

An ornate doorway with intricate floral and geometric patterns in blue, red, and gold. The doorway is framed by multiple layers of decorative borders. The top part of the doorway features a large, colorful floral motif in blue, red, and gold. Below this, there are several layers of arches and borders, each with its own unique design. The overall appearance is that of a highly decorated, traditional Islamic or Middle Eastern architectural style.

Grants 101

Everything Your Faith-Based Organization
Needs to Know About Grants



Bricks & Mortals Guidance Documents for FBOs



INSIDER TIP

Many grants require that you be a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, so make sure your nonprofit status is up-to-date.

What is a grant?

A grant is when an organization or government entity provides funds for your program. Grants do not need to be paid back. These can fund specific programs or general operations.

Can houses of faith apply for grants?

Many houses of worship wonder if they are able to apply for and receive grants – many grants are available for houses of worship! With any grant, it is important that you check the specific requirements listed in the grant application.

Tip: Many grants require that you be a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, so make sure your nonprofit status is up-to-date.

What do grants cover?

A grant may cover a range of expenses, it all depends on the type of grant offered.

Taking the example of a food program, some grants will:

- Fund direct service provision, for example. buying food for your food pantry;
- Support the program more broadly, for example, purchasing food, printing marketing materials, or funding staff; and,
- General operating support, which can be used for whatever your program or site needs, including overhead.

Grants vary widely, so it is important to review their guidelines carefully before applying to make sure you are eligible, make sure you are answering the questions correctly, and applying for the appropriate budget items.

Many faith-based organizations apply for funding for social service programs, such as childcare services, food pantries, soup kitchens, and public health work. If you are applying for social service programs, your program will, in almost all cases, need to be open to all people regardless of their faith community.

Other grants may offer you support for maintaining your historic building or constructing a new building; this funding often comes from historic preservation organizations and organizations focused on faith-based organizations.

Tip: Your organization might want to keep a list of funders who fund your areas of need, and subscribe to their email updates and social media.



Where can I find grants?

Faith-based organizations can apply for grants through government agencies. Some places to find government grants include:

- [Grants.gov portal](#): Here, you can see grants available to nonprofit organizations that are available through federal agencies, including funding for food programs, educational work, and more.
- [New York State Grants Gateway portal](#)
- [New York City Funding](#)
 - Many of NYC's funding opportunities are through [City Council Discretionary Funding](#). The application for this funding goes live in January each year.

You can also find funding through private foundations. Some places to search include:

- [Bricks and Mortals Monthly Updates](#): We include grants that might be of interest to faith organizations in our monthly newsletter; subscribe here.
- [Foundation Center](#): This is a comprehensive paid online directory of grants.
- [Candid](#): This is a free resource, including a digest that can be delivered to your inbox.
- [Philanthropy NY](#): This directory of funders across NYC, with website links to their specific grant programs. Look through funders that might be a good match to see if their past funding matches your goals and values.

How to Apply for a Grant

Every grant is a little different, so your first step will be to review the grant application and **make a list of everything needed to apply**. Grant applications usually include a mix of narrative that you will write and supporting documents for you to provide.

It takes time to put together a grant application, so it is easier to have longer lead time to do so. Once you find a grant that you are interested in applying for, review the list of items in the application that you will need to prepare and the team that you will be working with and relying on. Make a timeline and plan for preparing these documents so that you can submit your grant application by the deadline noted on the application.

Every grant will require different documents, but some are especially common, and it will be useful to have the following items ready:

- Your budget
- Information on your board/governing body
- Data about your current programs and your goals



Your budget. Have both your organization's current budget and a copy of a proposed budget for how you'll use the grant funds.

Information on your board/governing body. You may need to provide information on who sits on your board, session, or other governing body. It is helpful to have their names and brief bios ready to go.

Data about your current programs - and/or your goals. Are you currently operating a food bank? In your application, provide information about how many people you serve. Are you running a theater space? Include how many shows were produced, and how many audience members came to see them.

