



# Cultural Grants Application Toolkit

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Applying for a grant can seem daunting, especially if you're doing it for the first time. That's why we wrote this guidebook! We hope it will:

- Help you understand the granting process
- Share some tips on effective grant writing and budgeting
- Give you the tools you need to succeed in the granting arena

Whether you're a first-time grant-writer, a novice looking to improve your results, or an experienced applicant just hoping to enjoy the grant process more, this toolkit is for you!

## Introduction: Get Into the Grant Mindset

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Before you embark on your first grant adventure, it's helpful to understand what grants really are and what they mean to your organization.

### **Myth: A grant is just free money**

The best way to be successful in the grants world is to get into the right mindset. A grant is not free money. It is a way for the funder (in this case, the City of Surrey) to achieve its strategic priorities by investing in arts, culture, and community activities—through you!

Why is this important? Whenever you write a grant application, think of the funder as a potential partner. Your goal is to build a compelling argument to convince the funder they want to be part of your project. We'll talk more about how to do that later on.

### **Myth: Grant writing is a necessary evil**

Receiving a grant is great. But the process of grant writing can be useful in itself. Grants are a great opportunity to:

- Take stock of your current position
- Build your organization's capacity
- Articulate your organization's mission, activities, and community impact
- Identify key strengths and challenges
- Consolidate resources
- Set goals for the future

Remember, grant-writing takes practice. Every application you submit makes you more prepared to write successful proposals in the future.

## Getting Started

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We try to make the process of applying for a City of Surrey Cultural Grant as simple and straightforward as possible. Still, grant writing is time-consuming, and can be stressful if done at the last minute. We recommend starting work on your grant at least a month before the deadline. Starting early will give you time to:

- **Read—really read—the guidelines:** Make sure you read the instructions! Your application will be more effective if you understand what the application is asking and what our funding priorities are.
- **Do your research:** Are other organizations providing similar programming? How much will various project components cost? Strong grant applications show evidence you have thought carefully about the project you're proposing, the need it fills, and the resources you will need.
- **Gather your documents:** In addition to the application form, you will have to submit information such as:
  - your society number
  - your board directors' names and addresses
  - your financial statements from the last fiscal year
  - letters of support from people outside of your organization familiar with your activities - including past or current community partners

You will enjoy the grant process much more if you have these things on hand well before the deadline.

- **Proofread:** Take the time to carefully edit your application, and always ask at least one friend or colleague to read it over before you send it in. Remember, while you are not getting marked on spelling and grammar, clarity is key. One of the most common reasons grant applications are unsuccessful is that the committee simply can't understand what is being requested.
- **Talk to us:** City of Surrey Cultural Grant Program staff are here to support you. Start work on your grant application early so you can contact us if you have any questions about your submission.

## Making Your Case: Who, What, Why?

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The program description is the core of the City of Surrey Cultural Grants application. This is your chance to let us know who your organization is and how you contribute to the Surrey community. The description should include a very clear and succinct explanation of who you are and what you want to do.

### WHO

Start out with a very brief section introducing your organization. You might include your mandate, activities, and a short summary of your group's history. Statistics about your membership, ticket sales, and history of programming look great here.

**Eg.**

Kwantlen Taiko is Surrey's leading Japanese drumming ensemble. Formed in 1997, the ensemble has performed across Canada and in more than 20 countries abroad. In 2016, Kwantlen Taiko represented Surrey at the World Taiko Festival in Singapore, bringing home a silver medal in the junior category. The ensemble is committed to building understanding and appreciation for the Taiko, giving annual workshops, school demonstrations and training 20-35 new members each year.

### WHAT

Next, explain the project that the Cultural Grant you are requesting will help fund. Make sure you include when and where the project will take place, and who will be involved. Even if some details are not yet confirmed, a clear and specific project proposal sends the message to the evaluation committee that you are thinking seriously and practically and you are aware of the many elements involved in planning a project or event.

**Tip!**

Don't assume that the evaluation committee knows anything about your organization or your project. No matter how well-known you think you are, explain clearly who you are and what you want to do, without using jargon.

**Eg.**

The Bear Creek Printmakers Association would like to organize the first annual Surrey Sketch-Off. Tentatively scheduled for the afternoon of Sunday, April 13, the event will take place at Guilford Recreation Centre. Members of the public of all ages will be invited to drop in to try their hand at sketching a large-scale still life composed of local found objects. Art supplies will be provided. Drawing workshops with Surrey-based artists Emily Carr, Ai Weiwei, and Pablo Picasso will be offered throughout the day.

