Tips for Writing a Successful Grant – For Filmmakers –

Debra Torrence Ed. M.

GRANTS
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Good

Contact debratorrenceconsulting@gmail.com
919-244-7243

Types of Funding
Film/Shop Labs

Film Labs

- Film Labs may or may not include a stipend for living or travel and have a heavy focus on mentoring and craft.

- While a lab might sound time–consuming and restrictive, it is still a great way to secure film funding for your project. Labs are also great ways to network for future opportunities.

- Filmmakers that are chosen for lab participation usually have a leg–up in programming for a particular festival.

Types of Funding
Filmmaking Fellowships

Film Fellowships

- Film fellowships are different in that they may require a service commitment of some kind.

- These may also include a residency requirement and additional follow-up with the awarding committee on the project's progress.

- One of the most widely known fellowship is from the Sloan Foundation and is a part of the Sundance, Tribeca and San Francisco Film Festivals.

Types of Funding
Grants

Film Grants

- Film grants are usually unrestricted funds, services, or equipment that can be used for the development, production, or distribution of a project. They do not have to be repaid.

- Often the awarding entity will want status updates or recognition in the film's credits.

- Film grants give independent filmmakers the most freedom.

What A Grant Is Not

- A pot of gold
- A crisis intervention fund
- A long–term solution for your hopes & dreams

What A Grant Can Do for Me?

- Address an identified, documented need – equipment, travel
- Be a catalyst – seed money
- Create a tool, partnerships – a film
- Directly or indirectly impact people – distribution
- Engage the community – social media
- Fund new services or programs – educate

How do I Get a Grant as a Filmmaker?

Fiscal Sponsor or Nonprofit Partner

- Filmmaker grants (Filmmakers without Borders, Southern Doc Fund, The Film Collaborative) don't require a nonprofit partner
- Most grants out there that are not film focused require a nonprofit organization apply
  - Fiscal Sponsorship – used primarily when a film or media–related project wants to secure funding from individual, foundation, government, or corporate sources that give only to nonprofit organizations with IRS tax–exempt status.
    - Examples
      - Southern Documentary Fund
      - Organization passionate about the focus of the film

Where to Find Grant Opportunities

- Advertising
- Annual reports of like entities
- Businesses your entity works with including banks
- Civic Groups
- Corporations
- Friends & Family Connections
- Foundations
- Google Searches by
  - Topic
  - By what will change
  - Geographic area
  - Scope of work
  - News articles/Press releases
  - Sponsors you read or hear about

- Government – Local, State, National
- Signage
- Tourism entities (heads in beds events)
- Trusts
- TRIFF website – tryoninternationalfilmfestival. org/film
- Websites/Networks for Film Makers

Types of Grant Applications

- LOI: letter of intent or interest
  - Shorter than a grant, but all must be known, usually no budget/narrative
  - Used to support an initial review by the funder to get an idea of fit
  - Some are one paragraph, while others are a few pages.
  - Concise, clear and measurable change is a key

- RFP: Request for Proposal
  - Call for full applications for funding

- Full grant app with grant cycles
  - All the materials due on publicized deadlines

- Full grant app with rolling cycles
  - All the materials due but deadlines are ongoing

Create Your Toolkit – At a Minimum to Be Ready

- Business Documentation – Articles of Incorporation or Status
- Employer Identification Number (EIN)
- Physical mailing address, website, social media addresses, phone #s
- Tenure of business
- Investor Information (as applicable)
- CVs/Key Crew Bios – Producer, Director, Writer, Actors, Director of Photography, Production Designer (outline education, experience, skills & pro certifications qualify for the position)
- Treatment about film
- Production Schedule
- Concise paragraph outlining your idea from a creative and technical point of view (e. g.
- Project budget and sources of funding over time
- Certification of Existence document
- No taxes owed certification/documentation
- Unique Entity Identification (UEI) for federal grant applications

May Be's to Add in Your Toolkit

- Proof of Ownership of Content

- Government Issued Incorporation Documents

- Proof of Ownership of Content – Please provide option agreements, or project chain of title agreements (when applicable).

- Rights information – may need to be the primary rights holder of the project

- Lead – may need to be the director or producer attached with the film project

- Have at least one previous professional credit to their name.

- Demonstrate the quality and suitability for theatrical release and/or television broadcast to audiences

More May Be's to Add to Your Toolkit

- Project Treatment
- Shooting Script
- Artistic Statement
- Production Plan
- Fundraising Strategy
- Film Business/Financial Plan
- Audience Engagement Plan
- Production Credits

Review & Determine Fit

- Read the instructions & grant criteria carefully, twice at a minimum.
  - Are you able to adhere to the requirements?
- Check for eligibility – scope of work, stage of production, geographic & topical
  - Are you eligible and a "fit"?
- Check on timing
  - Will the timing of funding provided work for your needs?
- Check funding amounts & match requirements
  - Is it a fit for your needs?
  - What other sources can you bring to the table?

