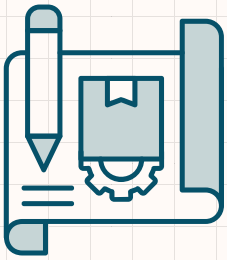
The GRANT BUILDER

EST. 2025



A step-by-step blueprint to fund your community project

ActionDignity

TD

HANNAH ABAYNEH
EST. 1998

The Grant Builder
Created by Hannah Abayneh
In partnership with ActionDignity
As part of the TD BLACK Project – Community Action Plan

This workbook was developed as part of the Community Action Plan led by the Black Youth Advisory Group under ActionDignity's TD BLACK Project. Rooted in the lived experiences of Black youth in Calgary, Alberta, this initiative applies principles of community development to foster belonging, build leadership, and support youth in developing the skills, confidence, and tools to envision and pursue positive futures. We believe in the power of youth-led change and the importance of creating accessible, culturally grounded resources that help bring community ideas to life.

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Credit:

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Thank You, ActionDignity

This workbook would not have been possible without the guidance, encouragement, and support of ActionDignity.

Thank you for believing in the power of grassroots ideas and in the individuals and communities who dare to dream, build, and lead change from the ground up.

Your commitment to equity, inclusion, and community empowerment continues to inspire and uplift so many—including me.

Because of your support, The Grant Builder is more than just a workbook. It's a roadmap for emerging leaders, changemakers, and visionaries who are ready to build something that matters.

With deepest gratitude,

Hannah Abayneh
Author of The Grant Builder

“IMPOSSIBLE” ISN’T A DEAD END—IT’S A WORD BUILT FROM “I’M POSSIBLE.”

What seems out of reach today may just need belief, boldness, and a blueprint. You have everything you need to begin—just **start**.

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HELLO

Why I Created The Grant Builder

I created The Grant Builder for anyone who has a powerful idea but isn't sure how to begin. I know what it's like to feel inspired but stuck—unsure where to start, how to get support, or if you're even ready.

This workbook isn't just about funding. It's about finding clarity, building confidence, and turning your passion into purpose. Grant Builder is built on the belief that readiness isn't perfection—it's simply starting from where you are.

If you've ever had a project on your heart but didn't know how to bring it to life—this is your guide.

Welcome, Changemaker.

Whether you're exploring a new idea or preparing to launch a full-scale community project, this workbook is for you. Inside, you'll find tools, prompts, templates, and guidance to help you move from vision to action—and from action to impact.

You don't have to be a professional grant writer to make a difference—you just have to start. Let this workbook guide you step by step as you build something meaningful for your community.

SECTION 1

GETTING GROUNDED

Starting Where You Are

Every journey begins with awareness—of your idea, your purpose, and your readiness to take the first step. This section helps you reflect on your "why," explore what drives you, and acknowledge the power of your voice.

You don't need to have everything figured out yet. You just need the courage to begin. This chapter is where clarity starts.

Let's begin from where you are—not where you think you should be.

> Funding follows clarity. The clearer your mission and impact, the more likely funders will support you.
>
> VU LE

SELF-READINESS

ASSESMENT

01 REFLECTION

I have a clear idea of the change I want to create in my community.

ask yourself ▶

What specific issue or gap am I trying to address?
Who will be impacted if this project succeeds?
Can I describe my idea in one sentence (elevator pitch)?

02 REFLECTION

I've spoken to others who may benefit from or support this idea.

ask yourself ▶

Have I talked to people in the community who would use or benefit from this project?
Have I shared my idea with mentors, friends, or organizations who could provide input or support?
Am I open to feedback to improve my idea?

03 REFLECTION

I understand the time and effort involved in applying for a grant.

ask yourself ▶

Do I know what documents, forms, or preparation is required for the application?
Have I reviewed deadlines and application criteria?
Am I prepared to commit time to writing, planning, budgeting, and possibly reporting?

04 REFLECTION

I am willing to learn and adapt throughout this process.

ask yourself ▶

Am I open to feedback and learning new skills like budgeting, writing proposals, or presenting ideas?
Can I stay flexible if my project needs to change or evolve?
Am I committed to the process even if it challenges me?

If you answered mostly "Yes," you're ready to move forward. If you answered "No" to a few, that's okay—this workbook will help you close the gaps.

SELF-READINESS

ASSESMENT

01 REFLECTION

I have a clear idea of the change I want to create in my community.

ask yourself

02 REFLECTION

I've spoken to others who may benefit from or support this idea.

ask yourself

03 REFLECTION

I understand the time and effort involved in applying for a grant.

ask yourself

04 REFLECTION

I am willing to learn and adapt throughout this process.

ask yourself

Sample Email Template

Introducing Your Idea to a Mentor or Advisor

Subject: Seeking Guidance on a Community Project Idea

Dear [Name],

My name is [Your Name], and I'm looking to launch a community project that focuses on [brief description – e.g., youth mental health, neighbourhood greening, newcomer integration, etc.].

I admire your work with [Organization or Initiative] and would truly value 15–30 minutes of your time to share your insights and advice on how to get started—especially with grants and partnerships.

Please let me know if there's a time that works best for you in the next couple of weeks. I'd be so grateful for your time.

Warm regards,

[Your Full Name]

SECTION 1

PERSONAL reflection

Before you start writing or planning, take time to understand the community you serve, the issues you care about, and the systems at play. Grounding gives your project relevance and context.

