelines to find information about which artistic disciplines qualify for a particular funding opportunity.

### Nature of Your Project Idea

You will find that most arts organizations offer a variety of grants that are dependent on the *nature of your project idea*. For example, within each artistic discipline, you are likely to find specific funding for projects related to:

- Travel (*note that The CIRI Foundation does not support travel*);
- The creation of new works;
- Art production;
- New audience development;
- Touring;
- Capacity building; and others.

You can find information about the nature of the projects supported by a grant program outlined in the description and guidelines. If you are still unsure if your idea fits the criteria, it is always a good idea to contact the grant program's Program Officer to discuss your ideas. It is best to make an appointment for in-person visits versus dropping in. Phone and e-mail inquiries are also equally valuable. When reaching out, it is important to clearly articulate your idea and be as specific as you can about what you want to do and what support you are seeking for your project. For more information, see the *How the Program Officer Can Help* section of this handbook.

## **Your Level of Experience**

It is also important to select a funding program that fits you or your organization's level of experience in the arts.

### ***Career Level as an Individual Artist***

Your career level as an artist is determined by the education, training, and apprenticeships you have undertaken; the length of time you have been practicing; and whether or not you have produced a significant "body of artwork." Your history of public presentations (i.e. solo or juried exhibitions or performances of your work) and the level of recognition you have received from your peers and community are also considered. Individual artists often fall into the following categories of experience:

- Emerging Artist (*new/learner to approximately 3 or more years*);
- Practicing/Establishing Artist (*approximately 3 years to 5 or more years*);
- Professional/Senior/Mid-Career Artist (*approximately 5 years to 10 or more years*);
- Mentor/Mature Artist (*approximately 10-15 years or more years*).

### ***Level of Establishment as an Arts Organization***

The level of establishment of an arts organization is evaluated based on a variety of criteria, including how long an arts organization/group has been in existence, as well as the level of experience of the artists/arts administrators involved. Other factors include an organization or group's

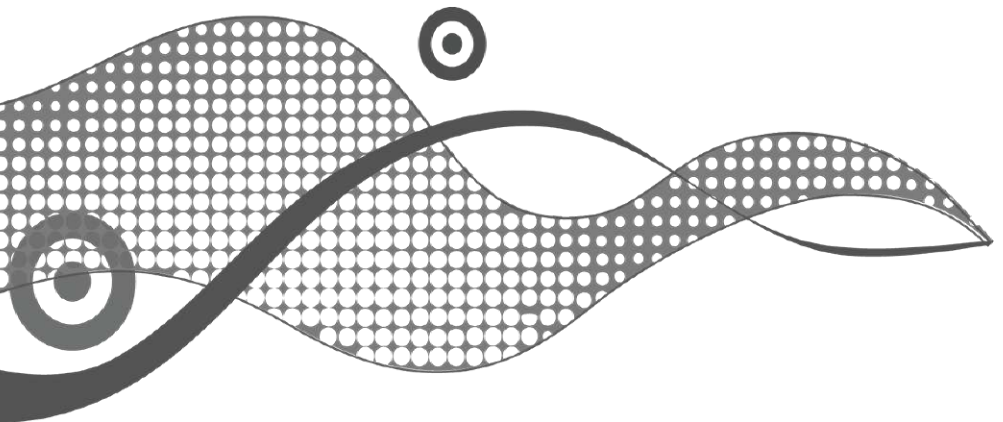
historical and ongoing activities related to the arts, their history of receiving arts funding, and their successful completion of past projects.

Once you have explored various funding sources and have determined the program(s) you qualify for based on the above criteria, it can be extremely helpful to contact the Program Officer(s) in charge of your grant program(s) of interest to confirm the suitability of your choice.

## **How the Program Officer Can Help**

Program Officers are employed by funding organizations to oversee the administration of arts funding programs. They do not usually have the authority to decide who receives a grant; though it is their job is to determine your eligibility to apply and to oversee the peer assessment process (discussed later in the handbook).

Program Officers are helpful resource people for potential applicants, as they can provide some guidance regarding how your project fits within a given funding program and provide tips to strengthen your application. The name and contact information for the Program Officer can usually be found in the program guidelines of a grant program. Contacting the Program Officer well ahead of the grant deadline will ensure they have time to respond to your inquiries effectively.



## **Questions to consider asking the Program Officer:**

- Ask for a sample of an application that was funded;
- Ask if the funder will be hosting a workshop or webinar before the deadline to share information about the program, guidelines, and be available to answer questions;
- Ask if the Program Officer has a review period and can look over your proposal to provide feedback before the deadline;
- Ask the Program Officer for referrals to other resources to support your project, or for other ways they might help support you as an artist;
- Ask the Program Officer to discuss a long-term strategy for seeking funding throughout your artistic career if you are new to grant writing.

