Museum Assessment Program

Grant Writing Guide

Using Your MAP Report to Leverage Funding

American Alliance of Museums

INSTITUTE *of* **Museum**and**Library** SERVICES

This grant writing resource guide is designed to help your organization in preparing an effective proposal for a self-determined project in conjunction with your MAP self-study materials and assessment report. Attached to this grant-writing guide is a list of your state's government agencies and foundations, which you hope you will use in tandem with this guide. Please note that the following are general proposal recommendations and that you should always follow the specific guidelines a potential funder provides. The MAP staff wishes your institution success in any funding opportunity it pursues.

Review the MAP Process

Before you plan and set priorities for your proposal, sit down with the assessment team and review the entire MAP process including your institution's progress towards implementation. Review your application, self-study workbook and MAP report. Are there any patterns that emerge? What are your implementation plans? How has your institution improved operations? This is an important first step in determining which projects are priorities, what resources you have to commit to future projects, and which priorities/projects need outside funding.

Plan and set priorities

Determining which project is worth proposing can be achieved by looking over the MAP report and considering both the short and long term recommendations provided by the peer reviewer. In deciding which recommendation you will pursue for outside funding, ask yourself the following:
- What do you need?
- When do you need it?
- Why do you need it?
- Who do you need to do it?
- How much do you need to do it?

If you can answer those questions simply and succinctly, you should move forward and ask yourself the following questions that designed to dig a little deeper:
- How does this project align with your mission?
- Why is your organization the most qualified to develop and implement this project?
- How will you execute the project?
- What is the duration of the project?
- What will be included in the scope of the project?
- What staff will be needed to execute the project and their specific responsibilities?
- What outcomes do you hope to achieve? (Alternatively: How will you define the success of the project?)
- What resources do you already have available to use towards the project?

- Are there other individuals or organizations that you will need to partner with to complete the project? How will you identify these partners?

All of these questions will shape and guide your proposal. If you cannot answer these questions or if your project doesn't align with your mission, re-evaluate the project.

Using the MAP Report:
- Review the Mission and Planning section of your peer reviewer's report and evaluate your institution's mission statement. Examining your mission statement will guide your activities and decision-making process as well as clarify how your institution can further strengthen its mission and planning.
- Look over the recommendations, resources and appendices provided by your peer reviewer. Those supporting and sample documents will provide guidance on how to implement your projects.

Compile a list of potential funding sources

- If your state has museum association, we encourage you to contact them and consult about likely funding sources;
- Seek advice from fellow museum professionals and your Board of Trustees to identify potential funding opportunities;
- Look at organizations with mission and projects similar to yours—review their funder list;
- Look for funding by foundations, state and federal agencies that aligns with your project by accessing their websites and exploring funding search databases;

Prepare your proposal package

Your package should be well-organized, clear and concise. Make sure it follows the funder's guidelines for format, page length, project descriptions, and incorporates the funder's review criteria. Most proposal packages will include the following components:

1. Cover letter (one page): Make sure that before you submit the proposal, you are aware of the cover letter requirements and contact information for the funding organization. Include a thank you for the opportunity to submit the proposal.

2. Executive Summary (one page): This summary should include the following:
   - Project title and synopsis
   - Need
   - Expected outcomes
   - Timeline
   - Organization and its expertise
   - Funding requirements

Using the MAP Report:
Parts of your MAP report can help to shape your Executive Summary. The background information in the MAP report's summary will identify strengths and key recommendations. The brief institutional history with founding date, institutional mission, and overview of exhibitions/collections and program highlights, can be included in the proposal. The Executive Summary section of the report might highlight your institution's expertise and strengths. Review the following elements of your MAP report:
- Executive Summary
- Introduction
- Brief Institutional History
- Summary

3. <u>Statement of Need/Supporting Data (two pages)</u>: When arguing for your specific financial and capacity needs, it is helpful to use data pulled from surveys or evaluations your institution has compiled. Furthermore, review your Self Study Workbook Activities and Workbook and supporting document from the Peer Reviewer in order to compile supporting data. This data can include the following:
   - Statistics culled by your staff, volunteers, governing authority, or internal data
   - Statistics gathered by external sources (e.g. city and state statistics, evaluations conducted by outside organizations, etc)
   - Examples, testimonials and anecdotes
   - Statements of Support from individuals and organizations (e.g. your peer reviewer, other cultural institutions, etc)

   Using the MAP Report:
   Draw specific content from the MAP report and the recommendations made by your peer reviewer. Remember that the peer reviewer is an expert professional and can be quoted in the proposal. You may want to include parts of the MAP report verbatim in your proposal. This section should support the case you are making.

