REDUCING NONPROFIT OVERHEAD

Common Grant Application

Questions Shared Across Funders

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TECHNOLOGY
ASSOCIATION of
GRANTMAKERS

OVERVIEW

ANSWERING THE CALL TO REDUCE NONPROFIT OVERHEAD

Further advancing an earlier study which confirmed that 39% of our grant applications are duplicative across funders, the Technology Association of Grantmakers (TAG) has published the list of shared fields that comprise the nearly 40% of grant application overlap.

"We are pleased to share data that will help reduce redundancy and enable a more humane charitable sector," says TAG Executive Director, Chantal Forster. "Many of the shared form fields are candidates for auto-population from shared data repositories or removal altogether. This data is a call to modernize and leverage technology to create space and time for a more humane philanthropy that focuses on trust and relationships."

The data science effort led by TAG relied upon over 130 grant applications shared by foundations throughout North America, the EU and UK. The first phase of the work to identify the level of similarity between forms was published in August 2021 and indicates that nearly 40% of fields in the sample were duplicative across funders.

This second phase reduced the roughly 3,600 form fields to 13 question groups through a multi-method and multi-analyst data triangulation approach led by data scientist Kwame Porter Robinson. The process also sanitized the data to remove foundation identifiers and prepare for publication.

13 GROUPS OF COMMON QUESTIONS

Below are the thirteen groups of questions generated by this research from an original dataset of roughly 3,600 question fields. Shown in parentheses is the percent (%) that this group represents from the full set of 3,577 grant form fields:

1. Organizational Biographical and General Information (18%)
2. Miscellaneous (3%)
3. Corporate Delegation and Oversight, Organizational Structure (5%)
4. Data Handling, Overview, Measurement, Evaluation and Reporting (4%)
5. Project Demographics/Orientation/Status (2%)
6. Alternative Supports (<1%)
7. How Did You Hear of Us (<1%)
8. How has COVID-19 Impacted Your Work (<1%)
9. Organizational Budgeting, Revenue Practices, and Forecasts (20%)
10. Collaborative Partnerships and Community Support (5%)
11. Requested Grant Funding Related (20%)
12. Time Spent Filling Out the Form (<1%)
13. What the Organization Does (22%)

Within each group above are questions that share a degree of similarity across all 133 grant forms.

> **It is important to note that TAG is NOT suggesting grantmakers use all the questions presented below in their grant applications. Rather, this data is provided as an interim step in the process of avoiding nonstandard questions, auto-populating form fields, and reducing these questions further, an effort we hope the philanthropic sector will consider pursuing.**

An in-depth report on methodology, and findings can be found in the full report at https://www.tagtech.org/resource/resmgr/reports/TAG-GrantSimilarity-Analysis.pdf

NOTE: The questions provided below use language that best represents all questions from all funders that are grouped in each theme from the original set of 3,600 questions.

GROUP 1: ORGANIZATIONAL BIOGRAPHICAL AND GENERAL INFORMATION

Provide the following information about the organization and staff. Where contact information is requested, provide (if applicable) Name, Title, Address, Email Address, Phone Number.
- Professional References/Testimonials (others who can speak on the organization's behalf)
- Qualitative Staff Characteristics (project-related experience, shared backgrounds, executive biographies, etc.)
- Applicant Contact Information
- Contact Person Contact Information
- Intern Roles (if any)
- Key Contacts Contact Information
- Key Program Staff Resumes/CVs
- Organization's Contact Information
- Organization's Donation Website
- Organization's DUNS Number and/or GuideStar profile
- Organization's Fax Number
- Organization's Founding Date/History
- Organization's Legal Status
- Organization Social Media (Facebook page, Instagram page, Twitter page, etc.)
- Primary Applicant Contact Information
- Staff Contact Information
- Staff Demographics (Age, Ethnicity, Gender, Immigration Status)
- Staff Qualifications
- Total Number of Part-time Workers
- Total Number of Full-Time Workers
- Total Number of Paid Staff
- Total Number of Staff Hours

GROUP 2: MISCELLANEOUS

- To submit this grant please provide your signature, the date of signature, and indicate your title and position. Also confirm that you understand and acknowledge eligibility criteria and the project's satisfaction of these criteria. Your agreement includes permission to share information with other donor advised funds as well as acceptance of terms and conditions.

