FREE TEMPLATE

Grant Application Timeline Template (Free PDF)

Three backward-planned preparation schedules, for 12, 8 and 4 weeks before a deadline, with a key dates section and an internal deadline built in.

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> This is a plan for preparing a grant application, worked backward from the funder's deadline. Pick the schedule that matches the time you have, write in owners and dates, and tick tasks off as they finish. The tasks are typical, not required. Your funder's instructions decide what the application must contain and when it is due.

Key dates

Funder:

Opportunity:

Funder's deadline (date, time and time zone):

Internal deadline (at least two working days before the funder's deadline):

Deadline for questions to the funder:

Letter of intent or pre-application due:

Date registrations and portal accounts must be working:

Date partner letters and commitments are due to us:

Date the budget is locked:

Date the full draft goes to reviewers:

Date leadership or board sign-off is needed:

Staff leave, holidays and other deadlines in this period:

How backward planning works

Start from the internal deadline, not the funder's deadline. The two working days between them are for upload problems, missing signatures and files that will not open. Then place each task as late as it can safely go, and put the tasks that depend on other people first, because those are the ones you cannot speed up.

Application lead:

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Person who will submit:

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12-week plan

Use this for a federal application, a first application to a funder, or any application with partners.

Weeks before deadline	Tasks	Owner	Done
12	Read the full funding document. Confirm eligibility. Make the go or no-go decision. Check registrations and portal access.		
11	List every requirement and attachment. Assign section owners. Hold a kickoff meeting. Send questions to the funder.		
10	Confirm partners and request letters with a due date. Request data, financial documents and resumes.		
9	Agree the project design: need, goals, objectives, activities. Draft the logic model if one is required.		
8	Draft the statement of need and project description. Start the budget with finance staff.		
7	Draft evaluation, capacity and sustainability sections. Chase partner letters.		
6	Complete the first full narrative draft. Draft the budget and justification.		
5	Internal review of narrative against the scoring criteria. Check budget against narrative.		
4	Revise. Complete forms and attachments. Collect remaining letters.		
3	Outside reader reviews the full package. Budget locked.		
2	Final revisions. Check formatting, page limits and file names. Get sign-off.		
1	Assemble the package. Compliance check against the funding document. Submit by the internal deadline.		

8-week plan

Use this for a funder you know, or a program you have described before.

Weeks before deadline	Tasks	Owner	Done
8	Read the funding document. Confirm eligibility and go or no-go. Check registrations and portal access. List requirements. Assign owners.		
7	Request partner letters, data and financial documents. Send questions to the funder. Agree the project design.		
6	Draft the need and project description. Start the budget.		

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Weeks before deadline	Tasks	Owner	Done
5	Draft the remaining narrative sections. Draft the budget justification.		
4	Complete the full draft. Internal review against the scoring criteria.		
3	Revise. Complete forms and attachments. Collect letters.		
2	Outside reader review. Lock the budget. Get sign-off.		
1	Final edits, formatting and compliance check. Submit by the internal deadline.		

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4-week plan

Use this only when registrations are already active and most content exists. If either is not true, reconsider applying.

Weeks before deadline	Tasks	Owner	Done
4	Read the funding document. Confirm eligibility, go or no-go, registrations and portal access. List requirements. Request letters and documents the same day.		
3	Draft all narrative sections from existing material. Draft the budget and justification.		
2	Full draft reviewed against the scoring criteria by someone who did not write it. Revise. Complete forms and attachments.		
1	Lock the budget. Get sign-off. Format, run the compliance check and submit by the internal deadline.		

Things that take longer than expected

Add your own dates for the items that apply.

Item	Who we depend on	Date requested	Date needed
Registrations and portal accounts			
Partner letters and agreements			
Board or leadership approval			
Financial statements or audit			
Data from outside sources			
Signatures			

Submission day

- [ ] The person submitting has signed in to the portal this week
- [ ] Every file opens, is named as instructed and is within limits
- [ ] The budget total matches the forms and the narrative
- [ ] A second person has checked the package against the funding document
- [ ] We submitted by the internal deadline and saved the confirmation

Confirmation number or receipt saved at:

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Want help with this? The Complete Grant Architect is a free 16-week grant writing course, and you can hire a grant writer for your next proposal. Both are at subthesis.com.

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