AWARENESS

What pressing needs or gaps do I see in my community?

OBSERVATION

Who is already doing work in this space, and how can I learn from them?

PERSPECTIVE

How does my identity or experience shape how I view this issue?

SECTION 2

DEVELOPING YOUR IDEA

From Inspiration to Impact

Your idea is the heart of your project—but even the strongest ideas need shaping. This section guides you in turning your spark into something tangible, relevant, and community-centered.

You'll explore the problem you're addressing, the people you're serving, and the change you want to see—all while learning how to tell your story with clarity.

Your idea already matters. Let's help others see why.

> Ideas are easy. Implementation is hard—but it starts with clarity and courage.
>
> JANE CHEN

VALUES, PURPOSE & PASSION

YOUR "WHY"

REFLECTION

Every great project starts with a reason – a spark. Your "why" is more than just a nice story – it's the anchor of your work. Funders, community members, and even future partners want to understand what drives you. Exploring your values, purpose, and passion will help you build a project that is deeply personal and widely impactful.

SELF-REFLECTION PROMPTS

Values

What breaks your heart or excites you the most about your community?

- This helps identify the problem or opportunity that resonates with you on a deep level.

Story

What personal experience or life lesson pushed you to care about this issue?

- Sharing your lived experience adds meaning and authenticity to your work.

Vision

If you had unlimited time, money, or help – what would you create or fix first?

- This clarifies your true priorities and long-term goals.

Alignment

What core values do you want your project to reflect?

- Examples: equity, creativity, compassion, sustainability, empowerment.

Purpose

What kind of legacy or ripple effect do you want your project to leave behind?

- Think beyond just outcomes – imagine the feeling, energy, or movement you want to spark.

VALUES, PURPOSE & PASSION

YOUR "WHY"

IDENTIFYING THE COMMUNITY NEED

Research Tools

- Talk to people (community members, elders, youth)
- Look at data (Calgary Foundation's Vital Signs Report, Statistics Canada)
- Search news articles or local community newsletters
- Host informal discussions or polls

Worksheet Prompt

- What gap, issue, or opportunity does your project address?
- Who is impacted by this issue? (Be specific)
- What evidence or insights do you have that this is needed?

BUILD YOUR PROJECT FOUNDATION: MINI MISSION BUILDER

What is your project idea?
[e.g., A free mental wellness workshop for newcomer youth]

Who is it for?
[e.g., Immigrant youth ages 14-18 in NE Calgary]

What does it aim to do?
[e.g., Provide tools for emotional well-being and belonging]

Why now?
[e.g., Youth isolation and post-COVID anxiety rates are rising]

Mission Statement Example:
"My project aims to support newcomer youth in NE Calgary by hosting free wellness workshops that build emotional resilience, foster belonging, and connect them with local mentors."

Sample Email Template

Requesting Community Feedback

Subject: Request for Input on a New Community Project Idea

Hi [Name],

I'm working on a community project that aims to [brief idea]. I'd love to hear your thoughts as someone active in the community. Would you be open to reviewing a short summary and giving me any feedback?

Your perspective would really help shape something meaningful.

Thank you!

[Your Name]

SECTION 2

PERSONAL *reflection*

Your idea is the heartbeat of your project. It should be rooted in your values and designed to meet a clear need with achievable outcomes.

VISION

What change do I want to create and for whom?

PURPOSE

What makes my idea meaningful, timely, or unique?

READINESS

How will I know if my idea is strong enough to move forward?

SECTION 3

PLANNING YOUR PROJECT

> Good intentions are not enough; funders need to see a clear, concrete plan.
>
> VU LE

Turning Vision into a Workable Plan

Having a good idea is one thing. Turning it into a clear, doable, fundable plan is what makes it real. This section breaks down your project into goals, timelines, budgets, and logistics.

You'll start seeing how all the moving parts come together—and why preparation is just as powerful as passion.

Planning doesn't limit creativity—it gives it direction.

DEFINE YOUR PROJECT *goals*

A strong goal is **specific**, **achievable**, and **aligned** with the grant's purpose.

For example:
❌ Vague: "Help the community."
✅ Strong: "Offer three free Saturday art workshops for 15 immigrant youth in Calgary to improve emotional expression and belonging."

goal 1

goal 2

goal 3

TEMPLATE
LOGIC MODEL

The logic model is a simple but powerful framework that visually maps out how your project is intended to work—from beginning to end. Think of it as your project's storyline: it shows what you're putting in, what you're doing, and what you hope to get out of it. This worksheet, will help you identify and create your story.

INPUTS (RESOURCES)

What you're starting with — funding, time, materials, people, space. ***"What do we need to make this project possible?"***

ACTIVITIES (ACTIONS)

What you will actually do with the resources — workshops, campaigns, events, outreach. ***"What will we do to make a difference?"***

OUTPUTS (DELIVERABLES)

The tangible results of your activities — number of sessions, people reached, materials distributed. ***"What will we produce or provide?"***

OUTCOMES (SHORT-TERM CHANGES)

The changes or benefits that come shortly after — new knowledge, skills, behavior change, awareness. ***"What difference will it make right away?"***

IMPACT (LONG-TERM CHANGE)

The broader, deeper, lasting change you hope to see — healthier communities, more equity, reduced harm. ***"What long-term change will this contribute to?"***

TEMPLATE
PROJECT TIMELINE

A project timeline is a step-by-step schedule that outlines what tasks will happen, when they will happen, and who is responsible. It helps you move your idea from vision to reality in a structured, realistic, and trackable way. Think of it as your action plan on a calendar — it helps funders (and you) see that you've thought ahead and can deliver results.

