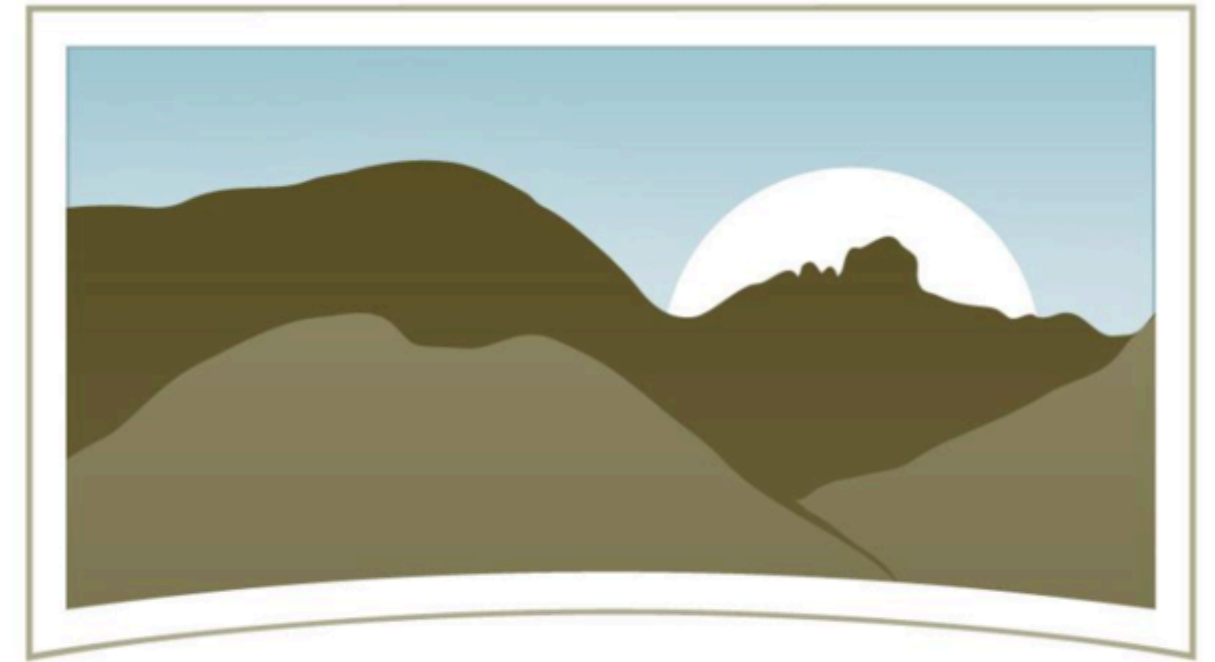


Grant Writing

Best Practices and
information for the HACF
combined grant application

Emily Frazier, Executive Director
Helena Area Community Foundation
February 20, 2025



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About Me: Emily Frazier



Emily Frazier, CFRE, MA, is a Helena native and a nonprofit nerd. She holds a master's degree in Philanthropy and Development from Saint Mary's University of Minnesota, is a Certified Fund Raising Executive and loves connecting people to the causes they care about. She lives with her husband, Eric, and her dogs, Hershel and Watson.

**Special Skills: Baking, Basketweaving,
Carving Candles, Amateur Gardening**



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ABOUT TODAY: GRANT WRITING

- Basics of Grant Writing
- HACF's Combined Cycle 2025 and Funding Sources
- Evaluation Metrics
- Strategies for Success

brief break

- Finding Grant Opportunities
- Types of Grants (and how they differ)
- Foundation Grants
- State/Federal Grants
- Best Practices



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BASICS OF GRANT WRITING

A Grant Is:

A grant for nonprofits is a financial contribution or support provided by a government, foundation, or organization, to a nonprofit organization to fund specific projects, programs, or initiatives that align with the funder's philanthropic goals

A Grant Is NOT:

An unrestricted donation, a guarantee of future funding, or a reason to create new programs just to receive funding



