

FUNDAMENTALS TO HELP POSITION YOUR ORGANIZATION TO SECURE GRANT FUNDING

ACM WEST 2026

Building a Foundation for Successful Grant Writing

Workshop Facilitator/Speakers:

Natalie Nigg, Outreach and Development Manager, CMAC-Fresno

Christina Marie Jeffers, Executive Director, Access Humboldt

Thursday, February 12 | 2pm - 3:30pm

501c3

Positioning



BRANDING
PITCHING
REPORTING



PRESENTED BY
CHRISTINA JEFFERS,
ACCESS HUMBOLDT

Checklist

**501C3 IN GOOD
IRS STANDING**

DOJ REGISTRATION

SOS COMPLIANCE

**NARRATIVE/BRAN
DING**

**COMPELLING
PHOTOS & VIDEO**

**WEBSITE
OPTIMIZED/FUNN
ELS**

STAFFING/REPORTING



Fund what you do, not what you're going to do.

- What does your team do well?
- How is that innovative?
- What impact have you made?
- Why should that program survive?



Your Brand



- Branding goes beyond logos and colors
- Brand your programs
- Brand your staff
- Brand your content



Pitching

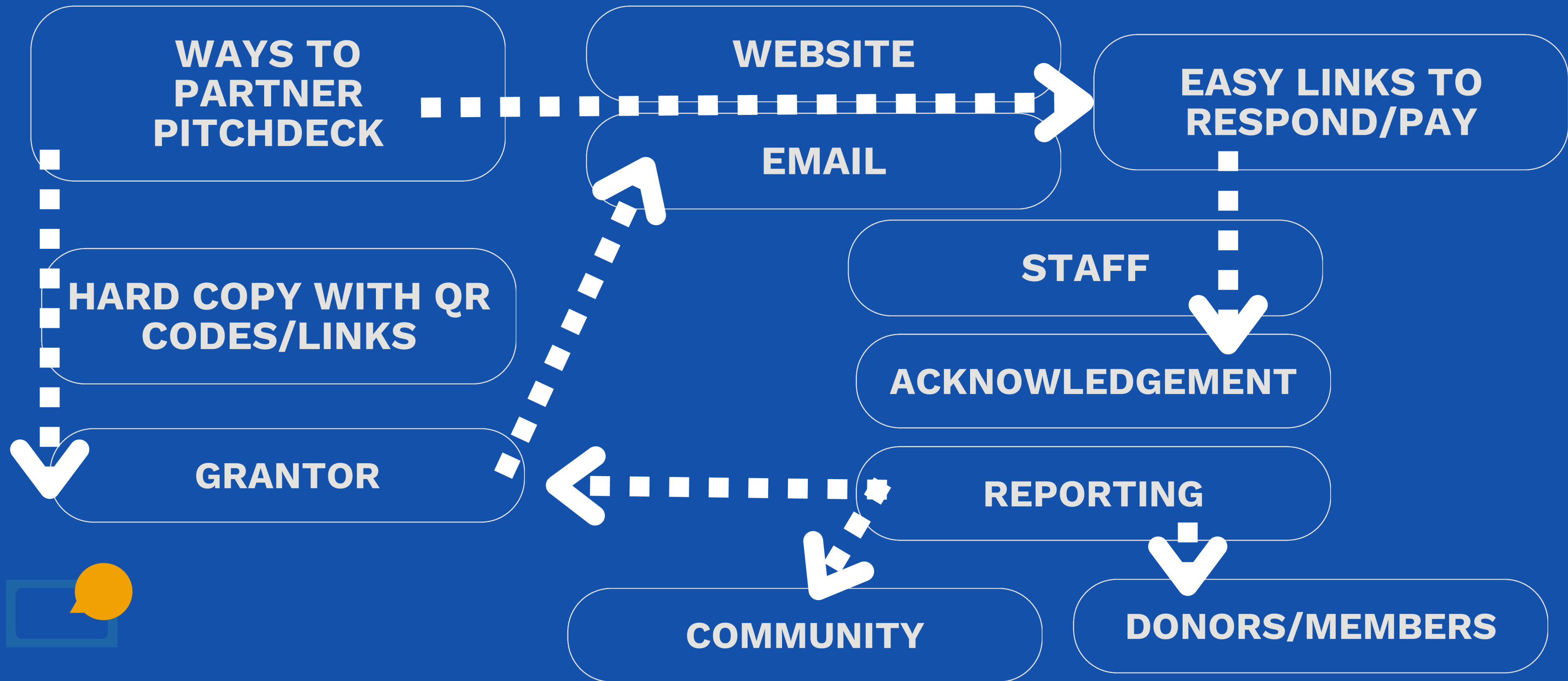
“Access Humboldt is a 21st Century digital skills training center that distributes community made content on cable, streaming, and Low-Power FM. As your local Public Access, Education, and Government channels on TV & Radio, we uphold Free Speech, inspire learning, and drive civic engagement. For 20 years we have delivered gavel-to-gavel coverage of civic meetings for 7 cities and 3 Joint Power Authorities; preserved local culture & Arts, lifted local voices, and informed Humboldt County with award-winning content in 3 languages. Our Digital Editing Program benefits the community with hands-on training in a computer lab that also serve as a third space. This cutting edge program requires hardware & software upgrades so that we can continue to teach competitive skills and preserve content integrity in the age of ai. ”



- Pitch benefit to community
- Pitch your expertise & track record
- Pitch your program needs, not operational needs



Funnel



Reporting

KEEP IT CLEAN AND SIMPLE.
REFER ORIGINAL APPLICATION.
EXPLAIN UNEXPECTED OUTCOMES.



