There are many excellent resources online and in print on how to prepare a grant proposal. This section provides links to search databases, as well as information on common elements of the application process.

Research
Whether your proposal receives funding will depend in large part on whether your purpose and goals closely match the priorities of granting agencies. Thorough research is the first step in creating a successful grant application. It is a good idea to begin your research six months before creating your application. Extensive resources for researching funding opportunities can be found online through grant-oriented websites and databases. The Grant Opportunities page includes links to several funding websites. In addition, MassArt subscribes to the Foundation Center's directory online (one of the most comprehensive resources for identifying funding prospects), as well as Associated Grant Makers of Massachusetts (AGM) which focuses on local funders. To gain access to either online database using MassArt's ID, contact the Director of Institutional Grants.

Each funder has a unique mission, set of funding goals, and operating process, and it is important to be aware of them before you write your proposal. Your proposal must meet the funder's guidelines for geographic location, funding interest, population served, type of funding, etc. Additional guidance in researching grantmakers can be found in the Proposal Development Resources section below, as well as in the Grant Opportunities section of this site.

It is important to keep in mind that because relationships are often critical to success in fundraising, the importance of communicating with a prospective or current donor/foundation can be a determining factor as to whether or not a grant is awarded or renewed. MassArt's grants office can work with you to contact foundations and will make suggestions of how best to keep donors aware of a project they may have funded.

Michigan State University
http://staff.lib.msu.edu/harris23/grants/3music.htm
Contains a music grant database that lists many funding sources.
Applying for a grant
A well-written grant application fulfills all the requirements requested by the funder and clearly explains how grant money will be used. Some funders provide templates for applicants and others accept standard formats such as the Associated Grant Makers Common Proposal Form (see below), but all funders will provide a list of application requirements and deadlines and these must be closely followed.

Letter of Intent
Depending on the funder's application process, a Letter of Intent (Letter of Inquiry) can serve several purposes. Some grant makers require a letter of intent to determine if a full proposal is of interest; such a letter is critical if the applicant hopes to move to the next stage of the process. For other grant makers, a letter of intent replaces the longer full-proposal format, saving time for both the applicant and the funder. Sometimes a letter of intent is the first part of the funder's grant application process and can provide applicants with the opportunity to obtain initial feedback for the full proposal. Occasionally a letter of intent is optional.
If the grant maker does not specify exact criteria for a letter of intent, it should be no longer than two-to-four pages and include summaries of the following:

- Introduction/Overview
- Goals and Objectives
- Need
- Alignment of project with grant maker's areas of interest
- Credentials of person/staff responsible for carrying out the project, and prospective collaborators
- Budget summary with estimate of total project cost and the amount requested.
Common Proposal Elements

Cover Letter
A cover letter is written in the format of a business letter and should be no more than one page in length. The primary purpose of the cover letter is to indicate MassArt’s institutional support, summarize the project, and state the amount being requested and institutional commitment. A cover letter is also an opportunity to include incidental information about the institution or project that might not fit into the proposal narrative. Cover letters are usually drafted by the grants office and signed by the president of the college.

Cover Page
The cover page, typically a form provided by the funder, is the first page of an application and provides a reference and summary for the reviewers. A cover page contains basic information about the applicant including name, address, contact information, institutional mission, and amount requested, and often includes a 2-3 sentence description of the project.

Proposal Narrative
The proposal narrative is a well-organized, detailed description of the need for and intended goals, activities, and outcomes of the project. The narrative also includes the background and capacity of the institution, demographic information on the target audience, qualifications of the project leader and staff, and evaluation process. A proposal narrative should not be considered an exercise in creative writing; the goal is to clearly and thoroughly answer each of the funder’s questions in the order in which the questions are asked.

