

For projects in your town forest, grants are an essential funding tool. A list and description of relevant grants, the Grants and Funding Resources List, is included in the Implementation Pod. However, most of these grants do require significant effort, with a written application and a competitive process. Ultimately, receiving a grant is “10% inspiration and 90% perspiration.” The strategy and ideas are essential, but hard work is the key to a successful application.

In preparation:

- ❖ Research the grantor and understand their mission, goals, and values – and who reviews grant applications
- ❖ Carefully read the grant description to ensure your project aligns
- ❖ Read past applications for this grant, both successful and unsuccessful, to understand what the grantor is looking for and what types of projects the grant funds
- ❖ Reach out to staff at the grantor’s office and ask questions and hear advice—they are usually happy to chat about your project BEFORE they get your application, and you should take advantage of this!
- ❖ Share this project with the community and build local support. Reach out to groups that may not be typical forest project supporters such as schools or senior citizens. Get a sense of the potential for volunteers to help implement this project.
- ❖ Contemplate funding. Determine what match your municipality can provide. You may need to go after multiple grants for one project. In general, there’s a 5-50 guideline for grants. The grants should be for no less than 5% of the total project budget and no more than 50%.

Writing the grant application – Overall:

- ❖ Keep your writing concise and straightforward and hit home how the project matches the grantor’s goals and guidelines for the grant
- ❖ Assume the reader knows nothing about the project and make it easy for the reviewer to understand your project
- ❖ If you don’t have a good answer for a question, be honest and don’t omit a question or topic entirely
- ❖ Provide a detailed work plan describing the project; it’s task and timeline.
- ❖ Use bold face type to reinforce the key elements of the project

- ❖ Use pictures, diagrams, and maps when possible—a picture is worth a thousand words and most grant applications have word limits!

Writing the grant application – Specifics:

- ❖ Keep the background brief and focus on the work to be done
- ❖ Create goals and objectives for the project that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant to the mission, timed, and challenging
- ❖ Present an overview of your community with qualitative and/or quantitative data. If using quantitative data like the census, compare your community to state or national averages
- ❖ State your town's abilities, strengths, and capacities related to the implementation of this project. You should describe previously implemented projects, municipal and community support, and ongoing partnerships and collaborations. Demonstrate capacity and readiness to implement.
- ❖ Repeatedly mention project readiness, community support, and consistency with long-range planning (such as your town forest recreation plan, municipal plan, or regional plan)
- ❖ Provide measures for assessing the effectiveness of the project and make sure the project has a discernable result – what will success look like?
- ❖ Provide a well-explained, mathematically accurate budget. Mention planned in-kind donations such as meeting space or equipment. For the parts of the project not being funded by the grant, clearly explain how they will be funded.
- ❖ Discuss the long-term plan for this project – how will it be sustained financially?

Reviewing the application:

- ❖ See your project through the eyes of the grant reviewers
- ❖ Have a reliable proofreader and critic read the application
- ❖ Have someone who knows nothing about the project read the application
- ❖ Have someone familiar with budgets review the proposed budget
- ❖ Be concise and to the point