

Section 4.7

**National Endowment for the Arts
"Tips" for Writing Successful Proposals**

Producing the best possible proposal for a grant competition can be a daunting task. Armed only with a good idea for a project, the applicant must jump into the fray and face stiff competition, the nagging question of whether or not the proposal will contain everything that reviewers are looking for, and limited time to prepare the application. Although there is no secret formula that will guarantee a successful proposal, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) offers some tips to assist applicants in their grant writing endeavors. [See <http://arts.endow.gov/Guide/Orgs99/First.html> for additional tips.]

One of the most important things to remember when writing a proposal is to ask questions. If a question arises or if something is not clear, the applicant should immediately contact staff in the appropriate discipline or field at the Endowment and get an answer or clarification. The NEA staff is ready and willing to help, so it is best to utilize them. Besides looking in the grant competition guidelines for contact information, an applicant can get a list of contact information by accessing the NEA website at <http://arts.endow.gov/> and clicking on "NEA Staff." This link connects to lists of contacts by office, discipline/field or staff member's name.

In addition to seeking answers to questions, an applicant needs to remember to enclose proof of their institution's tax-exempt status. Designated local arts agencies and cities that apply on behalf of their arts divisions also must include a copy of the city/county ordinance, resolution, charter, or contract that assigns them the authority to operate on their local government's behalf.

Applicants applying for Planning & Stabilization grants must include one copy of their organizations' financial statements. These financial statements must be audited by an independent certified public accountant for the most recently completed fiscal year. Public agencies need only include a financial statement signed by the agency's comptroller. For those organizations applying as a consortium, financial statements must be included for those organizations that have them, and a list should be enclosed of those participating organization that do not have financial statements. Once again, if you have questions about the legalities of tax-exemption and what documents need to be included in the application, contact the Endowment for assistance.

Although the NEA recognizes the need to assist applicants with problems specific to any given proposal, it also reiterates some basic points to remember when putting together a complete application:

- Write clearly and succinctly and say what you want to say. There are no magic words that guarantee success
- When preparing application materials, use at least a 10-point font, and do not condense or photoreduce your type
- Check all math for mistakes and do not inflate the amount of money requested so that the Endowment has something to cut
- Use the check lists that the NEA makes available with applications