Office of Sponsored Programs

Westcliff University

Applying for
External Funding

Grant Basics

Grants and the development of them can seem daunting at first, but this packet should provide enough information to get you started. If you have questions along the way, you can always reach out to the OSP office at osp@westcliff.edu

What is a Grant?

A grant is not a loan, which means that you do not have to pay back the money (unless you do not meet aspects of compliance, which will be covered later in this document). However, it is also not free money. Grants are given to fund impact and those who give the grants want to make sure their money is being used for what it was intended and agreed to in the grant proposal. Thus, there is a process to managing the grant and accounting for how you have used the funds.

Who is Involved in the Grant Process?

The key players in the grant award process at Westcliff University include:

Principal Investigator (PI): The individual who will submit the project/program idea and be responsible for the implementation, management, and closure of the grant.

Co-Principal Investigator (CPI): The individual who assists the Principal Investigator in the development of the project/program, the grant preparation, and the grant management.

Grant Director (D): The individual who manages the OSP office, the grant writers, and interactions that must take place to keep the grant on track.

*Grant Writers (GW):* Individuals who help to put words to ideas in the grant proposal.

Financial Department (F): Curators of the independent cost center required to manage a grant.

Program Officer (PO): The contact person for a grant through the organization that is offering it.

Grant Lifecycle

A grant has a lifecycle, or phases that are involved throughout the duration of the grant. The image below will indicate each phase.
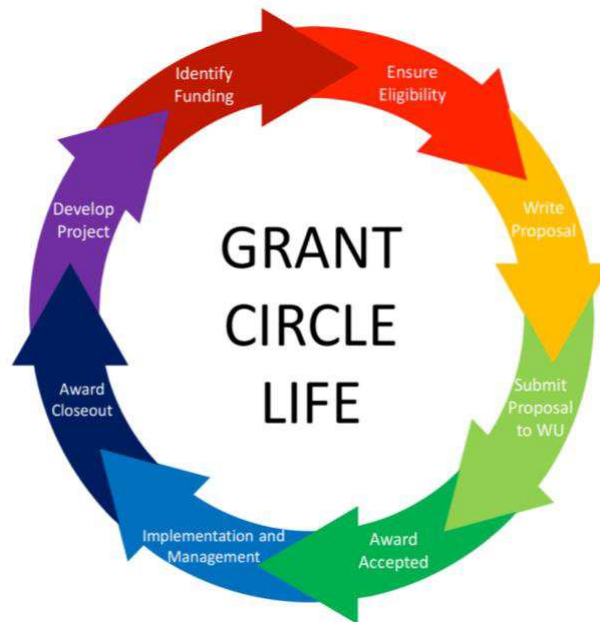
This will break down into three primary phases: (1) Pre-award, (2) Award; (3) Post-Award. In each phase you can expect the following:

Pre-Award:
- Generate the idea for the project/program
- Submit grant proposal clearance form to the OSP office
- Find eligible funding
- Write and submit the proposal

Award:
- Accept the award
- Implement and manage the award
- Track all necessary data
- Provide reports (as specified by the funder)

Post-Award:
- Finalize all documents
- Close all accounts
- Submit final report

What Do I Need to Start?

To begin, you need an idea. You need to start working on your project/program design or have a project/program that is already in place that you want to expand or add something new to. What you do not want to do is find a grant in a field that is similar to yours and create a grant proposal for that specific grant. This ends up being a waste of time and resources.
**To understand what is involved in a project/program design, please see section 3. (We recommend that you look through the project readiness checklist to get an idea of what to consider).

Funding

Funding Sources

Westcliff University is an Eligible Education Institution and holds the designation of a public benefit institution. When submitting for a grant, it will be done under the private institutions of higher education eligibility status.

The primary sources of funding include:

Federal Funding: Federal grants become available consistently throughout the year. All federal grants will be posted on https://www.grants.gov

State Funding: California has a series of grant opportunities that are available through the state government. To see a list of available grants, please visit https://www.grants.ca.gov

Local Funding: Grants may become available through foundations, corporations, or even the city of Irvine. The OSP can help you to identify these forms of funding.

Funding Types

There are various types of funding that you can receive, including, but not limited to:

Grants: Money that is given (and does not need to be paid back) to fund a specific project or program. Grantors want to contribute to making an impact, so the impact you designate for the project or program should be measurable and clear.

Competitive Grant: Competitive grants are those you have to compete with other organizations to receive. You will fill out an application, turn it in by the specified deadline, and wait to hear back about the results.

Continuation Grant: If you have received a grant in the past and its lifecycle has come to an end, you could have the opportunity to apply for a continuation grant (or a grant that allows you to continue your work with the same project/program).

Cooperative Agreements: Cooperative agreements are similar to grants in that you receive money to fund a project/program. However, the funder is expected to be more involved in the project itself. The terms will be stipulated prior to signing the agreement.

