



2023 Grant Application  
Writing Workshop

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# Introductions, starting with me...

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- Kevin Ronaghan: currently managing Grants & Community Initiatives at the Community Foundation of the South Okanagan Similkameen
- Previous grantmaking experience with Vancity Savings Credit Union and Vancouver Foundation (Centre for Not-for-Profit Sustainability)
- Naramatian since 2016
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# An introduction to your Community Foundation

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- 30 + years of service
- Nearly \$16 million in assets under management
- \$8.6 million in grant funds disbursed over its history (that's more than 2400 grants)
- Supports the entire South Okanagan Similkameen region
- [Home - Community Foundation of the South Okanagan Similkameen \(cfso.net\)](http://cfso.net)

# Credits

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- Some content for this presentation is adapted from our 2022 grant writing workshop, which was developed by:
  - **Kim McPhedran** ([www.writtenbykim.com](http://www.writtenbykim.com))
  - **Sarah Trudeau** (Manager, Grants & Community Initiatives, CFSOS)

# The reality of grant programs

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- They are generally very competitive.
- The total dollar value of requests often far outweighs the funds available to grant.

# No two funders are the same

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- Each funder will have their unique requirements, processes and approaches to grantmaking.
- Understanding your funder(s) is important.

# Getting to know your funder(s)

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Before putting effort into a grant proposal:

- Do your research. Learn about the funder's history, their goals/priorities and their past grant allocations.
- Review their eligibility guidelines, application form and supporting documents carefully.
- Make the effort to talk to their grant staff and ask questions. Be sure you know what they're looking for and if your organization/project/program is a good fit.

# Where can I find information on available grant programs?

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- Here's a place to start:

[Other Funding Sources - Community Foundation of the South Okanagan Similkameen \(cfso.net\)](http://cfso.net)



# The task of grant staff/grant review committees

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- They need to read and evaluate all eligible applications received for a given grant program.
- For our Foundation grant program, that can mean 40 – 60 applications!
- You want your application to stand out from the crowd (in the best possible way!)
- A well written application can have a positive impact.

# What makes a good grant application? (not an exhaustive list...)

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- It's complete and adheres to the funder's application instructions and guidelines.
- It matches well with the funder's eligibility criteria and funding goals/priorities.
- It's clearly written and straightforward to understand.
- It outlines a demonstrated need, and an achievable and measurable plan to address that need.
- The project, program or activity fits well with your organization's mission and purpose.

# Good grant proposals take time

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You'll need time for:

- Researching funding opportunities
- Contacting funders and asking questions
- Gathering your information
- Drafting, editing, re-writes
- Proofreading before submission

Don't wait until the last minute! Give yourself the time you need to create the best possible proposal.

# Time saving strategy: "Grant Proposal Tool Kit"

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Consider building a central electronic file for your proposal writing!

Include typically requested information you can adapt for your applications. Some ideas:

- A description of your organization and its history and achievements
- Your mission and vision
- Your organization's registration details (CRA or Society number)
- A list of current Board members and their roles
- Up to date financials

# More tool kit items...

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- Descriptions of your programs or services – goals and objectives, key activities, staff, evaluations, and successes
- Recent data that shows the need for your programming in your community
- Electronic copies of supporting documents: letters of reference, brochures, annual reports, media coverage, etc.

***Revisit your toolkit often to keep the information current!***

# Consider your audience

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- Remember that the average grant reviewer will likely not share your depth of knowledge of your field or issue.
- Use plain language. Avoid using your field's "jargon" whenever you can (and explain it when you can't).
- Tip: have someone unfamiliar with your organization's work read your application and offer feedback.

# Other writing tips...

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- Keep it simple. A clear and reader-friendly style is best.
- Tighten your writing. Avoid word-padding to simply meet character limits. Often less can be more.
- Be direct. Don't "bury the lede!"
- Use an active voice in your writing wherever possible:  
[Use the active voice – The Writing Center – UW–Madison \(wisc.edu\)](#)
- Use the funder's language where appropriate.

# More writing tips!

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- Do you speak more eloquently about your work than you can write about it? Try using a speech to text program to record your draft application.
- Is writing not your strong suit? Consider using an online tool like *Grammarly* or *Hemingway* to help you.



# Some questions to ask yourself as you craft your application

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- Have I clearly and accurately described what we're trying to do, how we'll do it, and why?
- Have I made a strong case for the need for the project? (Include supportive data where you can.)
- Is my project plan achievable? (Think about its scope and timeframes, and your organization's capacity.)
- Have I outlined how we will measure and evaluate our work?
- Is my budget clear and reasonable?

# Expressing the need

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- There are many important funding needs out there; your goal is to convince the funder that yours is one that is worth supporting.
- Data (and stories!) can help bolster your case.
- Use local and regional research to support your argument. (Hint: the 2023 Vital Signs report can be found here: [Vital Signs Community Report - Community Foundation of the South Okanagan Similkameen \(cfso.net\)](#))

# Your proposal's budget

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- Your budget's level of detail should meet the funder's requirements; use the funder's budget template if one is provided.
- Expenses should match with the activities outlined in the project or program description.
- Don't shortchange yourself with respect to overhead, staffing, and program costs.
  - BUT: be sure to pay attention to some funders' cost limits (particularly with overhead)
- [6 tips for writing a solid grant budget proposal | Imagine Canada](#)

# A few words on measurement

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- A complex field!
- Outputs are only one piece of the measurement puzzle
- The importance of measuring impact is growing (i.e., how you're "moving the needle" on your issue)
- There's lots of information out there on measurement; for example:
  - [Five essential practices of good impact measurement – Purpppl](#)
  - NonprofitReady: [How to Measure the Impact of Your Nonprofit Programs](#)

# Food for thought:

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- Think of a grant as an investment by the funder in your organization (and your community!)
- If you were considering putting your own money into the project, would your grant application encourage you to invest?

# After the decision

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- **If you're successful:** Congratulations! Take some time to reflect on what made your application great so you can replicate those approaches with the next one. (Hint: ask grant program staff for feedback)
- **If you're unsuccessful:** Be sure to ask for feedback from grant staff. It might initially be a “high demand/tough decision” message. If that's the case, try asking them for additional feedback specific to your application.

# New to applying for grants?

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- Be sure your organization is “grant ready” and has the capacity to effectively manage, deliver and report on its funded project(s).
- Consider starting with smaller funding requests.
- Foster a positive relationship with the funder, and work to gain their confidence in you as a grantee.

# Alternatives to written applications

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- Some grantmakers are becoming open to receiving applications in different formats: oral, video, etc.
- It's worth checking with grant staff to see if those or other options are available to you, particularly if producing a written application is a barrier to your organization's participation in their grant program.



# Grants are just one tool

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- Pursuing grants is just one of several tools your organization can use to find financial support for its work.
- Creating a diversified fundraising strategy is a valuable organizational development goal.
- Fun fact: the Community Foundation will consider grant proposals for organizational development activities!

# Additional learning

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[Alberta Community Development Office: Grant Writing 101 Video Series – YouTube](#)

# CFSOS Foundation Grants

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- Our annual grant cycle typically begins in August of each year.

- Here's the link to more information:

[Foundation Grants - Community Foundation of the South Okanagan Similkameen \(cfso.net\)](http://cfso.net)

Thank you!

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