The proposal should be formatted to make it easy to read with headings that break the narrative into sections. The proposal narrative should explain in detail the need for the project (the problem or opportunity), the proposed solution(s), goals and outcomes, and explain how the project results will be evaluated. The narrative should correspond to the enclosed budget and to a separate project timeline if one is required. It is important to point out how the project is aligned with the grant maker’s mission and goals. Standard descriptions of and demographic information specific to MassArt, along with sources for information on Boston and city neighborhoods such as Mission Hill, can be found in the MassArt and Metro Boston Information section.

It is a good idea to start writing your narrative early and to leave time to get comments and suggestions from several readers on different drafts. As you write, it may help to put yourself in the place of the panelist/program director/other reviewer who is reading your application--an individual who
may have no understanding of your project and little familiarity with MassArt or Boston. Show that you have researched your project topic and are well-informed, and use clear, concise language that is interesting but direct. Find a way to make your proposal compelling and eye-catching, perhaps in terms of need, timing, or your innovative approach to a problem or opportunity.

**Attachments**

Institutional grant proposals requesting funding usually require attachments that include legal and financial information prepared on behalf of an institution. (Grants to individuals will have different requirements.) The most commonly required legal and financial attachments are:

- Internal Revenue Service letter confirming tax-exempt 501(c)(3) status
- Current board list with relevant background affiliations
- Financial information
- Organizational budget for requested fiscal year(s)
- Project budget
- Most recent independent audit or account review
- Year-to-date budget information for current fiscal year
- Project budget
- Most recent independent audit or account review
- Year-to-date budget information for current fiscal year
- Additional attachments such as diversity information forms, IRS form 990, or resumes may also be required.
- Endorsement letter from an individual who is knowledgeable about your work and may be a stakeholder in your project. The letter is often drafted by the grant writer or project coordinator and signed by the endorsing individual and written on his/her letterhead. Letters of support must be requested early in the process; if the letter is being requested from someone in the Boston community, Robert Chambers, Assistant to the President for Government and Community Relations, should be notified in advance and may assist with the contact.

Many funders allow the addition of materials that provide more background information on your project and institution. The inclusion of a separate page that lists the contents of the Attachments section is a good way to give funders an overview of all the documents that are contained in the section.

**Budgets**

A budget is an estimated financial plan for a project and a key component of your proposal for reviewers. A budget should include an estimate of expenses
as well as anticipated cash and in-kind income and the sources of each. The budget may be as simple as a one-page statement of projected revenue and expenses or your proposal may require a more complex presentation, perhaps including projected support and notes explaining various expense or revenue items. In addition to the information below, the Foundation Center provides a free online tutorial, Proposal Budgeting Basics: Proposal Budgeting Basics.

**EXPENSES** A budget should delineate specific expenses to be charged in detail under a column labeled "Expenses". The categories below indicate direct project costs typically found in institutional budgets:

**Personnel:** The costs of staffing the program. In an institutional grant application, staff listed in this section will include in-kind or donated time by current college employees and can include individuals hired specifically for the project who will become MassArt employees as a result of the project. Staff wages are based on a percentage of annual salary and can be stated as FTE, such as half-time can be shown as 0.50 FTE (full-time equivalent). If the staff member's time is presented as an hourly wage, the cost calculations should be shown as the breakdown of wage x hours x weeks, such as: $10.00 per hour x 40 hours per week x 52 weeks = $20,800.

**Fringe Benefits:** Fringe benefits are those taxes and benefits that the employer must pay for an employee and are calculated on base salary. MassArt fringe benefit rates are determined annually by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The FY2012 fringe rate at MassArt is 35%. Fringe benefits that are required by law include FICA (Social Security and Medicare), FUTA (Federal Unemployment Taxes/Insurance), SUTA or SUI (State Unemployment Taxes/Insurance), and Worker’s Compensation (on-the-job accident insurance). Other benefits include medical insurance and paid sick leave.

**Contracted Staff:** The costs of subcontracted personnel such as consultants, guest artists, researchers, evaluators, videographers and others who are not employed by MassArt. This figure may be shown as a contracted fee or an hourly or weekly rate.