Prepare a Summary & Working Outline

- Create a summary to share with others/for letters of support
- Create an outline with each narrative question asked by the funder
  - Add the space limitations to each question
- Number the pages
- Save the file frequently using versions (v1, v2, etc.) to ensure content is saved
- Email yourself a copy occasionally for safe keeping as you go
- Outline key points to make under each question
- Read the questions again – did you provide the information asked for?
- Remove/delete information not requested or if very important to share, find a place where it "fits"

Secure Letters of Support/Commitment & Signatures

- Review the entire grant submission criteria

- If letters are involved
  - Identify who will provide them
  - Send them an email asking for their help and due date
  - Outline a draft
  - Email it to them to edit, personalize, put on letterhead & sign
  - Save in PDF and upload

- If notarized signature is needed, make arrangements to get your signature notarized at your bank or another location

- Confirm support/schedule for signatures from the authorizing person(s)/partners as needed

Create a Timeline

- Funders may ask for a timeline for the project
  - Charts are an easy way to say a lot in a small space
- Embed the reporting requirements in the timeline
- Review the timeline to be sure it aligns with their funding timeline

Activity	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Grant Set Up	X				
Advisory Committee Meetings	X	X	X	X	X
Employer Meetings	X	X	X	X	X
Faculty Training	X	X	X	X	
Funder Reports	X	X	X	X	X
Hire Program Staff	X		X		
LPN Program State Licensure Approval		X	X	X	
Procure Project Equipment & Technology	X				
Student Recruitment	X	X	X		
Project Assessment		X	X	X	X
Student Alum Mentors			X	X	
Student Supports		X	X	X	
Student/Program Assessment		X	X	X	
Worker/Student Org Meetings		X	X	X	

Draft a Budget

- Use the format provided (do not make one up)
  - Create a worksheet offline
  - Triple check your figures
- Include all costs for the project/activity/capital you are requesting funding to support
- Include both cash and in-kind contributions in separate columns
- All should square – meaning the column totals down the budget should equal the column figures across the budget.

Project Budget Tips

- Check that your requested funding is within the minimum and maximum limits of the grant.

- Read the guidelines thoroughly to make sure your costs are eligible for grant funding.

- Include all costs, factoring in administrative overhead (do not include tax).

- Check that your project dates align with the funding period in your application.

Write a Budget Narrative

Poor: $20,000 for supplies.

Better: Office Supplies ($1,500), Meeting Supplies ($2,500)

Best: Office Supplies = $500 (printer ink ($54 x 9 = 486+tax), $350 (copy paper – 20 reams of white, 4 reams of color paper), $250 (Epson XL2 ink jet printer), $200 (printer labels & envelopes for four mailings to 200 people each time), stamps ($200)

Secure the Match
(**if required**)

- A grant match is funding or time required to leverage the grant funds received; your contribution.

- Check the criteria for the funder to align with their requirements. A match may be provided by the grantee in many forms.

- Examples:
  - Cash
  - Volunteer labor
  - In–kind services
  - Discounted services
  - Discounted costs for products/space rental etc.

Write the Narrative

- Read the questions the funder is asking

- Answer the questions the funder is asking

- Avoid sharing only what you want to share

Define the Outcomes (change)

Outcomes are **the difference you've made as a result of the outputs** (**#s**): the decrease in hunger, the decrease in disease, the increase in a person's ability to care for themselves, etc. Some grants don't ask for outcomes or outputs at all, but the ones that do expect you to know the difference.

Outcome Example

Poor: This film will change people's lives.

Better: The film will support efforts to increase the quality of life for persons with disabilities.

Best: If fully funded this film will be used to support advocacy and public education abou the need for access to library services for adults with physical challenges living in Polk County.

Define the Outputs (#)

An output is **the quantitative—or countable—result of your work**. It is the number of meetings, the number of people served, the number of classes offered and the number of trainings your organization will provide through the grant.

Output Example

Poor: We will reach a lot of people with this money.

Better: A total of fifty people will get to see this film.

Best: Up to 5,000 people will be provided the opportunity to see this film for free at the Tryon Theatre and online via YouTube during the grant period.

Create Attachments Early

- Make a list of attachments needed & create a checklist

- Give yourself enough time to find and prepare attachments

- Check the requirements for how to label each file

- Save each file as a PDF, checking your label name

- Attach in the order or in places designated for each file

- Review the attachments with the RFP criteria to doublecheck

Make It Stand Out – Optional Examples

Attachments can help you tell your story, highlight the need and fill in gaps you can not include in the narrative.

