Grants and Fellowships

Carole Bucy, Professor of History
Volunteer State Community College

Grants and fellowships provide scholars financial support to assist in research and writing. Many provide funding for research trips to libraries and special collections. Others often include housing, travel, and/or a stipend.

If you have a specific proposal in mind, you should review all possible sources of funding. Often, it is surprising how few applicants there are for some awards. If your proposal meets the guidelines for a grant or fellowship, you should not hesitate to submit an application. Many colleges and universities provide administrative support for faculty seeking grants and fellowships, often through an Office of Grants and Contracts or similar entity. If such a resource exists on your campus, be sure to make use of it.

The application

First and foremost, as an applicant you must be clear about your proposal. The important first step is to read carefully the grant's requirements. Most applications require a detailed essay of the proposal. Get input from your colleagues. Your colleagues may have drafts of proposals that they have submitted that they are willing to share. Do your homework. Review previous awards of grants by the agency to which you are applying. Remember to keep in mind:

- Does your proposal fit the grant's guidelines?
- What do you hope to accomplish?
- What specific collections will be used?
- What is unique about your proposal?
- How will this grant be used to assist you in accomplishing your purpose?
- What will be the end result of your project?

Online applications

Each year more applications are submitted online. If you apply for an award that only accepts online applications, you should review the format requirements well in advance of the deadline. Some ask only for a PDF file or an essay submitted as an attachment to an e-mail. Others (particularly the U.S. Department of Education) have a form into which various parts of your proposal must be placed. Elaborate charts and graphs are frequently difficult to paste into pre-existing electronic forms. Allow additional time to prepare for the possibility that a server could be down during the final hours before a deadline.

Professional Vita

Most applications require a professional vita. Make sure that your vita is comprehensive and up to date. It should give readers of a grant or fellowship basic information about your education and employment. It should include basic educational information, employment experiences, published works, and other grants and awards.

While it generally is not appropriate to ask for an extension for more time to complete a proposal, it is acceptable to ask for the date that you will be notified if your proposal is successful. While few grantmakers notify those who have submitted applications if they have _not_ been successful, knowing the date by which you should have been informed of an award enables you to seek other alternatives.

Budget
Many applications require a budget for the project. You should research all potential items for a budget well in advance of the deadline, for example:

- How much will your transportation (if necessary) cost?
- Will you have to purchase an airplane ticket?
- If you are applying for a travel grant, where will you stay?
- Will there be parking expenses?
- Will you need to make photocopies?

Deadlines
Strict attention should be given to deadlines. Most deadlines are firm and non-negotiable. Allow yourself additional time to make certain that your deadline is reached. It is advisable to send your proposal by a means (FedEx Overnight, U.S. Post Office Priority Mail, UPS Sonic Air Delivery, UPS Next-Day Air, DHL Express Delivery, etc.) that will guarantee delivery before the deadline.

Lists of available grants and fellowships
There are several excellent listings of available grants and fellowships. You may be surprised to see how many grants and fellowships are available.

American Association of University Women: http://www.aauw.org/fga/index.cfm

American Historical Association Web page and database: http://www.historians.org/prizes/index.cfm lists grants and awards given by the AHA. Their online member services also include a comprehensive listing of all available grants in history, but it is password-protected for the use of AHA members.

American Philosophical Society: http://www.amphilsoc.org/grants/

The Chronicle of Higher Education: http://chronicle.com/
The *Chronicle* regularly lists available grants.

Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History: http://www.gilderlehrman.org/historians/fellowships.html

National Endowment for the Humanities: http://www.neh.gov/

Organization of American Historians: http://www.oah.org/activities/awards/
Numerous awards, grants, and fellowships are awarded each year by the OAH.

U.S. Department of Education: While the U.S. Dept. of Education and other government agencies do not directly award grants for research and writing, the Department does have numerous awards for projects. There is a comprehensive U.S. Government Web site for grants found at: http://www.grants.gov/

Local historical associations, libraries, and research depositories: Numerous local historical associations and libraries, have some funding for research using a particular collection or research on a particular topic. One such example is the Virginia Historical Society (http://www.vahistorical.org/research/fellowships.htm). Such grants may not be listed on national web pages because of the regional nature of the applications. Make inquiries of local groups such as state historical societies and state libraries.