



2025-2026 Beginner's Guide for Grassroots Groups on Obtaining Funding

Created By: Atlanta Grassroots Foundation

This guide serves as a basic framework for positioning an initiative for funding success. This guide provides basic steps to develop your program and secure funding and other resources. For more comprehensive, step-by-step instructions on developing programs and securing funding, consider joining our cohort in Spring 2026 by completing the contact form [here](#).

Developing Your Project/Program

To secure funding, you first must develop your idea. Is it a long-term program or a one-time project? Build out your program/project so that it is ready to pitch.

1. Identify the Problem

- What issue(s) are you trying to solve?
- How will your idea/proposed solution solve this problem?
- Who are the individuals, locations, or entities affected by this issue?
- Who will your project/program serve? Include demographics (Race, income, etc.)
- Where (location) will your services be implemented? **NOTE: Be realistic, we can't save the entire state of GA in the start-up stage. Focus on one area and include your vision to expand to the whole state of GA.**

2. Research/Evidence

- Research similar programs/projects that have been done.
- Use established resources/data to support your problem statement (census bureau, academic journals, and news sites). **NOTE: Several credible journals and sites charge fees to access research/data. By utilizing your public library or library card, you can access these resources for free.**
- Try to pull data no older than 5 years old.
- If no data is available, create your own data by developing a survey or focus group amongst your target population or area. Offer food, gift cards, or raffle entries to gain more participants.

3. Solution

- Clearly identify your proposed solution to your problem. This is your project or program.

- Ensure it's realistic and achievable. For example, you may not be able to eliminate 100% of the pollution in your community with this project; however, you can reduce pollution by focusing on a major issue, such as litter, and propose hosting monthly neighborhood clean-ups.
4. Goals/Objectives/Outcomes:
- a. Goals
 - What do you want to achieve with this project or program?
 - Make broad statements. *Example: All residents in the Pittsburgh community will have access to safe and clean parks.*
 - b. Objectives
 - How will you know you are meeting these goals?
 - What are the steps you have to take to meet these goals? You can have multiple objectives for one goal.
 - Are they SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound)
 - *Example: Within 2 years, all three parks in the Pittsburgh Community will receive new playground and lounging equipment.*
 - *Example: Within 2 years, six park bathrooms in the Pittsburgh Community will be renovated with new safety features that include emergency call buttons, super bright LED lighting, non-slip floors, and enhanced ventilation.*
 - c. Outcomes
 - What are the projected changes or results you expect to see based on the work from your project or program?
 - *Example: In the next 2 years, all three Pittsburgh Community Parks will see an increase in use by 90%.*
 - *Example: In the next 2 years, all three Pittsburgh Community Parks will see a 50% decrease in crime.*
5. Budget
- What is the estimated cost to implement your program/project?
 - What resources/support do you need? Example, ten volunteers a month.
 - What resources/support do you already have or will likely have to carry out the activities in your project/program?
 - All of these factors should be built into your budget.
- a. **Building your Budget**
- i. List your expenses (research realistic prices).
 - ii. List your income. This can be projected income and In-kind support.
 - Projected Income: Are you in the final round for a grant award? Do you plan on collecting dues or membership fees?
 - Examples of In-Kind Support (Volunteer labor, free building space provided by your neighborhood church, donations of supplies from the local hardware store, etc.)

Finding Funding Opportunities

Finding funding is a job of its own. The following are some effective methods to find funding opportunities. You can also visit our resource page [here](#) to get a headstart.

Grant Search Engines: Candid (free at select Atlanta Public Libraries), GrantWatch, grants.gov, etc.

Social Media: LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram.

Follow foundations and Grantmaking organizations on social media. They often share/post funding opportunities.

Subscribe: Subscribe to Foundations/Grantmaking organizations and Grant search engines listervs and Newsletters.

You can receive emails when funding opportunities become available.

Fellowships: Fellowships/Cohorts are great opportunities for non-501c3 organizations to obtain funding and support for their projects/ideas.

In addition to funding, you also receive coaching, additional resources, and a chance to network with valuable people/organizations.

Relationship Build: A high percentage of grants are awarded by invitation only rather than through open call applications.

Get to know the key stakeholders and organizations in your community/city.

Examples of Engagement: Invite them to your group or community meetings and events. Attend their conferences, meetings, and events that are open to the community. Request a meeting with their program staff to share your work.

By building a relationship with these specific people, you can be recommended for grants through their networks or receive funding directly from them.

Applying for Funding

There's a lot that goes into writing a grant proposal/completing an application. Here are a few steps/pointers to get you started. However, by completing the steps listed under the **Developing your Project/Program** section, you can limit the amount of time spent working on your application by almost 50%.

Grant Applications

1. Research the funder
 - What are their subjects of focus?
 - What areas/programs do they fund?
 - What are their grant guidelines/eligibility requirements?
2. Research who was funded
 - Most organizations will post their grantees/projects funded on their websites.
 - Research these organizations and review the projects.
3. Writing
 - For applications with specific questions, **make sure you are answering the questions!**
 - Adjust the language in your proposal to align more closely with the funder. **NOTE: This does not mean changing your entire project/program to appease the funder's needs. Always stay true to your mission.**
 - *Example: Your project addresses food insecurities in your community by providing a weekly food pantry, community garden, and boxed lunches for children in the summer. The funder you are applying to for a grant only funds youth-focused projects. Therefore, you can increase your likelihood of being funded by focusing your proposal solely on the boxed lunch program or emphasizing the number of youth served through your other programs.*
 - Draft your responses in Microsoft Word or use grammar tools such as Grammarly to proofread your responses. **NOTE: We personally advise against using AI/Chat GPT tools. Keep your work authentic and from the source.**

Relevant/Other Steps

1. Partnerships
 - Partnering with already established organizations and groups is a strategic way to obtain funding and resources.
 - You can co-write a proposal, listing both groups as partners, and allocate funds to go towards both groups/organizations.
 - You can also collaborate on projects, cutting down costs and labor. Example partners can be: churches, neighborhood associations, and other nonprofits/groups in your community with similar missions.
2. Fiscal Sponsorship
 - As a grassroots organization in the start-up stage, you most likely won't obtain 501 (c) (3) status until establishing a track record and the infrastructure to manage and receive grant funding (bank account, officers, etc.).

