

# Grant Packaging: How to Assemble a Winning Grant Package

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Grant applications typically require you to provide a “package” of documents to support your request for grant funding. The assembly of such a package is no mean task. What should you include? What should you exclude? When is enough, enough? What is too much?

Here are some practical pointers on assembling a winning grant application package for your municipality:

1. **Follow directions.** Most grant applications contain detailed instructions and guidelines. These are usually separate from the actual grant application. Go over all of these carefully. The instructions and guidelines (often NOT the application) will include a list of required documents needed to support your grant application. Such a list may be “buried” in an appendix or attachment to the instructions. Be sure to read ALL information accompanying the grant instructions so that you know what must be included. Leave no stone unturned.
2. **Be sure to include ALL required supporting documents.** Failure to include required items will disqualify you. If for any reason you do not have an item by the time of the grant deadline, be sure to explain why in detail, and offer to provide it as soon as it is available. If you can only provide a partial document (e.g., an unsigned form), go ahead and provide what you have. Again, explain why the item is incomplete. This does not guarantee that the missing or incomplete item will be accepted at a later date. However, at least you will let the grant reviewers know that you have not overlooked a key item, and that there is a good explanation for your not having it.
3. **Provide supporting materials in the form and format required.** For example, if a supporting document must be an 8 ½ x 11 inch hard copy, then provide it that way. If it must be in an electronic form, then comply. Do NOT assume that the grant reviewers will read or accept anything supplied in a form or format that is at variance with the instructions. Again, read all instructions carefully to ensure that you supply what is needed in the form and format that are required.
4. **Provide supporting materials in the order listed in the grant instructions.** This will help you as the applicant, as well as the grant reviewers, make sure that you have supplied everything required. This can operate as a “checklist” for you as you collect every piece.
5. **Check your attachments thoroughly.** As a corollary to the above, check every attachment thoroughly. Make sure that it is exactly what you need and that it is

legible, signed if necessary and complete within itself. Do not assume that something given to you by another source is precisely what you need. It is your job to check it before it goes out with your application.

6. **Look for requirements of multiple copies.** Often, grant applications will be reviewed by committees of people who are located in different places. In such cases, the grantors may require you to submit multiple copies of your application (and attachments) so that they may be distributed for review. Be sure to read the grant instructions about this, and allow plenty of time to copy, collate and check your application before you submit it for review. Be sure to page-check all copies to make sure that every duplicating job has been done correctly (no missing pages, no blurred pages, etcetera).
7. **Watch out for instructions regarding binding, tabbing and the like.** Sometimes the grant application will specify the manner of binding and “packaging” allowed. Do not vary from these instructions, as inhibiting as it may seem.
8. **Make your grant package “sing”.** If your grant application must include a volume of materials (i.e. attachments, spreadsheets or supporting documents) and if the instructions allow for it, then by all means, make your grant package “sing.” In other words, any stranger who picks up your grant application and package should feel delighted to read it. Your package should look, read and feel like a well-written song. It should be:
  - a. complete,
  - b. legible and easy on the eyes,
  - c. easy to follow and organized logically.

As with any good, lengthy piece of writing, your grant application should include:

- ▼ **a title page** clearly identifying the grant and the applicant, with date and contact information;
- ▼ **a table of contents or index** with references to page numbers or index tabs;
- ▼ **headings and subheadings, with cross-references** to the application requirements, such as specific application section numbers to which you are being responsive.

Every grant writer and grant reviewer has his or her own style and preferences, but I prefer the small, three-ring binder or folder, with an index and tabs. Why? Such a packaging method allows one to add or subtract items as they are collected, allows flexibility to rearrange or edit any contents until the submission deadline and neatly packages all material within one bound volume. If materials are an odd size or cannot be hole punched, then I use pockets in my binder as they still keep things together in one organized place.

Please remember: With any grant “package”, a solid, clear index is key. Do not make your reader “guess” what you are including and why what you are including is important and relevant.

This last tip may seem contrary to all of the above, but it is nonetheless sound:

9. **Avoid extraneous material.** It may be tempting to include “gloss” in your grant package to prove why your organization deserves millions of dollars, and how many wonderful accomplishments your organization has made. But be careful, such “gloss” may actually work against you if it is not directly responsive to the precise grant application.

In all events, it is a waste of your time and the grant reviewer’s time to include anything that is “off-point”. In fact, more and more grant applications are now stating that videos, CD-ROMs, photographs and other glossy materials should NOT be included in your grant package. Of course, follow instructions and where instructions are missing use your best judgment. Less is more.

Creative discipline is the craft here. You want to make a grant package that is totally appealing to your reader, vivid, a pleasure to read, clear, concise and memorable. And you want a package that is complete and responsive in all technical detail, without going overboard.

Best of luck!

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