Phase 01

Action Items and Deadlines

Phase 02

Action Items and Deadlines

Phase 03

Action Items and Deadlines

Phase 04

Action Items and Deadlines

Phase 05

Action Items and Deadlines

TEMPLATE
BUDGET

A project budget is a clear, itemized estimate of how much money your project will cost, what you'll spend it on, and how it aligns with your goals. It's both a financial plan and a storytelling tool that shows funders you're thoughtful, prepared, and ready to deliver.

Shows readiness: Funders want to know how you'll use their money wisely.
Supports planning: Budgeting helps you think through logistics, materials, and needs.
Builds trust: A transparent, detailed budget increases your project's credibility.
Guides evaluation: Helps track if you stayed within budget and where adjustments were needed.

	Expense	Description / Purpose	Catagory	Cost	Notes
☐					
☐					
☐					
☐					
☐					
☐					
☐					
☐					

MEASURE YOUR SUCCESS

EVALUATION

Measuring success isn't just for funders – it helps you understand what worked, what changed, and what you can build on next time. It also shows accountability and gives your project more credibility when applying for future funding or partnerships.

PRE/POST SURVEYS

Ask participants before and after your event or program how they feel or what they know. What to measure:

- Confidence ("I feel confident talking about this issue")
- Knowledge ("I know more about X now than I did before")
- Connection ("I feel more connected to my community")

Tip: Use simple rating scales (1–5) and a few open-ended questions. You can use paper forms, Google Forms, or short conversations.

ANECDOTES & STORIES

Sometimes stories are more powerful than statistics. Ask participants to share a moment or quote that stood out to them. What to capture:

- A quote that shows how someone felt
- A small story of what someone learned or did afterward
- A message someone would share with others

Tip: Collect these casually – during reflection circles, exit interviews, or post-event check-ins.

NUMBERS & PARTICIPATION

Counting is simple but important. It shows reach and completion. What to track:

- How many people attended
- How many completed the full program
- How many returned to another session or brought a friend

Tip: Keep a sign-in sheet, use RSVP lists, or track social media engagement if applicable.

Sample Email Template

Requesting Budget Quotes

Subject: Request for Quote – Art Workshop Supplies

Hi [Vendor Name],

I'm organizing a community art workshop and I'm applying for grant funding. I'm hoping to include your services as a supplier for art materials.

Could you provide a simple quote for the following:

- 20 canvases
- Mixed acrylic paints
- Brushes and palettes for 15 participants

Thanks in advance!

[Your Name]

SECTION 3

PERSONAL *reflection*

A good plan turns your big idea into clear, organized steps. It helps you move from dreaming to doing.

STRUCTURE

What are the main activities and steps I need to complete this project?

TIMELINE

What is the timeline for each stage of the project?

ANTICIPATION

What challenges might come up, and how will I address them?

SECTION 4

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS & GAINING SUPPORT

You Don't Have to Build Alone

Strong community projects don't happen in isolation. This section walks you through how to find allies, build partnerships, and show funders that your idea is supported by more than just one voice.

From outreach emails to letters of support, you'll learn how to bring others on board and share ownership of your vision.

Impact multiplies when it's shared.

> The strength of any project is the people who believe in it with you.
>
> ANGELA GLOVER BLACKWELL

Partnerships

Partnerships strengthen your project by bringing in additional resources, skills, credibility, and reach. Many funders prefer or even require some form of collaboration – it shows your project is rooted in community, not just one voice. Here are four common types of partnerships and how you can use them:

1.

In-Kind Partnerships: A partner offers goods, services, or space instead of money.
Examples:

- A print shop donates flyers.
- A community center offers free event space.
- A speaker volunteers their time.

Why it matters: In-kind support lowers your budget and shows funders that others believe in your work.

2.

Outreach Partnerships: A partner helps you reach your target audience through their networks or platforms.
Examples:

- A youth group shares your event on social media.
- A local school distributes your workshop flyer.
- A cultural org helps translate your materials.

Why it matters: Outreach partners boost visibility, credibility, and attendance, especially for grassroots projects.

3.

Co-Leadership Partnerships: You share planning, decision-making, and delivery of the project with another group or individual.
Examples:

- You co-host an event with another youth-led org.
- A group of elders and youth co-design a healing program.
- You and a nonprofit co-lead a summer program.

Why it matters: Funders love seeing shared leadership, especially with lived experience, cultural knowledge, or youth involvement.

4.

Letters of Support: A formal letter from a partner or respected community member endorsing your project.
Examples:

- A community leader writes a letter of support for your initiative.
- A past partner writes about your reliability and impact.
- A teacher or mentor confirms the need for your project.

Why it matters: Letters of support build credibility and trust with funders who don't know you personally.

Sample Email Template

Asking to Collaborate

Subject: Potential Collaboration Opportunity for a Youth Project

Hi [Name],

My name is [Your Name], and I'm working on a community project to [brief idea, e.g., support newcomer youth through creative workshops]. I believe this aligns with the great work [Their Organization Name] is already doing.