- Fiscal sponsorship is when an established agency collects and disburses financing on your behalf. Some Fiscal Sponsorships offer additional services such as staff, HR services, etc.
 - Most agencies charge a fee for this service. You can request that fee be covered from grant funds and donations received (as long as the grant terms allow).
 - Examples of organizations to ask to be your fiscal sponsor:
 - a. Your Neighborhood Association (if they have 501 (c)(3) status)
 - b. Organizations aligned with your mission
 - c. Organizations operating in your specific community/neighborhood
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Individual Donations/Donors & Sponsorship

Building support through individuals, partners, and sponsorships is one of the most lucrative funding sources for both grassroots and established organizations.

Soliciting Individual Donations

1. Identify Donors
 - Seek out individuals who are connected to your work and passionate about what you are doing.
 - Ask neighbors, churches, friends, and family members to donate to your cause. Donations can be monetary or physical goods.
 - Maintain a donor list in an Excel sheet with contact information and giving history.
2. Engaging Donors
 - Always send a thank you letter after a donation has been received. **Note: If fiscally sponsored, you can provide tax write-offs for donors/sponsors using the fiscal sponsor's tax ID. Include this information in your thank-you letter.**
 - Maintain contact with these individuals periodically by sending emails with updates on the progress or outcomes of your project/program (include pictures and stories on the impact your work is making). These updates can be in the form of Newsletters or a simple email. Maichimp offers a free platform with limitations to create newsletters, and Microsoft Word also has templates you can edit and save as a PDF to share.
 - If you have the capacity, utilize social media to keep them engaged by asking them to follow your pages.

Sponsorship

1. Identify Businesses
 - Ask local businesses to sponsor your events/projects through monetary donations or goods.
 - Not all corporate organizations will require you to have a 501 (c) (3) status to support your efforts. Start small by soliciting sponsorship from small, local businesses such as mom & pop hardware stores, restaurants, and corner stores.
 - For example, if you are hosting a neighborhood clean-up, reach out to the local corner store or hardware store for support. They can donate items like beverages, gloves, and

trash bags, among others.

- In exchange for their support, you would promote the organization on your flyers and other marketing materials, allow them to use their branding or have vendor space at your event, and thank them on social media and in your newsletter.

NOTE: Not all money is good money. Please do your research on the individuals and the businesses/owners before requesting their support. Some individuals and businesses proudly support policies, people, and activities that don't align with your mission and work.

Examples

The following is an example donation request and thank you letter.

October 1, 2025
Name of Business
Street
City, State, Zip

Dear Business,

In this paragraph, introduce yourself, project/program (You can state your mission, a brief history of your project/program, and who you are). Example: The Mocha Hills Beautification Project was founded in 2024. We strive to support the residents of Mocha Hills by maintaining an environment that is clean, safe, and healthy for all. Some of our many initiatives include neighborhood clean-ups, community block parties, and advocacy on behalf of the community and residents for safer/cleaner streets.

In this paragraph, share details about the specific event or initiative you are looking for support for (Include the Date, Activities, etc). Example: The Mocha Hills Beautification Project hosts several events to engage residents and support our community. One of our main activities is monthly neighborhood clean-ups. **On Saturday, November 1,** Mocha Hills Beautification Project will host our largest clean up covering two of the longest in distance and most littered streets in our neighborhood. Our goal is to remove months' worth of debris, overgrowth, and plant flowers in underutilized green spaces.

In this paragraph, state your reason for writing this letter and list out your specific ask. If you are fiscally sponsored or have 501 (c) (3) status, state that here (example: your donation is tax-deductible). End with a thank you. Example: We are contacting our neighborhood hardware store to further support the beautification of our neighborhood by providing gardening/yard supplies for our 20 volunteers participating in our monthly neighborhood clean-ups. Furthermore, we request a donation of trash bags, trash pickers, gloves, yard bags, and flower seeds.

Kind Regards,

Your name
Title, Organization
Cell:
Email

Date

Name of Individual/Business
Street
City, State, Zip

Dear Individual/Business,

In this paragraph, thank them for their support (State what kind of support/amount and date received). Example: Thank you for supporting our annual back-to-school bash. We received your contribution of \$1,000.00 on MM/DD/YYYY.

In this paragraph, reiterate the impact their donation made. With your support, Youth Initiatives was able to provide fifty youth with backpacks to start the school year. Your donation is a testament to the positive change we can bring together in the Mocha Hills Community. It helps us continue our essential work by uplifting and supporting our youth and future leaders, equipping them with the tools, supplies, and mentorship they need to thrive.

In this paragraph, reassure the donors about the transparency of the donation process. Assure that you adhere to all federal and state regulations for receiving donations for your type of entity (501 (c) (3), fiscal sponsorship, etc.). This information can be found on the IRS website.

In this section, thank them again and leave a closing note asking them to contact you with any questions or issues. Example, we value your support and would be happy to assist you with any questions or concerns you may have.

Kind Regards,

Signature

Your name

Title, Organization