



**DEVELOPING STRONG PEOPLE FOR A STRONG ARTS & CULTURE SECTOR**

## Grant Writing Toolkit

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*So you're going to apply for an artist grant from the Manitoba Arts Council, Winnipeg Arts Council or the Canada Council for the arts. What do you need to know to help your grant get the attention of the jury?*

This toolkit will address the basic needs for a grant application, the content within the application and the following tools:

- Artist's statement
- Biography
- Support material
- Budget
- Art project outline

### What is the Artist's Statement?

When it comes to writing an artist's statement, there are no simple formulas. Artists' statements vary in length, form, and substance. Depending on the situation that prompted your need to write, you may have to take all or most of the following elements into account: your audience, your purpose or motive, the materials and medium in which you work and the subject of your work, the theories and methodologies that influenced your work, your own personal perspective or background. It is usually impossible to break this information down into separate categories, as it is all somewhat interrelated. Because artists' statements vary so much, it will probably help to look at examples written by other students and artists.

The Artist's Statement is a brief narrative that describes the body of your work and its meaning. It is often the only tool the observer of your work has to fully understand your work, the way you intended it to be understood. It also serves as a promotional tool to avoid misinterpretations of your work.

The artist's statement offers you the opportunity to express your artistic vision. It demonstrates that you know the content of your work, which you are serious about the direction you are currently taking and that you have the ability to communicate clearly.

The artist's statement serves as a useful written tool that accompanies other presentation materials when approaching artist run centres, curators, collectors, grant givers and the press. It also serves as a basis from which to develop a verbal response when someone asks you about your work. In our fast-paced society, there are many times you will be faced with little time to describe your work. As an artist you should be prepared with a succinct and meaningful explanation at a moment's notice. Your artistic statement is like a thirty second commercial for you.

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Although challenging, the process of creating an artist's statement can be enlightening and informative. It will assist you in the clarification of your creative goals. An artist's statement is very constructive for artists who change their focus frequently. It is useful if you work in different series: You may want to prepare a different statement for each.

An artist's statement that is poorly written or contrived may do more harm than not having one at all. Do not force yourself to write one until you have strong feelings about the motivation behind your work.

### **ARTISTIC STATEMENT**

There are several types of Artist Statements you can prepare:

- A statement that accompanies a specific work of yours
- A statement that remains with your arts resume/CV
- A statement that is included with a grant application
- A statement that is included with other types of applications, such as an application for an artists' residency, or an application to be part of an exhibit or festival

An Artist Statement can be as brief as one paragraph and is usually not more than one page.

The purpose of the Artist Statement is to help the reader gain some insights into your intentions as an artist, and to your creative process - why you do what you do, why you choose to work in a given medium and what ideas, issues or concerns you are trying to communicate with your work.

An Artist Statement also describes your relationship to your work - how you became interested in doing this particular type of work, what motivates and inspires you, and what the work means to you when it is complete.

Example (artist statement that accompanies a specific work):

As a Metis playwright/performing artist, I receive most of my inspiration through my family and community. Family gatherings as well as attending community events such as powwows, teaching circles, ceremonies and feasts are strong foundations to my work. This is how I learn history, stories and story telling techniques unique to our culture. The beauty and dynamics of my community help me to vision my characters, themes and stories in my work. My urban life experiences such as attending many contemporary Indigenous, European and diverse cultural theatre workshops/productions offer a depth to my creative process and approach. It is the exposure to these various approaches to storytelling, cultures and community that expand my continual professional development while guiding my individual expressive aesthetic.



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Here are some questions that will help you to create a first draft of an Artist Statement:

1. Where are you from? What are your tribal affiliations? If your work originates from your cultural traditions, please explain.
2. Do you consider your work to be traditionally based, contemporary or a little of both?
3. What is it you hope to convey to people through your work?
4. What materials and methods do you use and why?
5. What events or influences have affected your work?
6. What aesthetic concerns do you have?
7. What subject matter do you use and why?
8. Does your First Nations language play a part in the work you do? How so?
9. Feel free to customize the Artist Statement to reflect your unique art practice.

