



IN THIS MONTH'S NEWSLETTER

Each year we create a newsletter highlighting grants management tips, centered around what we hope are constructive recommendations for applicants and grantees. In this issue, Cullen staff shares 10 tips to promote more effective grant seeking and grant management practices.

POINTERS FROM
NICK SCHIFANO

Program Officer for Performing Arts



Review the Cullen Foundation's website to gain clarity on our eligibility criteria.

Our website includes key grant information for organizations interested in applying for a grant. Ideally, a careful review of our website occurs prior to reaching out to speak with a Cullen staff member. A thorough review of our website will provide potential applicants with detailed information on types of support, eligibility criteria, financial requirements, funding ranges, and grant timelines.

TIP
#1

If an organization does not have reviewed/audited financials completed by a certified CPA for its most recently completed fiscal year, it is not eligible to apply for a grant.

All grant applications must meet this requirement—we cannot make exceptions and cannot conduct Pre-LOI or Pre-Application phone calls with potential applicants until this requirement is met.

TIP
#2

Our Performing Arts grants are exclusively for those local organizations whose primary mission is performing arts.

The primary mission and activities of the applicant organization must be performing arts. Due to limited resources in this sector, we do not fund programs and events with a performing arts component that are hosted by organizations that are not members of the performing arts sector.

TIP
#3

Performing Arts organizations should demonstrate their impact on Erie County residents by providing strong, verified audience counts.

The most effective way for an organization to convey its attendance data is by implementing a reliable attendance/audience collection system and sharing that data with grant makers. Reliable audience attendance counts are weighted strongly in our decision-making. The more information you have regarding your attendees, the stronger your grant application will be. We highly encourage organizations to have robust audience and attendance data in advance of applying for a performing arts grant.

TIP
#4

POINTERS FROM
MARY LOU KUBÉ

Program Officer for Education



Demonstrate student impact clearly.

Strong applications include specific data and real-world examples that show how the program will improve student learning. Make sure to highlight measurable outcomes and how success will be tracked.

TIP
#5

Showcase sustainability and collaboration in the program you're applying for.

Funders appreciate programs with long-term potential. Explain how your initiative will be sustained beyond the grant period, whether through partnerships, matching funds, or institutional support.

TIP
#6

Clearly structure your program description response.

Use numbered sections or distinct paragraphs to answer each part of the Program Description prompt. Be specific—describe student demographics, outline daily activities, provide exact dosage details, and explain the grant's impact in measurable terms. A well-structured response makes it easier for reviewers to assess your application.

TIP
#7

POINTERS FROM
FLOKINE LUHR

President



Read the instructions and questions, provide clear and relevant details, and include data, results and evidence when you have them.

Make your application clear, concise and complete—be sure you're answering each part of the question. Consider the 'audience' carefully (who's reading the application). Remember the focus of the grant you're applying for and make that central to all answers to the application's questions. Then, use data you've collected to strengthen your illustration of impact and past success.

TIP
#8

Focus on making your project budget informative, accurate and easy to read.

Whatever you're asking for—whether it be program funds, capacity building support, capital or general operating—make a project budget that's easily interpreted by an outside reader. List both sources and uses in your budget and highlight the lines/items for which you're seeking Cullen funding. Make your line descriptors concise but informative. Date your budget; if it's a capital project, provide the source of the estimate along with the date it was made.

TIP
#9

Consider asking for and accepting offers of help.

Ask a co-worker, Board member, friend, or Cullen staff member to review your draft grant application before you submit it. Seek out someone who will read it closely and objectively and provide constructive feedback. Starting your application early will give you time for this additional appraisal and can greatly improve the comprehensiveness and flow of your application.

TIP
#10

OTHER HELPFUL
TIPS

Be sure your contacts are current/updated in Foundant, our grants portal. This is important as your report notifications and other important communications are sent to this contact.

If you move your office location, remember to let us know and change your address in Foundant. We use the address you maintain in Foundant when we send out grant checks.

We'll never email you asking for bank account numbers, wire instructions, or other sensitive financial information. If you're unsure of a message you receive from us, please call our office at 716-800-4280 to confirm the message's origin and legitimacy.

Before you begin the grant application process with us, please visit our website and review the eligibility criteria, minimal requirements, cycle deadlines, and other instructions included there.

WHERE CAN I FIND MORE HELP?

For assistance in changing your organization's contact name(s), mailing address, newsletter recipient(s), portal password, or other general questions, call us at **716-800-4280** or email us at **info@thecullenfoundation.org**.

We understand circumstances can change after you receive a grant from us. Our preference in such cases is to hear from you as soon as possible and in advance of your spending any grant dollars outside of approved budget items.

To discuss changes to your project budget, an adjustment to your report due date, or any other grant-related challenge, please contact a Cullen staff member.

OUR WEBSITE

We'd love to hear from you—please reach out and tell us what's on your mind, what information would be helpful to you, and/or how we can do a better job of assisting you.