



10 TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL GRANT WRITING

1. FIRST, KNOW THY SELF

Create descriptions of your work that explain why it is important, what issues it addresses, who the key personnel are, the timeline of the project and what it will cost. You should also know if others are doing similar work, and be able to explain what makes your work unique.

2. LEARN ABOUT THE FUNDERS

Be sure to do your research on a funder before you begin to apply for a grant. What is the funder's focus or goal? What kind of work do they usually support? Who are their board members? Are you *really* a good match for this funder? If not, it's better to look for another funder whose interests match what you do.

3. FOLLOW DIRECTIONS

Read all of the guidelines and directions CAREFULLY. Use a checklist to be sure that you include everything that is required. Don't submit things aren't required unless you check with the funder first.

4. DON'T BE AFRAID TO TALK TO THE FUNDER

Call the funder if you are unsure of something or if you have questions.

5. WRITE IN A STYLE THAT IS SIMPLE, DIRECT AND PERSUASIVE

- Don't assume that the funder knows anything about your mission, community or project, unless you've told them.
- Make sure that your ideas are organized and easy to understand.
- Don't use jargon or other special words that people outside of your field won't know.
- Spell out abbreviations
- Have someone else proofread your proposal to correct any errors.

6. BE AS SPECIFIC AS YOU CAN

- Use numbers, percentages and other data. Don't write:

"Last year, we served hundreds of developmentally disabled children."

When you can write:

*"Last year, we served **1,235** individuals between the ages of **10 and 16**, or more than **27%** of all developmentally disabled young people in Waldo County."*

7. PROVIDE A STRONG AND ACCURATE BUDGET

- Whenever possible, show that your project has other forms of support:
 - List other grants or sources of funding you have received or are trying to get
 - Don't forget to include in-kind support.
- Double check your budget to be sure that it is correct.



8. MAKE SURE EVERYTHING MATCHES

Once everything is assembled be sure to do a final, careful quality check. Does your project description match your budget? Does your timeline match the funders grant cycle? Does your application include all of the information requested? Having a grant buddy to review everything with you can make this step even more accurate.

9. SLICK DOESN'T COUNT! PREPARATION DOES

Don't rely on fancy paper, graphics, or format to get the funders attention. Good proposals are made of good ideas, lots planning, and careful work.

10. DON'T FORGET TO RESPOND TO THE FUNDER

- If you are successful, thank the funder.
- If you were not successful, call and find out why. Remember that foundations receive far more proposals than they are able to fund and just because you did not get funding does not mean the project is not worthy.

Helpful Resources

1. **Maine Philanthropy Center** (<http://www.mainephilanthropy.org>) The Center acts as an information and education source for issues of concern to Maine grantmakers and provides funding information and education to Maine nonprofits.
2. **Guidestar** (www.guidestar.org) GuideStar is the leader in providing comprehensive data on more than 1.5 million nonprofit organizations. The information they provide contains searchable data from IRS Forms 990 and the IRS Business Master File, including comprehensive facts on grant activity.
3. **Maine Association of Nonprofits** (<http://www.nonprofitmaine.org>) Maine Association of Non Profits is dedicated to strengthening the leadership and management effectiveness of Maine's non-profits.
4. **Foundation Center** (www.fdncenter.org) The Foundation Center is an excellent source of information on private philanthropy in the United States. They help grantseekers better understand the field of philanthropy. Their Web site provides help with proposal writing, tools for locating prospective funders, or a library or training class near you.
5. **Foundation Finder** (<http://fdncenter.org/funders/>) Search more than 2,000 annotated links to grantmaker Web sites. The links are categorized by grantmaker type, and all annotations are searchable (except those of Community Foundations, which are listed alphabetically by state).
6. **Council on Foundations** (www.cof.org) The Council on Foundations is a membership organization of more than 2,000 grantmaking foundations and giving programs worldwide. They provide leadership expertise, legal services and networking opportunities—among other services—to their members and to the general public.
7. **Fundsnet** (www.fundsnet.com) & **Fundsnet/Maine** (www.fundsnet.com/maine.htm) Fundsnet provides numerous of links to grantmaker Web sites, categorized by type and other grantmaking and fundraising resources. One Web page is dedicated to grantmakers in Maine.



8. **Center for Nonprofit Management** (<http://www.cnmsocal.org/>) The Center for Nonprofit Management fosters healthy neighborhoods and communities by improving the performance of nonprofit organizations addressing critical issues and serving underserved populations. The Center for Nonprofit Management provides training in software applications such as Microsoft Word and Excel, as well as classes in strategic use of technology in such areas as fundraising and information management.