Once you have completed your artist's statement, you will need to explore the contents of your arts portfolio.

### **WHAT'S IN AN ARTS PORTFOLIO**

Whether you're an individual artist or an arts organization or collective, an Arts Portfolio is a necessary part of grant writing and applications for other opportunities in the arts world. Arts portfolios for individuals and groups usually include the following items:

#### **INDIVIDUAL**

- \* Photo, audio/video samples
- \* Artist Biography
- \* Artist Statement
- \* Artist CV / Resume
- \* Brochure, Flyer or Rack-card
- \* Business Card

#### **ORGANIZATION OR COLLECTIVE**

- \* Photo, audio & video samples
- \* Organizational Background
- \* Statement of Intent
- \* Past projects & activities
- \* Brochure, Flyer or Rack-card
- \* Business Card

As an individual artist, the three main items to have are photo samples, a biography and an artist statement. The CV (or arts resume) can come later along with brochures, flyers, rack-cards and business cards.



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For organizations and collectives, it is extremely important to create your organizational background/history, your artistic statement or statement of intent, and a list of past projects.

Keep in mind that if you're planning to apply for grants you'll need a computer copy available for regular updates.

For all your documents and samples, be sure to make a couple of "back-up" copies on CD or on a flash drive. This serves as a back up but also helps you to be ready, almost anytime and anywhere, for opportunity to present itself!

Some artists and collectives place photos of their work online in their own website or on 'social networking' websites such as Facebook, Bebo, MySpace and others. Social networking sites are an excellent way to promote your work at no cost.

These sites track the number of visitors to your page and allow people to comment on your photos and your 'blog'...this is also a good way to see if an online gallery could be a useful marketing and communications approach for you.

Before using social networking sites, be sure to check that the ownership and copyright of any of your photos or statements will remain yours and not taken or shared with others.

You'll find this in the websites 'Terms and Conditions' when you set up an account (don't agree to them unless you read them!). If the terms are not acceptable to you, don't set up the account, seek an alternate site.

Now, you have your artist statement and art portfolio. To meet the grant guidelines you will need to include your biography.

### **ARTIST'S BIO**

An artist's biography is an informal narrative description that gives the reader a brief overview of you and your work. It should include a sampling of details about your accomplishments and be written in the first person "I", or the third person "she, Jane Jones or Ms. Jones".

It is generally a compilation of material and information drawn from your artist's statement and your arts resume or 'CV' (curriculum vitae). By providing highlights of your accomplishments, your artistic education/training and the creative ideas behind your work, you are creating a marketing tool that will have many uses over the long term.



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To begin formulating your Artist's Bio:

Introduce yourself (your English/Tribal names and where you are from. It is not mandatory to include your traditional name, but if you are comfortable with sharing your name, you can include it)

Example: My English name is Jane Jones, and my traditional name is \_\_\_\_\_. I am from the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ First Nations.

OR: Jane Jones is originally from \_\_\_\_\_ and resides in \_\_\_\_\_.

Talk about the type of art work do you create (i.e. new media, painting, textiles, weaving, carving, jewelry, film making, beadwork, pottery, ceramics, choreography/dance, music, stories etc.)

Example: I design and create original artistic works in textiles (hand-cut appliqué and hand-painted garments) and recently began experimenting with hand-engraved silver, copper and brass jewelry work to complement my work in textiles.

OR: Jane designs and creates a blend of textile works including appliqué and hand-painted garments, and she recently began experimenting with hand-engraved silver, copper and brass jewelry to complement her work in textiles.

Here are a few more questions to help develop your bio (you can respond to each of these OR provide whatever information you feel is important to share):

1. How long have you been working as an artist?
2. How did you become involved with creating this type of artwork?
3. How would you describe the 'intent' of your work?
4. What are your philosophies around the work you do?
5. What are some of your 'career highlights' as an artist?