- **Tip: If you are not already, begin keeping data on how many people use or participate in your programs. Think about what will be a success for the program that you are requesting funding for in terms of the number of participants, total events, or other data points.**

Reach out to the funder.

Often funders are willing to speak with organizations applying for grants with their organizations. Reach out to discuss anything you have a question about before submitting your application. However, make note if their website or application says that they are *not* available to speak with prospective grantees.

Deadlines are key.

Funder deadlines are not flexible. If there is a date set by which they have to receive your application, you will not be able to submit after this deadline and have your application considered.

- **Tip: Mark all deadlines on your team's calendar.**

BONUS TIPS FOR GRANT APPLICATIONS

If you win a grant, write a thank-you letter! Invite the funder to see the program they have funded. Keep in touch and continue to build the relationship.

If you did not win, that's okay! You have to apply to be considered, and just because you were not awarded funding this time, it does not necessarily reflect anything about your program. Reach out to try to have a phone call with them to get feedback on your application.



Four Tips for Writing Effective Grants

- **Tell a cohesive narrative.** What are the big ideas that you want your potential funder to take away from your grant application? What needs are you filling in your community that other organizations are not? What makes your program unique? Return to these big ideas – key points for funders to remember – throughout your application.
- **Tell a story.** Some grant applications may make room for you to tell direct stories about your work. If you have stories about how your program has improved the lives of the people you serve, it can be great to share them. For example, if you run a mock job interview program, you could highlight a story of someone who participated and successfully landed a great job. (In most cases, you will want to change the names of participants to protect their anonymity.)
- **Proofread, proofread, proofread.** Making sure that your text is polished makes all the difference. It lends a more authoritative, trustworthy voice to your organization. As you proofread, also keep your sentences short. Long, complex sentences can confuse readers.
- **Avoid mission creep.** This happens when a nonprofit expands its mission beyond the original goals. It can sabotage your ability to reach your original goals or lengthen the time needed to complete them. To avoid it, your organization has to have a clear mission statement that is communicated to all stakeholders.

Need help applying for a grant?

If you need help finding or applying for grants, please contact us at info@bricksandmortals.org.



Other Resources

- [Candid.org](#) (Free and Paid): Offers grants and trainings (including “Introduction to Proposal Writing”)
- [Funding for Good](#): Free and paid templates for grant writing and grant applications.
- [GrantStation](#): A searchable database of active grants including private foundations, corporate grantmakers, federal funding sources, and state-specific opportunities.
- [The Federal Grant Website](#) (Free): A List of all grant opportunities by the Federal Government and Government agencies. You may need to create an account to begin your applications.
- [The National Fund for Sacred Places](#) (Free): A grant program for Faith-Based Organizations with historic, cultural, or architectural significance. The program provides training and capital funding for 30-40 cohorts every year.
- [Candid’s Open RFPs](#) (Free): A List of open Requests for Proposals (RFPs) and notices of awards as a free service for U.S.-based nonprofit and grantmaking organizations.
- Bank Charities: Large bank chains in the US will have charitable foundations that support nonprofit community programming. Please read through the eligibility and instructions before applying:
 - [Bank of America Charitable Foundation](#)
 - [TD Bank Charitable Funding](#)
 - [M&T Bank Charitable Foundation](#)
 - [Wells Fargo Philanthropic Services](#) (through private foundations)
- Corporate Grants: The charitable organizations of corporations that provide direct or in-kind funding to businesses under their corporate responsibility initiative. They often provide funding to organizations whose missions align with company values or industry focus or nonprofits serving communities where the company operates
 - [Coca-Cola Foundation](#)
 - [GEICO Philanthropic Foundation](#)
 - [Kroger](#)
 - [State Farm](#)
 - [Walmart](#)
 - [Costco](#)
 - [John Deere](#)
- [Supportive Housing Network of New York’s Funding for Affordable Housing](#) (Free): a list of funding opportunities for all potential sources of funding for supportive housing.
- [Instrumentl](#) (PAID): A database of funding sources, offers a 14-day trial period.

