GRANT WRITING TIPS for ORGANIZATIONS

Ohio Arts Council staff has compiled the following grant-writing suggestions based on past observations and panel comments. While every application is different and not all suggestions will be appropriate in every situation, in general the most competitive OAC applications are those that consider the following (arranged in order according to the application form):

1. <u>Prepare to write a great application.</u>

   ☐ **Read the *Guidelines*.** Familiarize yourself with the program to which you're applying, including changes from previous years. Some programs have specific requirements for multi-year funding requests. Pay special attention to the Review Criteria – these are the exact criteria that will be used by panelists as they read and score your application.

   ☐ **Review all deadlines.** If your program has a draft deadline, consider submitting a draft for staff review.

   ☐ **When in doubt, ask.** If you are unsure which program is most appropriate for your project, are having technical difficulties with an application, or have other questions, contact us. The OAC has a coordinator assigned to every grant program who can assist you.

2. <u>Begin your application in ARTIE – and start off on the right foot.</u>

   ☐ **Double-check your Profile for accuracy and completeness.** Emails related to this application will be sent to this address; make sure it is *accurate*, *monitored* and can accept OAC emails (they won't go to a "junk" folder). Choose a descriptive project title (if applicable).

   ☐ **Use the organizational history section to your best advantage.** Provide a concise summary of your history, highlight major accomplishments and milestones, and make sure items are up-to-date.

   ☐ **Align the Participation page with your narrative.** Ensure that numbers of artists participating, adults and children benefiting, etc., match those described in later response items.

3. <u>Write a clear, descriptive, well-thought-out narrative with the evaluation criteria in mind.</u>

   ☐ **Make your narrative easy-to-read.** Use a positive, straight-forward tone that casts your organization's work in a positive light. Don't use tentative language or write in first-person.

   ☐ **Tell the panel who, what, when, where and why.** Assume every panelist is learning about your organization and/or project for the first time. Include descriptive details. Make sure panelists understand what you plan to do. Include the activities (and/or outcomes or outputs) that will result from this work.

   ☐ **Talk about your impact...** Describe what difference your work will make, why it will be valuable, and why it is essential that it be supported with public funding.

   ☐ **…and describe how you'll know you've made that impact.** Program evaluation can seem daunting, but it doesn't need to be. Describe how your organization will know whether it has been successful – what observations will be made or data gathered, how impact will be measured. A basic discussion of your evaluation plan will greatly enhance your application.

   ☐ **Use quantities wherever possible.** Including relevant data – the *number* of performances, the *duration* of a workshop, the *size* of a mural, etc. – will provide helpful background for panelists.

   ☐ **Cite statistical references.** Only include statements you can substantiate. For example, if you state that your program is the only one of its kind in your area, explain how you know this. If you state that your work generates a particular economic benefit to your community, cite the source of this calculation.

   ☐ **Think broadly about accessibility.** Making programs accessible to people with disabilities is important (and ADA compliance is required), but accessibility is more than just wheelchair ramps. Consider how your programs are made easy-to-access for *all* potential constituents, including those from diverse cultures and other underserved groups.

   ☐ **Use formatting to improve readability.** ARTIE accepts rich text, so feel free to use bolding, italics, headings, bullets, etc., to improve the way you tell your story to panelists.

- ☐ **Explain how you will market your programming.** Make sure your narrative includes a concise summary of the ways your organization will make others aware of its work, and refer again to the program's Review Criteria to see how panelists will evaluate your approach.
- ☐ **Have an unbiased third party read your application.** Find out if your responses make sense to someone unfamiliar with your organization or the OAC application process. If not, look for ways to be clearer and more understandable.

4. Include a logical, mistake-free budget that aligns with your narrative.

- ☐ **Make sure the budget aligns with the narrative.** For example, if you provide an earned income estimate for ticket sales, make sure it's the same estimate you mentioned in the narrative.
- ☐ **Double-check program match requirements and the allowable request amounts.** *Program guidelines change periodically.* Make sure you know the required match and maximum award size for this year.
- ☐ **List all applicable in-kind support – and be descriptive.** State all applicable in-kind donations whether or not you will need them as part of your match. Remember that you may include volunteer hours.
- ☐ **Use the budget narrative box if needed.** ARTIE will take care of your math, but if there are any budget fluctuations or figures you think may raise a red flag for a panelist, use the text box on the budget tab to share clarifying information.
- ☐ **Capital expenditures may not exceed $1,000.** This may include bricks-and-mortar expenses, major equipment purchases, etc.

5. The most competitive applications include helpful hyperlinks and/or support materials.

- ☐ **Share the most relevant hyperlinks.** ARTIE allows you to embed links to online materials right from your narrative – board lists, artist bios, event calendars, media reviews, strategic planning documents, and so on (see Instructions tab for help). This is a quick and easy way to round out your application and save you from uploading lots of materials that are already freely available online.
- ☐ **Refer to the Support Materials tab in ARTIE.** For materials not available online, be sure you've included everything appropriate to your OAC program and project. Materials that enhance your written application, provide background on your organization, and put a human face on your work are best.
- ☐ **Make sure your materials are current.** Panelists will visit your website and other relevant links and pages, including social media. Make sure all are up-to-date, operational, and present the best possible impression of your organization's professionalism and quality.
- ☐ **Consider uploading an audiovisual sample.** Submitting a rich, easy-to-understand work sample appropriate to your art form can greatly enhance panelists' understanding of your work. Remember to describe the sample's relevance to your application, and any viewing instructions, in the boxes provided.

6. Final details can be critical to your success.

- ☐ **Quick question? Write a Note.** ARTIE's Notes function – on the far right of your application screen – is perfect for sending a short note to your coordinator, or leaving a reminder for another staff member (or for yourself). Notes generate a threaded conversation that will remain with your application within ARTIE rather than getting lost in your email inbox.
- ☐ **Do an ARTIE error check.** Before it's time to submit your application, let ARTIE's Check for Errors function look for any missed fields or misaligned requests. You'll be prompted to fix anything that presents a problem. If no errors result, you're all set to submit when ready!
- ☐ **Request feedback as needed.** If you'd like a full draft of your application reviewed, use ARTIE's Request Feedback button. Experienced grantwriters are less likely to gain new insights using this process, but new applicants are encouraged to take advantage of this process. NOTE: panelists are not informed which applicants used this function, so it plays no role in application scoring.
- ☐ **Plan to attend (or listen to) the panel meeting.** Most OAC panel meetings are open to the public and audio-streamed online. There are few better ways to improve as a grant-writer than to listen to applications being reviewed by skilled OAC panelists. Good luck!