ARTalk

This is the second issue of ARTALK for Partnership Programs, Julie Bailey, Editor.

GENERAL GRANTS

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*what is the mission of your organization?
*what are the goals and objectives of your organization?
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*can your organization do the project successfully?
*where will the funding come from if the grant is unsuccessful?

These are all tough questions and should be addressed prior to writing the application. Take a look at the past history of your organization. Have past projects been successful from a financial standpoint as well as in serving a targeted audience? And, are you requesting an amount which is appropriate for your organization's past financial

history? Many times, organizations attempt to undertake a project which is too large for them to do successfully. You need to make sure that you not only have the financial resources necessary, but the people power as well.

Getting acquainted with the IAC and the size of the grant category to which you are applying is critical. It is important to request an amount that is not only appropriate to your organization, but is within reason for the IAC to fund as well. In the General Grants category, the average size grant runs between $1200 and $1500. The smallest given last year was $400 and the largest was around $5200. If your request is larger than $6,000, reviewers can immediately take a negative attitude towards it simply due to the limited amount of money they have to allocate. Last year requests outnumbered available funds on a 8 to 1 ratio. Panelists must look at every grant from the standpoint of feasibility in relationship to the amount of funding available. Large sized requests tend to "turn-off" panelists. So, keep your requests in line with the average size of grants given in the past.

It is also important that you are able to administer the funds properly. If your grant request exceeds 15%-20% of your entire year's operating budget, it's probably too much. The IAC will not fund an entire season of activities, so if the project is your only one for the year and consumes your entire operating budget, it will not be funded.

Don't forget to research other funding possibilities as well. Since the IAC will only provide up to 50% of your total project cost, you must provide at least a dollar-for-dollar cash match. Donated goods and services do not count as match, although they are important and are recorded on the application form.

Ask yourself these questions:

*where do financial shortfalls seem likely?
*what possibilities exist for obtaining the necessary cash match?
*what earned revenues are possible? can we sell tickets, memberships, etc. to offset the cost of the project?
*are grants available on the local level? from corporations, foundations, private contributions?

Lack of evidence to support financial need is often quoted as a reason why grants are denied. Do not overlook any possibility for funding the project on the local level.

Be realistic when preparing your budget. Many times both expenses and income on a project are estimates at the time of application. This is acceptable, but do not inflate figures. If your request is partially funded, you will be required to submit a revised budget form indicating how the shortfall will be made up. Remember, reviewers are experts within the particular discipline that they are assigned to and have an uncanny ability to determine if a project is realistic from the financial standpoint as well as judging artistic quality.

As you begin to draft the narrative portion of the application, remember to use only the space provided on the form. Clarity and brevity are important. With so many applications to review, panelists need to be able to get a feel for your project without having to read volumes. Stress the important points of your project description providing just enough details to allow for a fair and adequate review. It is sometimes helpful to ask someone who knows nothing about your project to read the application. If they are left with

questions, the reviewers may be as well.

Become familiar with current grants vocabulary and the priorities for funding within the grant category. These priorities are listed in the guidelines along with restrictions. There are items we are unable to fund due to state and federal requirements on the money we are granting. The priorities for funding generally include broad categories such as "those projects which serve special audiences." If you are unsure of the nature of these priorities, call the IAC and ask.

The supporting materials which must accompany your grant are also listed in the guidelines. Be sure that you are sending all of the required support materials. As with the narrative sections of the application form, clarity and brevity are equally important in preparing support materials. Send along an adequate number of materials which demonstrate to the reviewers that past projects have been successul, information about your organization in general and items which can attest to the artistic quality of the project and the people involved. Once again it is important not to send volumes of material, because the reviewers only have a limited amount of time to spend on each application.

Since artistic quality is the most important review criteria, materials supporting quality are critical. If you are contracting with an artist or company to assist with your project, please send resumes or company information along with a video, cassette tape or slides so that the reviewers can fairly judge artistic quality. Last year, the visual arts review panel did not recommend re-granting all available funds simply because slides of visual art work were not submitted with very many applications. Without

them, it was impossible to judge quality.

It is equally important for you to be aware of the review process and how you can take advantage of this process to assist you in becoming a better grant writer.

