

GRANT WRITING ESSENTIALS MANUAL

THE GRANT WRITING EXPEDITION: A JOURNEY THROUGH
PLANNING, WRITING & REPORTING



South East District works with sport, culture, and recreation groups across the southeast region. One of our key roles is helping communities understand funding opportunities and prepare strong grant applications within the sector.

This manual supports and supplements our **on-demand recorded webinar** by expanding on the material presented, providing detailed explanations, examples, and reference tools for ongoing use. (Recorded webinar: <https://southeastdistrict.ca/programs/on-demand-training-modules>)



Disclaimer All information provided in or throughout this workshop, presentation, and handouts is for educational and informational purposes only. It is not intended to provide individual advice and should not be relied upon for such purposes. You should assess whether you require additional information or seek independent professional advice. Although the South East Sport, Culture & Recreation District believes the information is reliable, we do not guarantee its accuracy or currency. The District and its representatives are not legally liable for any damages resulting from the use of this content. By using the content, you agree to indemnify and hold harmless the South East Sport, Culture & Recreation District against all claims arising from its use.

1. Grant Writing as a Mountain Climb

Think of grant writing as climbing a mountain:

- **Base Camp (Planning):** Getting organized and ready
- **The Climb (Writing):** Completing and submitting the application
- **Summit & Descent (Reporting):** Sharing results and lessons learned

Every grant is a new mountain — preparation makes the climb easier.

2. Phase 1: Planning (Base Camp)

Why Planning Matters

Most successful grant writers spend **more time planning than writing**. Planning helps avoid mistakes, saves time, and improves your chances of success.

Step 1: Read the Grant Guidelines

Before you start, carefully read all grant guidelines:

- Who can apply?
- What projects are eligible?
- What costs are allowed?
- What is the deadline?
- What documents are required?

 **Tip:** *Print the guidelines or highlight them digitally.*

Step 2: Confirm Eligibility

Check that your organization and project are eligible:

- Organization type (non-profit, municipality, school, etc.)
- Project type (program, capital, training, planning)
- Location or geographic restrictions
- Target group (youth, seniors, community members)
- Funding amount and timeline



If something doesn't fit, it's okay to look for a different grant or call the funder if clarification is needed.

Step 3: Assess Your Readiness

Ask yourself:

- Do we have a clear project idea?
- Have we written our goals down?
- Are we ready to deliver this project if funded?

3. Planning Tools (Use These!)

Draft in a Word Document First

Always draft answers in a Word document:

- Easier to edit and review
- Helps avoid lost work
- Makes future applications faster

Keep Templates

Create reusable documents for:

- Organization background and contact details
- Mission and vision
- Key priorities

Use a Logic Model

A logic model helps organize your project:

- What you will do
- What you need
- What will change because of your project

Example: Summer Arts Camp Logic Model

Component	Description
Inputs (resources needed)	• <i>Qualified teaching artists and camp staff</i> • <i>Art supplies and materials</i> • <i>Studio or classroom space</i> • <i>Funding from grants and sponsors</i> • <i>Partnerships with local arts organizations</i>
Activities	• <i>Visual arts workshops (painting, sculpture, photography)</i> • <i>Performing arts sessions (theater, dance, music)</i> • <i>Guest artist talks and demos</i>
Outputs	• <i>60 youth participants (ages 8–14)</i> • <i>6-week program, 5 days/week</i> • <i>10+ art forms explored</i>
Short-Term Outcomes	• <i>Increased exposure to diverse art forms</i> • <i>Improved creative expression and technical skills</i>
Long-Term Impact	• <i>Lifelong appreciation for the arts</i> • <i>Increased access to cultural opportunities</i> • <i>Stronger community engagement through youth arts</i>

In a logic model, **outputs** typically include:

- The number of participants served
- The amount or duration of programming delivered
- The types of services or activities provided

Difference between outputs and outcomes:

Outputs = what was delivered

Outcomes = what changed as a result

To explore more on creating logic models, check out these helpful links:

- <https://youthrex.com/blog/the-whats-whys-hows-of-developing-a-logic-model-a-guide-for-students/>
- <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/f/2016/focus-on-logic-model.pdf>

Create a “Statement of Need”

Creating a “statement of need” helps clarify and explain why funding is necessary, strengthening your grant application. The questions below can help!

WHO / WHERE / WHEN?	WHAT? / WHY?	EVIDENCE OF PROBLEM	SO WHAT?
Who are the people with the need?	What is the need?	What evidence do you have to support your claim?	What are the consequences of meeting the need?
Where are the people?	Why does this need occur?		How is the need linked to your organization?
When is the need evident?			

4. Phase 2: Writing (The Climb)

Keep It Clear and Simple

Reviewers read many applications. Your application is often rated and assessed against many other applications for a limited amount of dollars. Make yours easy to understand:

- Use plain language
- Avoid acronyms
- Be specific

 **Test:** Could someone outside your organization understand this?

Tell Your Story

Explain:

- Who benefits
- Why the project matters
- What impact the funding will have

Support your story with:

- Data (i.e. community survey)
- Community input (i.e. testimonials/focus group feedback)

Follow Instructions Exactly

- Answer all questions in the grant application (missing one could deem the application incomplete)
- Stay within word or page limits
- Align with funder priorities using your own words

Incomplete applications may not be reviewed.

Think Like a Funder

Assume the funder knows nothing about your organization or your project.

