

# | GETTING STARTED

ALL THE THINGS YOU WISH YOU KNEW BEFORE  
APPLYING...

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A WORKSHOP CREATED FOR THE CULTURAL COALITION'S [FUNDING BOOSTER PROGRAM](#)

*The Funding Booster Program aims to improve the arts & culture sector's ability to apply for and win grants, and to increase state, regional, and federal funding to the creative sector in our region.*



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## Guess Who Has Upcoming Deadlines...

### Chelsea Groton!

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\*\*\* Thank you Chelsea Groton Bank for sponsoring this workshop \*\*\*

Deadline: Applications accepted year-round. Those received 3rd Friday in April (April 15th, 2022) will be reviewed in May.

#### Grant Eligibility:

- Non-profit 501c3
- A Governmental unit referred to in Section 170c1 of IRS Code
- Special consideration given to programs benefiting communities that are served by Chelsea Groton
- Program Areas: Animal Welfare, Arts/Culture, Economic Development, Education, Environment, Health & Human Services, Housing & Youth Activities.

Grant Awards: Range \$500- \$5,000

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## Top Challenges For Cultural Nonprofits Post-COVID

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- 1. STAYING RELEVANT** - Are you READI - Relevant, Equitable, Accessible, Diverse, Inclusive? Does your mission and programming relate directly to your community, and the community you want to attract? Are your programs responsive to current needs? Are you thinking “outside the box” for new ways to expand/grow; or are you static, unchanging? Are you mindful of the future that you are co-creating with others?
- 2. COMPETITION** - The pandemic has highlighted how important community programs are to connecting people in meaningful ways, but organizations have limited resources, staff, and technology to capitalize on these opportunities. So, how do you stay competitive? How do we know what funders will be prioritizing?
- 3. FINANCIAL SECURITY** - How do we survive with extreme challenges to earned income? How do we plan programming, or ask our donors to give with an increasingly uncertain future?

# 4

## Let's Talk R.E.A.D.I. Shared Terminology

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CT Office of the Arts/ Department of Economic & Community Development [READI Framework](#)

**Relevance** - Meaningful or purposeful connection to one's aspirations, interests or experiences in relation to current society or culture.

**Equity** - Policy and practice that is fair and just; processes and systems designed to ensure that we distribute resources without bias.

**Access** - Pathways that invite participation and communication and that provide opportunities for constituents from all populations.

**Diversity** - A mosaic of individuals offering unique perspectives and experience influenced by their ethnic, cultural, social, economic and ability backgrounds.

**Inclusion** - Active participation by constituents who represent and reflect communities we are all a part of.





## Why READI?

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**For your BUSINESS-** Being READI is good for your bottom line. Expanding access to your programs and services will boost participation, increase earned and contributed revenue sources, and make your project more competitive in the funding arena.

**For your MISSION** - Being READI is good as you are a gatekeeper (in a position of power)! Acknowledging this role and how it can be used to create a more equitable future for our communities is our social responsibility.

**For your COMMUNITY** - Being READI is good as you are more accurately serving your WHOLE community not simply the ones that have participated thus far.



# 6

## Where to start?

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1. Make a personal commitment. We are not going to become DEI specialists overnight, or make our boards or programs more diverse immediately. This is long-term, strategic change, that when done correctly takes time. Funders understand this, but they want to see thoughtful and meaningful steps; strategic movement, no matter how small
  2. Self-evaluation/Discussion. Having a conversation with staff and board to see if there are internal barriers to completing this work.
  3. Work with a consultants. [Thought Partner Solutions](#) is used by the Cultural Coalition.
  4. Participate in a cohort program such as [Walk in Their Shoes](#) offered by our peer in western CT, open statewide.
  5. Take a training online for staff and boards available from numerous sources: [Americans for the Arts](#) has fantastic research and webinars!
  6. Individual Research/Growth - Read, listen, participate in the conversation. The Cultural Coalition has a [DEI & Anti-Racism](#) program. Listen to recordings from 2021 workshops (more coming soon).



