

Quick Guide: What Is the Typical Grant Process?

ARCVI Domain: Finding and Sustaining Funding

A guide for community violence intervention (CVI) programs

Not every grant starts with a full proposal. Always read the funder's process, eligibility rules, and due dates carefully. Below are common steps and what they usually mean.



1. Before You Apply for a Grant

Before you write anything, make sure the opportunity is a good fit.

- Check fit: Does the funder support your issue area, geography, and target population?
- Gather basics: EIN, nonprofit status or fiscal sponsor, key staff bios, budget, and recent program data.
- Watch deadlines: Note required forms, attachments, and whether pre-registration is required.
- For CVI programs: Be ready to explain who you serve, why they are high-risk, and how your program improves safety and stability.

Tip: A strong application starts before the writing. Good documents, clean data, and clear roles save time later.



2. Letter of Inquiry (LOI) / Letter of Intent

Many funders use an LOI to screen applicants before inviting a full proposal. Think of it as a first conversation.

- Usually short: often 1-3 pages or an online form
- Introduces your organization and the problem you are addressing
- Look for funder specifics for LOI. Usually, you will need to briefly describes your program, the amount requested, and why you are a good fit. If you have a logic model, this is a good place to show it (paste in image as very small graphic)
- Craft this LOI to directly fit their request!

What funders look for: Clear need. Strong fit with priorities. Capacity to carry out the work.



3. Request for Applications (RFA) / Request for Proposals (RFP)

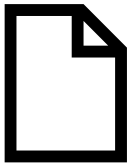
This is the formal announcement from a funder or government agency inviting organizations to apply for specific funding.

- What will be funded
- Who is eligible
- What the application must include
- How much funding is available
- The deadline and submission method
- Special rules, such as match requirements, reimbursement, or reporting expectations

CVI Grant Tip: Funders often want to see strong partnerships, trauma-informed services, credible staffing, and a clear plan for tracking participant and community outcomes.

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After an LOI or RFP comes the full proposal, followed by review, award, and reporting. Here is what to expect next.



4. Full Grant Proposal

This is the complete application. Depending on the funder, it may be 5 pages or 30+ pages.

- Organizational background
- Statement of need for those served and related to your program’s theory of change
- Program narrative: what you will do, who you will serve, where you will do it, and why it matters
- Goals, outcomes, and work plan (include staffing to match work plan)
- Evaluation or performance measurement plan
- Budget and budget justification
- Organizational financials and attachments

CVI proposal tip: Be concrete. Explain your outreach or case management model, staffing plan, partnerships, and how you will track participant and community outcomes.



5. Review and Award

Once submitted, the application is reviewed by funder staff or outside reviewers. Some funders may ask follow-up questions or request a revised budget.

- Reviewers look for fit, readiness, feasibility, and a realistic budget
- They may also look at evidence, partnerships, staffing, and sustainability
- Some applications include interviews, presentations, or site visits
- If awarded, read the grant agreement carefully before signing

Know before you accept: Start and end dates. Reporting schedule. Allowable costs. Payment method: reimbursement or advance.



6. Post-Award: Reporting and Grant Management

Winning the grant is only the beginning. Good grant management helps protect funding and build trust with funders.

- Track spending and save documentation
- Collect the data promised in your proposal
- Submit reports and invoices on time
- Communicate early if timelines, staffing, or goals change
- Use what you learn to improve the program and strengthen future applications

Warning: Reimbursement grants can create cash-flow stress. Make a plan before the grant starts.

Common mistakes to avoid ❖ Missing attachments ❖ Ignoring funder instructions ❖ Vague goals or outcomes ❖ Unclear budget ❖ Waiting until the last minute	Quick checklist before you submit ✓ Is the application complete? ✓ Did someone else besides you proofread it? ✓ Does the budget match the narrative? ✓ Are partner letters included? ✓ Did you submit at least a few hours before the deadline?
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