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BASICS OF GRANT WRITING

- Research/Seeking Opportunities that fit well into your mission and programmatic priorities
 - Creating a new program based on a grant opportunity almost never improves your organization.
- Review Eligibility
- Write carefully--follow all instructions to the smallest detail
- Consult with colleagues to ensure information is correct and well presented
- Proofread carefully
- Submit on time
- If awarded, make sure to calendar all report deadlines



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BASICS OF GRANT WRITING

Requirements for all grants

- Organizational info, including IRS Letter
- Narrative Proposal
- Budget
- Evidence/Impact Goals

Some grants have additional requirements, such as

- Timelines
- LOI
- Logic Models
- Letters of Support
- Additional additional materials (each funder is different)



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BASICS OF GRANT WRITING

Well Written Grants Get Rejected Sometimes

- You can't control who else is in the pool, and some grants are very competitive
- If you aren't successful, it is appropriate to ask for feedback. Some grants will provide it automatically (federal, etc)
- Review who was chosen for funding to better understand why you weren't selected

Poorly Written Grants Get Rejected More Often

- Misspellings, questions not fully answered, deadlines missed
- If the field is competitive, mistakes make you easy to eliminate from consideration.



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HACF'S Combined Grant Cycle



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HACF'S COMBINED CYCLE

- Goal: SIMPLE APPLICATION
- Funding sources:
 - \$25,000 HACF
 - \$19,000 City of Helena
 - \$23,750 Lewis and Clark County
 - TOTAL: \$67,750
- Due to City and County Funding, our cycle is subject to open meeting law– only include information you are comfortable sharing widely.



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HACF'S COMBINED CYCLE: EVALUATION

Criteria:

General: Application is complete (Yes / No)

Meaningful Grant: The project need is immediate in the community (Score 1-5)

Meaningful Grant: The application describes a measurable program or project. (Score 1-5)

Meaningful Grant: The project need is specific (Score 1-5)

Client Base: Grant project will serve an appropriate number of clients (Score 1-5)

Budget: A grant will provide a significant percentage of project budget (Score 1-5)

Budget: Projected budget is specific (Score 1-5)

Budget: Projected expenses are reasonable (Score 1-5)

(If applicable) Organization has demonstrated successful implementation of previous HACF grants (Yes / Partial / No) *



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HACF'S COMBINED CYCLE: EVALUATION

Values:

- Program Quality is more important than the Application Quality
- Not all organizations have equal capacity for grant writing - do not reward/penalize based on grant writing ability/experience or lack thereof
- Conflicts of interest (positive or negative) result in an evaluator not rating an organization
- Evaluators are openminded and willing to engage in discussions with other evaluators - matrix ratings are not the final word on funding, but they are used to guide our process
- “Meaningful” means that it makes a difference in the community, not that it is meaningful to the evaluator(s)



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STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

Do:

- Write clearly and concisely, but give some data and information
 - Single sentences aren't enough to evaluate program quality
 - Including entire research papers doesn't improve your chances
- Pay attention to how much of the total cost of your project/program/purchase is covered by an HACF Combined grant
 - Evaluators are seeking a high level of impact...it is better to ask for a small, specific expenditure than for a large expenditure that will require a large amount of additional funding.
 - We are looking for a “thorn in your side” that can be addressed by a small grant
- Be specific
 - You can apply for general operating funds, but specify what it will do



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STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

Don't focus on offering benefits to HACF

- Recognition is not meaningful to this process for HACF
- Remember, HACF is also not the only source of funds. We are taking into account what is meaningful to the City and the County as well. We are seeking programs that make our overall communities better.

Don't spend an undue amount of time on your application.

- While we do want to see sufficient information to answer the questions, long applications are not better than concise applications.
- Our grants are small, and we strive to make our application and reporting requirements appropriate to the size of grants awarded

Don't forget to report on your 2024 grant (if you received one). Grant history and fund usage will count into the process this year.



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STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

Notes:

- We anticipate having more strong applications than we can fund
- Do your best work, and if grant writing capacity is limited in your organization, feel free to note that. We hope that presentations like this will provide additional support to those who are still learning.
- Our evaluations are public, and members of the public are permitted to make comment. However, the evaluation is not an appropriate time to present new information. Please make sure the critical information is in your application.
- We are grateful for our entire nonprofit community. We encourage all applicants to also join sign up for Greater Helena Gives as an additional way to raise funds, and to join our convenings for executive directors and fundraisers.