# 7

## Competition

### Funders Have Missions Too, What Are They Looking For?

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- **Diversity, Racial Equity, Inclusion, Cultural Competency** – Requires review of behaviors, org structure, policies/practices. If you're not having conversations about equity your organization will struggle to be relevant moving forward.
- **Evaluation & Adaptation** - Do you self-evaluate; synthesize what you learn during programs, and how it will change what you do in the future? Do you adapt as feedback indicates need for changes?
- **Partnerships/Collaborations** – Breakdown silos. Funders are looking for the greatest community impact (make the most of every dollar). Collaboration is a key piece to expanding impact, and helps you reach new audiences, and shares resources.
- **Fiscal Responsibility** – Is your operating budget clear? Does it accurately reflect the financial needs of your organization? Are funds allocated appropriately to reflect your mission/programming?



# 8

## Financial Security - DIVERSIFY! *Contributed Income – Grants vs. Donations*

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### GRANTS

- “Stamp of approval” for individual donors. Having history of successful grant awards conveys that you have been vetted and deemed worthy.
- Can provide much larger funds than the typical donation. Average grant award \$3-5K for local foundations.
- Can be a more dependable income source compared to donations, but takes a lot of staff resources to apply, track, properly report etc...

### DONATIONS

- Donor income is “stamp of approval” for funders. Demonstrates that your mission/programs have community support.
- Typically unrestricted income, use it to pay staff/keep the lights on, or as matching funds for a grant request.
- Less paperwork, but don’t be fooled... if you want to keep and grow your donors you need to have multiple “touches” (contacts) throughout the year.





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## Financial Security - DIVERSIFY! *Earned Income Sources*

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- Corporate Sponsorships - Because the Business is “buying” marketing presence.
- Program Registration Fees/Ticket Fees
- Tuitions
- Member Fees – Members are NOT Donors. Members are purchasing a benefit (early access to tickets; exclusive seats etc.) Donors are giving just for the “feel good” nothing in return except a thank you and tax-deduction.
- Merchandise or Other Sales
- Special Events – Be realistic! Make it manageable, unique, & a staple.
- Interest on savings, long term savings, etc.

# 10

## Is Your Organization Ready for Grants? Do you have...

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1. A clearly defined **mission statement and outline of your programming**, with descriptions, goals, a way to evaluate if they're successful, and a budget for each.
2. A **short or long range plan**. Does not have to be fancy but DOES have to involve all stakeholders, and give some direction to where the organization is going and why.
3. **Financial Statements**. Do you have an operating budget that is board approved? Are the expenses and income sources clear? Do you have a track record of sound financial practices? **TRANSPARENCY IS KEY!**
4. **Board List**. Do you have a board that operates according to your bylaws? Are they giving time, talent, and \$\$? Does the diversity of your board reflect your community?
5. **Capacity**. Do you have the capacity and time to complete a competitive grant application? Do you have the staff capacity to manage the grant and reporting if awarded?

**Grants are competitive at every level. Having these puts you in a stronger position AND gives you essential copy/verbiage to write grant proposals.**

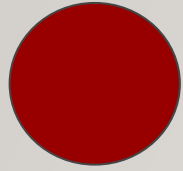
# Grants

## Where to Find Them & How to Approach Them

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- **Utilize Free Services.** Cultural Coalition Website, Bank Foundation Directories, libraries, CT Department of Economic & Community Development. Follow funders on Social Media/FB.
- **Look Inward.** Board and donor/member connections. Where do they work, who do they know? Blanket “Letters of Inquiry” yield VERY little fruit.
- **Start Small & Local.** If you’ve never received a grant try a local bank foundation or sponsorship. Regional banks with foundations/sponsorships: [Chelsea Groton](#)!!, BOA, Charter Oak, Dime.
- **Investigate Your Target.** Funding Priorities Line-up? (CHECK) Guidelines are relevant to our org? (CHECK) Read through FAQ’s? (CHECK) Looked at past awardees? Anyone look like me? (CHECK)
- **Make the Call!** The Grant Officer is not your enemy. Chat them up. Explain your mission, program idea – be passionate about what you do/impact. Review scoring rubrics. **Follow their guidance.**

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## Does the Program, Fit the Grant?

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*You can't fit a square peg into a round hole.*

Never sacrifice the integrity of your program to fit into the funding priorities of a grant. Not only is it obvious to the grant reviewer, but you're not staying true to your mission.

HOWEVER, sometimes funding priorities make us think "outside the box" about ways we SHOULD be partnering, opportunities we might be missing to be more equitable, and ways to reach new audiences and adapt.