It is safe to assume that a funder is your friend and that the Program Officer is there to support you as an artist and provide resources to help you succeed. Keeping a friendly or cordial demeanor when reaching out to Program Officers and developing positive relationships with them, can be of great value to you.

## **Applying to Multiple Sources for Funding**

If your proposed project involves several stages and/or is a large-scale production, you may consider applying to more than one funding source. Specifically, for large-scale projects, it is not unusual for applicants to secure some of their funding through one grant program and then use this first amount of funding to leverage or match more financial support from a second or third funding agency. You may also want to discuss the possibility of requesting funding from the same funder for different stages of a large scale or long-term project.

# BEFORE YOU BEGIN WRITING

## Preparing

Now that you have decided on the right grant program for your project, there are several important steps before you begin writing. These steps include familiarizing yourself with the program's description and guidelines, and creating a plan to get your proposal in on time.

### Getting Familiar with Program Descriptions and Guidelines

Before you start writing, you will want to spend some quality time studying the *program description and guidelines* specific to the grant program you are applying to. Though this may not sound like the most exciting way to spend your time, it is the best way to avoid wasting your resources and emotional energy on a grant program that does not fit your project idea.

Within a grant program's *program guidelines*, you will find the *program description*. The program description outlines the types of projects considered eligible for funding, as well as the types of projects that are considered ineligible for this specific funding opportunity. In the guidelines and description, you will also find information regarding the funding organization's priorities and vision. This can be helpful information when writing about the how the outcomes of your proposed project are in line with the goals of the funding organization.

### Timing is of the Essence

Stress can kill the excitement and creative process that lies at the heart of planning a successful project. As a result, it is important to look ahead as much as possible and make sure that you are not going to be surprised or pressured by the unexpected.

#### *Check Application Deadlines*

One of the first things to do when considering applying to a grant program is to find out the due date. Each funding opportunity has its own unique submission deadline(s). Many grant programs have one annual deadline, while others have several deadlines per year, or accept applications on an on-going basis.

You will also want to clarify ahead of time whether your completed application needs to be received (by the funding agency) on or before the deadline, or if your application will be accepted if it is postmarked (at the post office) on or before the deadline.

Many applications are exclusively electronic, so be sure to note electronic deadlines properly. If it is difficult to determine answers to these questions from the website or guidelines, contact the Program Officer.

### *Leave Yourself Enough Time*

Once you know the deadline for the submission of your application, you can plan the steps you will need to take in order to complete your application on time. Grant writing takes time and it is best to start work on your application as soon as you know you will be applying. In fact, it can often take between one to two months to organize your ideas, write your proposal, seek out letters of support, create high-quality samples of your work, and make your final edits.

You may find it helpful to create your own “grant-writing calendar” that includes the deadlines you have set for yourself to complete various stages of your proposal. It is a good idea to complete your own draft of the proposal at least two weeks before the deadline to allow someone to proof read your proposal and share feedback that may strengthen it.

A common reason for applicants to be denied funding is because they submitted an incomplete application – don’t do this! Make sure you wait to submit until you have all the required documentation for your proposal.



# WRITING YOUR PROPOSAL

## Quick Reminders: The “DOs” of Grant Writing

- **DO** read the grant criteria thoroughly so you fully understand what the proposal is asking for – if you don’t understand, do reach out to the funder for clarification and keep asking questions until it’s clear to you!
- **DO** call the Program Officer to make sure your project idea matches the grant funding – if it doesn't match, do ask for referrals to other funding sources!
- **DO** follow the grant application instructions and guidelines exactly!
- **DO** write succinct, clear, pointed sentences in your proposal!
- **DO** answer all questions in the grant application!
- **DO** include a clear budget and timeline!
- **DO** use spell check and grammar check and enlist a proofreader!
- **DO** print your application single-sided on plain paper with your name and a page number on each page, or use the form with pre-numbered pages requested by the funder!
- **DO** plan ahead and make time to complete your application with time to spare!
- **DO** submit requests for your support materials such as letters of support or recommendation well in advance of the deadline to ensure they are received on time!
- **DO** make a photocopy of your entire application!
- **DO** submit electronically when possible!

## Getting Started

When first sitting down to begin writing a grant application, it is not unusual to feel overwhelmed by the process of putting your ideas into words. The important thing is to simply get *something* down on paper (or on your computer), remembering that you can always make changes at a later time if you are not happy with what you have written.

## Beginning to Put Pen to Paper

You may already have a well-developed idea of your project in your head, but you will likely need time to translate your vision into words on a page. Beginning to write requires that you allow yourself to get your ideas out, without the pressure of having your thoughts come out perfectly on the first go. It is often useful to allow your mind to wander



freely and write down all the thoughts that come to you, without judging your ideas or your writing.