### WHY

Lots of organizations explain who they are and what they want to do, and leave it there. But the WHY is the most important part of your application. WHY should the City of Surrey support your organization? Since available funds are limited, why should we fund your project instead of another?

In this section, present a clear, logical, and convincing argument for your project. What's special about your initiative? Is anyone else doing anything similar? How is your project different? What unique strengths does your organization or project offer?

The key to writing an outstanding grant application is to back up your argument with evidence. Sure, you think your organization is the greatest, but do the facts back up your opinion? Weaving evidence into your description to build your argument makes your application seem more convincing and more professional. Here are some of the many ways to weave evidence into your application:

- Organizational data (ticket sales, enrollment, revenues, etc.)

**Eg.**

Crescent Beach Bhangra is one of the fastest-growing arts organizations in Surrey. Our ticket sales increased 35% in 2018 over the previous year, while our total revenues increased by 39%.

- Secondary data (Statistics Canada, City data, academic studies, etc.)

**Eg.**

Dragon Theatre presents plays in Mandarin with English surtitles. Census data indicates that Surrey is home to more than 25,000 native Mandarin speakers.

- Audience/user surveys

**Eg.**

93% of respondents rated last year's production of Hamlet as "Outstanding."

- Testimonials

**Eg.**

One participant wrote, "the workshop completely changed the way I approach my art practice. It gave me the tools and the confidence I need to take my painting to the next level."

- Press Quotes

**Eg.**

The Surrey Now-Leader called Cloverdale Stageworks "the gutsiest arts start-up this side of the Fraser."

## Budgets

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The budget can make or break a grant application. It doesn't matter if your project is big or small, funders are looking for a budget that is:

**C**lear: Revenues and expenditures are explained and obviously related to the proposed project

**R**ealistic: Amounts are reasonable estimates, based on past actuals where possible

**A**ccurate: Amounts are well-researched and math is correct

**B**alanced: Revenues (including the requested grant amount) equal expenses

We designed our Cultural Grant Budget Template to help you simplify the budgeting process. Whether or not you choose to use the template, here's how to draft a CRAB budget in a few easy steps:

### 1. Brainstorm a complete list of expenses for your project

First, write down all the costs your project will incur. Every project is different, but common costs include:

- Artist fees
- Administrative salaries/wages
- Venue costs
- Equipment rental
- Travel/transportation
- Licenses/permits
- Accounting fees

Don't forget to include small charges—things like printing, office supplies, liquor licenses—as they can really add up!

### Tip!

If you're having trouble coming up with a full list of expenses, try thinking through your project from the planning stage to the post-mortem, jotting down costs as you go. If you're using the Cultural Grants Budget Template, use the individual budget lines as a guide, but feel free to change them or add more as needed.

## 2. Decide the amount of each expense

Now that you have a list of the goods and services you will need, estimate the amount of each expense. This will take some research! Make some calls or do an internet search to figure out what you can reasonably expect to pay for each item. This step may be more time-consuming than just taking a wild guess, but it's guaranteed to save you time and headaches later on.

### Tip!

It's not uncommon to find businesses that offer lower prices to not-for-profit societies. Be sure to say who you are and what your organization does when inquiring about fees.

Arts and culture projects often rely on donated or in-kind goods and services. See Step 4 below to learn how to include them in your budget.

## 3. List your revenue sources

Next, make a list of the revenue sources you expect to support your project, and the amount you expect to receive from each source. Depending on your organization, you will probably rely on a combination of:

**Earned Revenue:** Income from ticket sales, performance fees, tuition fees, advertising, and concession and merchandise sales

**Private Sector Revenue:** Private donations, corporate sponsorships, and contributions from private foundations

**Public Sector Revenue:** Grants from federal, provincial, and municipal funding bodies. Don't forget to include the amount you have requested from the City of Surrey in your budget!

Funders like to see a diverse revenue base for two reasons:

1. Just like other things in life, cultural projects seem more attractive when they're supported and valued by others
2. Funders want to know that your organization is resilient and that your project will not fall apart if one funder drops out.