**Keep an open mind, but always be aware of where you're headed.**





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## General Rules of Grant Writing *Make it hard for them to say no!*

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1. **The technical writer vs. the emotional writer** – BE BOTH! Data drives points home, emotion connects the reader to your mission and its impact.
2. **ANSWER THE QUESTION!** Repeat the question, or provide headers to make sure you're answering everything. Multi-Pronged Questions are very common.
3. **Use their words right back at them!!** Repeat key words to support your points. Don't be long-winded.
4. Just like in dating... **Confidence is a good thing!** As long as it's mixed with a touch of humility.
5. **Don't show a picture of desperation or provide general information**, funders rarely want to be the saviors of sinking ships. Rather, they want to know how your program is going to make an impact/fill an essential need.
6. **Watch-out for Character/Word Limits** – UGGHHH Character Limits... typically WITH spaces.
7. **Presentation Matters!** The easier you make it for the reviewer to read the better your chances.



## Breaking it down... Both Technical & Emotional Writing

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- **Tell a story.** Introduce the argument and main players, outline the issue, connect it to the larger world of your community, elicit emotion, and drive it home with data. It should flow like a story!
- **Keep the voice.** Don't "lift" data directly from the web, it feels forced. Make the data fit your narrative and beware of using jargon.

**Let's look at an example...**



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## BOTH TECHNICAL & EMOTIONAL WRITING

Typical Grant Question: *What need will your project address?*

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**Example:** {ORG} prides itself on our ability to adapt, shift, and respond to the needs of our community. Therefore, when the pandemic hit and {ORG} temporarily shut its doors, we didn't miss a beat. Our staff, utilizing our current laptops, shifted to working from home and within weeks our programs moved to virtual platforms. Now, almost a year later, when over 96% of arts/culture organizations across the country have cancelled events, 37% have made either temporary or permanent reductions in staff, and, in CT, nonprofit organizations have suffered a \$4.5B financial loss (Americans for the Arts), {ORG} has remained steady, retained our staff, and continued to offer programming both virtually and in-person when feasible. {ORG} has survived, and will continue to survive and flourish because we listen to the needs of our community, we adapt, adjust, and grow always remaining relevant. However, this does not mean we are without need. During this time when we have pinched pennies to ensure our fiscal stability we are faced with a dire situation where the tools we rely on 100% to function are crashing. Our laptops no longer hold a charge, they cannot perform updates, and they struggle to work with various applications and software that we use on a daily basis. Therefore, {ORG} is requesting assistance to address this immediate need....



## Breaking it down... ANSWER THE QUESTION!

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**QUESTION:** Provide detailed info about how activities will address the stated need and intended impact. Include the # of individuals served and # of hours participants will be involved. If the request is for project support, note whether this is a new or existing program. If existing, how long has it been in operation. (300 Word Max)

**The Need:** (Emotion & Data!) Can you demonstrate there is a community need? Use demographics, studies, data.

**The Impact:** (Emotion & Data!) Brag a little about the strength of your program.

**Project Details:** (Don't be general) This NEW project will run for 8-weeks, two-hours per session, for 16 total contact hours. The project directly serves our 100 members and indirectly serves the community at large through marketing/culminating event etc....

**Steer clear of generalized statements, project “concepts” and outlines.**





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## Breaking it down... USE THEIR WORDS BACK AT THEM!

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CFECT - Southeastern General Grant Funding Priorities

Empower youth;	Promotes systems change;
Promote basic needs & rights;	Rooted in evidence-based approaches;
Serves lower-income communities;	Seeks to eliminate racism & social inequity
Collaborative;	Incorporates voices of clients, consumers, and youth
Regional in scope;	Includes measurable outcomes & affects positive change

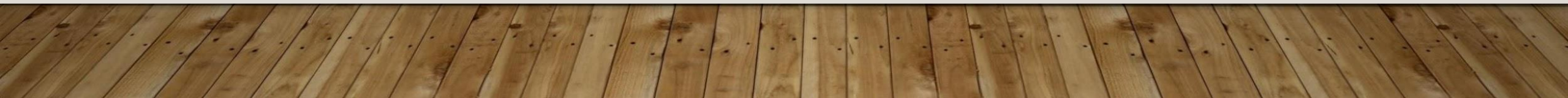
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## Breaking it down... **SHOW CONFIDENCE, IT'S OK TO BRAG A LITTLE!!**

