

PERFECTING YOUR GRANT WRITING STRATEGY

Hotsheets

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Canada is unique in the international publishing landscape for having such a wide array of public funding supports available to magazine publishers. The Aid to Publishers program from the Department of Canadian Heritage is the most widely accessed, but there are many others that publishers may want to pursue to further their business goals. However, securing grants is not a given and can be a discouraging process so a strategic approach to applying for funding is an important skill to develop.

UNDERSTANDING THE LANDSCAPE

Navigating the granting landscape can often feel overwhelming: eligibility requirements, the specific language of applications, creating budgets and supplementary material packages. You need to have a grasp on all of these to be successful. But first, you need to know where to start. It's helpful to think about grant funding primarily across the three levels of government: federal, provincial and municipal. At the federal level, grants that should be on your radar include the Department of Canadian Heritage's Aid to Publishers and Business Innovation streams as well as Canada Council's Sector Innovation (for arts and literature publishers). Funds vary widely by province but almost every province and territory has its own arts council and economic development ministries or departments that can provide important funding. For instance, in Ontario, there is the Ontario Arts Council, Ontario Creates and the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Sport. Private foundations and relevant tax credits are outside of the scope of this Hotsheet but worth looking into as well.

GETTING ORGANIZED

It can be tempting to feel compelled to apply to every grant you find. Don't, or you will end up overwhelmed and not apply to anything. Also don't. Before you choose where to seek funding, getting organized about deadlines, eligibility and award amounts is the best place to start. Make a list of all of the grants you are currently eligible for as well as the grants you could be eligible for in the future (don't skip this second part!). Put it all together in a document with due dates, project start and end dates, and the specific funding priorities of the grant itself. The next

step is mapping what's available to your current and future needs.

IDENTIFYING YOUR NEEDS

It's helpful to make a list of your most pressing needs that you can use to compare to the list of grants and their funding priorities you created in the step above. This is not an exact science. Many grants can be used for many purposes, so it might be most advantageous to start with the most restrictive funds. For example, Business Innovation will only fund new initiatives and cannot be used for ongoing activities. Only you will know how best to prioritize what you need but getting clear on how these grants can and cannot help your business is essential.

A common need of any publisher is more help. Thankfully, there are many programs that are earmarked for staffing including Canada Summer Jobs and Young Canada Works, or provincial youth employment programs. While these programs can be helpful, it is also important to understand your obligations which include substantial training for and investment in your trainee. Many other grant funding streams will pay for portions of salaries so long as they are directly related to the project, so be sure to look at each grant's requirements in this area.

HOW TO BE SUCCESSFUL

At its core, grant applications are a cross between a persuasive essay and a standardized test—remember those? The most important thing to do is to answer the question being asked. To make sure you're doing this, first speak to the program officer about how your project relates to their funding priorities. Ask questions but be prepared to also answer them. If a program officer expresses doubt or suggests that your project might not be the right fit, listen to them. Go back to your master list of grants available and your needs and try again. Program officers truly are there to help you.

But what about budgets? This is often the most misunderstood and lamented aspect of any application. Numbers are your friend and, like your narrative, also tell a story. Where you request, spend and match your money tells a jury about your priorities and likelihood of success. If your budget appears unrealistic or is difficult to understand it will be more challenging to recommend you

for funding. It is particularly helpful to show you are not relying entirely or overwhelmingly on that particular grant funding to complete the project. Like any revenue model, diversity is key. Do not forget your own in-kind contributions.

BONUS TIPS

- Watch your timeline. Are you applying for several grants that all take place at the same time?
- Tracking and reporting on secured grants are outside of the scope of this Hotsheet but set yourself up for success by thinking early about how you are going to do this.
- Prepare your additional materials. Always include supplier quotes and one-pagers where possible.
- Don't forget you have the option to include notes about your budgets. Use these liberally.
- Think critically about what kind of personnel you are applying to the project. Make sure it's adequate and showcases the diversity and strengths of the people on your team.
- Remember those grants you aren't yet eligible for? How can you work to meet the eligibility criteria? This is especially critical if you can enter any core funding stream.
- Good luck!

Note: There are important changes coming to the Aid to Publishers program. Over the next five years the Department of Canadian Heritage will phase in a new funding model based on eligible editorial expenditures rather than paid circulation reach. You can use grant funding now to set yourself up for the best success once this transition is complete.