- If you are applying to any one (or more) of our supporting organizations please list them and provide an explanation of your involvement. For example, some organizations offer thought partnership while others might offer in-kind expert staff support.

GROUP 3: CORPORATE DELEGATION AND OVERSIGHT, ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Provide the following information:
- Board/CEO Contact Information
- Board/CEO Demographics (Age, Ethnicity, Gender, Sexual orientation, Immigration Status)
- Board Compensation/explanation thereof
- Does the board contribute financially to the organization? If so, generally how much?
- Qualitative Board/CEO Characteristics that are relevant and important for us to know, e.g. professional affiliations, national origin, and/or length of time in role
- Total Number of Board of Directors
- Total Number of Executive Staff
- Strategies for ensuring continual improvement within the organization/project staff

GROUP 4: DATA HANDLING, OVERVIEW, MEASUREMENT, EVALUATION AND REPORTING

Share the following information:
- Briefly describe what kind of data will be collected or generated (if relevant). What outcomes, deliverables and evaluations are important to this work?
- Data to be collected in order to monitor progress/impact on served populations
- Planned policies/procedures/practices to ensure data security and regular data monitoring
- Whether or not collected data can be shared
- School-related data (including persistence/enrollment/completion rates for K-12, Bachelors, Associates, and/or Short-Term Credentials)
- Whom the desired data will be collected from and how often
- Methods for calculating volunteer hours
- Methods for calculating projected populations served
- Methods and theory applicable for data measurement
- If this work requires institutional review board (IRB) approval (e.g. research and experiments involving human beings) then please indicate whether you have obtained approval and explain why.

GROUP 5: PROJECT DEMOGRAPHICS/ORIENTATION/STATUS

Provide the following information about populations served by the project:
- Annual counts of population served (including number of people served)
- Specific race and ethnic populations served
- Served populations by geography/location
- Served populations by income/socioeconomic status
- Served populations by work/occupational status

- Served populations by gender identification
- Served populations by sexual orientation
- Served populations by disability status
- Served populations by veteran status
- Specific age groups served
- Total population counts (including number of people served)

GROUP 6: ALTERNATIVE SUPPORTS

Aside from financial assistance, what other resources, partnerships, or skill sets can be offered to support this work?

GROUP 7: HOW DID YOU HEAR OF US

Explain how you heard about the Foundation and why you have chosen to apply for funding here. Were you referred by another non-profit organization?

GROUP 8: HOW HAS COVID-19 IMPACTED YOUR WORK

Provide information on the ways in which COVID-19 has had an impact on your organization, your current projects, and anticipated future work.

GROUP 9: ORGANIZATIONAL BUDGETING, REVENUE PRACTICES, AND FORECASTS

Provide information on the following:
- Chief Finance Officer (CFO) and finance controller certifications, degrees, certifications, and/or any professional affiliations.
- The organization's IRS history/records, including 501c3 determination/EIN, 990, if applicable
- The organization's GuideStar Exchange participant level
- Any instances of fraud, malfeasance, or financial mismanagement in the past five years (including details on how they were managed and resolved, if applicable)
- Available non-monetary resources (e.g. in-kind support)
- Financial health (rate the condition of your finances, including strengths and challenges)
- Financial management structure (including information about both staff and processes that make this organization a good steward of resources)
- Financial expenses during the last fiscal year
- First and second most recently completed internal audits
- Fiscal sponsor details, including fees, contact information, and letter
- Funding allocation methods (e.g. overhead, staffing, or to project)
- Funding from external sources (e.g., federal, state, or city funding)
- Income and balance sheet
- Liability amount and insurance
- Number of trustees
- Recent major changes to financial circumstances (if any)

- Records of the organization's most recent budget and year-to-date budget
- Revenue
- Start and end dates for the organization's fiscal year
- Statement of revenue and expense for the most recently completed fiscal year
- The remaining number of months' worth of cash reserves still on hand
- The organization's current operating budget and expected annual operating budget for the next fiscal year
- The organization's long-term fundraising plan/plans for project sustainability
- Whether or not the organization is a registered Living Wage Employer
- Any other pertinent product budget details