Of course, at the time of your grant application, many of these revenue sources may not be confirmed. You may not know yet how many people will attend your play, or whether your BC Arts Council grant application will be successful. Do your best to come up with realistic, conservative estimates. Base them, where possible, on past experience. For example, if you produced a similar event last year and 250 people attended, don't expect you'll sell 3,000 tickets this year.

Remember! You will have to submit a final report at the end of your project, comparing your proposed budget with the actual budget. Although some variance is expected, your goal is to match the two budgets as closely as possible.

#### **4. Add In-Kind Expenses and Revenues**

Not all project costs are paid in cash. Donated goods and services are an important part of not-for-profit budgets for two reasons:

1. They save you money
2. They demonstrate that your project has the support of other individuals, organizations and businesses in the community.

Common in-kind donations include:

- Office/venue rental
- Event equipment
- Advertising
- Catering
- Volunteer administration/event staffing
- Artist fees (\*see below)

Although you don't pay for them, these in-kind contributions have an equal-to-cash value, and should be included in your budget. Remember to list them as both expenses your project incurs and revenues you receive. In other words, in the budget you submit, In-Kind Revenues should equal In-Kind Expenses.

How do you determine a value for donated goods and services? A good rule of thumb is to indicate fair market value. Do an internet search, or ask businesses to tell you how much they would normally charge for the good or service they are providing.

Volunteer time should also be valued according to fair market price. Activities that require no special qualifications can be valued at up to \$15/hour. Activities that require special qualifications or expertise can be valued at a maximum of \$25/hour. Volunteer activities can include anything that contributes to the production of your program or event, such as

- Administration
- Ticket sales
- Catering
- Accounting

You may also claim donated services by professional artists as in-kind contributions. These would be valued at the artist's regular fee (please see note below). However, if your organization exists to provide opportunities to amateur artists—for example, if you're an amateur choir or photography club-- you cannot claim the participants' time as volunteer hours. Also, remember that only 30% of the in-kind expenses in your Surrey grant application can come from volunteer hours.

#### **5. Balance your budget**

When you submit your budget, the total revenues should equal the total expenses.

## 6. On Artist Fees

Without artists there are no arts. We recognize that Surrey is home to many emerging arts and cultural organizations that are enriching our community with interesting and engaging work on shoestring budgets. We know it may not always be possible for small organizations to pay full union fees. However, we want to see evidence that you committed to compensating professional artists fairly.

Click on the links below to learn about industry standards for artist pay:

American Federation of Musicians: [www.afm.org](http://www.afm.org)  
Canadian Actors Equity Association: [www.caea.com](http://www.caea.com)  
Canadian League of Composers: [www.clc-lcc.ca](http://www.clc-lcc.ca)  
Canadian Alliance of Dance Artists: [www.cadadance.org](http://www.cadadance.org)  
Professional Writers Association of Canada: [www.pwac.ca](http://www.pwac.ca)  
Canadian Artists Representation /CARFAC: [www.carfac.ca](http://www.carfac.ca)

## I Didn't Get the Grant. Now What?

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Even the most seasoned grant applicants are sometimes unsuccessful. Try to turn the disappointment into a positive by reflecting on what you could have done differently. Pay close attention to the feedback you get from the evaluation committee. You might not agree with it—you might even choose not to act on it—but it gives you a window into the thought process of this funding body.

If you would like more details on why your grant was not approved or how you can improve your chances of success in the future, feel free to **Contact Us**.

## I Got the Grant! Now What?

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Congratulations! Your grant application was successful. First, take a moment to bask in the glow of a job well done. Now, be sure to follow these next steps:

### 1. Keep a Copy

Don't forget to save a copy of your grant application! Remember, you will have to write a final report (see below) detailing how your actual program or event compared to your proposal. Not only that, keeping an archive of grant applications on hand helps you to refine the language you use to describe your organization and its activities.

## 2. Spread the Word

It doesn't matter how great your event or program is if nobody knows about it. Make sure you devote the time and money to advertising and promoting your project necessary to make it a success. Advertising can be very expensive, but the investment often pays off. There are also many free or low-cost ways to let people know about your programs:

- Online calendars and listings such as MAXguide [www.maxguide.org](http://www.maxguide.org) or Surrey Now-Leader event listings
- Cross-promotion with other cultural organizations
- Social media advertising
- Email blasts to your mailing list
- Press releases to print media, radio, television, and online blogs

## 3. Let Us Know

Don't forget to invite City staff to your events. Letting the Mayor and Council know about your initiatives, inviting them to your events, and sending them thank you letters demonstrates your appreciation for their support and helps your organization build a positive long-term relationship with the City of Surrey.