Sponsorships: Corporations may provide funding through sponsorships for events where they can market their company in some way at the event.

In-kind: In-kind refers to gifts or donations that are not in the form of money. They will either be a good or a service.

How to Find Funding
The OSP office is happy to help you search for funding. However, if you would like to look at options to fund your project/program on your own, please consider the following sites:
1) https://www.grants.gov
2) https://www.grants.ca.gov
3) https://grantstation.com
4) https://www.tgci.com

Eligibility Considerations
Prior to putting together a grant proposal, you must ensure that you are eligible for that grant (which ensures you are not wasting time and resources to put it together). A few aspects to check:
1) Geographic focus - Ensure the funder specifies that they will fund your area
2) Amount - Ensure you are not trying to fund a project/program that is extremely over the maximum amount the funder is willing to provide (they may feel that their contribution will not make a dent).
3) Activity type - Double-check that they are open to funding your activity type (capacity building./curriculum development/etc.)
4) Organization type - Verify the funder will fund the type of organization you run (for-profit, nonprofit, etc.)
5) Operating budget - Check to see if the funder requires your organization to have a minimum annual operating budget
6) Two additional aspects to consider carefully - (a) Do you have an evidence-based need? (b) Have you already shown proof that you can make an impact?

Project Design
It is crucial to have your project design ready to go before looking for grants. You need to know what you are doing, why you are doing it, and who you are doing it for before you will be able to find a grant to fit that initiative. (See our grant proposal readiness checklist and grant proposal clearance form for further assistance).

Statement of Need
This is key to show the purpose of your project/program. You will need to do research to complete this section. Look at what the evidence-based need is in the community/your context that your project/program is intending to address. Ensure that you research to see what others in your area are already doing to meet this need and identify how you will go about this in a unique way.

Examples (All information and statistics in the example is *fictional…*please just note the way in which it is organized)

Bad Example	Good Example
People are wasting a lot of food in Los Angeles. It is causing issues with global warming.	Los Angeles dumps over 1278,000 tons of food waste in landfills annually (Johnson, 2014). When food waste ends up in a landfill, it releases methane emissions. Methane emissions are "28 times more potent than carbon dioxide" and due to this potency, 8.2% of greenhouse emissions come from food waste (Deer, 2017). This is a worldwide problem that will continue to affect the global population. Due to the population of Los Angeles, a shift in waste regimen will have a direct impact on total waste in landfills. If we continue to emit the same amount of greenhouse gases, earth is projected to increase by 4 degrees Celsius per century. Eventually, this will make earth inhabitable (Smith, 2019).

Tips: Add statistics and peer-reviewed resources. Ensure you cover the what, the who, and the why in this statement on need.

Goals and Objectives

The main considerations when setting your goals and objectives are to make sure that you can attain them (you must hit your benchmarks to remain in compliance with your grant award), each of them are SMART (see below), and each of them are tied into your evaluation plan.

      S = Specific
      M = Measurable
      A = Attainable
      R = Realistic
      T = Time-bound

Project/Program Description

This will include the information regarding the activities that will take place (think step by step, when and by whom?). The activities should be measurable. You will want to create a timeline for these activities. Additionally, you will include the staff that will be involved, and the resources that will be needed.

Project Evaluation

Determine how you will evaluate if you are meeting your objectives and how effective this program/project was (or perhaps how much of an impact that it had).

Consider if you would like to collect qualitative, quantitative, or mixed data - after that determine how you will collect it (options include pre- and post-tests, retention rates, surveys, grades, and more). In this plan of evaluation, ensure you mention when the evaluations will be done and by whom.

Budget

In the budget, you must identify every aspect of the total costs for the budget. If you have funds being given to you from other sources (diversified funding), you can indicate that. However, the total costs also need to be represented. Note both direct and indirect costs here.

For this section, use a budget sheet (or a table) for a visual representation and then include a narrative that explains the rationale behind the cost or how you went about determining those figures.

Important: Know what you are asking for. If you need to rent equipment, call the company you wish to rent from and verify the cost before adding it to your budget request.

What are direct and indirect costs?

>***Direct costs*** = Costs that are directly associated with your program/project, such as the equipment that you need, the transportation it involves, the staff you must have present, etc.

>***Indirect costs*** = These are costs that are incurred but may be shared with other departments or organizations. This includes things like electricity to use a building, money allocated to the rent of the building, etc.

Grant Proposals

Grant Sections

Typically, the sections of a grant include:
  (1) Executive Summary
  (2) Organization Background/Information
  (3) Statement of Need
  (4) Project Description
  (5) Budget
  (6) Evaluation Plan
  (7) Sustainability Plan

For some grants, you may be asked to write a Letter of Inquiry (LOI). In an LOI, you will incorporate:
  (1) Summary Statement (Introduction)
  (2) Organization Background
  (3) Purpose of Project/Program
  (4) Project Design
  (5) Budget

What's the Difference Between the LOI and the Grant Proposal?