As you're building your content for your grant application, another necessary item is your artist curriculum vitae (CV).

### **ARTIST CV**

If you're a performer, you know that a traditional résumé or curriculum vitae (CV) isn't going to land you your next gig. Instead, you'll need to make sure that you set up your acting or performing CV appropriately. The purpose and intent of creating a separate arts CV is to demonstrate your commitment to your art form. A regular CV/resume usually won't do that and may end up being distracting to a reader.



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### Personal Information

Most CV writers would never think of putting their height, weight, or eye color on their CVs; however, if you're a stage or film performer, it's a necessity. After all, you want to make sure that your recipient gets a good indication of your appearance. In fact, you can even add other particulars, such as your nation, gender (especially if you have a neutral name and don't include a picture of yourself), and age (though many performers leave this out because of age-bias in the industry.)

### The Headshot

Actors will want to include at least one photograph, known in the business as a "headshot", with their CVs. In fact, most acting CVs are printed on the backs of headshots so producers, directors, and other hiring agents can easily refer to both the individual and his or her credentials. Make sure you pay for an excellent, realistic headshot; it won't behoove you to have one that doesn't resemble what you really look like. There are a number of photographers who specialize in headshots; find a reputable one by asking your theatre friends. Our artist CV is a resume of your career in the arts. It is very similar to an employment resume with slightly different headings and sections. Your artist CV can be done in point form, chronologically listing each item from the most recent item.

### Special Skills

As a performer, you undoubtedly have some unique assets that set you apart from your competition. In a performing or acting CV, it's perfectly acceptable to list one or more of your most unusual ones. These can include ability to speak several dialects or languages; three-octave singing range; dance training; or even a blood-curdling scream (that last one might get you cast in horror films). Again, only you know which distinctive skills you possess; just make sure the ones you include are impressive since you'll have limited space on your CV.

### Recent Performances

You'll need to highlight your most recent acting or performing experiences in your CV; however, it's critical not to recite all of them, especially if that would make your CV over one page. Instead, choose the top several, making sure most of them are quite current. One exception to this rule is that it's okay to list an older performance if it will cement your professionalism in "the biz". For example, if you were part of the cast of a well-known television show back in the early 1990s, it's okay to enter that on your CV to boost your credentials. As your career expands it may be difficult to keep your CV to one page - ensure you are only including career highlights that emphasize your diversity.

### Portfolio

If you're a model or artist, you may also want to include a portfolio with your CV. This could be a DVD that would include few pages of photographs or a couple video clips of



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performances. Again, just make sure you proceed with caution - never give out originals

As with all CVs, it's critical that you update your performing art CV on a regular basis. In fact, after every job or two, your CV should be revised to reflect your most recent assignments. Additionally, plan on getting a new headshot as your weight, age, and hairstyle change.

Here's a template you can use to begin developing your artist CV:

Name and Contact info (including email address and website, tribal affiliation (if applicable).

Formal, Accredited Education & Professional Development

Date(s), name of accredited course, location of course, course instructor

Informal, Self-Directed Education & Training

Date(s), name of non-accredited course, location of course, course instructor

Arts Apprenticeships

Date(s), Mentor's name, techniques learned, work created

Teaching Experience

Date(s), school/institute, name of class/seminar, number of students

Presentations Made

Date(s), name of presentation, audience, brief description of topic(s) covered

Awards/Grants/Scholarships Received

Date(s), name of award/grant/scholarship, reason for the award

Commission Orders

Date(s), name or type of creation work, who commissioned you, title of final work

Date(s) Name of Production, role, location, name of producer, director, location,

Media Coverage

Date(s), name & type of media (TV, print, radio, web), title/description of featured work

Now that you have all your print material ready, you can start building your support material.