MAINE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION AVAILABLE GRANTS

COMMUNITY BUILDING GRANT PROGRAM supports projects that help to build and strengthen Maine communities.

BELVEDERE ANIMAL WELFARE FUND supports programs that address population control for cats and dogs.

BELVEDERE HISTORIC PRESERVATION GRANT PROGRAM supports the preservation or restoration of historic buildings in rural Maine communities.

EDWARD H. DAVEIS BENEVOLENT FUND supports early childhood and youth leadership programs in Greater Portland.

FRANCES HOLLIS BRAIN FOUNDATION FUND supports nonprofit organizations and projects that serve disadvantaged, underserved and/or vulnerable communities.

JOHN & ELLEN EMERY SCIENCE GRANTS supports teachers in AOS #91 to promote the study of science in their classrooms.

EQUITY FUND supports organizations that serve the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) community of Maine.

FUND FOR MAINE LAND CONSERVATION supports projects that advance land conservation.

HOSPICE FUND supports programs for end-of-life volunteer and bereavement services in Cumberland and York counties.

MAINE CHARITY FOUNDATION FUND supports programs for people who are vulnerable or disadvantaged because they live in poverty and/or lack access to critical resources such as education, housing, food, and transportation.

MAINE EXPANSION ARTS FUND supports indigenous, ethnic, or rural arts programs or projects.

MAINE STEEPLES FUND supports the preservation of church steeples of historic, cultural, and community significance.

MAINE THEATER FUND supports professional and community theaters in the production and presentation of live theater.

LEONARD AND RENEE MINSKY FUND FOR ARTS EDUCATION supports artists in residence in 3-5 grade classrooms in the 5 public schools of Penobscot and Washington counties.

PEAKS ISLAND FUND supports nonprofits that bring residents together to improve life on Peaks.

PEOPLE OF COLOR FUND supports organizations led by and serving communities of color across Maine.

The **PF FUND FOR THE BALDWIN AREA** supports projects that focus on efforts to bring residents together and improve life in the community.

RINES THOMPSON FUND supports organizations in Greater Portland working in the areas of environment and conservation, early childhood and youth programming, and arts and culture.

ROSE AND SAMUEL RUDMAN LIBRARY TRUST supports libraries serving communities in northern and eastern Maine with populations of less than 10,000.



SAVOY/SIMPSON SEARCH AND RESCUE FUND supports search and rescue organizations in Maine

WELCH CHARITABLE FUND supports organizations in the greater Portland area with preference given to nonprofits working with youth, education, health care, alcohol and substance abuse rehabilitation, and/or arts and culture.

For more information go to:

www.maineef.org



The top giving foundations in the state of ME

- The Maine Community Foundation, Inc.
- TD Banknorth Charitable Foundation
- Maine Health Access Foundation
- Davis Educational Foundation
- The Stephen and Tabitha King Foundation
- Davis Family Foundation
- Lunder Foundation
- The Sam L. Cohen Foundation
- Hannaford Charitable Foundation
- The Iberdrola USA Foundation, Inc.
- Maine Cancer Foundation
- Maine Bar Foundation
- The Orchard Foundation
- Great Bay Foundation
- Davis Conservation Foundation
- Horizon Foundation, Inc.
- Bangor Savings Bank Foundation
- Fisher Charitable Foundation
- Unity Foundation
- Margaret E. Burnham Charitable Trust
- Davenport Trust Fund
- Maine Initiatives, Inc.
- Shaw's Supermarket Charitable Foundation
- Savings Bank of Maine; FBS Charitable Foundation
- Morton-Kelly Charitable Trust
- Kennebunk Savings Bank Foundation
- The Golden Rule Foundation, Inc.
- Franklin Savings Bank Community Development Foundation
- Libra Foundation
- Saco & Biddeford Savings Charitable
- Maine Women's Fund
- Machias Savings Bank Community Development Foundation
- MainStreet Foundation
- Planet Dog Foundation
- John Sage Foundation
- The Catalyst Fund



Application Guidelines

What to know before you apply for a grant

These are general guidelines. Please consult the web page for the individual grant program to which you are applying for more specific guidelines. (Click [here](#) to review available grant programs and their guidelines.)

Who is eligible to apply?

- Nonprofit 501(c)(3) federal tax-exempt organizations, including most municipalities
- Public schools
- Public agencies working for the State of Maine
- Indian tribal governments (or political subdivisions) recognized by the Department of the Interior
- Non-exempt groups with a fiscal sponsor that is a 501(c)(3) organization, public school, or public agency (Click [here](#) to review our Fiscal Sponsorship policy and forms.)

When to apply?