Since you likely think about your project idea at various points in your day, you may also find it useful to carry around a little notebook to record ideas as they come to you. You can then be sure that your moments of inspiration will not be forgotten, as your notebook will be with you when you sit down to complete the grant application form. An alternative to written notes is recording voice memos to work from when writing up your application materials. These allow you to use the familiar process of “talking out” your project, while keeping track everything you said.

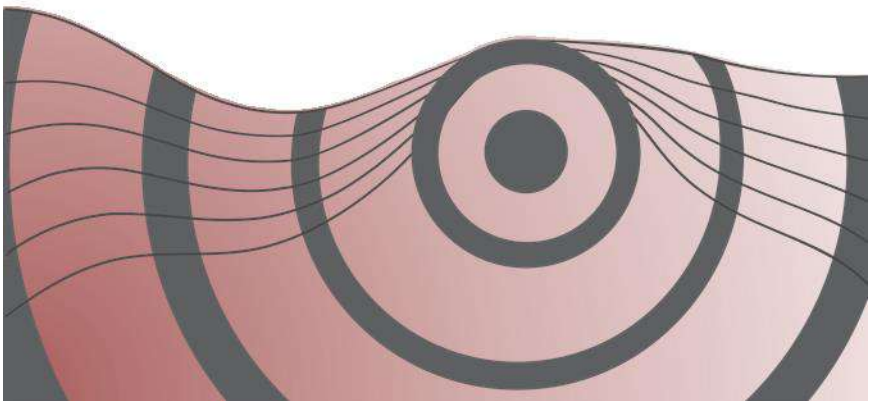
### **Clarifying Your Project Idea**

When clarifying your project idea, it is helpful to break down the elements involved in your project. In order to help you with this process, we have provided the following questions to help you create a clearer picture of your project idea. You will also find space to write your responses to these questions on the next page of this handbook.

1. What artistic medium is the main focus of my project?
2. What is the main focus or subject of this project?
3. What would I like to have completed at the end of this project?
4. How will I evaluate successful completion of my project goals?
5. Does my project idea fit into any grant funding categories, such as; the exchange of knowledge, the production of new work, the development of

new skills, the exhibition of previously completed work, etc.?

6. Is travel a central cost in this project? If so, how will I cover it if grant funders cannot provide money for travel?
7. Does my project involve other artists, such as a mentor, collaborator, etc.?
8. What makes this project important to me, my community, and/or my culture?





## RESPONDING TO QUESTIONS ON AN APPLICATION FORM

A summary of commonly asked questions can found here to get you thinking about what you will likely encounter on an application:

- Please describe your history and philosophy as an artist (or organization).
- What is your project idea? Please describe your proposed project.
- Why is this project important? What is the need your project will address?
- How will your background, prior experience, and history help you to carry out this project?
- How long will it take you to carry out your project? What is the project timeline?
- Who will be involved in your project and what will their roles be?
- How will your project benefit you, your community, or the general public?
- How much will the entire project cost? What is the full project budget, and what portion of this are you requesting from our grant program?
- Does your project involve the use of traditional knowledge or wildlife materials? If so, have you addressed protocols and guidelines where required?

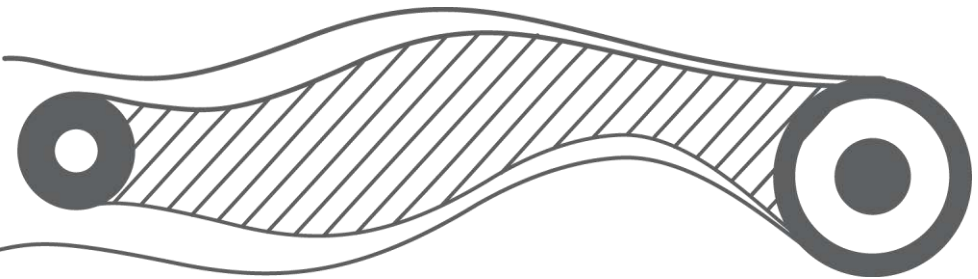
Questions asked on grant application forms vary between funding organizations, as well as between funding opportunities within each organization.

As a result, no matter how many grant applications you have written in the past, it is always important to respond directly to the specific questions found on every application form you complete.

When formulating your responses to questions, it can be helpful to begin your response by first paraphrasing the question on the application form. This paraphrasing approach can help you start writing and can ensure that you are responding directly to the questions asked.

For example, if an application form asks: “*What are the community benefits of this project?*”

You can begin your response as follows: “*The community benefits of this project are...*”



## **Your History and/or Philosophy as an Artist**

On application forms for arts funding, there are almost always questions that seek information about you as an artist or as an arts organization. For individual artists, these questions often ask about your background, art practice, any training you have received in the arts, information about your creative process as an artist (the steps you go through to create your work), and a few highlights of your successes. For arts organizations, these questions often ask about your organization’s philosophies and values, the expertise of artists or arts administrators involved, and highlights of past projects.

