MISTAKES TO AVOID

- **Running out of time:** Make sure you have enough time to plan and write the grant. Many common mistakes can be avoided if you allot enough time to the writing process.

  - **Goals & outcomes should be clear:** If you aren’t specific about your project and what you hope to accomplish, the grant reviewers probably won’t select your project for funding.

  - **Writing the budget:** If the request doesn’t interest the funder, or fall within their guidelines, no matter how well written the grant application might be, it will probably be denied.

  - **Not defining jargon or abbreviations:** Some words or phrases might make sense to you because you use them every day, but might be foreign to the grant reviewers. An easy way to avoid this mistake is to have someone less familiar with your program or project read through your proposal.

  - **Find meaningful collaboration:** Make sure the partners you work with are truly collaborative in nature and will help you achieve your organization’s mission and serve the targeted community.

TIPS FOR MANAGING GRANTS

- **Calendars are your friend:** Set up reminders in a calendar on your computer for reporting due dates. Also include the due dates for any potential grant applications or LOIs so you don’t miss a deadline.

- **Achieve deliverables and outcomes:** Don’t get caught surprised come reporting time – within a few days of receiving grant funds, sit down with the outreach or program staff that will be implementing the deliverables.

- **Use grant-specific tracking sheets:** Keep track of your progress towards all grant deliverables

- **Running out of time:** Some agencies or foundations require very detailed financial reporting. If you aren’t sure of the requirements, don’t ask until the day the report is due!

- **Spending grant funds:** Avoid under or over spending of the grant budget. Make sure to keep accurate records of grant expenses and staff time/benefits. If your organization is inexperienced with managing grants, get the advise of a CPA who works with nonprofits. The advice they will give you can help save you from mismanaging grant funds.

- **Don’t surprise your funder:** If there is a problem, tell your funder as soon as you know. They might be able to help you!
Many Request for Proposals (RFPs) from foundations, government entities, or other grant opportunities will provide you with specific questions and guidelines. Below are some basic components of a grant:

- **Cover Letter or Cover Sheet** – An overview of the funding request. Be sure to include your contact information.
- **Organizational Information** – Include a brief summary of your organization or project’s history, mission, and goals. Describe any other programming or activities that your organization is a part of. Describe why you are qualified for funding.
- **Needs Assessment or Problem Statement** – Objectively address the specific situation, opportunity, problem, need, and the community your proposal addresses. If possible, support your problem statement with third-party research to justify the problem.
- **Program Goals & Objectives** – Describe the outcome of the project or program in clear measurable terms. Be sure to include at least one goal for each problem from your problem statement.
- **Methodology or Work Plan** – Describe the process you will use to achieve your stated outcomes. Include a clear description of the activities you will complete, along with a timeline.
- **Evaluation** – It is important to be clear as to how you will evaluate the success or effectiveness of your project. Provide a plan for evaluating if you’ve met your objectives through performance metrics.
- **Budget** – Clearly detail all costs, both administrative and programmatic expenses. Include staff salaries, fringe benefits, operating expenses, travel, equipment costs, supplies, event expenses, etc. Be sure to explain all budgeted items in a budget narrative, and make sure the budget is consistent with the proposal narrative.
- **Attachments** – Some or all of these may be required by the funder: verification of tax-exempt status, list of officers or the Board of Directors, Financial Statements (if available), current general operating budget, list of other funding sources, biographies or resumes of key personnel, letters of support or endorsement by appropriate individuals or organizations, and diagrams of equipment or plans for building requests (if applicable).

**TERMINOLOGY**

- **In-kind contribution** – a donation of equipment, supplies, meeting space, or staff time.
- **Letter of Interest or Intent (LOI)** – a brief letter outlining an organization’s activity and its request for funding that is sent to a prospective donor. Some grantmaking foundations prefer to receive an LOI before a full proposal.
- **Operating Expenses** – Expenses relating to rent/mortgage, utilities, maintenance, taxes, etc.
- **RFP** – Request for Proposals
- **Tax-Exempt Organizations** – those organizations that do not have to pay federal or state corporate or sales tax.
- **Unrestricted funding** – money that is not restricted by the foundation to be used for a specific purpose or program.
- For more terms, visit [http://foundationcenter.org/getstarted/tutorials/gfr/glossary.html](http://foundationcenter.org/getstarted/tutorials/gfr/glossary.html)