As grant applications arrive in the IAC office, they are assigned to a review panel based on the discipline of the project (i.e., music, visual arts, dance, etc.). Applications are then reproduced, placed in notebooks and mailed to reviewers approximately two weeks in advance of the review panel meeting. Most support materials are retained in the office and distributed for review the day of the panel meeting. If materials are easily reproducible they are often sent along with the application form. In the case of video or cassette tapes, slides, or bulky support materials, it is impossible to send them in advance of the meeting.

You are invited to attend the review panel meetings! In fact, we encourage you to do so. This is the best method of learning how to prepare better grants. Even though you are not allowed to speak to the panelists during the review process, listening to their discussion can prove to be invaluable.

Each application is discussed and voted on for funding/no funding. After all applications have been voted on, those receiving the majority vote for funding are re-discussed for the purpose of allocating grant funds. Recommendations on funding levels are then sent to the IAC Board of Directors for their review and endorsement. The IAC Executive Director has final awarding authority and makes those final determinations after review of the advisory panel and board recommendations.

After funding notices are mailed, the IAC encourages you to

contact our office and request panel scores and comments for each of the applications you submitted. Because each review criteria is scored, it is easy to determine strengths and weaknesses of your application. Together with recorded verbal comments from the review panel meetings, these scores will assist you in learning to become a better grant writer.

In summary, IAC staff is here to assist you in preparing your application if the need arises. We won't write it for you, but will provide technical assistance. Learn to use the grants review system to your advantage and start receiving your fair share of available dollars.

ARTS TO GO

While the General Grant deadline is an annual one, Arts to Go applications arrive throughout the year. These grants enable organizations to provide high quality performing arts events in their communities with limited financial assistance from the Iowa Arts Council.

The roster of available artists or companies for the 90-91 season is now available. This booklet covers performances scheduled between July 1, 1990 and June 30, 1991. Beginning December 1, 1989, organizations can begin applying for a fee support and get a commitment on funding for those 90-91 events. This program is designed to work well in advance of the performance date, but in doing so, assists artists and sponsors in planning.

In addition to being able to look ahead for 90-91, the IAC also has grant funds available for a limited number of performances in the 89-90 season. This season ends June 30, 1990. The guidelines require that you submit your application at least three months in advance, so if you wish to arrange an event before June 30, do not wait much longer to submit a request for funding.

If you are interested in obtaining the rosters of available artists for Arts to Go, please contact our office at 515-281-4451. The receptionist will be happy to send them to you.

PARTE CONFERENCE

Each Fall, the Arts to Go program has held a Booking Conference. The purpose of this conference is to allow interaction between the artists/companies and potential sponsors. This past month, the Arts to Go program teamed up with the Artists-in-Schools/Communities, Arts to Share and Special Constituencies programs for a special three-day conference. If you were in attendance at the PARTE conference, you may already realize what a success it was!

Written evaluations are now being studied and have given the IAC many good ideas to build on for 1990. But overall, participants gave the PARTE conference an excellent rating.
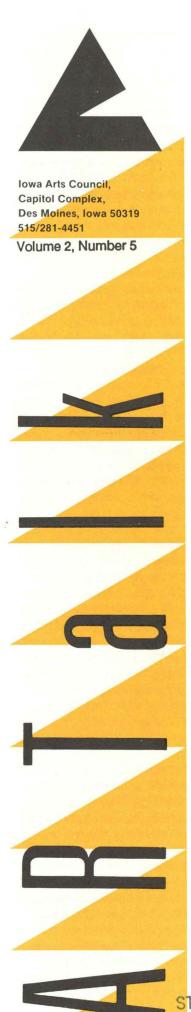
Information will be out soon on the dates of the 1990 PARTE and we hope that you will plan on coming to meet the artists and learn more about cultural programming in your community.

PERFORMANCE OPPORTUNITIES

If you are interested in attending some of the Arts to Go performances, a list is included here of upcoming events. These are only those performances which have been funded by the Iowa Arts Council to date. Be sure to check with the sponsor in advance to verify performance times, etc. If you need sponsor information, please contact the IAC and we will be happy to furnish you with a contact persons name.

Maharishi International University, Fairfield:
Carol lei Post, forte piano, May 20;
Tom Becker, classical guitar, June 10;
Des Moines String Quartet, Jan. 14.

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