4. <u>Project Description (three pages)</u>: This section should give an overview of your goals and objectives for the project. When you select your project, consider and include in your proposal:
   - Project narrative
   - Planned or desired outcomes
   - Action steps for achieving outcomes
   - Metrics of success to measure program results
   - Project staff (e.g., staff, governing authority, volunteers, consultants, collaborators). Specify what project staff is already available and who you will need to hire.

- Project resources. Include any resources that your institution already has available as well materials and supplies that will need to be acquired.
- Time line
- Sustaining the project. Explain how the project will continue to be funded in the future to insure funder that it is a good investment.

Using the MAP Report:
The peer reviewer's report should serve as a professional opinion regarding recommendations for improvement for your institution and may include specific suggestions towards the scope of your project. Your project team will need to consider the logistics of executing the project and how these steps will ultimately impact your institution. You may find it helpful to work with the reviewer to theorize action steps to implement your project.

5. <u>Budget (one page)</u>: The budget should reflect and support the narrative and should be accurate and realistic. Make sure that someone familiar with your finances contributes to this section. In creating a budget, think about:
    - Expense information: personnel, non-personnel and overhead
    - Income information: grants, gifts, earned income, in-kind donations, etc.
    - Cost-share: Some grant and funding applications require a cost-share. Cost-share can be made up of a variety of sources including paid and unpaid staff time, in-kind donations, funding from another source, etc. By providing some form of cost-share, you are demonstrating to the funder your dedication to the project.
    - Although not required by all funders, compiling a budget narrative assists in planning for full, true costs and serves to validate expenses.

6. <u>Organizational information (one page)</u>: This should be information about what your organization is, who it serves and why it serves them. Include the following:
    - Your mission (and vision statement, if applicable)
    - Brief overview of organizational structure: staff, volunteers and governing authority
    - Your community engagement: your audience, your programs and your expertise
    - Community relationships: either with other organizations, partnerships or councils.

Using the MAP Report:
Your MAP report will have this organizational information, usually at the beginning, in its Executive Summary. Use that as a model for writing the proposal summary. Also use the information you gathered for your self-study and additional documentation to fill out your organizational information. This will serve as a template for future funding proposals

7. <u>Conclusion (less than one page):</u> The conclusion should serve as your final appeal, which will restate the needs of your organization, why your organization is best suited to deliver the project, how this project will enhance the organization, and why this project will meet the criteria of the funding organization. Make a concise but meaningful final statement. Make sure that your organizational needs and the project's importance truly resonate.

8. <u>Appendix:</u> The appendix should support and complement your proposal, so choose materials and documents that make a strong and pertinent case. This may include MAP reports, data, and letters of support referenced in the Statement of Need/Supporting Data section.

   Using the MAP Report:
   Some of these documents may be found in your own MAP report's appendix. Review the materials that your peer reviewer has attached to your MAP report and see if they align with the project and the proposal.

Proposal submission and results:

Before you send your proposal, double-check that you have the correct information regarding who and where to submit your proposal.

Acceptance/Rejection

If your proposal is accepted:
- Send a thank you letter.
- Establish a cordial relationship—be professional and responsive. The funder is helping your institution grow and improve, and with the right attitude and performance, they could become an ongoing or future financial resource.
- Make sure to check grant agreements and grant report forms.
- Meet all deadlines for reporting.
- Communicate frequently/often—within reason.
- Work to meet the outcomes established in the report. If you discover that these outcomes cannot be achieved, reevaluate the project and discuss alternatives with your funder. Do not be discouraged.

If your proposal is rejected:
- Don't take it personally. This may not be the right time for your project with this funder. It is possible that a future opportunity will arise.
- If feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of the proposal is provided, review and use this information to strengthen and revise the proposal for future applications.

- If you have concerns about the rejection, it is appropriate to discuss the situation with the funder to see if they will explain the specific reasons you were not selected.
- Research other grant opportunities and deadlines and requirements for those.

Proposal tips:

- Avoid jargon
- Humanize the project
- Keep it simple, concise—make sure to revise and edit!
- Connect the project to your mission
- Contact the funder discuss ideas and ask questions
- Tell a story
- Make it clear and honest
- Submit ahead of deadline

Using your Peer Reviewer:

It may be helpful to ask your reviewer to review the proposal before you submit it. An external party that knows your operational capacity and your needs may give you further insight into your project's implementation and may give you resources to help support your case.