- Explain clearly
- Proofread carefully (double check your budget totals)
- Ask a fresh reader to review for understanding and errors

5. Key Proposal Elements (Checklist)

- ☒ Target group clearly described
(e.g. are you targeting families, youth or underserved populations?)
- ☒ Community need explained with evidence
(e.g. How do you know the program is needed? Simply stating you think it is needed is not enough.)
- ☒ Partners and roles identified
(Shows grant reviewers know that you are not working as a “lone wolf” and that others care about and support the initiative, not just your organization)
- ☒ Clear outcomes defined
(e.g. When all said and done, what difference will the project make? What changes will occur because of the program and for who?)
- ☒ Plan to measure success
(e.g. What does success look like? What indicators of success will tell you the project was impactful?)

6. The Budget (The Most Critical Element)

One of the most critical yet most neglected parts of a successful grant is the **budget**. Here is the truth: your grant **must explain your request in both words and numbers**. In other words, your grant budget must paint the financial picture of your request.

The “grant budget” is NOT your organizational budget. The purpose of the grant budget is to:

- ✓ Detail the costs of the program or project you’re proposing.
- ✓ Show the funder exactly what their money will pay for.
- ✓ List other sources of income for costs not covered by the grant being requested.

 **Tip: Your budget must align with your story.** Make sure that what you describe in the narrative is reflected in the budget. For example, if you need to bring in an instructor from outside the community, explain that in your narrative so that a \$500 mileage expense in the budget clearly aligns with your program’s funding needs.

Budget Checklist

- ☒ Matches project description
- ☒ Know what expenses are eligible under the grant
- ☒ In-kind contributions identified (sometimes funders will accept in-kind contributions, such as program space, and sometimes they do not – check the guidelines)
- ☒ Totals add up correctly – does revenue and expense balance?

Sample Budget Table

- Project supplies – \$2,000
- Instructor fees – \$3,000
- Facility rental (in-kind) – \$1,500

Budget Narrative Example

Instructor fees cover delivery of 10 sessions at \$300 per session. Facility space is provided in-kind by the municipality.

 **Tip:** When possible, explaining how expense totals are calculated can help grant reviewers better understand the accuracy of the listed amounts.

7. Phase 3: Reporting (Summit & Descent)

Reporting shows what you achieved and that you completed what you said you would do.

What to Track

- Expenses and receipts
- Attendance or participation numbers
- Outcomes and stories/testimonials
- Challenges and lessons learned

Common Reports

- Interim updates
- Final reports
- Financial reporting

 **Tip:** Staying organized throughout the project makes reporting easy. Once you are approved a grant, review the follow-up requirements, so it is clear from the start what is needed.

8. Common Mistakes to Avoid

- Missing deadlines
- Skipping eligibility checks - *Don't be afraid to call the funder for clarity!*
- Vague outcomes - *Be concise and clear on what you are trying to achieve – and does it align with the funder's criteria and goals? You may have a great program idea – it just might not be a good fit for the grant. Be sure there is indeed alignment!*
- Weak budgets - *Many times, the grant reviewers look at the budget first! It is the most critical area of your grant submission!*
- Not proofreading

9. Tips for Success

- ✓ Start early
- ✓ Stay organized
- ✓ Use clear language
- ✓ Include letters of support when requested
- ✓ Keep copies and records of all grant information
- ✓ Build your budget using actual costs or quotes whenever possible, be precise in your estimates, include all other sources of revenue, and make sure total expenses and total income balance exactly.

10. Additional Resources

- a) **Writing Effective Grant Applications** (Source: Recreation MB)
<https://www.recreationmb.ca/Grant-Manual>
- b) **Grant Writing Guide and Workbook** (Source: City of Saskatoon)
<https://www.saskatoon.ca/sites/default/files/documents/community-services/community-development/2024%20Grant%20Writing%20Guide%20and%20Workbook.pdf>
- c) **Grant Resources** (Source: CIF)
<https://www.cifsask.org/grants/resources/>
- d) **Grant Writing for Beginners – 5 Min**
<https://youtu.be/MBRrCwOuM00?si=krncW1kF10koV-Zb>
- e) **5 Quick Steps for Successful Grant Writing** (Source: SaskCulture)
https://www.saskculture.ca/content/documents/24.08.12.5_Quick_Steps_for_Successful_Grant_Writing.pdf
- f) **Mastering the Grant Budget – 7 Minutes**
https://youtu.be/XJn_pmsqxtc?si=Egw_BaAHO9_6nuQ0
- g) **7 Tips for the Budget**
<https://imaginecanada.ca/en/360/tips-for-writing-a-solid-grant-proposal-budget>
- h) **Tired of Rejected Grants? Try This Instead – 6 Minutes**
<https://youtu.be/m5eKqKR5UT0?si=vuXCC2ctQuVK9ltS>

11. Final Thoughts

Every grant is a new mountain. With preparation, clarity, and creativity, reaching the summit is possible. Every climb builds confidence for the next one.

Need Help? South East District is always here to support you.

- Join our **Newsletter** to get monthly grant tips and additional grant writing tools!
- Visit our online **Resource Hub** – we have a funding section!
- Check us out: www.southeastdistrict.ca
- Contact our **Team** for guidance: Email: ed@southeastdistrict.ca

*Thank you for investing in your community —
we're glad to support you on your grant writing journey!*