

Tips for a Successful Grant Application

Getting Organized

- Carefully read the *Application Guidance* and *Program Guidelines* to determine if your project is eligible and a good fit for this grant source.
- Review the countywide significance requirement and *Scoring Criteria* to ensure that your project will compete well.
- Read through the *Application* and determine the required materials for submitting an application, so that you will have adequate time to assemble them.
- Allot a reasonable amount of time to prepare the application.
- Review successful grants to use as models.
- Contact the Countywide Bicycle/Pedestrian Coordinator to discuss your project and receive early feedback.
- Ensure your organization, if a nonprofit, meets the ACTIA nonprofit organizational requirements.
- Round up support for your project, if you haven't already received it.

Planning for the Application

- Before you fill out the application, determine why you believe ACTIA should fund your particular project.
- Consider these questions:
 - How will your project achieve the grant program goals?
 - How will this project help to implement the priorities in the Countywide Pedestrian and Bicycle Plans?
 - Why is this project important for Alameda County as a whole, and not just the local community?
 - What transportation barriers or problems does your project solve?
 - What goals and benefits do you intend to achieve through this project?
 - Why should ACTIA fund your project instead of another project?

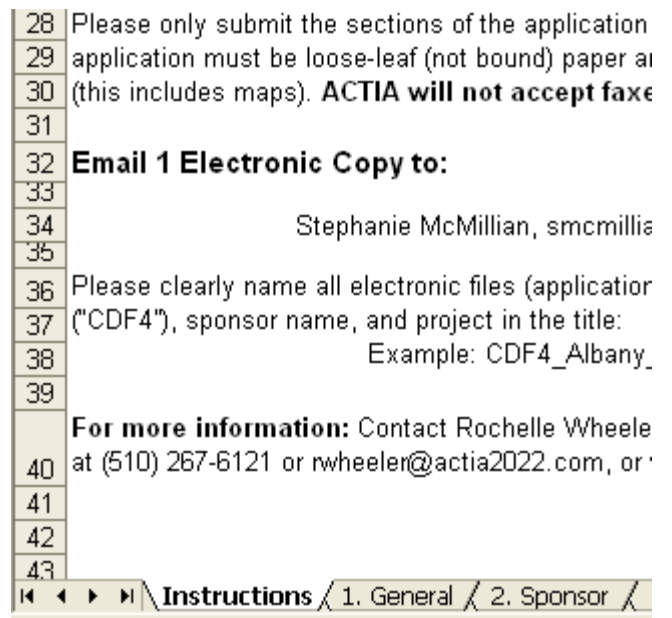
The Importance of Graphics

- Successful applications contain clear graphics that quickly convey the project need, components, and location to the reviewer. Graphics should help you “tell the project story.”

- To the extent possible, include:
 - Photos that convey the project location and need. Take high-resolution, digital photos.
 - A clear map that locates the project within a city.
 - Clear plans that show the project limits, the existing configuration, the specific proposed project elements, and the proposed finished project.
 - Clear maps that illustrate the context of the project – the surrounding bicycle and pedestrian facilities that connect to the project, and nearby activity centers and transit stations/stops.
- The ACTIA Web site includes links to the maps in the Countywide Pedestrian and Bicycle Plans. You can download the relevant map and then use close-up shots to show the location of your project, and surrounding countywide priorities.

Using the Excel Application

- The application is an Excel workbook with 12 numbered sections in 18 worksheets (tabs). The tabs run along the bottom of the file, as shown below:



- Read the “Instructions” in the first tab of the document to become familiar with using this Excel format.

Tips continued ...

- Try to keep answers within the limits of the space provided. If an answer takes up more space than provided, it will not display properly.
- If there is additional information that you would like to submit in response to particular questions, use the space provided in Section 11, or provide additional attachments.
- Only complete sections of the application applicable to your project type.
- Save the application to your computer hard drive often, so you don't lose your work.

Making Your Case

- The first part of the application asks for a brief (200 characters) and longer (150 to 300 words) description of the proposed project. In each version:
 - Describe the project as if the reader had never heard of it before.
 - Do not make any assumptions that the decision-makers will be familiar with the type of project or the location.
- Write clearly and concisely! This cannot be over-emphasized. Do not use vague terms, such as “X project will improve the safety of the community.” Use specific language to the extent possible.
- Clearly state the purpose and need, as well as your solution. Give a description that explains the transportation barriers/problems which your project addresses, such as:
 - **Problem:** In area X, children do not have a clear bike path to Middle School X and less than one-third of all students ride their bikes to school.
 - **Solution:** In area X, we plan to build a two-mile bike path from the intersection of AB to Middle School X.
- Describe how your project will achieve the goals of the grant program.
- If your capital project is one part of a larger project, include a clear definition of the overall project, how this one part fits with the larger project, and how you will use the grant-requested funds.
- Focus your responses on the funding priorities of this grant program.
- If you feel the application questions have not allowed you to describe an important part of your project, include additional information in Section 11 or include an attachment with this information.
- Make it easy for the reviewers to find ways to give you the credit you deserve.
- Have a colleague who is unfamiliar with the project read the application, and give feedback on its clarity.

ACTIA Measure B Bicycle and Pedestrian Countywide Discretionary Fund Cycle 4 Grant Program

Project Estimating and Grant Budgeting

- Set a realistic timeline. Remember that most projects take longer than anticipated and build this into your schedule.
- Prepare a thorough, realistic cost estimate.
- In addition to the budget information requested in Sections 4 and 5, include a detailed budget as an attachment, as this can help reviewers further understand the scope and details of the project.
- Include all foreseeable costs in your budget. Include contingency funds, if reasonable.
- Review the *Program Guidelines* to determine what costs ACTIA covers and what expenses are not eligible (for example, overhead costs).

Unsuccessful Grant Applications

- Grant evaluation teams are less likely to fund grant applications that are:
 - Repetitive and overly verbose.
 - Unclear regarding the implementation steps and project outcomes.
 - Difficult to understand.
 - Vague, with a poorly defined project.
 - Not clearly demonstrating that project partners have been in communication and have agreed to the project implementation method.
 - Benefiting only a small area.

Finishing and Submitting the Application

- Reread the final copy of your proposal slowly and carefully, to ensure that you have clearly described your project and the need.
- Check spelling and grammar repeatedly. Remember that the text within the cell boxes will not be spell-checked by Excel, so review the text carefully.
- Proofread for any errors.
- Submit a complete application package.
- Submit your application well before the deadline.

Follow-up

- Contact ACTIA to ensure that staff received all application components.
- If your application was unsuccessful, contact ACTIA to discuss the reasons, so that you can prepare a stronger application in the future.

These tips are based on tips found in the *Solano Countywide Pedestrian Plan*, where you can find additional tips: www.sta.dst.ca.us/plans2.html#pedplan