

# Community Public Art Guide

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Budget Planning Form

## Getting the Funding

by Jennifer Roth

Thinking through the finances before you spend the money.

### 1. Create a Budget

It is very important to create a comprehensive budget. To be accurate, a budget must cover every expense that you expect to incur. It is best to overestimate costs, rather than underestimate. This allows you to cover unexpected problems and ensure the project's ultimate completion. Most sponsors will ask for a copy of the budget before committing to a donation. If you provide evidence of careful planning, they will be more likely to make a donation. If your project is not associated with a 501(c)3 organization, look for one to serve as your fiscal agent.

### 2. Research Sponsors

You can begin your search in several directions depending on the scale and scope of your project. Most importantly, plan ahead and start early. Corporations and foundations often require that proposals be submitted by a deadline, which may or may not coincide with your project. Start early enough to research your prospects and have enough time to locate funding.

Potential donors include local, state, and federal government agencies, corporate sponsors, charitable foundations, private donations, local businesses, or local service organizations. Research will help you understand their background, areas of interest, past contributions, and specific goals. Understanding who they are, who they give money to, and why they give money will help you to choose the right prospective funders for your project. Individualize each request according to the specific interests of the organization (This does not have to entail changing the scope of your project to fit a particular organization's interests.)

Pay attention to who the decision makers are at foundations, corporations, and businesses. When you speak of your project anywhere, be on the lookout for people who might know those decision makers and who would advocate for funding for the project.

The Internet provides several sources of information with regard to arts funding.

Here are some general websites that might be helpful:

<http://www.nea.gov/federal.html>

<http://fdncenter.org/focus/arts/>

<http://www.partnershipforeffectivenonprofits.org/byTopic.asp?show=arts>

[http://www.artsusa.org/issues/funding/funding\\_article.asp?id=1086](http://www.artsusa.org/issues/funding/funding_article.asp?id=1086)

<http://www.artheals.org/resource/grants/grants.html>

For useful information on writing grants, go to:

[http://www.grantproposal.com/resources\\_inner.html](http://www.grantproposal.com/resources_inner.html)

### 3. Be Creative!

Do not limit yourself to sponsors interested in arts organizations only. Other areas of human and community development are likely to fit into the scope of your project. The following areas are worth exploring:

Youth at risk  
Job/Leadership Training  
Conflict Resolution  
Community Building Activities  
Elderly  
Disabled  
Adults and Children  
Health  
English as a Second Language  
Community Beautification

Education  
Municipal Department

Explore all of your options. The further you dig into your network of contacts and resources, the wider the range of possibilities for this project. Speak to local authorities and community groups in your area. Ask for suggestions of who might be interested in contributing to your project.

Don't forget that you can use product or service donations, not just cash. Non-monetary or in-kind donations can be a great help to any project. Religious organizations can assist with fundraising projects or childcare services. Schools and community centers can provide space for prep time or group meetings. Private businesses as well as restaurants can also be an integral part of a local community project. Ask a hardware store to donate equipment and supplies. Ask restaurants or grocery stores to donate food, drinks, or snacks for volunteers on site.

#### **4. Contacting a Sponsor**

Individuals will donate if he or she is interested in a number of aspects of your project. Offer potential sponsors a detailed description of the project including the larger goals that you hope to achieve with this project:

What is the need for this project in particular?

What are the advantages to this project?

How will this project impact its surrounding communities?

This would also be a good time to discuss past projects and their effects on individual members of the neighborhood and the community as a whole.

Funders will favor a project with a clear plan of action, experienced staff, and specific goals. Potential sponsors will want to know the background of the individuals, artists, or organizations involved in the project as well as their relevant experiences and expected contributions. They will be interested in past projects that you have completed or precedents in other successful projects similar to your own. If applicable, it is worth mentioning other organizations or individuals with whom you have worked on past projects as references.

#### **5. Securing your Budget**

Finally, record in your budget the donations that you have secured so far. Your goal is to acquire enough money to cover the project's total expenses. Be sure to keep accurate records of your income and expenses throughout the duration of the project. Ask someone with bookkeeping skills to oversee and maintain these records.

#### **6. Keeping your Sponsor**

Don't forget about your sponsors once they have written you a check. Understand that maintaining the relationship between your sponsors and yourself is extremely important. A sponsor deserves to be recognized and a sound relationship between you and your sponsor can also be advantageous to future projects. Always acknowledge with a follow-up thank you note that the sponsor spent time in considering your project. A thank you note should be sent whether or not the sponsor decided to give money to your project. The eventual sponsor should be regularly and enthusiastically updated on the progression of the project. Upon completion of the project, invite the sponsor to a dedication. Donors will enjoy the positive publicity and appreciate your expression of gratitude. Remember that while donors are an absolute necessity to you, you are hardly a necessity to them. Maintaining the relationship between you and your sponsor is up to you.

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