



Application Tips

Throughout your career, you will no doubt encounter a number of opportunities to help get your music made, played, and heard. Whether they're fellowships, grant programs, residencies, competitions, or other types of programs, nearly all of them will involve an application process. Each application will have different components and requirements, but here are some basic hints that should be helpful as you navigate through the application process.

1. Read the application guidelines and eligibility requirements carefully. Virtually all will contain a description of the opportunity, a statement defining who's eligible to apply, and an explanation of how to apply. Then ask yourself two questions: Is this something I'm seriously interested in pursuing—(in other words, is it a good fit for me); and do I meet the eligibility guidelines for the program—(am I a good fit with what they're looking for)?
2. If you decide to apply, make a schedule for yourself that allows adequate time for you to complete all of the steps of the application process. Make sure it's realistic and includes contingencies for unexpected events that might impact your work.
3. Keep your résumé, biography, and work lists up-to-date. This will help ease the amount of time you spend on the application process.
4. As you begin writing the various elements of your proposal, be clear, concise, and don't be afraid to let your personality—and your passion—show through. Try to view your proposal through the panelist's eyes. Remember they will probably be reading a large number of applications, so do whatever you can to make yours stand out.
5. Again with the panelists in mind, consider how "user friendly" your proposal is. Evaluate the amount of copy on each page, whether you've chosen a font that's easy to read, if the material on the page is organized and clearly laid-out—make your proposal inviting and easy on the eyes.

6. Run your proposal by a friend to get their feedback. Make sure that what you're saying is clear to an independent reader.
7. As you're assembling your written application materials:
 - Include the application form and make sure it's completely filled out with your current contact information.
 - Use plain white paper for your written materials. The panelists only see photocopies of the original materials, so using heavyweight or colored paper is a waste of your resources.
 - Clip your written materials together with a paper clip or binder clip – don't staple or bind materials. All materials are photocopied before the panelists see them, so all binding and staples need to be disassembled.
 - If you want your material returned, enclose a check sufficient to cover postage. Do not enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope—we no longer accept them.

In addition to your written materials, you will usually be asked to provide work samples—often recordings and scores. Here are some things to remember:

8. Include the date of composition on your work samples so the panel can hear how your work is developing.
9. Prepare a Work Sample Sheet listing the track numbers on your recording and the titles, composition dates, duration, performers and any other pertinent information you feel would be helpful for the panelists to know. If the work is an improvisation, clearly state the role you played in the creative process (i.e. if you provided charts or sketches, how much the performers were instructed, etc.).
10. Send multiple work samples, but remember that quality should take precedence over quantity. Send samples that showcase the total range of your work. It is preferred, but not required, that the scores you submit match your recorded samples. If you would like panelists to see a certain section in the score, mark it with tabs so the panelists can find the correct place quickly.

11. Submit attention-grabbing evidence of your own personal voice. Do not try to second guess or please the panel by covering all possible bases. Include work that only you could have done – derivative work is easily dismissed by the panelists.
12. For project grants such as JFund (Jerome Fund for New Music) select work samples that demonstrate your ability to accomplish the proposed piece but that do not show that you have done an identical project before. Panelists prefer to award risk takers (within reason) rather than fund a composer's twenty third string quartet.
13. Take time to test your recording on several playback options to make sure it works.

Some Other Things to Keep in Mind

14. Remember that the dynamics of every panel are different – exactly the same application will generate different responses from different panels. Do not take success or failure as objective proof of your worth or ability.
15. Foundations are restricted in the kinds of support they are able to provide. Consequently, ACF passes on those restrictions to applicants (e.g. career level, geographical limitations, project focus) via the grant guidelines. While we strive to offer all programs equally, some people may be ineligible or may have more difficulty applying than others, depending on the program.
16. Applicants are welcome to contact ACF program staff members before they begin the application process, while they are preparing their application, and/or after the results have been announced. We'll do our best to answer your questions about the program or your application, and—for several of our larger grant programs—will provide panelist feedback about your proposal.