LOI	Grant Proposal
Short (1-3 pages)	Expanded (can be 15-25 pages)
Offers a brief idea to funders of your project so they can tell you if they want to fund it before you put your time into a full proposal	Extensive depiction of your project idea put together in hopes of getting funded
Each aspect of the LOI that you include should be 2-4 sentences at most (written like a letter)	Each aspect of the grant proposal is written about in depth and has subheadings throughout

Tips for Writing Grants

Writing grants is not for everyone, and that's why the OSP office is here to support you throughout the process! We will assist with the writing portion of the grant, but we encourage you to keep in mind, even a perfectly written proposal does not mean that you will get funded. There are many factors that are involved in the decision making process so mitigate your expectations.

(1) Write in active voice
(2) Do not use program/project interchangeably (a program is that which happens consistently; a project has a start and end date)
(3) Ensure you have no errors
(4) Write in plain English
(5) Use engaging, clear language
(6) Create a story
(7) Be careful about being too specific (do not lock yourself into something should your situation change - an example would be using the word 'transportation' in the budget instead of 'airfare' in case you need to adapt and use a different mode of transportation).l

Scoring of Grants

You can check your grant to see how those who are funding it will be scoring. However, typically, the scoring will follow a process similar to this.

(1) *Initial Review:* At this stage, the grant application will be reviewed for completion, eligibility, and other basic requirements.
(2) *Programmatic Review:* At this stage, the grant application will be reviewed in more depth to determine a 'score' based on quality, alignment with their mission/vision, and more. Each section will be allocated a certain amount of points, very similar to how we use a rubric in education.
(3) *Budget Review:* A cost analysis may be conducted to ensure your budget is in compliance with standards and is accurate.

Expectations for Acquiring Grants

Acquiring a grant is not just about submitting a quality proposal that is well written and compelling, it is also about the funder's priorities, geographic focus, passion, and the initiative's potential impact. While grant writers can help with the quality control, a lot of the reasons that grants are awarded or not fall outside of the control of the grant writers.

- Grants can take a long time to acquire - this can even surpass 12 months in some cases (primarily with federal funding). Overall, plan ahead.
- Try to go into the grant process expecting to never get a grant. When you do get one, you will celebrate! Though, obtaining funding can be challenging.

Post-Award Management

Expenditures and Finances

After a grant is awarded, the PI, CPI and finance department will be required to track all spending and expenditures.

Federal and state grants typically use Time and Effort Reporting Sheets. Foundation grants typically use alternative budgeting sheets. Regardless of the sheet used, strict detail and attention must be paid to completing these documents. They will be used within the reports that are typically requested throughout the grant lifecycle.

At Westcliff University

When your grant is awarded, the Financial department will set up an independent cost center for your grant. To request or use funds, you will need to **submit a request** and have the finance director and the OSP director sign off on the amount and purpose for it. *Important note:* If anything in your budget or program changes, you must seek approval from your donor before using the money. (If you do not remain in compliance with the way in which you are using your funding, you may be required to repay the entire sum).

Milestones and Benchmarks

In your grant application, you outlined milestones and benchmarks that correlate with your plan of evaluation. In each report that you are required to submit to your donor (frequency and timing of these reports vary by donor), you will indicate if you have met these benchmarks and provide data to evidence this. If you are not meeting benchmarks, your funding may be required to be repaid.

Reporting Requirements

As mentioned above, many times, donors require reports throughout the life of the grant to ensure you are making progress, using their funds the way in which you stipulated, and are getting updates on the impact their funding is making. Be prepared to track data, keep updated budgeting sheets, gather stories, photos, or quotes from your participants (consent required),

and remain vigilant with how you are proving that you are meeting the benchmarks and objectives you set for your program/project.

What if I Need Help?

The OSP office is here to help you, but you will still need to designate a PI and a CPI. You must have a clear plan for your project/program and be willing to put the time into ensuring that your project is of quality and has clarity. While we can help to flush out your idea, we will not develop your idea for you.

Can I Forward a Grant to the OSP Office?

Yes and no. You may tell us that you found a funding opportunity and ask us to verify if you are eligible for that funding, but you cannot forward us a grant and ask us to fill it out for you. You must have a grant proposal clearance form submitted and signed before we can help you in the process.

What If I Need to Rush the Grant Application?

Your application will be considered at risk. We do not place overtime hours on our grant writers or anyone else involved because a grant request was submitted late. We do not accept responsibility for missing a grant deadline should the grant requests not be submitted before the deadlines we specified on the website.