**Travel:** Travel expenses may include the cost of individuals attending symposia or conferences and cost of student buses, MBTA passes, etc. Often included in a proposal budget, travel costs need a clear rationale
and description. Include the cost and number of buses, number of trips, for example, or the rationale and costs for a plane ticket, hotel and number of nights.

**Supplies, materials, and equipment:** This category may include art, digital, and other project supplies, promotional handouts, meeting supplies, installation materials, and necessary equipment. Some line-items may be included as in-kind donations. If the design and printing of promotional materials is a big ticket item, this should be included separately.

**Other Direct Costs:** Funders often provide this opportunity to add items needed for the project but not corresponding to other categories, such as web design, receptions, or other miscellaneous expenses. Be sure to check specific budget guidelines to see if the funder permits the costs of refreshments or food in the budget; some do not.

**Indirect Costs:** All categories above refer to the direct costs of a project. Indirect costs for a project ("overhead") are costs associated with administration and facilities, such as office, classroom and exhibition spaces and services provided by the college. In many universities, an indirect cost rate (a percentage of total direct costs that can be reimbursed by a funding source if an indirect cost rate has been negotiated and approved by the grantor) is negotiated periodically with the federal government to be included in grant proposal budgets. MassArt does not currently have a federally-negotiated indirect cost rate; however if indirect costs are allowed by the funder, a percentage of direct project costs can often be included in the budget. If an indirect cost is allowed, the rate needs to be discussed and approved by the project coordinator and the grants office. When institutional negotiations for a federally-approved indirect cost rate are concluded, that rate will be added to this page.

**INCOME.** The amount of money anticipated to cover the expenses should be listed in a separate column labeled Income. The total of the Income column should be equal to or more than the total of the Expenses column. Included under Income is a list of all the foundations and agencies being approached to fund the project with dollar amounts requested as well as a notation indicating which sources are committed, pending, or anticipated (if a proposal has not yet been submitted). It is also important to list any in-kind donations, which may be in the form of personal or staff time, space, or materials, etc, in both the Expenses and Income columns.
Many institutional grant funders will ask a question in the narrative about the project’s sustainability; that is, how the project will be funded after the grant funds are gone. The budget can reinforce a response such as "continued fund-raising efforts" or "revenue-generating activities" by including such items in the revenues section if they are relevant. Both personal and institutional proposals are strengthened in the eyes of a funder if the project is supported—or may be supported by several other funders and if there are in-kind donors, including MassArt itself.

**Budget Narrative**
Some institutional funders, particularly federal government agencies, require a budget narrative (or budget justification). The budget narrative serves as an explanation by providing more details on expenses itemized in the budget and tightly connects those expenses to the needs outlined in the project narrative. A budget narrative can be presented either as notes to the budget or on a separate page (see sample below).

**Sample Budget Templates**
These sample budget templates may be useful for both institutional and personal grant applications.
- Sample Project Budget Template (PDF)
- Sample Budget Narrative (PDF)
- Personal Grant Budget Template (PDF)

**Proposal Development Resources** Although not a comprehensive list of resources, these links are intended to help start your research. We encourage you to research other sources and to send us your findings to be added to this site for other users.

**Associated Grant Makers Common Proposal Form** (website) This form was developed to make the grant application process easier for both grant makers and grant seekers. The purpose is to provide a grant proposal format that is commonly accepted and consistent for grant application review processes. For a list of grant makers who accept the common proposal form, visit the AGM website.

**Seven Frequent Errors in Proposal Writing** (website) Helpful tips on mistakes to avoid when writing a grant proposal.

**Online Proposal Writing Course from the Foundation Center** (website) The Foundation Center provides an online short course designed to assist you in creating successful grant proposals. The course is free and can be completed at your convenience.
Tech Soup: An Introduction to Grant Reports (website): Tips and tools for preparing reports for your funders.

Writing a budget for an art project (PDF)