



Grants Tip Sheet # 1

Developing Your Project

Do Your Homework

- The first step in developing a project is to identify the issue or issues involved. What is the situation you want to address? Identify the need for the project, its costs, and the archival procedures to be used. Once you do your research, you are in a better position to decide on the best solution.
- **Review Your Core Documents**
 - Use your mission statement, long range or strategic plan, collections policy and other policy documents as guides when selecting your project. Ask yourself, “Which areas have high priority in your organization?” Find a project that will further your mission and make a real difference to your organization.
- **Seek Institutional Support**
 - Be sure you have the full commitment of your organization before writing your application. This will ensure support for your project at all levels, a focused application that is not too wide ranging, and a project that is right for you.
- **Talk With Others**
 - Identify the issues at hand and analyze your needs by consulting with others including:
 - + Your board, staff, and volunteers
 - + Interested community members and potential stakeholders
 - + Staff of past grant recipients in repositories similar to yours - this will provide you with information on common pitfalls and unexpected benefits of the type of project you are contemplating.
 - + Don’t forget to consult with your DHP Grants Officer (Phone: 518-474-6926, Email: dhs@mail.nysed.gov). This may save you time and money by insuring your project is appropriate. The DHP Grants Officer can also direct you to specialists, provide new perspectives, and point out the pros and cons of various solutions.

Scope and Scale of Your Project

- Look for a project, or a phase of a project, that is “doable” in one year or less.
- Often projects don’t always run as smoothly as expected, so it’s a good idea to build in a little time in case something doesn’t go according to plan.

- Also consider that, although the tentative date for award announcements is June 30th, for 2001-2010 grants it was early October before awards were announced, and funding didn't start until late November. Keep this in mind as you develop your application. It could be that you may not have a full calendar year to carry out your project.
- Is the size of the project realistic? Can it be broken down into several parts? While the DHP can fund only year-by-year, many projects take two or three years to complete. Break larger projects into clearly defined phases that can be accomplished in a year.

Think Strategically

- Is there a topic, population group or event which you think should be included in New York's historical record?
- Do you have a project that is difficult to achieve with your current resources, but could be accomplished if you had additional resources? Are there priority projects that have been delayed due to lack of resources?
- Do you have the capacity to take on a project at this time? For example, you would not want to start a project to collect large amounts of records if the capacity of your storage space is too small, or if it doesn't meet environmental standards. Or, you would not want to start a project that requires a lot of oversight by staff if you are in the process of downsizing.

Document the Process

- Keep good notes while you are developing your project. They can be used as a "jumping off point" when you sit down to write your proposal and, depending on how thorough you've been, can provide you with a detailed outline for your application narrative.

Is This the Right Grant for You?

- The work of your project must follow standard archival practice. Do you have the capacity to follow this requirement?
- DHP grants require cost sharing. Are you prepared to make the requisite match (20% for Documentation and 50% for Arrangement and Description projects)?
- Go over eligibility criteria and be sure your proposal is for either Documentation- or Arrangement & Description-type projects.
- For Arrangement & Description proposals: Do you have custody of the collection(s)? Are you able to regularly provide public access to the collection(s)?