

WHY DOES A COMMUNITY APPLY FOR FUNDING?

- ◆ Empowers The Community To Effect Change
 - ◆ Builds Community Capacity
- ◆ Allows The Community To Purchase Essential Items
 - ◆ Creates Opportunities For People
- ◆ Provides The Community The Ability To Achieve What They Need To Become Sustainable

HOW DOES A COMMUNITY ACHIEVE THIS?

This informational resource was created to assist a Community on the verge of deciding to apply for funding, so that they become prepared for this journey and have the ability to achieve answering this question.

The Stages of Grant Funding

Stage One: Ideas and Planning

This is the very first stage for a Community, it is where the Community decides to embark on an endeavor. Listed below are some ideas for a Community to consider when developing Project ideas:

- **Preparation:** An anticipated funding proposal should be carefully prepared and thoughtfully planned.
- **Examine and Research:** Begin reviewing and researching Comprehensive Plans, Capital Improvement Plans, Strategic Plans, Long Term Recovery Plans, Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plans, Hazard Mitigation Plans, and facilitate discussions with staff/community to formulate Project ideas. This review and research should be done in advance of potential funding application announcement.
- **Prioritize and Focus:** While researching and examining has commenced, consider beginning the development of a Project List that can be prioritized based on Community need, support, and the ability to accomplish a Project. Please note, a Project List can be updated, as needed and can serve as a tool to keep focus on Projects that need to be accomplished.

Stage Two: Identifying Funding Resources

This is the stage where the Community has developed a Project Priority List and can begin to find grants and/or funding sources to accomplish their Project. Listed below are some resources available to assist your Community in finding funding:

- **Consolidated Funding Application (CFA):** Currently, the Consolidated Funding Application (CFA) is a yearly funding announcement within New York State. Consider utilizing the prior year's CFA Resource Guidebook to examine past Agency funding requirements, matches, and the types of funding that is available. Numerous CFA resources are available on the website below, that include information on program questions, webinars, and workshops. Please note, ask questions by contacting other municipalities that went through the funding process and/or contact grant program contacts for information and assistance. This diligence will prepare you for when future CFA funding announcements are released. Information can be found at: <https://apps.cio.ny.gov/apps/cfa/>
- **Grants Gateway:** The New York State Grants Gateway serves as the primary outlet for State agencies to post upcoming and available funding opportunities. The portal offers a simple way to search for available and anticipated grant opportunities, download grant opportunities, and register to receive email notifications when specific types of grant opportunities are posted. Information can be found at: https://grantsgateway.ny.gov/IntelliGrants_NYSGG/module/nysgg/goportal.aspx
- **GRANTS.GOV:** Grants.Gov provides a common website for federal agencies to post discretionary funding opportunities and for grantees to find and apply to them. Information can be found at: <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/home.html>

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- **County and State Agencies:** Schoharie County maintains a directory of funding organizations and each State Agency has websites, which usually list grant funding information, resources, and contact information on their sites.
- **Utilize the Web:** It may sound silly, but one can “google” grant information that will lead to links for funding opportunities.

*** Please be aware when identifying funding resources, there is competition for funding and make sure the funding source is legitimate***

Stage Three: Getting Organized to Apply

This is the stage where the Community has a Project Idea, selected a potential funding source, and now needs to determine if the funding source chosen can and should be applied for. Listed below are questions to consider when your Community is considering applying for funding:

- Do both the Community and the grantor agency or foundation have the same interests and intentions?
- Is there funding available? Certain funds are not available all of the time. Be prepared for announcements from the funding source you are looking to apply through, so that you are ready when funding is announced.
- What is the deadline for the proposed grant or funding? Can the Community meet that deadline? Are there multiple deadlines? Is it rolling funding?
- What are the eligibility requirements for the funding? Is the Community an eligible applicant? In an eligible location? Is the Project eligible for funding? Does the Community meet all the requirements to apply?
- How does the Community apply for funding—online, hard-copy, or both?
- Does the funding source require a Letter of Intent (LOI)? Some funding agency’s require a LOI to be completed prior to being able to apply for funding through an agency. LOI’s usually include an introduction of the Project, contact information, a description of the organization, a statement of need, the Community’s methodology and/or an achievable solution to the need, a brief discussion of other funding sources, and a final summary. If yes, when is the LOI due?
- Is there a match for funding—in-kind, cash, or both?
- If awarded funding, what is the timeframe to complete the Project? Can the Community meet this deadline?

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- Can the Community apply with an organization, another Community, or can the Project be regional?
- Does the application require a public hearing, prior to submittal ?
- Does the application require a resolution, prior to submittal?
- Does the application require letters of support?
- Does the application require quotes to reflect requested budget? If so, how many?
- Does the application require maps, engineering plans, or photos?
- Does the application require referencing a plan for the proposed Project or evidence of Community support? Is the Community's plan current?
- Does the application require a needs assessment in order to apply? Does the application require data to support the need for funding?
- Does the funding resource require attendance at conference and/or webinar in order to apply?
- Who will administer the grant funding? Will the Community hire someone? Can staff administer? Does the Community have the capacity to accomplish what is described in the funding announcement?