Review the grant proposal to determine if attachments are allowed & what type of attachments are allowed. Examples include:

- Showreel
- Testimonials
- Mood Boards
- Storyboards
- Quotes for services – current information (quotes over 3–months may no longer be valid to support your application).
- Pictures of you, your team, a past production

Treatment Content

• Synopsis/Treatment: communicates the story you will tell.   Presents a clear and concise vision for your finished film

• What is the story you plan to tell and how do you plan to tell it? Consider themes, characters, narrative-arc (framework that gives structure to a story, including exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution) and point of view.

• Why is the topic/story important?

• What pressing issue does the film address and how does the project relate to the themes in work?

• What is the stylistic and visual approach?

• Are there specific creative elements you plan to employ in telling the story?

• Are there challenges that this particular project presents and how you plan to address them?

• Status and Time-line: (1-2 paragraphs) Provide a brief summary of the status of the project and a time-line for completion.

• Funding Strategy: (1-2 paragraphs) What other sources do you plan to approach for funding and what is your overall strategy for raising the funds required to complete the project as described? Be specific.

Audience, Distribution & Outreach

Discuss your strategic plan for distribution and outreach. Key questions to address include:

- Who is the audience for your film?

- How do you plan to reach your audience?

- What is your distribution strategy?

- What outreach activities are you considering in relation to your project?

- How will you engage and interact with your audience?

Sharing Results/Impact

- Evaluate, Measure, Assess
  - Determine how you will measure your outcomes & outputs
    - How will you know they have been achieved?

How are funding decisions made?

Driven by Understanding

Grants are funded when a funder has a clear understanding of:

- Project proposed
- How the project will be implemented
- Why the funding is requested/need
- Alignment with funder's goals/mission/priorities
- When the activities will happen
- Who will do & support the work of the project
    - Ability to be good stewards of funds
    - Quality of applicant
    - Capacity to manage, measure and achieve goals
    - Capacity to complete the project in a timely and successful manner

Funder Review Criteria Sample

- Project falls within the scope of Fund's mission and values.

- Primary team members have a strong connection to the story.

- Proposal is well–researched and clearly presented.

- Project has a feasible budget and fundraising plan.

- Project Director and collaborators possess the skills necessary to successfully complete the project.

- The applicant shows an understanding of their intended audience and how to reach them.

- A completed application and all requested documents.

- A fulfillment of eligibility requirements.

Film Industry Review Criteria

- Do the Project Director and the project presented meet the grant goals and eligibility requirements?

- Does the project tell a compelling story and address a pressing issue?

- Does the project exemplify the spirit and nature of the grant?

- Does the project take an innovative approach to the subject matter? Has the story been told before and if so, does this project's approach bring something new to the story?

- Does the Project Director have the access necessary to tell the story in a compelling way?

- What is the quality of the work sample provided? Does it have a strong visual style and does it reflect the spirit and nature of the grant, such as exhibiting high production values, artistic writing, outstanding music composition and skillful direction, camerawork and editing?

Film Industry Review Criteria continued

- Is the treatment well written and does it give a clear picture of the film's story and themes. Does the treatment articulate the film's connection to the grant and its stated objectives?

- Are the Project Director and production team assembled experienced and capable of completing the project as described?

- Does the proposal identify an audience and a realistic plan for reaching and engaging that audience? Does the project have a realistic strategic plan for raising the remaining budget and a reasonable chance of securing public distribution in theatrical release, broadcast or cable television, or educational/ancillary distribution (to schools, museums, or other institutions)?

- Is the budget thorough and realistic? Are line items in the budget within industry norms and standards?

Professional Credits – Sample Criteria

- The director and producer on each project must have at least one previous professional credit to their name.

- Professional credits include having previously worked on one of the following: a documentary or fiction film commercially released either locally or internationally, a documentary or fiction film and/or series broadcast on television either locally or internationally, a documentary or fiction film that has screened in at least an international film festival.

- Eligible professional credits include but are not limited to: producer, director, associate producer, executive producer, DOP, editor, etc.

Professional Credits – continued

- Be of high quality and suitable for theatrical release and/or broadcast to audiences internationally;
If there is a registered production company associated with the project

- Whenever possible, trailers and sample footage should be sent via an online link such as Vimeo or YouTube. Both Vimeo and YouTube. allow for free password protected uploads of videos.

Review Tips Before You Submit

- Write your application

- Spell check it

- Let it simmer…. at least overnight

- Reread it – out loud

- Invite another person to read it

- Make edits

- Reread it checking you have answered each question asked…give them what they want to know, not what you want to tell them

- Review against criteria in the industry

Tip: Submit Early

- Plan to submit your application earlier than the deadline, just in case there are questions or issues in submitting the application.

Contact Information

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