



## Grant Readiness

One of the most successful ways to expand your organization's resource development capacity is to engage in grant readiness. Engaging in this process will enhance your organization's capacity to submit clear, consistent, and impactful applications and to respond to grant opportunities as they are available.

**First Nations has compiled some tips and tricks for your organization to consider when engaging in your own process of grant readiness.**

Grant readiness activities can include, but are not limited to:

- Developing Proposal & Online Application Templates
- Gathering and/or Updating Common Application Attachments
- Compiling and/or Updating Grant Language & More
- Prospect Research
- Preparing Application Timelines

### Proposal & Online Application Templates

More and more, donors are moving to online application systems or other customized proposal formats. Your organization can prepare for different application types by developing and creating templates for both document-based proposals and online applications.

Organizations should consider developing and creating these templates for program(s)/projects that require regular submission of grant applications. Other templates for development might include endowment funding, general operating support, capital campaigns, or other organizational initiatives.

### Document-Based Proposals

These proposals utilize Word, PDF, and Excel document formats and are either sent in hard-copy format to the donor via mail or electronically via email. Unless otherwise specified, the narrative of document proposals should fall between five to eight pages total (not including attachments).

***Pro Tip: Incorporate elements of your organization's logo, color schemes, taglines/mottos, etc. into the proposal document. Consider developing a "Proposal Cover Page" that includes photographs highlighting your organization's work. Add to the impact of your documents by***



***making them visually appealing. Utilize the same themes and formats throughout the various templates you develop.***

### **Online Applications**

These proposals are submitted via customized online databases, either hosted by the donor or through a grants interface. (For example, many common grant applications for donors that participate in statewide giving initiatives utilize a customized application and database. Same with corporations who utilize a common grants interface.)

Cull online applications you have submitted in the past and/or plan to submit in the future for common questions and develop your responses accordingly. Most online application systems utilize character and/or word limits for responses. Examples of standard limitations include characters from 500 to 5,000 (including spaces) or 100 to 500 words. (First Nations application system utilizes word limits ranging from 25 to 2,000.)

Create documents that contain responses to these commonly asked questions within chosen character and/or word limitations. Edit and modify these answers as needed for each donor and copy/paste these answers into their online application systems.

***Pro Tip: Create Word documents for each online application you submit. Begin by reviewing the online application and transferring questions and requests into the Word document. Save your answers in the Word document—being sure to follow character and/or word limitations. Following completion of the application, you can then easily copy/paste answers into the online application system and submit.***

### **Compiling & Updating Common Grant Attachments**

Time is precious when it comes to proposal development. Maximize the most of your organization's time by creating a database (like a shared file folder) of commonly requested grant attachments. It might also be helpful to develop a schedule for ensuring regular updates to attachments as necessary.

Commonly requested grant applications include, but are not limited to:

- Tax-Exempt Status Letter/501(c)(3)\*
- List of Board of Directors & Affiliations (Including Tribal Affiliations)\*
- IRS 990
- W-9
- Current & Previous Years' Audited Financials (If Available)
- Current & Previous Years' Organizational Budget
- Project/Program Budget and/or Budget Narrative\*
- Project/Program Timeline\*
- Year-to-Date (YTD) Financial Statements (Income Statement, Balance Sheet, etc.)
- Letters of Commitment/Memoranda of Support
- Fiscal Sponsorship Agreement



# FIRST NATIONS DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

## GRANTSEEKER RESOURCE

- Annual Report (PDF Version or Link to Online Version)
- Key Staff Biographies
- CV/Resume of Executive Director and Key Project Staff

***\*Attachments typically required for applications to First Nations.***

### Coordinating Grant Language & More

It is important to present a clear and consistent organizational message to your donors. Funders who receive grant applications also might make a point to read your annual report, newsletters, website, social media, and more. Because many organizations' often have different staff members dedicated to these various duties, it is important to coordinate information and present a united front to donors.

Grant writers are often in a unique position to facilitate these efforts. Work with appropriate staff members to gather statistics, quotations, success stories, and other language that represents the organization's work and incorporate it into your grant writing. Ensure this information is regularly updated, typically at least once a year.

***Pro Tip: Think creatively about potential sources for your organization's grant language. Find unique ways to incorporate success stories and perspectives from beneficiaries of your organization's works. Grant language should appeal to the reviewers' rational and emotional mind.***

### Prospect Research

There are hundreds of thousands of donors across the United States with a potential interest in funding your organization. Many large nonprofits and fundraising institutions have teams of full-time prospect researchers whose sole responsibility is to uncover new grant opportunities, identify avenues for increasing support from current donors, and to conduct outreach to identified prospects. Even small organizations can find ways to expand resource development — particularly grant opportunities — through prospect research.

Industry databases such as [Foundation Directory Online](#) and [Grant Station](#) offer nonprofits the ability to search compiled donor information for corporations, foundations, family foundations, and public charities. [Grants.gov](#) is a searchable resource for organizations seeking funding from government agencies. Of these databases, Foundation Directory Online is the most user-friendly and widely-used resource of prospect researchers seeking private grant opportunities. Foundation Directory Online and Grant Station are fee-based services, while Grants.gov is free to anyone with an Internet connection.

***Pro Tip: Many public libraries offer free subscriptions of Foundation Directory Online. Some organizations also sign up for the monthly-fee option through Foundation Directory Online and utilize the membership to conduct targeted research during a specified time period once or twice per year — cancelling the membership when not in use.***



### **Preparing Application Timelines**

It can sometimes be hard to keep track of the application deadlines for various funding opportunities. Furthermore, some organizations (including government agencies) issue time-sensitive Requests for Proposals that require your organization to remain flexible and complete applications within short timeframes.

The more prepared your organization is for regular renewal applications and other anticipated applications, the more responsive you can be to time-sensitive RFPs and other last-minute funding opportunities. Use your prospect research to create a calendar of grant opportunities, being sure to incorporate the application deadlines of any current donors.

***Pro Tip: If your organization utilizes a fundraising database like Raiser's Edge, consider using the internal tracking mechanisms and functions to track proposals and upcoming grant opportunities.***