If you have already written documents for your artist’s or arts organization’s portfolio you can pull information from your portfolio (biography and statement) when writing your responses to these types of questions. At the same time, it is very important to adapt your artist’s biography and statement to relate them directly to the requirements of each grant program.

Many grant programs will also offer you the opportunity to attach your artist’s biography, artist’s statement, and arts resume/CV (or the equivalent for an organization). If you do include these documents, be sure that they are in addition to answering the questions on the application form and do not simply write, “see attached” in the space provided.

**Example: Please describe your history and philosophy as an artist**

<p>Strong Example</p>	<p>My name is Marie Utka and I am a mentor skin sewer and bead worker. My grandmother began teaching me to sew and bead when I was five years old, and I have spent more than 50 years creating wearable art. In addition to learning from my grandmother, I have attended and taught workshops about sewing and beading in indigenous communities around the world. These opportunities as both a student and teacher have influenced my work over the years and allowed it to evolve, but each piece I produce is grounded in my Athabaskan roots.</p> <p>I have taught all my children and grandchildren how to sew and bead, and I happily share my knowledge with anyone who is interested in learning. Each piece I develop represents both utility and art. As an Alaska Native woman, I am deeply committed to keeping this traditional art form alive and thriving. As a professional artist, I am committed to creating quality work and elevating the appreciation and understanding of traditional art forms in my community.</p>
<p>Weak Example</p>	<p>I started beading as a child and continue to do so because I want others to learn this art form and appreciate it.</p>



## **Organizing Samples of Your Artwork**

Not all funders require samples of your artwork, but many do. For funders that do require samples, it is important to submit high-quality samples of your artwork. Submitting samples of past work is equally important for arts organizations as it is for individual artists.

The nature of the samples included with your application will depend on the nature of the artwork you produce or the nature of the arts programs or artists supported by your organization. For example, a musician will send a high-quality demo audio file or CD, while a visual artist will upload or mail a CD of high-quality digital images. A dance collective will usually submit a video file or demo DVD, while a community arts organization may submit an online folder or CD of images from past community arts programs.

For visual artists (carvers, painters, photographers, bead workers, etc.), it is highly recommended that you send a CD of your images, rather than hard copies of photographs. Sending a CD of digital photographs provides the option for members of the review committee to view your work on a large projection screen and this carries a much greater impact. This also makes it easier for the committee to view and discuss your work as a team. Be sure to double check that the files on the CD or DVD match the file format requested by the funding organization and that you have labeled everything with your full name (i.e. both the CD and CD case).

## ***The List of Works***

To ensure the samples of your artwork are viewed properly, you will also need to provide a “list of works” that explains your work to the review committee. Though funding organizations often indicate what they would like you to include on this list, generally a “list of works” will outline information about each piece, including:

- Title;
- Medium (e.g. cedar carving, acrylic on canvas, etc.);
- Date created or exhibited;
- Dimensions or length of the art work;
- A brief description of your intention behind each piece.

Some funders in Alaska require up to 10 work samples – do not ignore this amount and include just five or six as your application may be considered incomplete and if so will not be accepted or reviewed. Contact the Program Officer if you have any questions about submitting samples of your work.

## **Writing a Description of Your Project**

Now that you have taken some time to ask yourself questions about your project and have allowed yourself some freedom to dream, you are probably ready to streamline your project idea into a project description. Some grant application forms will ask specific questions about the nature of your project, while other applications will ask you to include a concise “project description.” At this point, it is good to make sure that you have the ‘who, what, where, when, how and why’ of your project clarified.

**Double check:** Do you have a project work plan that provides a clear overview of the project including who, what, where, when, how, why and how much?



**Ask yourself these questions to help write your project description:**

<b>WHO</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Who will be involved in the project and how will you recruit them?</li> <li>▪ Who will be responsible for what aspects of the project?</li> </ul>
<b>WHAT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What is the ultimate vision for the project? <i>Make sure you describe this in a way that can serve as a key direction for all participants.</i></li> <li>▪ What form will the project take? What will be involved in successfully completing your vision?</li> </ul>
<b>WHERE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Where will the project take place?</li> <li>▪ Where will you need space? Will there be a cost associated?</li> </ul>
<b>WHEN</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ When will the project take place?</li> </ul> <p><i>If there are stages or multiple components, make sure to fully outline the timing of each.</i></p>
<b>HOW</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ How will the project proceed?</li> <li>▪ How will you evaluate and measure the success of your project?</li> <li>▪ How will you document any changes you've had to make to the project?</li> </ul>
<b>WHY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Why are you doing this project and why is it important? Is there a need being fulfilled?</li> </ul>
<b>HOW MUCH</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What is the anticipated cost of the project?</li> <li>▪ How will grant funds be utilized?</li> </ul>