- The online application opens for new proposals approximately nine months prior to the grant program deadline.
- For grant program deadlines, click [here](#).
- If the grant program uses online applications, these must be submitted by 11:59 p.m. on the program deadline, *even on weekends and holidays*.
- If the grant program uses paper applications, these must be postmarked on or before the program deadline.
- Late applications will not be accepted.

What to submit?

- Submit only one application per grant program, though organizations may submit an application to more than one grant program (even those that share the same deadline).
- For the Community Building Grant Program, a large organization (with an annual operating budget of \$2 million or higher) may submit more than one application if the applications are from distinct programs or departments within the organization and the proposed programs serve different counties.
- Submit only one application to the Community Building Grant Program, even if the proposed project serves more than one county. MaineCF staff will forward the application to all appropriate county and regional committees.
- Requests should be for *future* expenses only. Because grant applications take 10-12 weeks to process, plan the project start date accordingly.
- Requests should not exceed the maximum award for each individual grant program.
- Please only send information and materials requested in the grant program guidelines. Additional materials will not be reviewed.
- All competitive grant program awardees are required to submit a Project Progress Report. If your organization has failed to submit one, it will not be eligible for further funding until the missing report is filed. Click [here](#) for Project Progress Report information and forms)

Types of funding (often supported)



This is a general list – not every type of funding is available in each grant program so be sure to consult the specific grant program to which you are applying.

- **New projects:** activities that are distinct from ongoing programs and that have start and end dates.
- **Expanding projects:** the extension of a successful program to a new population or geographic location or to include a significant change in scope.
- **Capacity building:** projects that will strengthen an organization’s efficiency or effectiveness and that have clear goals or outcomes. For example, board training to develop fundraising capacity with specific goals.
- **Capital expenses:** can be part of the budget for a new or expanding project if they are necessary *and* directly related to the outcomes of the project. They can include materials, equipment, and costs related to building renovation.
- **Personnel expenses:** any staff salaries must be directly tied to a new or expanding project.
- **Indirect costs:** administrative overhead expenses of up to 20% of the total requested budget. When allowed, these should be included in the budget and labeled “Indirect costs.”

Types of funding (often not supported)

Many of the following expenses may not be funded, depending on the grant program. Be sure to consult the specific grant program to which you are applying.

- **Operating support:** ongoing administrative costs such as rent, utilities, office supplies, salaries (not tied to a specific project expense).
- **Ongoing activities:** continuing programs or projects that have no clear end date.
- **Endowments or capital campaigns:** activities leading up to a capital campaign such as feasibility studies as well as costs related to verbal or written requests for financial support such as fundraising events or appeal letters.
- **Camp scholarships:** funding for admission, enrollment, tuition, or other costs related to individual or group attendance at a short-term recreational or educational program.
- **Capital expenses:** purchases of property, equipment, or building materials related to the organization’s core operations.

What we will not fund, without exception

- Expenses already incurred
- Political campaigns
- Lobbying in the form of calls to action on a specific vote
- Religious activities: including, but not limited to, religious services, promotion of religious beliefs, or activities that are restricted to church or religious group membership

Grant Cycle Timeline

- **Application intake:** grants administrative staff cross-checks the legal name and address of each applicant and checks for required signatures and forms.
- **Eligibility prescreening:** program staff reviews each application to determine if it meets the required grant program criteria.
- **Referral process:** staff reviews applications and forwards those that might be of interest to donors who may decide to fund a proposed project.
- **Advisor review:** program staff assigns applications to advisors who make calls to applicants and write summary reviews.



- **Grant decision meeting:** advisors present reviews, discuss proposals, and make final award decisions as a committee.

Application Confidentiality

- Applications may be shared with interested parties, including donors for potential funding.

Notification

- All applicants receive a letter through regular mail notifying them if their request has been funded or declined. If there is an award, a check will accompany the letter.
- Grant programs vary, but notification typically occurs within 10-12 weeks from the deadline date. For example, with the Community Building Grant Program, grant decisions are usually made public within 14 weeks of the deadline, or by June 1.

Important Links

- [Listing of Competitive Grant Programs](#)
- [Competitive Grant Program Deadlines](#)
- [Fiscal Sponsorships](#)
- [Non-Discrimination Policy](#)
- [Grant Recipient FAQ](#)

Ready to apply?

- **Check out Explanation of MaineCF Application tips for a successful application** with detailed information on each question, budget sample, and general tips.
- To start the online application, go to MaineCF.org and click the Online Application link at the top of the page.



TIPS FOR CREATING A STRONG APPLICATION

This resource explains why we ask specific questions on the MaineCF application to help you present the best possible proposal. It includes question-by-question information and a sample budget.