GROUP 10: COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Share the following information about served communities and similar organizations:
- Beneficiaries of the project/services, also noting who are the primary beneficiaries
- Community involvement in project planning/implementation and/or decision-making
- Current collaborating organizations, contributions from these organizations, and which organizations are considered the most essential. Also indicate their roles in supporting your work.
- Planned/hoped for future collaborations
- Donor base details
- Other organizations involved in the same or similar work
- Prior collaborating organizations and their supporting roles.
- Served population experiences/issues and how they inform community outreach
- Specific community needs addressed by the organization, the root causes of these needs, and how they were identified
- The organization's engagement with volunteers
- Total number of volunteer hours

GROUP 11: REQUESTED GRANT FUNDING RELATED

Provide the following information relating to your application:
- Briefly and then in more detail describe why the grant is needed. For example, how did the project come to be and how, if funded, how might the work progress as it continues? What communities are involved and what opportunities exist?
- What of the foundation focus areas would this grant proposal be the best first for and why?
- Amount/funding tier applied for
- Type of grant requested
- Anticipated overall impact of the grant regarding your organization capabilities, if approved
- Requested grant start/end date; number of years applied for
- Descriptions of the types of things that the grant will be spent on/an itemized budget of planned grant spending
- Identify any grant funds intended for lobbying activities; if funds are identified then detail lobbying activities.
- Foundation priority groups that are the best match for the request
- Planned alternatives if the grant application is not approved

- Prior contact/interaction with the Foundation/specific Foundation staff; specify the expiration date if this application is related to replacing or renewing an existing grant
- Project-generated revenue (if applicable)
- Purpose of the application: project-specific or for general operating funding
- Resources dedicated to project support
- Sufficiency or insufficiency of the grant alone to support the project
- Any major changes in the organization over the past three years
- Things you hope to learn from this initiative if you receive funding
- If applicable, provide a signed cover letter from the CEO/Executive Director regarding this grant request.
- Project impacts/achievements within the past year
- Two main successes achieved for the project overall
- Strategies for meeting current and future organization/project goals
- Standards for gauging project success
- Any IP rights to be filed/generated for the project
- The timeline for the project

GROUP 12: TIME SPENT FILLING OUT THE FORM

Approximately how many hours did it take to complete this grant application?

GROUP 13: WHAT THE ORGANIZATION DOES

Along with any optional video uploads, share the following information about the organization and the project:
- Areas in which the organization conducts policy and advocacy efforts (if applicable)
- How the organization's work is planned to address both internal inequalities within the organization and external disparities within the served community
- The mission of the organization
- Project classification (e.g., arts & culture, community development, education, health, housing and shelter, public safety, etc.)
- The relationship of the project to the organization's mission
- The organization's geographic location
- The organization's current programs
- The organization's principles
- Racial equity approaches and economic impact guidelines followed for the project
- As an organization what populations and areas are a main focus?
- Do the organization policies align with Foundation nondiscrimination requirements
- How work done thus far demonstrates a commitment to racial equity
- Identified project impact areas
- Identified project challenges/risks (social, legal, financial, etc.) and mitigation efforts
- Anticipated scope of the project (including the size of the population served)
- Project impacts/achievements within the past year
- Two main successes achieved for the project overall
- Strategies for meeting current and future project goals
- Standards for gauging project success
- Strategies for ensuring continual improvement within the organization/project staff

- Any IP rights to be filed/generated for the project
- The timeline for the project

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RESEARCH CONDUCTED BY

Data analysis was conducted by data scientist Kwame Porter Robinson, a PhD student specializing in human interaction with artificial intelligence (HAII) and natural language understanding (NLU) at the University of Michigan's School of Information. In his four-part analysis, Robinson leveraged a combination of human-guided machine learning, clustering techniques, and corpus-based similarity analysis drawn from long standing semantic similarity and information retrieval research. You can find Robinson's scripts used in this analysis at https://github.com/TAG-repo/grantform-similarity.
Learn more about the process, methodology, and findings in the full report by Kwame Porter Robinson at https://www.tagtech.org/resource/resmgr/reports/TAG-GrantSimilarity-Analysis.pdf.

View the GitHub repository for this project at: https://github.com/TAG-repo/grantform-similarity/releases/tag/v1.0.0-alpha.

RESEARCH FUNDED BY