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**Question: Brief overview of your organization & mission. 150 words**

(ORG) is a 19-year-old community arts center with a mission to provide a nurturing environment for artistic creativity and development through educational fine arts programs and events, for all ages. This mission is evident from the moment you enter, from our abundant art store, open studio's, display of local art by students and seasoned artists, one-of-a-kind sculpture wall, and expansive selection of supplies/equipment. (ORG) classes, summer camps, workshops, and community partnerships make us a hub for town activity, with offerings for all ages, incomes, and abilities, in over 20 artforms. **Everything about (ORG) nurtures an atmosphere of inclusiveness, acceptance, spontaneity, and creativity, allowing our students to let their artistic ability shine--and it works!! In the past two years 5 of our students have WON the National Ceramics Competition where over 1,100 pieces were submitted but only 100 pieces selected nationally. This makes (ORG) an official award-winning studio!**



## Breaking it down... BE SPECIFIC

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- Will the reviewer be able to understand the project clearly? Remember, they know nothing about you, your organization, or your work!
- Do you elicit excitement so the reader genuinely wants to see the project realized?
- Are you providing a clear program OUTLINE and not a program CONCEPT. Answer the who/what/when/where/why, whether they ask it directly or not.
- Don't save the best for last! Make points up-front. Reviewers get overwhelmed. "Hook" them right up-front because by the last paragraph they can be skimming.

***Ask someone outside the organization to read the grant, like US! Cultural Coalition provides this service for FREE to Funding Booster Participants!***

## Common Questions: OUTCOMES & EVALUATION

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Some sample questions...

- Describe anticipated results during and after the funding period.
- What difference will this program make to your community?
- How will the success of this initiative be defined and measured?
- Which tools will you use to evaluate the project?
- Describe the benefits expected from this program or activity.

Keep evaluations simple -- Survey Monkey, Google/FB analytics, Zip Code analysis etc...

Readers can tell when you're "throwing in the kitchen sink" or over-committing. Make sure you can complete the evaluation -- they'll ask for the data in the final report!

***DISCUSSION: What are some simple evaluation techniques?***



# Understanding Outcomes Vs. Outputs

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**Outputs** = How many people attended my event, how many tickets were purchased, seats filled? The numbers behind the program.

**VS.**

**Outcomes** = Did we IMPACT our community/audience? How much? Did we make a difference or “move the needle” on the larger community issue we were working to impact? Did we achieve the goals of the program?

## Common Questions: MONEY QUESTIONS

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Some sample questions...

- How would you secure the remaining funds or modify this program or project if a partial award were approved?
- What other steps have you taken to raise funds for this activity or program?
- What alternative plans have you made in the event you don't receive the full amount?

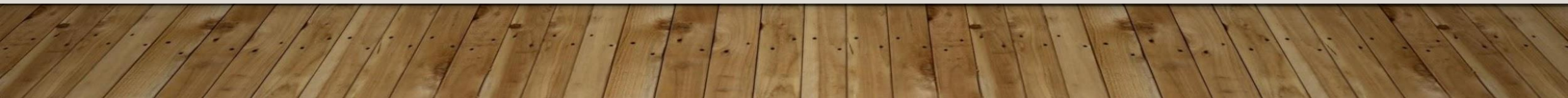
*Remember... Confidence is a good thing! As long as it's mixed with a touch of humility.*

**Example:** "X program can not operate without these needed funds, but {ORG} has successfully raised funds for programming for 10 years and we're committed to securing what is needed. If funds are not received the program will be postponed or reduced in scope until funds are identified."



## Additional Materials – Project Budget

\*\*\* Example \*\*\*

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- Separate income into **Contributed vs. Earned vs. In-kind** (volunteer hours, donated goods/services). In-kind must cancel itself out/be reflected in both income & expenses.
  - Project Budgets should **show a real picture of program expenses** - including all administrative and overhead costs, but you don't necessarily charge these to the grant.
  - Are your **line items clear** or are several expenses mixed into one category?
  - **Limit “miscellaneous”** income or expenses. What are these incomes and expenses? Find or create relevant line items.
  - **Matching grants** – Can you use in-kind? Where are the matching funds coming from?
  - **Typically you “zero-out” program budgets.** Operating Budgets SHOULD show surplus! Surplus/Cash Reserve shows responsible financial management - ability to plan for future.
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## Helpful Hints