I'm currently developing a grant application, and I'm seeking potential partners to:

- Offer feedback on the idea
- Possibly collaborate (space, outreach, volunteers)
- Or simply provide a letter of support

Would you be open to a short call or coffee chat to discuss this?

Thank you so much for your time and consideration!

Warm regards,

[Your Name]

Sample Socail Media DM

Asking to Partner or Collaborate

FIND PARTNERS

- Attend local networking events
- Reach out to cultural centers and libraries
- Ask people in your own network: "Who else should I talk to?"
- Use social media to find aligned local groups (Facebook groups, Instagram, LinkedIn)

Not all partnerships look the same – and that's the beauty of them! When thinking about potential partners, ask yourself: "What strengths or resources do they have that could support this project?" Maybe they have space, supplies, skills, a platform, or simply trust in the community. Great partnerships are built on shared value – what you give and what you gain. Think creatively and aim for collaboration, not just contribution.

1 **GROUP/PERSON**:	**2** **WHAT THEY COULD OFFER**:
3 **WHY THEY'RE A GOOD FIT**:	**4** **ACTION NEEDED**:

5 **NOTES**:

Sample Email Template

Requesting a Letter of Support from an Organization

Subject: Subject: Request for Letter of Support – "[Project Title]" Grant Application

Dear [Name],

I hope this message finds you well. I'm reaching out to kindly request a letter of support for my project, *[Project Title]*, which I am submitting as part of a grant application to [Funder or Grant Program Name].

The project aims to [brief summary of project goal — e.g., "support newcomer youth through creative wellness workshops"] and is designed to address [brief description of the community need or issue]. Your voice and endorsement would add meaningful weight to the application, especially given your role in [mention their expertise or connection to the community].

If you're willing, I'd be happy to provide a brief summary or talking points to make it easier to prepare the letter. The deadline for submission is [insert date], and letters can be sent directly to me or submitted along with the application.

Thank you so much for considering this request, and for the ongoing work you do in our community.

Warm regards,

[Your Full Name]

SECTION 4

PERSONAL reflection

Collaboration strengthens your work. The right partners can offer resources, credibility, and deeper community connection.

NETWORK

Who in my community shares this vision or could benefit from it?

EXCHANGE

What could I offer a partner, and what might I need in return?

TRUST

How can I build trust and communicate my value to others?

SECTION 5

FINDING THE RIGHT GRANT

> The best grant is the one that aligns with your mission, not just your budget.
>
> NINA SIMON

Funding That Fits

Not all grants are created equal—and not every grant is meant for every project. This section helps you understand where to look, what to look for, and how to identify opportunities that actually align with your mission.

Think of this as your match-making stage. Because when your project and a funder's priorities align, that's where funding flows.

This isn't about chasing money—it's about aligning vision and support.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF GRANTS

Before you apply for a grant, it's essential to understand who the funding is coming from—because not all grants are built the same. Each funding source has its own goals, expectations, and approach to community impact.
The table below breaks down three common types of funders, what makes each unique, and examples to help you spot the best fit for your project.

Government (Municipal, Provincial, Federal)	**Foundations & Nonprofits**	**Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)**
Fund public good, community development, inclusion, infrastructure, arts, safety, environment, and more.	Empower grassroots, equity-based, and local community leadership initiatives	Give back to the communities where they operate; improve social impact and brand values
CITY OF CALGARY	**CALGARY FOUNDATION**	**ENMAX**
Program: Neighbourhood Grants Purpose: Support resident-led community projects	Program: Stepping Stones Grant Purpose: Small, resident-led ideas that build community	Program: Community Investment Program Purpose: Community safety, education, environment
GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA	**UNITED WAY OF CALGARY**	**TELUS**
Program: Community Initiatives Program (CIP) Purpose: Community, heritage, arts, and recreation projects	Program: Community Investment Grants Purpose: Projects advancing equity, wellness, and belonging	Program: Community Boards Purpose: Local innovation and social impact
CANADA HERITAGE	**BURNS MEMORIAL FUND**	**SHAW**
Program: Building Communities Through Arts and Heritage Purpose: Local festivals and heritage programming	Program: Children's Support Program Purpose: Youth-focused programming	Program: Charitable Giving Program Purpose: Youth empowerment and digital literacy

RESEARCH TRACKER FOR

GRASSROOTS GRANT

> Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can.
>
> ARTHUR ASHE

Finding the right funding isn't just about meeting eligibility checkboxes—it's about finding people and organizations who believe in what you're trying to build. This section of your workbook invites you to actively explore grassroots organizations in your community, understand their missions, and imagine ways your work might align with theirs. The goal isn't just to get a grant—it's to build meaningful partnerships rooted in shared values and long-term impact.

Objective: Use this space to explore grassroots organizations in Calgary that align with your values and community goals. Think of it as a matchmaking process between your vision and the people who can help bring it to life. Make notes, dream a little, and plan intentionally—because the right partnership is more than just funding; it's about shared purpose and lasting impact.

Reflection Prompt

Are there any organizations here that feel like a natural fit for your story, your community, or your goals? How might you introduce yourself or your project to them?

GRANT TRACKING WORKSHEET

When you're applying to multiple grants, staying organized is key. This simple worksheet helps you keep track of deadlines, funding amounts, eligibility, and where you are in the application process.
Here's a small example to get you started–feel free to expand the table as you discover new opportunities!