Section 1 ORGANIZATION INFORMATION

Mission

Describe, in 100 words or less, your organization’s mission or purpose and the primary populations you serve.

This is a simple description of the purpose of your organization and the communities you serve. It helps reviewers understand your organization and how the proposed project fits into your current work. Be sure your mission description is easy to understand and simple. Describe the people who are most often served by or participants in your programs. Include characteristics such as age, gender, race and ethnicity, and region.

Programs or Services

Describe, in 100 words or less, one or two of your organization’s most important programs.

This is a simple description of programs that exemplify the work you do. It gives reviewers a sense of your organization’s experience and expertise. Select programs that best fit with your mission.

Section 2 PROJECT INFORMATION

One-Sentence Project Description

Complete the following sentence in 25 words or less: We request support to...

This is a *very short* and clear statement of your project. We use this description in our database, in communications, and for posting grant awards on the website. It is important to be concise and include the purpose of the project (the “what”) and the population served (the “who”). Example: To expand the FUN program to provide after-school leadership training to 30 additional middle school girls.



Narrative Section: Use up to 200 words for each of the following unless otherwise specified.

Overview

Provide a description of your project, including the overall goal, and community need(s) you will address.

This short paragraph provides an overview of your project and what you hope to achieve. What is the compelling need in the community that the project addresses? Reviewers will consider whether the project seems like an effective way to address that need.

Outcomes

List up to three specific results you hope to achieve. Include a brief explanation of how you will track your progress and/or measure your results.

This is a description of the specific results or outcomes you want to achieve with this project. Reviewers will consider how these specific results or outcomes align with your stated overall goal. How will you know if these results were achieved? This evaluation plan can range from something as simple as counting the number of people who attend your programs to more complex measures of impact, such as how much participants learned or changed their behavior. Be sure your plan is realistic for the project. If you receive a grant, you'll be asked to report on your progress toward these results in your progress report.

Impact

For project requests: Explain how this project will make the community stronger

For capacity building requests: Explain how this project will make your organization stronger

Describe specifically how the results you listed above will make your community or organization stronger. We know the results of a project may impact a community or an organization in many different ways. What is the connection you see between the specific results you want to achieve and how the community or organization will be improved?

Activities

List up to five specific activities you will do to achieve the results and impact you described above.

This question helps us better understand the specific project activities or implementation plan. What steps will you take to produce your planned results? If your project includes many activities, just focus on the most important ones. Reviewers also will consider whether the specific activities you plan are eligible for funding within the eligibility rules of the grant program (for example, grant funds cannot be used for expenses that have occurred).



Partnerships and Collaboration

List any organization that you will partner with to make this project successful. Include a brief description of what each partner organization will do in this project.

How will other organizations help with any aspect of the project? This information helps reviewers know how community resources are being used and what expertise and resources your partners will contribute to your project.

Population Served

Describe the people who will most benefit from this project. (If this is a capacity building request, describe the people your organization serves.) Include an estimate of the number of people who will directly benefit from or participate in your project.

MaineCF seeks to fund projects that will have positive impact on Maine communities or organizations. We want to be sure that MaineCF's overall grantmaking provides a range of support to the people of Maine. Be sure to include any important characteristics, such as the age range of participants, their gender, racial or ethnic identity, or geographic region. If you receive a grant, you'll be asked to report on the actual number of people served.

Key Project Personnel

List the specific roles, responsibilities, and qualifications of key personnel for this project.

Describe what each staff person will specifically do with this project and any training, education, and/or experience they have related to the work they will perform. This helps reviewers assess the capacity of an organization to carry out the project as proposed.

Section 3 PROJECT FUNDING

In this section we ask you to list all potential funding sources for your project. This can include funding that you have already secured, such as a grant you have already received or fees you have collected. It may also include funding that you hope to get but have not yet secured. This funding is considered pending. Be sure to include the amount you are currently requesting from MaineCF and any in-kind donations that you expect. Reviewers will see this as your funding plan for this project. They will consider the likelihood of whether you will secure the funding and the diversity of funding sources, including if the organization is contributing to the project.

We also ask you to fill out a budget form to see exactly how you plan to spend the grant funding in the context of the overall project budget. Reviewers consider if the proposed expenses seem both adequate and reasonable for carrying out the work.



Budget Narrative

Describe how you plan to use the grant funds if you receive them in 200 words or less. Please check the grant program guidelines for a list of what is eligible for support.

This is your opportunity to explain in simple language your plan for using the funds. You also may include information that you think is important to consider when evaluating your budget, such as fund-raising plans, potential changes in costs, and explanation of the expense items.