To communicate with the Mayor and Councillors, send an email to [mayor@surrey.ca](mailto:mayor@surrey.ca). Invitations should be sent a minimum of 6 weeks before your event.

## 4. Document and Evaluate

Start thinking ahead now to your next grant application! What documentation and data did you wish you had to strengthen your last application? Collect it now! Photos, videos, admission data, audience surveys, testimonials: all these things can be used to enrich future grants as well as to liven up your website and advertising. Make sure you take the time to gather them.

## 5. Complete a Final Report

Most funders hold grantees accountable by requiring them to submit a final report. In the City of Surrey you have an extra incentive to send it in promptly: in most cases we also hold back the final 20% of the grant payment until the final report is received.

There are three simple sections to our final report: the initiative assessment, the statistics form, and the budget.

### a) Initiative Assessment

The initiative assessment is your opportunity to reflect on how your project went. What happened? What was the impact on the Surrey community? What aspects are you most proud of? What challenges did you face, and how did you work to overcome them?

In some cases, the initiative assessment will be quite similar to the program description in your application. It's not uncommon, though, for projects to change between their inception and realization. It's a good idea to make note of these changes in your final report and explain why they occurred.

Remember: major changes should be discussed with Cultural Grants staff in advance to ensure your project is still eligible for funding.

### b) Budget

You are required to submit a document comparing your projected and actual budgets.

- The projected budget should be identical to the one you submitted with your application.
- The actual budget shows your project's real-world expenses and revenues.

You may use our **Final Report Budget Template** or complete your own document in a similar format.

Don't worry! We are not expecting the two budgets to be identical. However, if there are major discrepancies it's a good idea to explain why. For example, if you projected \$15,000 in ticket sales and you only ended up taking in \$750 at the box office, your final report should offer an explanation.

### c) Statistics Form

The statistics form is simply intended for the City of Surrey to track the impact of our Cultural Grants program. Please indicate the number of:

**Public Events:** Number of events open to the public

**Artists:** Artists refers to the number of professional artists involved in your initiative, (whether or not they were actually paid in cash). Please include amateur participants or students enrolled in arts classes under the Audience/Participants category.

**Audience/Attendees:** Count the total number of audience members, participants, or attendees, whether or not they paid for a ticket

**Board Directors:** Number of Board Directors involved

**Number of Volunteers:** Number of Volunteers involved

**Volunteer Hours:** Combined total number of Volunteer Hours

## General Writing Tips for Grant Applicants

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Any kind of writing can be challenging, and grant writing is certainly no different. It can be difficult to express your ideas clearly and succinctly in writing. Here are a few tips to make things easier:

1. **Keep it simple:** Always write in your own voice, using simple, straightforward language. Don't make the mistake of trying to use fancy jargon or "grant-speak"—it will not only give you headaches but also make it harder for the evaluation committee to understand what you're trying to say.

2. **Write a point-form draft:** Don't get bogged down trying to craft perfect sentences. Start by listing the points you want to include in each section. Once you have the framework down, it should be easier to link your ideas with complete sentences.
3. **Try saying it out loud:** If you're experiencing writer's block, ask yourself "what do I want to say?" Sometimes saying it out loud as if you're talking to a friend can help you get your writing flowing.
4. **Ask for feedback:** Always ask at least one friend or colleague to read your grant application before you send it in. This person's role is not only to check for spelling and grammatical mistakes, but also to make sure that your application is clear, coherent, and logical. Sometimes it takes an outside perspective to realize that what is in your head is not always what is on the page.

Remember, the evaluation committee is not expecting Nobel-Prize-winning prose. They are looking for clear, clean writing that makes it easy to understand your project and goals.

## Good Luck!

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Surrey's arts and cultural organizations make our city a more creative, inclusive, and colourful place to live. We hope the tips and guidelines in this toolkit help you to write your grants with confidence!

### Contact Us

Do you have a question about your grant, or need support as you go through the application process? We are here to help you! Contact us at [culturalgrants@surrey.ca](mailto:culturalgrants@surrey.ca) or call 604-591-4850.