GRANT WRITING OVERVIEW

Introduction to Grants
In order to apply for grants, you need to:

• Produce a body of work
• Document it
• Show it (How to get your work shown? Alternative spaces, artist collectives, open calls for work)

Once you have a body of work, you can look into getting a grant to support making more work.

Grant Types
There are two major types of grants – by application and by nomination. Most grants for emerging artists are by application. The purposes of a grant are to help you keep making work (fellowship, travel grant), to help support a new project (project grant), to support equipment/materials/capital improvement, and/or to support an exhibition/performance/screening.

Funding Agencies
• Local Government
• National Foundations
• Local Foundations
• Arts Organizations (including those that offer funded residencies)

Which grant is right for you?
You can use online resources to determine if a grant is a good fit for you and your needs. Be sure to ask your network for ideas and learn from others’ experience applying for grants. You can ask faculty, friends, and even alumni. As you research grants, remember to read grant program guidelines carefully and identify ways in which your work relates to the guidelines before moving forward with your application. Review past grant recipients to see who’s been awarded grants from that entity in the past. Consider where you are in your career, as many of the guidelines identify different levels of experience--for example, “emerging” vs. “established” or “mid-career” artist. Find grant programs that are a good match with your level of experience and your proposed project.

Most grant applications include the following components:

Artistic Statement
• Your Statement should answer; “What kind of work do you make?” “Why do you make it?”
  “What do you hope to achieve with your work?”

Proposal
• Have a clear plan for what you propose to do with the grant money and state very specifically how the grant will affect your work.
• Be explicit about how your work relates to the grant guidelines. It’s important to simply and clearly integrate your passion for the project within the prescribed application framework.
• Do not repeat language. Be short, to the point, and describe your work in terms that anyone could understand.
• Recruit a friend to read your application and give you feedback.
• Read your proposal out loud. Rewrite and shorten if necessary.
• Allow for your authentic voice to emerge. Funders appreciate your passion.
• Include high quality artistic work samples. The samples are the most important part of the application, since the first round of cuts are usually based on the quality of the samples. Keep in mind that many panelists will not review your entire work sample. Artistic samples should support and amplify your artistic statement and should quickly convey the quality, seriousness, and uniqueness of your work.

Budget
• Be as specific and realistic as you can. Remember that you will need to pay taxes on your grant amount.
Benefits of grant writing
The process of writing about your work forces you to define your interests and goals. The process of assembling work samples and writing about your work can be useful to develop marketing and/or promotional materials for your website, etc.

Next steps
If at first you don’t succeed, try again! Call or email the foundation after the grant review period to receive feedback on your application. This information can help you write a better application next time.

This guide was created by Cathy Akers, artist and CalArts alumna (MFA Photo and Media 06).