NO	GRANT NAME	AMOUNT	ORGANIZATION
1	GROW (GRASSROOTS ORGANIZATIONS EMPOWERMENT) PLATFORM	VARIES	ACTIONDIGNITY
2	GRASSROOTS SEEDING GRANTS	VARIES	CALGARY AFRICAN COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE (CACC)
3	STEPPING STONES GRANT	UP TO $1,000	CALGARY FOUNDATION
4	NEIGHBOUR GRANTS	UP TO $10,000	CALGARY FOUNDATION
5	GRASSROOTS & INNOVATION FUNDING	VARIES	UNITED WAY OF CALGARY AND AREA
6	SHARED PLATFORM SUPPORT	OPERATIONAL COST SUPPORT; NOT A DIRECT GRANT	COMMUNITYWISE RESOURCE CENTRE
7	PROJECT GRANTS	$5,000–$25,000	CALGARY ARTS DEVELOPMENT
8	COMMUNITY-BASED INITIATIVES PROGRAM	PROJECT-BASED FUNDING (AMOUNTS VARY)	CALGARY IMMIGRANT WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION (CIWA)
9	YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROJECT SUPPORT	IN-KIND RESOURCES AND LIMITED PROJECT FUNDING	CALGARY YOUTH EMPLOYMENT CENTRE
10	IDEA LAB COMMUNITY INNOVATION FUND	UP TO $5,000 PER PROJECT	CALGARY PUBLIC LIBRARY FOUNDATION
11	WOMEN-LED COMMUNITY ACTION FUND	$500–$5,000	CALGARY WOMEN'S CENTRE
12			
13			
14			
15			

GRANT TRACKING WORKSHEET

PROJECT NAME: _____

NO	GRANT NAME	AMOUNT	ORGANIZATION
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			
13			
14			
15			
16			
17			
18			
19			
20			

ACTIONDIGNITY

GrOW (Grassroots Organizations Empowerment) Platform

Grant Name

Rolling Deadline

Deadline

Ranges from $500 to $10,000 based on project size

Amount

GRANT REQUIRMENTS

Must serve an ethnocultural or racialized community.

Project must show community benefit and align with ActionDignity's values.

Participation in capacity-building workshops is often encouraged.

Membership registration required for full access to resources and funding streams.

ActionDignity is committed to strengthening the voices of ethnocultural communities to influence systems and create transformative change in Calgary. They focus on equity, civic engagement, anti-racism, and systemic advocacy.

Mission/Focus Area

Ideas for How My Project Aligns

The Grant Builder is designed to help individuals—especially those from underrepresented communities—turn their ideas into fully developed, fundable community projects. ActionDignity's mission to empower ethnocultural communities aligns perfectly with the Grant Builder's goal of building confidence, capacity, and access to funding. Their GrOW Platform could support workshops or outreach efforts that bring the Grant Builder into specific cultural communities, helping grassroots leaders access the tools they need to lead.

Notes

Grant Name

Deadline

Amount

GRANT REQUIRMENTS

Mission/Focus Area

Ideas for How My Project Aligns

Notes

Grant Name

Deadline

Amount

GRANT REQUIRMENTS

Mission/Focus Area

Ideas for How My Project Aligns

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Mission/Focus Area

Ideas for How My Project Aligns

Notes

Grant Name

Deadline

Amount

GRANT REQUIRMENTS

Mission/Focus Area

Ideas for How My Project Aligns

Notes

Sample Email Template

Requesting Grant Info or Clarification

Subject: Question About [Grant Name] Application Process

Dear [Funder Contact Name or Grants Coordinator],

My name is [Your Name], and I'm preparing an application for the [Grant Name] to support a community initiative focused on [brief idea].

I've reviewed the guidelines but had a few questions about [eligibility / project scope/timeline]. Could you please clarify whether [your question]?

Thank you in advance for your support and time.

Warm regards,

[Your Full Name]

SECTION 5

PERSONAL reflection

Every grant has its own focus, criteria, and expectations. Matching your project to the right grant increases your chances of success and ensures alignment with the funder's goals.

FIT

Does this grant support the kind of change I'm trying to make?

ELIGIBILITY

Am I eligible to apply based on the requirements?

ALIGNMENT

What is the funder's mission, and how does my idea support it?

SECTION 6

WRITING THE PROPOSAL

Tell Your Story, Build Your Case

This is where everything comes together. Writing your proposal means taking all the pieces—your idea, your goals, your plan—and presenting them clearly, confidently, and convincingly.

This section guides you through each part of a winning proposal and gives you the structure, language, and tools you need to communicate your vision effectively.

A strong proposal isn't about perfection—it's about purpose, clarity, and belief.

> A grant proposal is a story. It's your chance to say: Here's the problem. Here's our solution. Here's why we're the ones to do it.
>
> KIVI LEROUX MILLER

SMART METHOD

Project name:

Project Manager:

Project Date:

WHAT IS IT?

The SMART method is a simple tool to help you set clear, achievable goals for your project. It stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound. Using SMART goals shows funders that you've thought through the details and can track your progress. It turns big dreams into concrete steps – and helps you stay focused, organized, and successful.