**SUPPORT MATERIAL**

In past, most grant agencies required you to submit photo-slides of your work. Only a few grant agencies still request slides - most now ask for a photo CD. A photo CD can be easily created if you have access to a digital camera, a computer and a blank CD. Simply take some photos of your work and upload to your computer. If you can hire a photographer to document your work, that would be acceptable as well.

Use photo -editing software to make any adjustments to them (i.e. cropping, fixing the color etc.). This same software can be used to place a label directly onto the photo. Once this is done, you can organize them and then burn them to a new CD.

If you don't have a digital camera but have photographs, these can be readily scanned at any photo store and placed on disc. You can then transfer the photos to your computer, label them, sort them, and then burn them to a new CD.



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If your artwork is not easily or clearly seen on your photos - use photo software to clean up the image and to crop the photo so your work is the main focus of the photograph. Quality photos are important because this is what the jury will view to determine whether your background as an artist and your grant application are a match.

### DEMO REEL

A "demo reel" is a CD or DVD created by those in the theatre arts, performance art plus film and video. It contains one or more video samples of your work.

Your samples should be no more than two minutes each; as this is how much time any jury will have to review your work. You can make it easy for them to see samples of your work by creating the demo reel and including a list of tracks, the duration of each track and the year each piece was created.

Be sure to create a high quality, high-resolution sample so the jury can assess your work without being distracted by the quality of the demo reel itself.

If you have access to any professional services to create a demo, that would be ideal. If not, you can still create a clean, quality demo reel on a home computer with the right software programs.

### AUDIO CD

Just like the photo CD for visual artists and the demo reel for theatre, performing arts, film and video, the audio CD is a sample of your music, singing and/or other sounds capes.

Also just like the other CD and DVDs, the audio CD should also be a quality recording. If you're recording at home, background noise such as traffic, the fridge, the television and so on, can distract your audience away from your good work. So be sure to record under the quietest conditions possible.

### WRITING SAMPLES

If you are a storyteller, writer or poet, your portfolio should include samples of your written work. If your work has been published (i.e. in a magazine, book, periodical, newsletter, newspaper or exhibit program) be sure to include a copy of that publication in your portfolio.

For publications with more than four pages, you may want to scan the booklet and save in PDF format. This will ensure that you have a permanent record of the publication and will serve as a great back up if the original becomes lost or damaged.



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Now that you have the necessary information required, it's time to assemble your grant application.

### Preparing Your Grant

There are three basic types of grant proposals:

- A letter of inquiry (LOI) is a one-to-two page summary that outlines the project. Funders request a brief description of the project before making a decision on whether to ask for a longer and more comprehensive proposal.
- A letter proposal is a three-five page description of the project plan, the purpose for which funds are being requested, and background information of the artist or group requesting funds.
- The long proposal is the most common document that funders seek. Three to forty pages or longer, it contains the cover letter and proposal summary. The usual format for a long proposal includes the need statement, goals and objectives, methods, budget, and evaluation.
- Contact funding agencies to request information on programs or to speak to a representative to help guide you to the right program that will fit your project. Visit websites the funders' website to research potential grant opportunities for your art practice.
- Once you receive the information, read the guidelines, criteria and eligibility requirements to ensure you have the right program for your project.
- Plan ahead to do all your preparation in time to meet deadline dates. It usually takes around ten to fifteen hours. Allow yourself time. This includes writing time and thinking time.

### Preparation

Next develop the goals and objectives. The goal defines the ultimate result of the change that is being proposed, whereas the objectives are the measurable steps you expect to accomplish in the process of reaching your goal. Simply put, a goal is the end result that the objectives help you to reach.

- One way to write a good objective is to start your objective statement with wordings that suggest a purpose, such as "to reduce," "to increase," "to decrease," and "to expand." Here's an example: "The objective of my photographic exhibition is to address the issue of child labor in South Asia."
- Objectives must be clear and concise. Your goals and objectives should tie directly to the need statement. The grant reviewer needs to be able to figure out that by the



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time the goals and objectives are met, the problem or need statement will have been addressed.

