

Grant Readiness Guide

2026



Strategic Grant Funding for Nonprofits

ARE YOU GRANT READY?

For new or smaller nonprofits, grants often seem to be the logical place to turn to get funding.

However, they end up spinning their wheels because they're simply not grant ready. They're not even at the starting line.

If this sounds familiar, don't despair! The following pages will walk you through what you need to be ready to pursue grant funding.

Now, let's go!



WHAT DOES BEING 'GRANT READY' LOOK LIKE?

At a minimum, being a grant ready organization boils down to having solid preparation in 3 core areas of your nonprofit.

- Organizational Foundations
- Programs
- Financials



ORGANIZATIONAL FOUNDATIONS



Just as having a solid foundation for your house is essential, the same is true for your nonprofit. You just cannot cut corners on this. Here are key items you need to be grant ready.

- A 501c3 designation, operating for at least 3 years
- An active and engaged Board of Directors who meet regularly, understand their full responsibilities, and contribute financially
- A clear Mission Statement for why you exist
- A written plan (Strategic Plan) which includes your history, community need, programs, goals, staffing, resources, and financials
- A list of your current funding sources and amounts
- An Annual Report detailing your accomplishments, revenue and expenses
- A professional website that clearly explains who you are, what you do and why, your programs, and your impact
- Complete profiles on Candid and Charity Navigator