S – Specific

State exactly what you will do. *Example: Host three Saturday art workshops for 15 youth*

M – Measurable

Show how you'll track success. *Example: 15 participants, 80% satisfaction rate*

A – Achievable

Prove it's realistic. *Example: Have experience, partners, and budget to deliver*

R – Relevant

Align it with the funder's goals. *Example: Supports newcomer youth mental health*

T – Time-bound

Include a clear timeline. *Example: Workshops from July 6 to August 10, 2025*

Tips

Small details make a big difference. Whether you're writing a proposal, building partnerships, or tracking your impact – clarity, consistency, and communication go a long way. Take your time, ask for feedback, and don't be afraid to keep it simple.

Project Title

Prepared By:

A WELL-STRUCTURED PROPOSAL TELLS A CLEAR STORY — ONE THAT FUNDERS CAN QUICKLY UNDERSTAND AND GET BEHIND. THESE 8 KEY SECTIONS HELP YOU ORGANIZE YOUR IDEA, EXPLAIN YOUR IMPACT, AND BUILD CONFIDENCE IN YOUR PLAN. WHETHER YOU'RE NEW TO GRANTS OR JUST NEED A REFRESHER, THIS STEP-BY-STEP TEMPLATE WILL GUIDE YOU FROM VISION TO SUBMISSION WITH PURPOSE AND CLARITY.

Executive Summary

A clear, 1–2 paragraph snapshot of your entire project. Write this after completing the other sections — it's your story in a nutshell.

Example:
"Art to Belong is a series of three weekend workshops using art and group dialogue to support mental wellness and belonging for newcomer youth aged 13–17 in Calgary. The project will be hosted in partnership with the local community centre, engaging 15 youth and 2 local artists. With funding support, we will provide all materials, snacks, and transportation stipends to remove participation barriers."

Problem Statement

COMMUNITY NEEDS

Describe the issue you're addressing. Why is it important? Who is impacted? Support your statement with local insight, lived experience, or simple data.

Example:
"Calgary has seen a 20% increase in newcomer youth in the last three years, yet access to culturally safe mental wellness programming remains limited. Many youth report feelings of isolation, identity confusion, and low confidence. This project addresses that gap by offering a safe space to create, share, and build connections."

Tip:
Frame the problem in a hopeful way — focus on change, not crisis.

Project Goals & Objectives

List 2–4 goals your project will achieve using the SMART framework (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound).

Example Goals:

- Provide culturally responsive mental health support
- Create inclusive art spaces that support belonging
- Build leadership and self-expression skills

Tip:
Each goal should connect directly to an activity and outcome.

Activities & Timeline

A list or table of what will happen, when, and who will lead each part. This shows you've thought through logistics and are ready to take action.

The top row should include: Activity, Date, Lead.

Budget

An itemized list of how the funds will be used. Include notes on how costs were calculated or covered.

The top row should include: Item, Amount, Purpose/Note.

Evaluation

Describe how you'll track progress and measure success. Funders want to see how you'll know the project made a difference. Options for Evaluation are:

- **Pre/post surveys (confidence, knowledge, connection)**
- **Participant stories/quotes (anecdotes)**
- **Attendance & participation numbers (outputs)**

Example:
"We will collect short feedback forms after each session, and hold a final reflection circle. We aim for at least 80% of participants to report increased confidence and a stronger sense of belonging."

Team & Partnerships

Who's involved in the project and why? Highlight relevant experience and community relationships. Show who is helping and how.

Example:
"Our team includes youth workers, artists, and volunteers from immigrant backgrounds. The local cultural centre is offering free space and promotional support. We also have a letter of support from the Immigrant Youth Society."

Tip:
Mention any in-kind support or co-leadership roles.

Conclusion & Next Steps

Explain how the project will continue, grow, or leave a lasting impact after the grant ends.

Example:
"We plan to offer a second series with the same model, with support from our partners. We'll also create a short photo zine to share with the community."

Tip:
Think about how your idea can evolve, be replicated, or inform future work.

Sample Cover Letter Template

Grant Submission

Dear [Grant Program Officer's Name],

I am pleased to submit our proposal for the [Name of Grant Program], which supports [brief description of grant's focus area – e.g., "community-based mental wellness initiatives," "youth empowerment," or "arts and culture programming"].

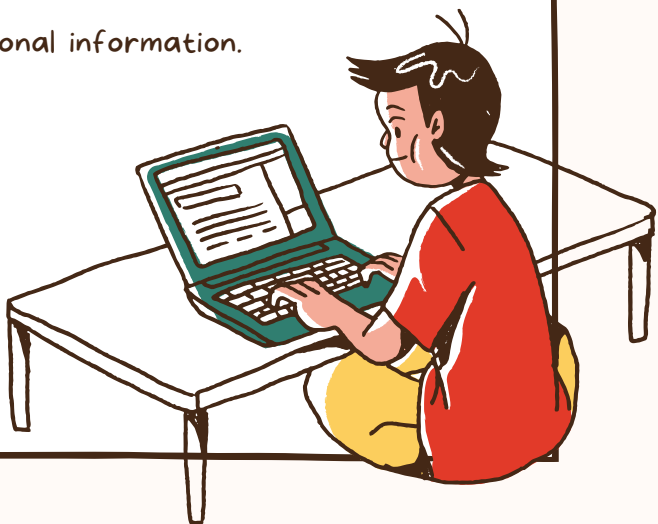
Our project, *[Project Title]*, aims to [brief 1–2 sentence summary of your project – who it serves, how, and why it matters]. We believe this initiative aligns with the goals of your program and has the potential to [brief impact statement – e.g., "strengthen youth mental health," "promote community healing," etc.].