Stage Four: Writing a Proposal

This is the stage where the Community has an approved Project idea, meets the basic requirements to apply for funding, determined the applicant, and is ready to write an effective proposal. The Community should consider the following when beginning to write a proposal:

- Who or Whom will be writing the proposal? Is the Community hiring a consultant? writing in-house? writing in-house with County assistance or Consultant for parts of application? or a combination of all?
- If writing in-house, can the tasks be completed effectively?
- If tasks are shared, determine responsibilities for each task and implement task deadlines in advance of funding deadline for time to review.
- Consider attending a grant writing workshop, this can be done in advance.
- Reach out to the funding source contact to discuss proposal and ask any questions that have developed.
- When writing a proposal make sure all the requirements of the funding are met.

The Stages of Grant Funding

Stage Five: Submitting the Proposal

This is the stage where the Community submits the application. Prior to submission the Community should consider the following:

- Have all the questions been answered?
- Have all the required forms and attachments been completed and included with the application?
- Was the correct font size, characters, and page numbers been adhered to?
- Was spelling, calculations, and due dates checked?
- Is the budget realistic? Does the Community have the fiscal infrastructure to meet the financial reporting requirements and related tasks?
- If awarded funding, can the Community meet the deadlines?
- If awarded funding, can the Community accomplish all the tasks required by the funding source?
- Did the Community review the scoring criteria and gauge how their proposal will measure up?
- Did the Community read the proposal again? Have others read the proposal? Honest feedback is extremely important.
- Don't wait to the last minute to submit, just in case there are any glitches.

Submit your proposal and be aware grant reviews can take three (3) months or more

Stage Six: Patiently Waiting

This is the stage that occurs after the application is submitted and the Community patiently waits to hear if their proposal has been accepted or rejected.

- Some reviews can take three (3) months or more.
- Sometimes, reviewers can request additional documentation prior to a determination being made and there usually are timeframes that are required to meet their requests.
- Generally, proposals are reviewed to verify applicant eligibility, application material, budget, and staffing to ensure that the applicant is able to effectively administer the program.
- Typically, reviewers have established guidelines and criteria to rank applications.

The Stages of Grant Funding

Stage Seven: Award Announcement

This is the stage where the Community receives notice if the Project was or was not funded.

If the Project was not funded, consider the following suggestions:

- Reach out to the funding source and ask if the entity could provide information to why the Proposal was not funded, look for their comments, suggestions, and examine where sections of the Proposal did not rank high.
- Make sure your Proposal matches the grant application funding source's criteria.
- Consider Revising and Reapplying for funding.

If your project was funded, consider the following suggestions:

- A notice of the award will be sent to the Community that includes the duration of the award, the award amount, a program contact, and contract. The Community may also receive a set of attachments that outline the basic requirements that must be followed.
- The Community will need to decide to accept the offer or decline the offer after thoroughly reviewing all materials.

Stage Eight: Carrying Out the Project

Stage Eight is the most important and an often overlooked Stage that requires a dedicated staff to be ready to implement the Project, so success for the Community can be achieved

This is the stage that occurs after the Community accepts the award and the Project commences. Listed below are the tasks that might need to be completed, after receiving an award:

- **Contracts:** What is required to sign contracts? Attorney review? Sub-recipient Agreements? Insurance? MWBE? Job Creation? Insurance? Public Hearing/Public Meeting? ADA compliance? RFP/RFQ needed (who will create, advertise, and review)? Procurement? BIDs?
- **Deadlines:** Are there specific deadlines? Can the Community meet those? Can the Community ask for an extension? If yes, what are the reasons/forms needed to request an extension?
- **Reporting Requirements:** Are there any? How often are they required (quarterly)? Are there specific forms/documentation required to complete reporting? Where and Whom are they submitted to? Are these reports required to be completed electronically, mailed, or both?
- **File Management:** Is there a specific file management system required? Specific file folders and labels? Do files need to be kept secured? What is the record retention for the funding? Are the files open to the public?
- **Financials:** Is the Project subject to an audit? Is there a limit to the number of drawdown requests the Community can make? Can the Community amend the budget? If yes, what is required for a budget amendment?

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- **Financials:** Does a specific interest-free account need to be created for funding? Is the award reimbursable or receive award first and then purchase/hire? Can purchases be made prior to grant award/signed contract and then be reimbursed (usually this is not permitted)? Did Community review criteria of what can be purchased with funding? How does the Community justify the expenses? What are the drawdown request requirements? What documents are needed to request drawdowns? (receipts, forms, etc.)?
- **In-Kind Match:** How is the in-kind match reported? Are time-sheets needed? Attendance records/hours? How and by whom is verifying this information?
- **Communication:** There should be constant contact with the Project Manager and the funding source to discuss any delays, problems, successes, issues, and concerns. This provides open communication to exist, so if problems exist there are no surprises. Also, many funding sources enjoy promoting successes that occurring during their awarded projects.

Stage Nine: Project Closeout

This is the stage where the process by which the funding source determines that all applicable administrative work and all required work of the award have been completed by the Community. Listed below are some helpful suggestions to better understand the close-out process:

- Does a final report need to be completed? If so, is there a particular format, forms, and deadline required?
- Continue to have a collaborative relationship with the funding source during this phase, there is a possibility in the future the Community and funding source may decide to work together again.
- Do records and supporting documentation need to be maintained for a certain amount of time following the close-out. If so, how long should they be maintained? Some programs require records to be maintained for three (3) or more years and at any point during that specified time, the Project may be audited.
- Is there any money left over from the award? If so, how does the Community address this?
- Remember to maintain verification that the close-out has been accepted by the funding source.
- Consider sending a thank-you note to the funding source and/or funding staff working on your Project for all their assistance.