**Example: Please concisely describe your proposed project**

<p>Strong Example</p>	<p>My proposed project is to create three original garments – a parka, boots, and gloves – using a full circle process of harvesting the materials, using them, and returning them to the earth.</p> <p>Each of these garments will represent what was necessary for the survival of my ancestors in a harsh climate, while simultaneously displaying the intricate and artistic touches that tell a story of identity, place, and the relationship between humans, animals, the land, and water.</p> <p>My project will take eight months and involve the following activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Research in skin sewing and beadwork techniques and patterns from the central Yukon River area;</li><li>▪ Harvest and prepare materials from this area, including moose hide, beaver, porcupine quills, berries, salmon skin, and caribou tuft;</li><li>▪ Create a parka, boots, and gloves inspired by my research and harvesting;</li><li>▪ Model the garments at <i>Wear Art Thou</i>, a wearable art exhibit in Anchorage;</li><li>▪ Write a narrative describing the process and story of each garment to accompany its display in the First Friday exhibit at Out North theater;</li><li>▪ Return the unused organic materials to the land and waters from which they were harvested.</li></ul>
<p>Weak Example</p>	<p>I am going to bead some boots and display them publicly.</p>

In addition to the questions listed above, art funding opportunities that are specifically designed for Alaska Native artists may require that you explain how you will address the necessary cultural protocols in the planning and execution of your proposed project.

***Including a Project Timeline***

As part of your project description, many funding agencies will ask you to provide a timeline that indicates how your proposed project will proceed. This timeline allows the assessment committee to understand

the progression of your project and demonstrates that you have thought through the steps necessary for its successful completion.

When constructing your timeline, you will want to imagine how long it will take you to carry out your project. You will then create a simple chart that breaks down your project plan by either weeks or months, depending on the length of your proposed project. It is best to keep your timeline simple and concise, yet complete.

**Example: What is the timeline for your project?**

<p>Strong Example</p>	<p>The timeline for my proposed project is as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ March: Submit grant application and finalize partnerships;</li> <li>▪ May: Research skin sewing, beadwork, and patterns from the central Yukon River area;</li> <li>▪ June: Continue research, harvest salmon and prepare salmon skins for sewing;</li> <li>▪ July: Continue research, begin developing patterns and designs for the parka, boots, and gloves;</li> <li>▪ August: Harvest berries and moose, prepare moose hide for sewing;</li> <li>▪ September: Begin beadwork, caribou tufting, and sewing;</li> <li>▪ October: Continue beadwork and sewing;</li> <li>▪ November: Prepare finished garments for display in <i>Wear Art Thou</i>, begin writing narrative to accompany each garment;</li> <li>▪ December: Finish writing narrative and display completed artwork with stories about the interconnecting relationships between me as the artist, the materials, and the environment for First Friday exhibit;</li> <li>▪ January: Return unused organic materials to the land and water of origin; complete evaluation.</li> </ul>
<p>Weak Example</p>	<p>I estimate my project will take about six months to harvest the materials and develop the garments, and then two months to display for the public.</p>

## *Developing a Clear Budget*

Your budget plays a critical role in your application for funding and will often make or break the success of a proposal for arts funding. Most grant application forms will provide you with a budget template where you outline all the costs (project expenses) involved in your project, as well as the source of the funds you will use to pay for your project (project revenues).

If a budget template is provided in the application form, we highly recommend that you use the format provided by the funding organization. If there is no budget template provided in the application form, you will need to choose one that is clear and easy to understand. Modeling your format to match one from a successful application is a good idea; ask the Program Officer for assistance if you're not sure how to present this information.

### **Elements that are critical to address in your project budget include:**

- A breakdown of how much the proposed project will cost (Project Expenses)
- Any additional sources of funding that are already confirmed and available for the proposed project (Confirmed Revenues)
- Any additional sources of funding you are pursuing to support the proposed project and when you expect to hear about the decision (Pending or Unconfirmed Revenues)
- How much funding you are requesting from this particular grant program (Amount Requested)

When determining your costs and revenues, it is also important to honor the resources that are available for your project that do not require the payment of money. These resources show community support, endorsement, and interest in the project. In applications for arts funding, these donated resources are called “in-kind” contributions.

Some examples of in-kind contributions include, but are not limited to:

- The use of studio, office, rehearsal and/or workshop space
- Access to administrative resources (office equipment, phone, fax, postage, etc.)
- Time volunteered by professionals or other people in support of the project (such as through sharing expertise, ideas, knowledge, research, resource development, etc.)
- Donated transportation services
- Materials

*If you have confirmed access to resources that will be donated to your project (i.e. meeting space), be sure to include an appropriate monetary amount (i.e. \$200 per month) in the confirmed revenues section of your budget template.*

A budget narrative may be requested to accompany your budget template – it is essential that these two documents mirror each other in cost and detail. If your budget template lists one cost and the narrative lists another, or if the budget template lists a cost that is not listed in the narrative then it may confuse those assessing your proposal. Be sure to double-check these documents for consistency and for relevancy to the overall project goals.