We are excited about the opportunity to bring this vision to life with your support and are grateful for your consideration.

Please feel free to reach out if you require any additional information.

Sincerely,

[Your Full Name]



PERSONAL reflection

Your proposal tells the story of your project. Writing it clearly, confidently, and using SMART goals helps funders understand your plan and invest in your success.

CLARITY

Are my goals Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound?

COMMUNICATION

Have I clearly explained the "why," "what," and "how" of my project?

STRATEGY

Am I using the funder's language and answering their questions directly?

SECTION 7

STEPS AFTER SUBMISSION

What Happens After You Hit "Send"

Submitting your proposal is a major milestone—so take a breath and give yourself credit. But the journey doesn't end there.

This section guides you through what comes next: the waiting, the follow-up, and what to do whether your application is approved or not. Because regardless of the outcome, this moment matters. It means you believed in your idea enough to act on it.

Whether you're celebrating a win or navigating a "not yet," this chapter will help you move forward with clarity, courage, and a plan.

> Funding follows clarity. The clearer your mission and impact, the more likely funders will support you.
>
> VU LE

The PROJECT CHECKLIST

FINAL SUBMISSION CHECKLIST

- ☐ YOU'VE ANSWERED **ALL REQUIRED QUESTIONS**
- ☐ YOUR BUDGET AND TIMELINE ARE **CLEAR**
- ☐ YOU'VE INCLUDED ALL **ATTACHMENTS** (LETTERS OF SUPPORT, BUDGETS, REGISTRATION, ETC.)
- ☐ YOU'VE SAVED A **COPY** OF YOUR FULL APPLICATION (WORD/PDF AND ONLINE FORMAT)
- ☐ YOU'VE WRITTEN A POLITE AND CLEAR COVER LETTER (IF NEEDED)
- ☐ YOU'VE NOTED THE **SUBMISSION DATE** AND **CONFIRMATION DETAILS**

Tip

USE TOOLS LIKE GOOGLE DOCS, WORD, OR NOTION TO ORGANIZE VERSIONS OF YOUR GRANT. FILE THEM BY YEAR AND GRANT NAME SO YOU CAN BUILD ON FUTURE APPLICATIONS.

AFTER SUBMISSION

Stage: Review Period	**Stage: Contact**	**Stage: Decision**
What Happens: Funders review applications — this could take weeks to months	What Happens: You may be contacted for clarifications, an interview, or a presentation	What Happens: You'll receive a letter or email notifying you of approval or denial

Sample Email Template

Grant Submission

Subject Line: Grant Application – [Your Project Name]

Dear [Funder's Name or Team Name],

Attached please find our application for the [Name of Grant Program], in support of our community initiative, *[Project Title]*. We believe this project aligns strongly with your focus on [insert relevant priorities, e.g., "youth engagement," "mental wellness," or "newcomer support"].

Thank you for the opportunity to apply. Please let me know if there is any additional information required or anything missing from this submission.

Warm regards,

[Your Full Name]

Sample Email Template

Grant Submission Follow Up

Subject Line: Follow-Up on Grant Application – [Your Project Name]

Dear [Funder's Name],

I'm reaching out to follow up on our recent submission for the [Grant Name], titled *[Project Name]*, submitted on [Date].

I wanted to confirm that our application was received and to check if any further information is needed at this stage.

Thank you for the opportunity and for supporting community-led initiatives like ours. I look forward to hearing from you.

Best regards,

[Your Name]

IF YOU ARE APPROVED

> Celebrate, then organize!"

NEXT STEP CHECKLIST

- [ ] READ THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS CAREFULLY
- [ ] NOTE KEY MILESTONES, REPORTING DEADLINES, AND BUDGET LIMITS
- [ ] LET YOUR PARTNERS KNOW
- [ ] SEND A THANK-YOU EMAIL OR LETTER
- [ ] BEGIN YOUR PROJECT WITH INTENTION AND TRANSPARENCY

Sample Email Template

Thank-You Email to Funder

Subject: Thank You for Supporting [Project Title]

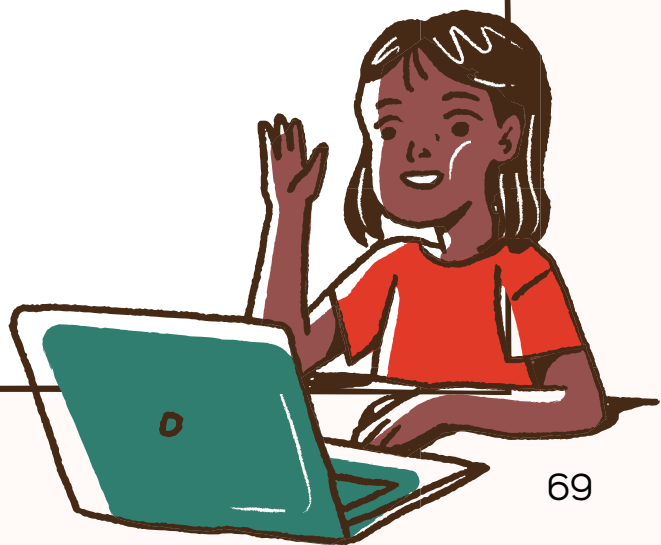
Dear [Funder Name],

Thank you so much for approving our grant application for [Project Title]. We are truly grateful for your support and thrilled to bring this project to life in partnership with your organization.

