



Why grants? An introduction for board/executive/program staff

Grants are an important part of a diversified funding strategy. They should not be your *entire* funding strategy. Depending on your specific nonprofit industry, they may make up a large or a small percentage of your overall revenue.

Grants are issued from the federal government, state and local governments, private and corporate foundations. Each has its own set of rules, responsibilities, and rewards. Some can be used for projects and programs, others can be used for capital investments, and still others can be used to underwrite general operating expenses.

Before searching to see what funding is available, your organization needs to determine if you are indeed grant-ready. Do you have the processes and policies in place needed to manage the funds? Is your team of staff/volunteers able to take on the required monitoring and reporting needed to support the funding? Do you have all organizational documents gathered and configured in an easily accessible way? See our "[Ready Access File Checklist](#)" for a list of commonly requested documents.

A common misperception around grants is that they are "free money." This is NOT the case. Grants come with a high level of responsibility including financial, programmatic, and impact requirements. It is critical to be able to document every component of how funds were used, the direct change made for beneficiaries, and broader outcomes for the surrounding community/society.

We are often asked, "are there grants for XYZ?" (such as a swimming pool, paying rent, or buying a vehicle). Generally, program/project grants are the most broadly accessible, followed by capital investments, and general operating. A skilled grantwriter, working together with your administrative/program staff, can help develop the proposal in such a way as to best align with the funder's goals and objectives.

Alignment is the key to winning grants. This means that the funder wants to accomplish something in the world that your organization is working toward as well. Alignment also means that the funder's eligibility criteria, award amounts, timelines, service locations, and other requirements echo your organization. These are "dream matches." See our "[Funding Decision Matrix](#)" to determine if your chosen funder is truly a good fit.

Even with this seemingly perfect alignment, not always do you "win" the grant. Budget constraints, funder board idiosyncrasies, and innumerable other factors contribute to the award decision. Grantwriting is a team sport. It takes the writer, budget developer, program staff, administration, evaluator, and so many more to make a request successful.

Let RBW Strategy show you how we can help broaden or deepen your grant-funding strategy with a consultation today.