Most funders will not provide funding for expenses that have already been incurred, i.e. paying you for something you've already purchased or work completed. They may only provide funding for future expenses related to the proposed project rather than past expenses, so make sure you clarify this with the funder.

### **Writing About Potential Outcomes and Benefits of the Project**

Many grant application forms will include a question about the outcomes of the proposed project – this is your opportunity to let the review committee know why your project is important.

When writing this section, it is often helpful to think about and communicate what benefits will come out of this project on various levels.

These can include benefits for the:

- Artist(s) involved (this could be just you);
- Arts organization(s) involved (if applicable);
- Community or communities, both directly or indirectly involved;
- Art form(s) as a whole;
- Maintenance and/or perpetuation of cultural/traditional knowledge.

**Example: How will your project benefit you, other artists, or the general public?**

<p>Strong Example</p>	<p>This project will have immediate benefits to me and my artistic practice. I will have the opportunity to learn to harvest new materials and explore the history of wearable art in my community, as well as the depth of the interconnected relationships between artist, animal, and environment.</p> <p>This project will also benefit aspiring new skin sewers and bead workers seeking to explore technique, tradition, materials preparation, and a full circle process of creating wearable art.</p> <p>Additionally, this project will benefit the general public interested in learning about Alaska Native traditions and art forms.</p>
<p>Weak Example</p>	<p>This project will benefit the community because they will get to see my finished product and they can ask me questions about how I created the garments.</p>

**Developing an Evaluation Plan**

Funders typically require an evaluation plan to be submitted with your project application. Project evaluation is the assessment of an ongoing or completed project, particularly addressing its achievement of project goals, effectiveness, impact, and efficiency. Evaluations capture stories and feedback, while also allowing for an exchange of information between the project designers and the funders, as well as with any project participants where there is community involvement.

Evaluation is often recommended or required by funders who wish to see some tangible results illustrating the impact their investment has made in the target community. These results might be illustrated in the form of photos, videos, oral stories, written surveys, graphs, art, etc.

Evaluation is also a helpful tool for reflection and guiding future choices around project development. The learning opportunities captured through evaluation can lead to improvement in future activities, and contribute to a larger conversation among practitioners around “best practices.” Evaluating your projects is as important for your lifelong work as it is for a funder.

### ***When is a Good Time to Evaluate***

Evaluations should take place in close proximity to the funded activity and be designed to evaluate both whether the goals of the project were achieved and what was learned through the project.

Collecting baseline data before the project takes place will give you a picture of the participants’ knowledge, feelings, awareness, etc. before taking part in any of the activities that might seek to increase their knowledge, affect their feelings, or develop their awareness. This could be done through giving a survey before the project, followed by the same survey given to the same people upon completion of the project, and then comparing the results. If it is not possible to collect baseline data before the project begins, collecting data related to the project’s goal(s) while the project is ongoing and/or once the project is completed is a must.

*Remember to add evaluation plans to your detailed timeline or project calendar.*

### ***How to Evaluate and Where It Can Take Place***

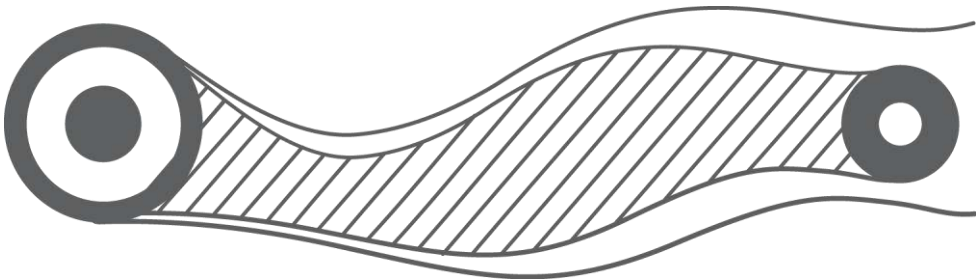
Evaluation should always begin by explaining the evaluation methods to the participants and obtaining their permission to gather evaluation data. Evaluation may include such things as surveys or questionnaires, interviews, photos, videos, quotes of things participants said, and any other documented information that will contribute to the evaluation process. Release forms and participant signatures may be required. Photos obtained in public places are fair to use, however, it is always polite to inform participants that they may be photographed and obtain their permission.

Evaluation can happen on site where the project is taking place. It can also happen over the phone or online through tools such as SurveyMonkey or Google Forms. Questions asked of participants should be crafted to elucidate whether or not the project has been successful.