Keep it Simple!! Be clear and concise ~ use simple language.

- Have specific, achievable goals.
- An effective grant can be anywhere from three to ten pages in length.
- Use spell check!! When you are finished your grant show it to a friend or advisor. Ask if all the points are clear? Ask if the grant flows in a logical form from one section to the next.

#### **Preparation**

- Make your grant visually appealing.
- Use large or boldface type for headings, use bullet points for lists, and emphasize key points with underlines or italics.
- Use white paper, not colour.
- Number the pages and consider using page headings that identify your grant by name.
- Don't go overboard with this, the most important part of the grant is the content, not the package. Note: read the program guidelines to ensure you have the correct amount of copies that are requested.
- Contact the Funder if you may have any questions or may need guidance.

#### **Overview: Draft Outline**

- Start with a draft outline ~ a basic plan that you can build on for the actual grant ~ a brain-storming session.
- Your grant tells a story and places your project idea in a context.

Describe **who, what, when, where, why** and **hows** of your proposed project.

**What** is special about your project? **Why** this proposed project? **Why** is it needed? **How** are you going to accomplish the proposed idea?

#### **Draft Outline**

Begin to draft a brief step-by-step chronology of your proposed project ~ from beginning to completion...each step you will have to complete...**how** your project will be carried out.

Your timeline and schedule should follow.

**Where** will the proposed project take place? **Who** will be involved with the project? **Who** will benefit? **Who** is the intended audience? Are there other partners/collaborators or participants involved? **What** will their role be? At this point, you may want to contact them to receive a written commitment or an expressed interest. Ask for copies of resumes or bios.



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### **Budget Research**

- Research the basic costs of materials, services or fees that you may need for the proposed project.
- Collect price lists etc. Refer to arts service organizations/unions to research standard artist rates (ie PACT, CARFAC, Musicians Union etc).
- Collect supporting documents that you would like to attach to your grant ~ endorsement letters, resumes, articles, visual or audio material etc.

### **SUBMITTING YOUR GRANT**

Consider these items to include...

#### **Cover Letter**

- The first impression of you and your project.
- A brief introduction of your grant and should be written after you have finished writing your grant.
- Include the title of the program you are applying to, the project title and a brief project description or your project mission statement.
- Indicate how much money you are requesting. You may also want to indicate where the project will take place and the dates.
- Ensure you address it to the appropriate person & have the correct spelling!

### **OPTIONAL ITEMS**

**TITLE PAGE...**Title of your project, Basic information: who is submitting the grant = name, address, telephone, fax, email

**TABLE OF CONTENTS...**If the grant has more than five pages, a table of contents will list and inform the reader on the various sections of the grant. This also will help organize the grant in a chronological way and will include a list of all supporting documents.

#### **Project Summary**

- Brief description/quick summary containing: Project mission or vision or artistic statement ~ an abstract statement of intent - goal.
- Why the project is needed.
- Your objectives ~ goals, purpose.
- Your plan
- Your qualifications ~ history/background information and activities of the past that has relevance to the proposed project. This is a quick message to convey all the essential facts about your project. The whole project summary should fit on one page - keep it short, strong, and thought provoking.



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- Clear and to the point will entice the reader to read on.

#### Statement of Need

- Statement of need is connected to your mission/vision/artistic statement.
- You are describing the need that the mission is trying to fulfill. The reason for the grant.
- Project need - why you need the money. Who will benefit from the grant? A community, an organization, an individual, all three? (what is the impact?)
- Emphasize your project's uniqueness.
- Be factual and passionate - avoid overdoing the passionate side! Try not to lose clarity.
- This is a good place to connect your project's need to the granting program's objective.
- Don't overwrite. Include the necessary information - the shortest, clearest statement will be the strongest.