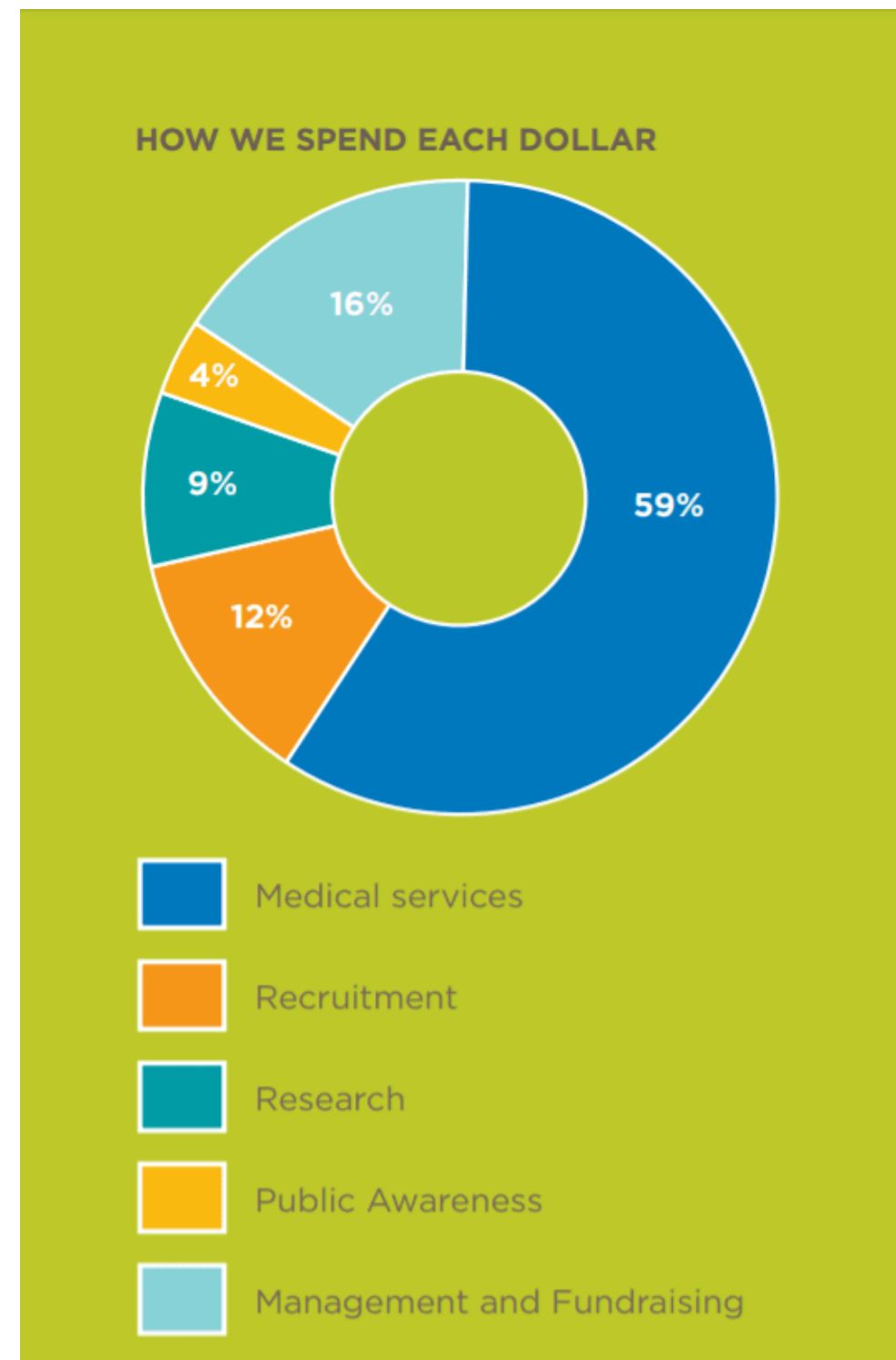
PROGRAMS

Your programs are where you walk the talk. Even the most inspiring missions won't get a penny in grant funding if you don't have well-defined, structured programs that clearly illustrate how you're meeting a need. Grantors rarely fund 100% for general operations. Here are key items you need to be grant ready.

- Clear and detailed descriptions of each program, including the need, whom you're serving, specific activities, program timeline, goals and outcomes, and measurement tools
- A clear case for the role your nonprofit is playing in the community – how you're filling an unmet gap
- Complete program budgets with all revenue and expenses
- Current statistics (locally & nationally) on the problem(s) you're tackling
- Success stories and/or client testimonials
- Well-defined program goals and measurable outcomes
- Staff capacity to track results and create program reports



FINANCIALS



Having your financial house in order is absolutely essential if you want to pursue grant funding. Funders want to see that you're managing your nonprofit seriously, and not as a side gig. They also want assurance that you'll use their grant funding properly. Here are key items you need to be grant ready.

- A complete and detailed organizational budget with revenue and expenses (approved annually by your Board)
- Organizational budget projections and actuals for each year
- Complete and detailed program budgets
- 990 tax form (don't skimp on a 990N or 990EZ)
- Annual audit (if your revenue meets requirements)
- Financial Statements/Balance Sheets
- List or report of all corporate, foundation, and government funders each year
- Staff capacity to track grant funding usage and allocations

BUT WAIT! THERE'S MORE!

Even if you're able to check all of the boxes for Organizational Foundations, Programs, and Financials (yay!), there are still other factors to take into account for grant readiness. Here are key questions you need to ask yourself.

- Do we know how to write well, or will we need to outsource grant writing?
- Do we have grant management tools in place?
- Do we have tools to research prospective grant funders?
- Have we asked our Board what connections they have with corporations & foundations?
- Is our website polished, thorough, and up to date?
- Do we have recognition and benefits for our grant funders?
- Are there opportunities for grant funders to volunteer with us?
- Do we have the capacity to wait 3-12 months for grant award notification?
- Do we have the bandwidth and materials for proper funder stewardship via thank you emails, notes, reports, newsletters, success stories, etc.?

POP QUIZ!

Beyond the nuts and bolts of grant readiness, being prepared to pursue grant funding is about telling your story of who you are, what you do, why you do it, and how the funder can be a part in helping. Here are typical questions in a grant application that you need to be able to answer well.

- Tell us about your history, mission, and purpose
- Tell us about your recent accomplishments
- What is the community need or problem you're working to solve
- Describe the program in detail
- Tell us the goals and outcomes of your program and how they'll be measured
- Describe the population you serve with your program
- Describe how our funding will actually be used
- Explain how you're unique from other similar organizations
- How will you sustain the program after the grant funding period
- If awarded, how will we be recognized by your organization





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LEARN MORE

Grants can be an excellent source of charitable revenue for your nonprofit organization, but it takes thoughtful preparation to truly be ready to pursue grant funding. You can't just wing it – trust me!

To learn more, visit www.greatergrants.com or email me at: laine@greatergrants.com