If you develop a survey or questionnaire to evaluate the project, you may want to consider developing questions to include the following:

1. Demographic data.
2. Level of involvement in the project.
3. Questions that measure the impact of your project.
4. Questions that provide participants with an opportunity to provide feedback on what they learned, what went really well, and what could use improvement.
5. Extra space for open-ended comments and reflections.

Consider answering any survey or questionnaire developed for the project yourself as a way to reflect and think about how the project changed your own knowledge, awareness, and appreciation of the subject matter.





## EDITING YOUR APPLICATION

### Quick Reminders: The “Do Nots” of Grant Writing

At this point, you have read about many factors that contribute to a strong arts funding proposal. In addition to knowing what to do when writing your proposal, it can also be helpful to know what not to do. Things to avoid when writing a proposal are listed below.

- **Do not** leave blank spaces on your application.
- **Do not** submit an incomplete application if you didn't have time to finish compiling all the required documents. Complete your application and submit it during the next round.
- **Do not** squeeze more information into the application form by using a small font or decreasing the margin spaces. Standard font sizes can be 10- 12 point and most applications forms are designed with a 1” margin.
- **Do not** simply write, “*see attached*” all over the application form and then attach your own proposal in your own format (unless the funding agency says this is acceptable). Use the space provided on the application form and, if you need more space, indicate that there is additional information attached.
- **Avoid** lengthy and/or vague statements as this can make it difficult for the review committee to understand your proposal. Be concise and remain focused on your proposed project and how it meets the program guidelines.
- **Do not** leave out critical details and assume that the review committee will read between the lines. Though it is important to be concise, it is also important to provide a full, detailed explanation of what you will accomplish with the funding.
- **Do not** staple all your documents, but rather use a paper clip as the Program Officer will likely be making multiple copies to distribute to reviewers.
- **Do not** submit materials that do not have your name on them – be sure to label everything!

## **Reviewing and Reworking**

Once you have finished your draft application and have all the materials compiled, review it thoroughly and revise it if needed before submitting. One of the best ways to do this is to read it out loud to yourself or a collaborator. You catch things reading out loud that might go unnoticed when reading silently.

It may be helpful to have someone else edit your writing, as a person who is not familiar with your project can often notice gaps in your proposal that you had not identified.

It is also a good idea to have at least one other person read your proposal out loud to you. This can help you to catch anything that is unclear in the application, and make the necessary edits prior to submission.

## **The Application Checklist**

Many grant application forms include a “checklist” near the end of the application form. Before sealing the envelope, review this checklist to be sure that you have included all of the items required. In fact, a completed checklist is often a required component of your proposal.

Some applications ask for recent letters of support for your project – if you see this on the checklist then make sure to request the letters well in advance of the deadline. Letters of support for arts organizations will need to come from individuals outside the organization.

## **Final Steps Before Submission**

When you feel ready to send in your application, go over your *project description* once more and compare it with the *program description* of the funding program you are applying to. If you did not paraphrase, it may be helpful to compare them side-by-side to see if there is anything missing in your written description. Ensuring that your project description is in alignment with the goals of the grant program will improve your chances for funding.

If you have allowed yourself enough time, read through the entire application once, then revisit it in a couple of days after you've had time to reflect.

If you do not have enough time to review everything again prior to submission, focus on the most important components of your project and make sure the budget and timeline are clear.

Make sure that you have not left out any key details and be sure to double-check your spelling and grammar.

Once you are sure that the proposal meets all the requirements and describes your project idea well, you are ready to send it in to the funding organization for assessment.

**Congratulations,  
you finished your  
proposal!**

# HOW AN APPLICATION IS ASSESSED

## What Is Considered In the Assessment

Each funding agency has its own process and checklist for assessing grant applications, but generally speaking, these are some of the things that may be considered:

- The nature of an artistic quality of the proposed project;
- The compatibility of the work and experience of the project participant(s);
- The artistic quality of the body of work already produced by the applicant;
- Demonstration that the project is well thought out and can be carried out as planned;
- Demonstration that the applicant has completed any other projects funded by this grant program (and submitted any final reports required);
- Demonstration of how this project benefits the community and that there is community support for the project;
- Demonstration that there are matching funds for the project and that the budget is well thought out, reasonable, and accurate;
- Demonstration of a well-developed evaluation plan to assess achievement of the project goals (this is mostly applicable to arts organizations or community projects);
- The proposed work matches the funder's mission and interest.

## When You Will Hear News

Now that you have sent your application off to be assessed, you are likely to receive a letter or email confirming that your application has been received. This letter may ask for clarification about information contained in your application. If it does, be sure to respond back and any of the questions that have been asked of you.

After this initial confirmation letter, it may take a significant amount of time before you hear back from the funding organization regarding a decision about your application. Depending on the granting organization, it can take anywhere between two weeks and four months or longer after the deadline before a decision is made and you are informed about whether or not you received funding. If you change your contact

information during this time, be sure to contact the Program Officer as soon as possible.

