AMPLIFY ARTS

Artist Funding Resource Guide

What kind of funding is available to artists?

There is a surprising amount of funding available to artists--individual artists and collectives--if you know where to find it. Major funders include foundations and nonprofit granting organizations; municipal city, state, and national arts council grants; corporate grants; individual gifts from donors and crowdsource funding websites. Depending on your project and how much you need to fundraise in order to realize your goals, you may want to think about using a combined approach by soliciting funding from more than just one or two of the above to create a comprehensive fundraising campaign. Individual givers and granting organizations also look for tax incentives when donating money. Most individual artists haven't incorporated into a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that accords the tax status which makes exemptions on charitable donations possible. Because of that, a lot of individual artists aren't eligible for the majority of grants out there and while they still may be able to secure individual gifts, donors are often incentivized to give larger amounts if they know a portion of their donation will be tax deductible. Fiscal Sponsorship is one solution.

What is Fiscal Sponsorship?

Fiscal Sponsorship is a mechanism by which a non-profit organization that is incorporated for charitable purposes under section 501(c)(3) of the federal tax code can lend its 501(c)(3) status to individual artists for the purposes of fundraising. The fiscal sponsor can receive contributions and donations for projects and programs related to its artistic mission, and then pass the funds along to individual artists, still allowing donors to receive tax incentives. Most of the time, fiscal sponsors keep a percentage of capital raised to cover administrative costs, usually between 8 and 10 percent. Fiscal sponsors also assume responsibility for administration of the grant and promising the grantmaker that funds will be used for their intended purpose. Make sure you seek out a fiscal sponsor whose mission statement aligns with the nature of your projects. Arts nonprofits like OCI, Fractured Atlas, or New York Foundation for the Arts or Fractured Atlas are going to be more likely to sponsor artists' projects than a children's charity, for example.

How do I get started?

One of the most important aspects of starting a fundraising campaign is organization. Don't wait until a month before your project's completion date to start raising money. Apply for Fiscal Sponsorship right away and give yourself substantial lead time--six months at least, if possible. Make sure your goals and objectives are clear. Create a spreadsheet with organizations or individuals from whom you would like to solicit funds and a budget that includes unearned income (confirmed gifts, prospective gifts) and earned income, if any, that you anticipate to come from your project. Confirmed gifts are dollars you've already secured from grants or other donations. Prospective gifts are dollars you hope to secure but haven't yet applied for or confirmed. All of this information should be worked into an itemized budget that includes the total cost of your project and submitted with each grant application you complete.

Preparing the financials beforehand will save you time down the road, as will clearly articulating your project's objectives and goals before starting the grant writing process.

What types of grant proposals are there?
There are essentially three types of grant proposals you might be asked to submit for any given project.
1. A one-page or letter of inquiry (LOI) is the first type of grant proposal. This is a brief outline or summary of your project that funders might review before asking for a more detailed proposal.
2. A letter proposal, the second type, is a little longer--three to five pages--and asks for the project description plus additional information about the artist(s) / organization(s) applying for funding.
3. The third, and most thorough, is the long proposal that can be anywhere from three to forty pages and sometimes longer. The long proposal will often ask for a cover letter, project summary, statement of need, goals and objectives, methods, budget, and evaluation.

What does writing a grant involve?
The first step to applying for any grant is doing your research. Look for foundations and granting organizations that have funded projects in the past similar in scope or objective to yours. Make sure your project fits the funder's profile and not the other way around. A lot of grants are also set up specifically for artists working in a certain region. There may be other restrictions as well so make sure you're eligible first before applying and always follow directions.

Grants aren't the place to color outside of the lines. If a grant application calls for a specific word count, page count, worksample image dimensions or titling format, always follow those instructions, despite what you may have done on prior grants. There is no one size fits all formula for grant writing and while you can duplicate information from other applications, it should always be tailored to fit the needs of the grant you're currently working on. Make sure the writing is thoughtful and consistent. The actual guts of an application may vary but will usually include a combination of the following:

1. **Artist Statement**: Your artist statement should give the reader a clear idea of what you do, and why you do it, even before s/he/they look at your work sample. Discuss the concepts and ideas you address in your work in a way that's direct and free of jargon.
2. **Work Sample:** A strong work sample will visually illustrate the depth and breadth of your creative practice to a reviewer through high quality images, video documentation, text or a combination of all of the above. Every application will lay out it's own specific parameters for submitting a work sample. Follow directions and ask for feedback from your peers and other artists before submitting the final edit to make sure you're representing your work accurately.
3. **Project Proposal**: The project proposal should outline in one to three pages the purpose of your project, why it's important, how it fits into the scope of the granting organizations other funded projects, and what you will need to make it happen.
4. **Statement of Need**: Some funders refer to the statement of need or need statement as the "problem statement." This is where you're able to address why your project is important and the kind of impact or public benefit it poses. Use clear and direct language that's easy to understand. Avoid artspeak and hyperbole or grandiose statements about the current state of the world and how your work will change lives that you're not able to prove objectively. If you'd like to incorporate support materials into your need statement, consider using verifiable news reports from reputable sources.
5. **Impact Statement:** Your impact statement should clearly articulate how the grant or award will make a difference in your practice. What will you be able to accomplish with grant funds? How will that alter the trajectory of your career as an artist? Where will that new trajectory take you?

6. **Goals and Objectives**: Your goals and objectives should tie directly back to your statement of need. For example, "I plan to address the issue of child labor in South Asia in my photographic exhibition by increasing awareness of deplorable working conditions that exist."

7. **Methodology**: Methodology refers to the methods you'll use to reach your objectives. Here you can discuss in greater detail about the steps you plan on taking to accomplish your goals. For example: "I plan to address the issue of child labor in South Asia in my photographic exhibition by increasing awareness of deplorable working conditions that exist traveling to India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka where I will document working conditions of child laborers in factories and sweatshops. I will gain access to these industrial spaces using my credentials as a retail buyer for Urban Outfitters." State what action needs to be taken to reach your objectives along with the start and end dates for the project. Name other people or organizations who might lend their help and your criteria for selecting participants. Show how your methods will use the funds for which you're applying and specify the populations that will be served.

8. **Budget**: Almost every grant application will include a budget. Funders want to know exactly where their money is going. If you've raised money for your project already, include it in your budget. If you anticipate earning income from your project, include that as well. Also be sure to itemize and list expenses as separate line items rather than lump sums. Include plane tickets, hotel rooms, camera lenses, framing costs, artist stipends, exhibition space rental, etc.

9. **Timeline:** A timeline will detail project milestones you hope to achieve and the date by which you hope to achieve them. Thoroughly outlining the scope of your work chronologically helps a reviewer understand that you've done your research and that you're approaching this project thoughtfully.

10. **Evaluation**: This section of your application should discuss data and how the funder(s) and public will know if your objectives have been met. How will data be collected? How will that data be analyzed? Who will be in charge of gathering data and reporting and how will the information be disseminated? Do you plan on creating video or photographic documentation; soliciting critical reviews or evaluations; producing a related publication; hosting lectures, panels, or other public programs; or any combination of the above?

Can I fundraise using other, less traditional channels?

Absolutely. There's nothing to say that grants are the only way forward when looking for funding. You might also want to consider hosting a benefit dinner, raffle, or cook-off, asking friends and family to help fund your project. You could also organize a screening and sell tickets and concessions; have an auction or yard sale; add a donation button on your website; or partner with a commercial business that might have an interest in your project. Crowdsourced funding campaigns through Kickstarter, Go Fund Me, and Indigogo, have also proven to be valuable tools for raising substantial chunks of cash. Be creative and explore as many avenues as possible.

Additional Resources

1. http://www.artistsnetwork.com/articles/business-of-art/grant-writing-tips (Artists Network)
2. https://www.gyst-ink.com/fundraising-without-writing-grants/ (Get Your Sh*t Together)
3. http://artfcity.com/2016/05/31/5-steps-to-take-the-pain-out-of-grant-writing-for-artists/ (Art F City)
4. https://www.callforentry.org/ (Cafe-Listings)
5. http://source.nyfa.org/content/search/search.aspx?SA=1 (New York Foundation for the Arts-NYFA Source)
6. http://www.cranbrookart.edu/library/research/grants.htm (Cranbrook Academy of Art Library-Listings)
7. http://artdeadline.com/ (Art Deadline-Listings)
8. http://www.omahacreativeinstitute.org/ (Omaha Creative Institute-Grants and Fiscal Sponsorship)
9. http://www.artscouncil.nebraska.gov/ (Nebraska Arts Council)
10. http://foundationcenter.org/products/foundation-directory-online (Foundation Directory Online-can be accessed for free at the downtown W. Dale Clark Library)
11. https://pen.org/emergency-funds-for-writers/ (PEN America-Listing of Emergency Fund Resources)