

IOWA ARTS COUNCIL

GRANT WRITING TIPS



1. **Read guidelines and instructions before beginning.** They are there to help you write a good application and are not optional, so make sure you follow them closely.
2. **Start your application early.** Give yourself enough time to write a well-thought out narrative and to collect high-quality support material. Deadlines are firm and technical difficulties are not considered. Plan ahead so you can get everything in on time.
3. **Quality, not quantity.** This is important not only for support materials, but also in preparing answers to the application questions.
4. **Don't bury the project details.** Explain the project up front and clearly. Describe what the funds are being used for, when and where the project will take place and who is involved. Your application will receive a lower score if a reviewer can't immediately discern the who, what and where.
5. **Understand your goals vs. objectives vs. timeline.** An arts/cultural goal is a broad statement about what your project intends to accomplish. Goals are a long-term end to which projects and activities are developed. Implementation objectives lay out how you plan to accomplish your stated goal. They are well-defined, specific and measurable. A timeline of activities describes in a chronological, detailed and concise way the steps you will take to achieve each objective.
6. **Be organized and logical.** Many applications fail to receive a high score because the reviewers cannot follow the thought process of the applicant or because parts of the application do not fit together.
7. **Respond directly to the application questions.** Follow the format of the application and do not make the reviewer hunt for your answers. It will benefit you if the panelists can easily follow responses to the questions.
8. **Consider the review criteria.** Review criteria are detailed in the scoring rubric, which is found in the grant guidelines. Refer to the scoring rubric as you write your answers. The scoring rubric and review criteria follow the application section by section.
9. **Be clear and concise.** Panelists have many applications to review, so be clear and concise. This is related to some of the earlier tips, but is worth emphasizing. When comparing many applications, panelists will award more points to applicants who clearly articulate who they are, what they do, and how the grant money will be used. Any confusion or small error can decrease your score and potentially put you behind another applicant.
10. **Avoid jargon and acronyms.** Do not assume the panel will be familiar with your art form or field.
11. **Proofread.** Review your application for typographical and grammatical errors before submitting. Type a draft of your application in Microsoft Word and use spell check. Copy and paste the narrative into the application when you are certain there are no errors, and double check that you pasted it correctly in the online application form. Check to ensure your narrative was not cut off by the character limit.
12. **Use proofreaders who haven't worked on the grant.** Have someone unfamiliar with your project, organization or art form read your application before submitting. If they understand it, it means you are making a strong case! This is also a great way to catch errors you otherwise might miss in your own proofreading.