#### OBJECTIVES

- Explain how your project meets the needs you have described.
- Objectives are really a more detailed version of your mission/vision statement.
- The mission statement = a broad, global picture of what you want to do. The objectives are specific and well defined.
- Stay focused ~ your objectives should flow in a natural fashion.
- Be positive - convey a feeling that your objectives can be achieved. Include any information that may support this.
- Don't confuse your objectives with the steps of the plan. Be clear and concise!

#### PROJECT

##### PLAN / SCHEDULE

- This is an outline of your plan. It should describe how you will accomplish the project's objectives.
- Describe where the project will take place - facilities, equipment requirements etc.
- Include a more detailed explanation - clearly explain what you are going to do - in sequence.
- Imagine that someone who knows nothing about you or your project is asking you specific questions and you are answering them.
- State your reasons for selecting your activities. How do you see the successes of this project? How will you provide this?
- Who will be implementing the project? Identify key people and briefly describe their responsibilities.
- You do not need to go on at length about them - attach resumes or bio's as supporting documents.
- Include a reasonable scope of activities that can be conducted within the time and resources of the project. Include a sub-heading of outreach - describe how you will reach people.
- Indicate the expected length of time that it will take to complete your project.



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- Consider including an evaluation sub-paragraph. This could be a straightforward as submitting a final report upon the completion of the project or can be through feedback forms completed by participants of the proposed project.
- Describe any expected outcomes

The budget section details the funds you will need to carry out the artistic project. This isn't the place to surprise the jury with any unrelated expenses.

- Every item that's written in the budget must tie into the rest of the proposal. Funders want to know exactly where their dollars will be going.
- The budget section can be itemized using topics such as art tools, framing costs, film rolls, personnel, salary, travel and living expenses.
- If partial funding for the project has already been received, the budget section is the place to note it.

#### **BUDGET**

- Second most important part of your grant following the mission/vision/artistic statement.
- Common sense is the rule of thumb -be realistic.
- Be consistent with the objectives and plan you've laid out. As much as possible, base figures on actuals -collected price lists, get quotes, etc. Accuracy brings your project much closer to reality.
- Be sure to mention any major budget items mentioned in your plan -if you have not mentioned the need it may be perceived that the item is really not needed. List budget items to support your objectives. Highlight items you expect the grant to support.

#### **Grant Budget**

- Complete the budgets included in the application form or attach a similar budget that details items specific to your project's needs.
- Budgets with details show that you have done your homework.
- Budgets are usually one page. You may choose to have an additional page which details expenses you are requesting support for.
- Include other revenue (pending or confirmed), in-kind, other government, other funders, the organization's contribution etc.
- If someone has made a commitment to donate time to your project, this is considered in-kind.
- Donated use of equipment, materials or facilities can also be considered in-kind.
- Other revenue builds your credibility.

Finally - ensure your revenues and expenses are balanced!!



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**Support Material**

- Strengthens the grant.
- Material should support the proposed project.
- Keep documents to a minimum. Include what is requested in the guidelines - usually only one copy is necessary.
- Never send original work or your only copy.

**Support material may include:**

- One or two endorsement/support letters.
- Articles which represent the applicant or participants in the project. Resume/ Curriculum Vitae of participants in the project.
- Related list of achievements of the applicant.
- Samples of creative work - extremely important.
- Ensure there is an attached list of titles of work and the year produced. You may also want to include brief descriptions of work.
- Copy a few examples of work onto a CD or DVD.
- Dance artists, actors/actresses, musicians, storytellers etc. - visuals of a performance is extremely important. Ensure the DVD contains your best work - should not be long!
- Audio work should include three to four pieces of work maximum. Ensure items are all labeled properly.

**FINAL TIPS**

- If you are unsure, phone the funder/colleague for advice.
- If you are unsuccessful, don't give up! Keep trying - and - try Again!
- If it is your first time applying ask the funder if you can submit a draft for feedback before the deadline.
- Phone the program officer/funder to ask for feedback and ask how you may improve your next grant.
- Be positive!!! Believe in yourself and your project!