Your investment in [briefly name the focus area, e.g., "youth mental wellness" or "community healing"] means a great deal to our team and the community we serve. We look forward to keeping you updated on our progress and the impact this project will create.

Warmly,

[Your Full Name]

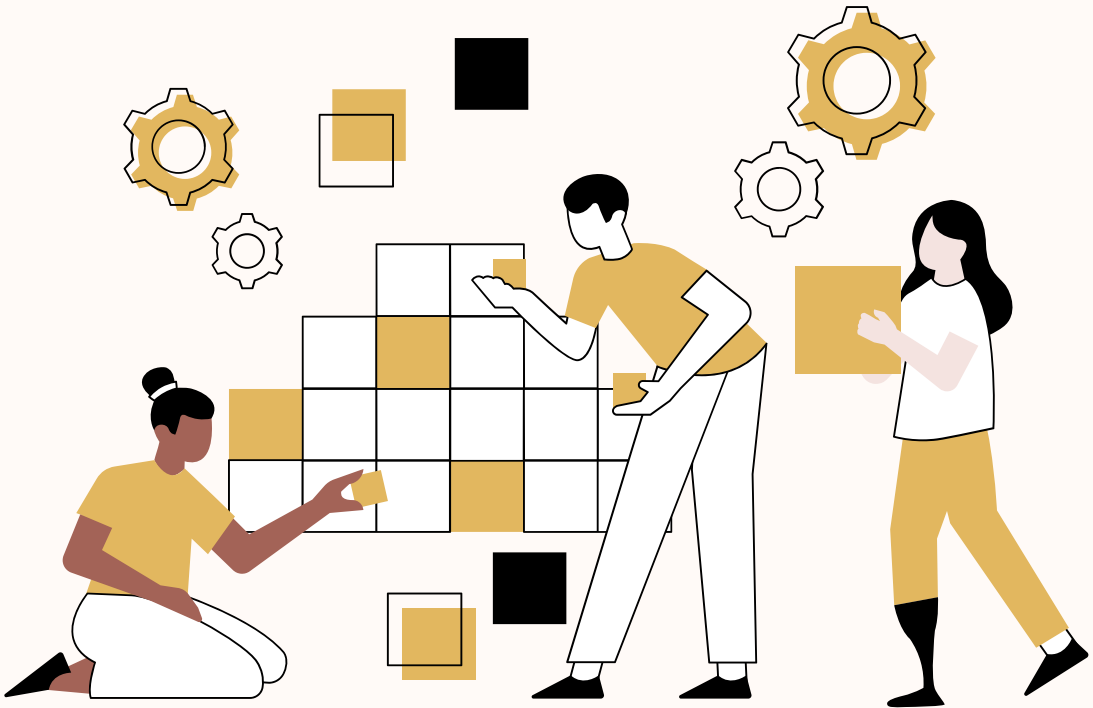


IF YOU ARE NOT APPROVED

> "No" doesn't mean "never." It means "not this time."

NEXT STEP CHECKLIST

- [ ] THANK THE FUNDER FOR THEIR TIME
- [ ] ASK IF THEY CAN PROVIDE FEEDBACK
- [ ] USE YOUR SAVED APPLICATION AS A TEMPLATE FOR FUTURE GRANTS
- [ ] CONSIDER ALTERNATIVE FUNDING SOURCES OR COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS



Sample Email Template

Thank-You Email to Funder

Subject: Request for Feedback on [Project Title] Proposal

Dear [Funder Name],

Thank you for the opportunity to apply for the [Name of Grant Program]. While we are naturally disappointed that our proposal for *[Project Title]* was not selected, we sincerely appreciate your time and consideration.

If possible, we would be grateful for any feedback or suggestions you could share to help us strengthen future submissions. Your insights would be incredibly helpful as we continue working to support [brief mention of your focus area, e.g., "newcomer youth" or "community wellness initiatives"].

Thank you again for your support of community-based work.

Sincerely,

[Your Full Name]

REFLECTIONS

LOOKING BACK TO MOVE FORWARD

Completing a community project—no matter the size—is something to be proud of. This section invites you to reflect on what worked, what you've learned, and how this experience has helped you grow as a builder, leader, and changemaker.

This isn't just about accountability to your funder—it's about giving yourself space to recognize the value of your work and the journey you've taken.

WHAT AM I MOST PROUD OF FROM THIS PROJECT?

WHAT FEEDBACK DID I RECEIVE FROM PARTICIPANTS OR PARTNERS?

WHAT DID I LEARN ABOUT MYSELF AS A LEADER OR ORGANIZER?

- ○
- ○
- ○
- ○
- ○

WHAT'S ONE SMALL (OR BIG) THING I'D LIKE TO DO NEXT?

SECTION 7

PERSONAL *reflection*

After submission, there's still work to do. Following up, staying engaged, and planning for both success and rejection are key parts of the process.

COMPLETION

Have I double-checked all requirements and submitted everything on time?

BACKUP

What's my plan if I don't get the grant — or if I do?

ENGAGEMENT

How can I stay connected with this funder or opportunity for the future?

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