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- Formatting matters!! Make sure fonts/sizes, spacing is consistent, spelling/grammar etc....
- Most applications are submitted online. Be sure to create a template OFF-Line and copy/paste when you're ready to submit. Otherwise you might lose your work if system crashes/forget to save.
- Always have another set of eyes look it over for inconsistencies. Sometimes you're too close to the program/grant to see that pieces of information are missing.
- If anything is left unclear, the reviewer may be left with doubt. Include a cover letter clarifying. It's OK if they call with questions... That means they're being thoughtful.
- All attachments included?? Double/Triple Check.
- Was Grant Awarded – YES! Great, don't forget to send a thank you! Acknowledge foundation on website and in all marketing, invite them to relevant events. Keep the relationship positive.



## The “What If’s”

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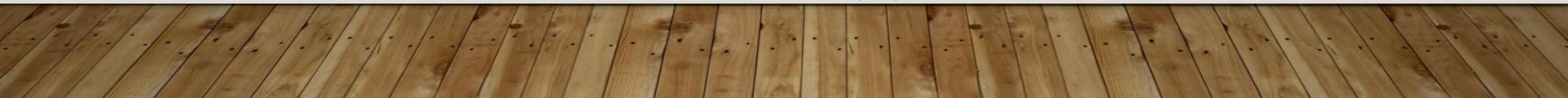
What happens if...

- You didn’t receive funding... Call. Are there comments? A Scoring Rubric?
- The program changes during the funding period...
- You don’t receive the other funding needed...
- A key partner backs-out...
- The project doesn’t achieve any of the stated objectives...
- A global pandemic occurs and you have to shut-down... (What are the odds!)

**Call them!! Be honest.**

**They DO NOT want to take the money back and can typically be flexible.**

**Don’t make this a habit – says you’re unreliable.**



## Comments From Grant Reviewers

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- Not a clear articulation of how this project fits the guidelines.
- Appreciate the data and numbers, but the narrative needs more humanity to it – the emotion gets lost in it.
- Budget is too general and the ask is not in-line with funding priorities. They did not read grant guidelines -- the ask is more than the total budget.
- The project would benefit if it's rooted in the community. Where's the collaboration?
- How will the org recruit for participation? Where's the promotional plans?
- More thought into how you will effectively evaluate the impact of your event.
- There is no real connection to the audience. The program only goes skin-deep – doesn't reflect the voices of, and participation directly with, the organization's community.

## Comments From Grant Reviewers

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- Needs more information/thought about how this aligns with the funding priorities.
- The budget does not correspond to the narrative.
- Wanted to hear more about how they were measuring outcomes.
- The program is operating outside the timeline for the grant funding period.
- I don't see how this program is connected to their mission?
- This is a wonderful program and I can see the authors deep emotional connection, but the narrative questions are simply not answered.

**\*\* BE A REVIEWER! That's the best way to improve your own applications. \*\***



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## Some Resources for Grants & Data

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- Southeastern CT Cultural Coalition: [culturesect.org](http://culturesect.org); [CT Office of the Arts](#)
- [Dept Economic & Comm. Dev.](#) & [State Historic Preservation Office](#) (SHPO) & [New England Fndt. Arts](#)
- NEA/NEH/IMLS: [National Endowment for Arts](#), [NE for Humanities](#), [Inst. Museum & Library Services](#)
- [Americans for the Arts](#): Great data!!
- [CT Humanities Quick Grants](#) (MUST talk to them first. 6x/year; Up to \$5K; Only if there's a humanities component)
- [Chelsea Groton Bank Foundation](#) (Rolling reviewed in May & October)
- [Dime Bank Foundation](#) (Deadlines March, June, Oct annually)
- [Dominion Energy Foundation](#) International & [Charter Oak Credit Union Foundation](#) (Deadlines Quarterly)
- [Edward & Mary Lord Foundation](#) (Deadline Rolling; LOI First; Talk to Cultural Coalition Staff before submitting)
- [Bank of America \(BOA\) Searchable Database](#)
- [Frank Loomis Palmer Fund](#) & [Bodenwein Public Benevolent](#) (Deadlines November & New London focus)





# THANK YOU

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