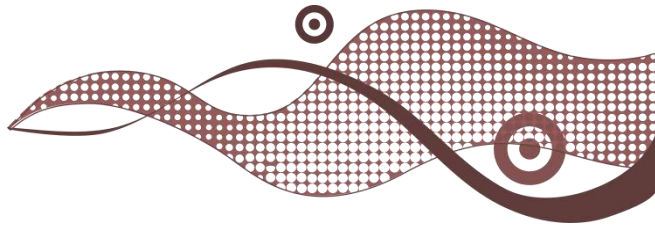
## **Who Will Be Making the Decision**

Applications for funding are often assessed by a “Review Committee.” You may also hear the review committee called a “Peer Assessment Committee,” “Peer Review Committee,” “Grant Review Committee” or “Jury.” Generally, all of these titles refer to the group of people who review applications and collectively decide which projects will be recommended to receive financial support.

Review committee members will often begin the assessment process by first individually reviewing all applications prior to meeting with the committee as a whole. During this first stage, individual committee members may be asked to assign points to each grant application based on the proposed project’s fulfillment of the program’s criteria, as outlined in the program description and guidelines.

Following this first stage, the review committee will come together as a group to discuss the applications in greater detail. Often over several days of intense discussion, the group will reach a collective decision regarding which applications will be recommended for funding.

Once the review committee has met and the grants are awarded, the Program Officer may have notes regarding each application and the reason for the committee’s discussion to fund or not fund a given project. If you would like to know why your project was or was not recommended for funding, you can often contact the Program Officer for this valuable feedback. Integrating this feedback into your proposal writing practice will strengthen your future grant applications.



## ONCE THE DECISION IS MADE

### **You Got the Grant: What Now?**

#### **Celebrate your success and start realizing your vision!**

It can be incredibly exciting to receive a grant to support your artwork. For many artists, the thought of someone believing in his or her vision and offering the support to bring this vision to reality is very affirming. Now it is time to get down to work on the project itself!

Though your proposal has already served its main purpose of securing funding for your project, it can also be a tool to help keep you on track. Refer to your project timeline often and use your project budget to be sure your resources are being used efficiently. Upon completion of the project, your proposal can also be a helpful reference when you are writing your final report for the funding organization.

Be sure to read all the terms of the funding, often included with award information, and keep these for your records. These documents can also help you in preparing final reports for the funding organization. They will also indicate whether or not you will need to keep receipts.

#### **What to Do If You Need To Change Part of Your Project**

Despite one's best efforts, sometimes project timelines can change and project outcomes can take on new and exciting, yet unexpected, directions. If this happens during the execution of your project, be sure to contact the Program Officer and keep them up to date.

#### **Making Yourself Eligible for Future Funding**

Almost all arts funding programs will require that you submit a final report once you have completed your project. You will usually need to submit this final report before a funding organization will consider you or your organization eligible to receive support for any new projects.

Funding organizations usually have their own specific final report form that you will need to complete. As part of this final report, you may be required to submit samples of work demonstrating the outcomes of the completed project, a summary of your evaluation tools and results, and receipts indicating how the funds were spent.

## **You Didn't Get the Grant: What Now?**

Rejection is a hard part of being an artist. Though it is always hard to stomach the disappointment of not having your proposal accepted, rejection is a common occurrence for even the most experienced grant writers. Allow yourself to feel the disappointment, while also being sure to keep faith in your vision and your art practice. There will be times that you get the grant and other times when you don't get the grant.

## **Seek Constructive Feedback and Try Again**

Even if you did not get the grant this time, submitting a proposal and receiving feedback can be a positive experience. You may wish to call or email the Program Officer to find out what feedback the review committee gave as they reviewed your project proposal. Receiving and integrating this feedback into your future proposals could lead to success in your future project proposals. You may also want to check with the Program Officer for any new suggestions on alternate sources of funding.

## **FINAL THOUGHTS**

Whether you are an individual artist and/or the representative of an arts organization, group, or collective, it is our hope that this handbook has provided useful information to get you started towards submitting applications for arts funding.

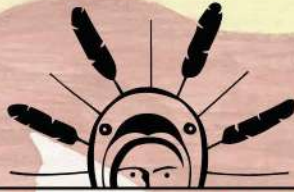
We encourage you to explore other sources of information regarding grant proposal writing for artists and arts organizations, as well as research the funding opportunities available for your specific artistic discipline.

The CIRI Foundation is proud to offer resources to support artists and culture bearers, and we greatly value your contributions to our communities!



**FIRST PEOPLES'**  
CULTURAL COUNCIL

This resource has been adapted from the First Peoples'  
Heritage, Language and Cultural Council's (FPHLCC)  
Artist Grant Proposal Writing Handbook.



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