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break/back to general advice



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FINDING GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

Some common resources include:

- Foundation Center (now part of Candid)
- Grants.gov (federal)
- State Department and Local Government websites
- Corporate websites (not just for sponsorships!)
- MNA or other nonprofit networks
- Subscription services (GrantStation, Foundation Directory Online)
- Grant Writing Consultants (The Dotted i, individuals)

Pro Tip: Talk to colleagues or similar organizations to see where they find opportunities.



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TYPES OF GRANTS

- Foundation
- State/Local Govt
- Fed Govt
- Corporate Grants
- Pass-through grants



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FOUNDATION GRANTS

- Huge variety of sources
- Simple to complex depending on funder
- Best opportunity to build relationships with funder
- Some require LOIs before full application

Examples?



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STATE/LOCAL GOV

State Departments or Local Gov

- Funding.mt.gov
- or specific depts (ex dnrc.mt.gov/grants-and-loans)
- Not only for nonprofits, but some include nonprofits
- Not always called “grants.” Many fall under “contracts”
- Expect more restrictions/disclosures/requirements
- Will need to register to apply

Examples?



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FEDERAL GOV

One Site for most

- Grants.gov
- But some are broken down by departments
- Highly complex and competitive, but can be very valuable
- Limits on overhead/indirect costs
- NEED TO PLAN AHEAD (let me tell you a story...)
- Let's talk about SAM

Examples?



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STATE AND FEDERAL GRANTS IN 2025

Why I'm worried about them...

...and you should be too



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STATE AND FEDERAL GRANTS IN 2025



The Nonprofit Quarterly

January 28 at 2:31PM · 🌐

Breaking News on Federal Funding Freeze: "This order is a potential 5-alarm fire for nonprofits and the people and communities they serve." <https://hubs.ly/Q034nxj00>



NP

BREAKING

Federal Funding Freeze Could Decimate Nonprofits

BY SUMAN BHATTACHARYYA AND ISAIAH THOMPSON

The Trump administration ordered a temporary halt to federal grants and loans. The freeze threatens nonprofits and essential services. While critics challenge the move's legality, it could have devastating consequences for civil society.

Trump's Funding Freeze Raises a New Question: Is the Government's Word Good?

Companies that get federal grants or loans usually sign binding agreement and depend on getting reimbursed. administration has upended that expectation.

📄 Share full article



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STATE AND FEDERAL GRANTS IN 2025



CHILDCARE

Changes to state contracts with childcare service providers provoke concern, and cuts

While support services for Montana providers and families will continue, changes to who delivers those services and how are presenting serious challenges.

 The Independent Record

Career Training Institute to close after 41 years, citing state's switch to new provider

A Helena nonprofit that has provided workforce development to low-income people for nearly 41 years has announced it will close.

Mar 21, 2024



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STATE AND FEDERAL GRANTS IN 2025

So...what should we do?



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STATE AND FEDERAL GRANTS IN 2025

Diversify

- Increase Individual Giving
- Corporate Sponsorships & Partnerships
- Foundation Grants
- Earned Revenue
- Membership Programs



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STATE AND FEDERAL GRANTS IN 2025

And Advocate

- Speak internally and externally about the threats to nonprofit funding
- FACTS
- Look to strong resources--Montana Nonprofit Association



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BEST PRACTICES

- Read and follow guidelines
- Start early (especially for complex applications)
- Learn about the funder (try to understand their motivations)
- Be CLEAR and CONCISE
- Use Data, Research, Case Studies--Evidence is your friend
- Budget Realistically--you want to be able to actually do the project if funded!
- Review Carefully before submittal
- Getting the grant is just the first step...failure to follow through will hurt you in the long run
- Sometimes choosing not to apply is the right choice

****The grants system is not perfect or fair, but some funders are trying to make the systems better****



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Thank you!

QUESTIONS?

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