Section 4 ORGANIZATION FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Organizational Financials

We ask for information on revenues, expenses, and assets from the most recent completed fiscal year. The format closely resembles the IRS 990 reporting. You can find the information we request on your 990 Form in Part I Revenue and Expenses and Part IX Statement of Functional Expenses.

The information helps reviewers assess the financial health and management of the organization and be sure it will be in operation through the life of the project. MaineCF gives grants to organizations of varying sizes, without preference to large or small budgets.

Board Members or Advisory Committee

The board list helps reviewers assess the strength of an organization by considering the expertise and skills of the board.



SAMPLE PROJECT BUDGET FOR THE MAINECF COMMON APPLICATION

ABC nonprofit seeks \$9,600 in a grant from Maine Community Foundation to support a new program to provide support to 10 new teen mothers during the first 10 weeks of their babies’ lives. The goal of this program is to improve the health and wellness of teen mothers and their newborn infants. This program is focused on giving new teen mothers respite time, and providing resources to help them care for themselves and their families. It will include free babysitting for 4 hours per week, delivery of 2 nutritious dinners per week, a peer support group, and low-cost transportation to health care appointments or to grocery stores. The entire project will cost **\$26,600** to implement. Of that, \$15,000 has been secured so far from other sources. Major expenses include project coordination staff time, babysitting services, transportation, and food.

PROJECT TIMING

Start and End dates	June 2022-June 2023
Amount Requested:	\$9,600
Total Project Budget:	\$26,600

PROJECT REVENUES

Name of Funding Source	Amount	Status (Pending or Secured)
Happy Family Foundation	\$10,000	Secured
Individual Donations	\$4,000	Secured
In-Kind Donations (ABC Org. and Volunteers)	\$1,000	Secured
RST Foundation	\$2,000	Pending
MaineCF	\$9,600	Pending
Total	\$26,600	

PROJECT EXPENSES

Expense Item	Amount from MaineCF	Amount from other funding sources	Total Expense
Babysitting services (40 hrs per wk, at \$20 per hr, for 10 wks,)		\$8,000	\$8,000
Culinary staff (2 staff, \$10 per hr 4 hrs per wk, 10 wks)		\$800	\$800
Culinary Supervisor (\$50 per hr, 4hrs per wk, 10 wks)		\$2,000	\$2,000
Food (10 mothers, \$10 per wk for 10 wks)	\$ 1,000		\$1,000
Meal Delivery (\$20 per wk for 10 wks)		\$200	\$200
Transportation (10 mothers, \$40 per wk for 10 wks)	\$ 4,000		\$4,000
Social Worker to run support group (\$400 per wk for 10 wks)	\$ 2,000	\$2,000	\$4,000
Program Coordination (10 hrs per wk at \$50 per hr for 10 wks)	\$ 1,000	\$4,000	\$5,000
Indirect 20% of total requested	\$ 1,600		\$1,600
TOTAL	\$9,600	\$16,000	\$26,600



Sample BAD Narrative

This fictional narrative is exceptionally vague. Reviewers would have a very difficult time determining what exactly the applicant plans to do.

1. Describe the history of the organization and its current programs and services.

ABC Development Partnership started in 2005 with a goal of working with the community to make it a better place to live. We are in the start up phase of partnering with other neighboring organizations to help improve our region.

2. Describe your project and its significance.

ABC Development Partnership works to develop a stronger more productive community by becoming better neighbors. We are organizing our community and involve all community members.

3. How will your project use existing community resources (local expertise, leadership, and traditions) to strengthen the community's ability to meet future challenges?

We will discover the strengths in our community, including individuals, businesses, organizations and help them to work together to improve community life.

4. What do you hope to achieve over the long term (goals)?

We hope to build a stronger community where all people feel that they belong and can help themselves and their neighbors when needed.

5. What will be different as a result of this project?

We will help the economy develop increase employment, help people have more financial security and help people of all ages feel less isolated and more connected to the community.

6. How will you execute the project? Please describe one or two strategies you will use to implement your project?

We will have meetings with our partners to identify the strengths of the community. We will then use this information to empower community members to make needed changes.

7. What tools will you use to help you collect the information you need to measure your success? (evaluation methods)

We will use strategies to identify the skills and strengths of the community. We will use a survey to collect information and use it with our partners to plan next steps.

Project Budget

Item	Cost	MaineCF	Other Funding
Staffing	10,000	10,000	
Equipment	\$10,000	\$10,000	

Note: This budget does not provide sufficient information about the costs of the program, doesn't align with the narrative answers above, and doesn't identify any other potential funding sources, including in-kind donations from the applicant. It also requests more from MaineCF than the maximum grant award amount.