GRANTOR



COMMUNITY

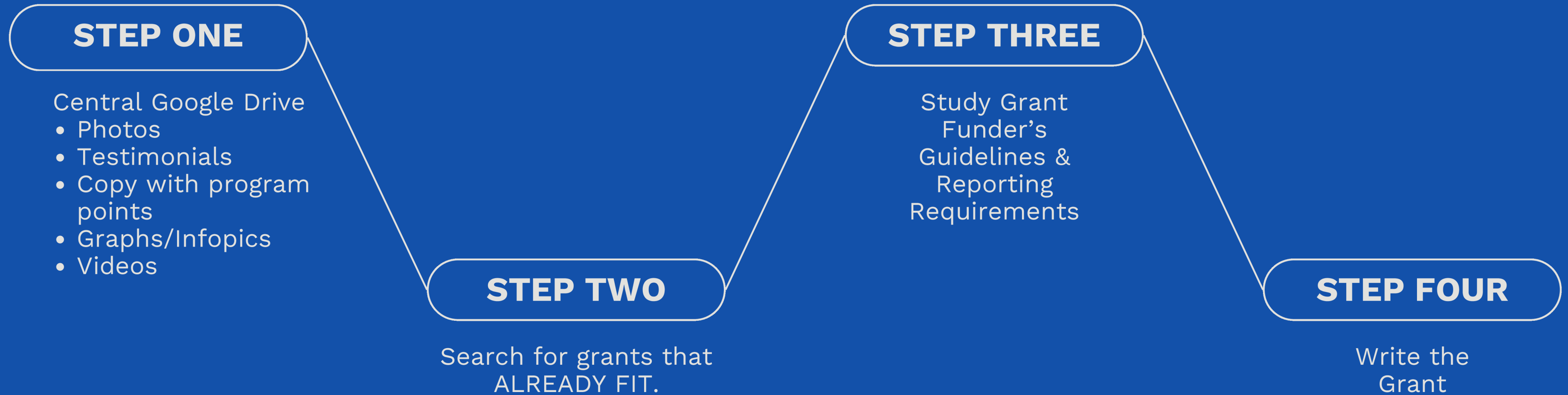


DONORS/
MEMBERS



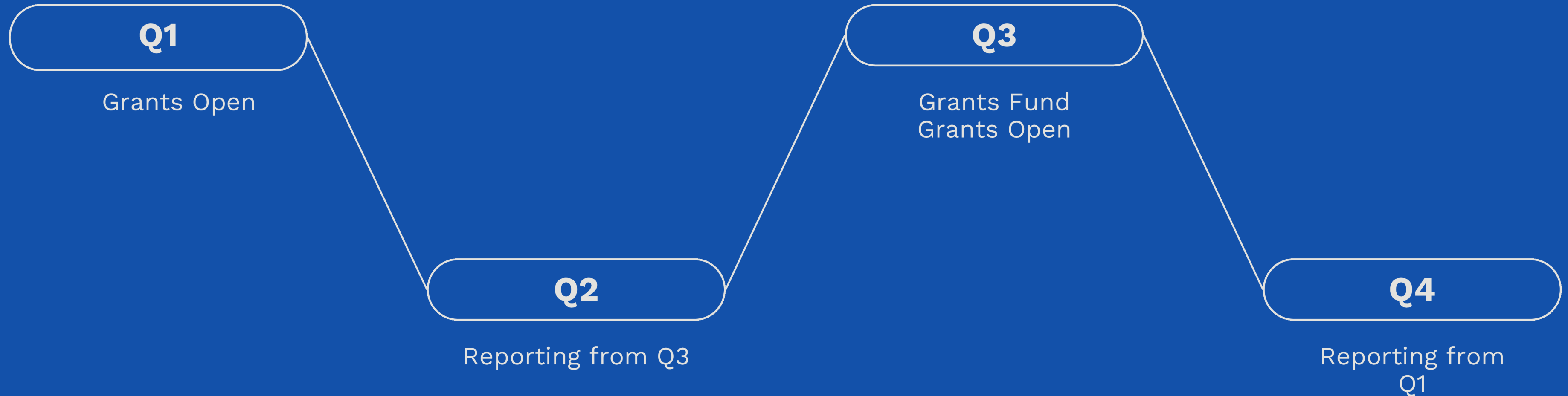
Modern Fundraising

Diversity= Variety or Assortment
Equity = Fairness
Inclusion = Coverage or Involvement



Grant Cycles

Local, State, Federal, Private



Do's & Don'ts

Demonstrate impact with measurable successes vs. invent a new program to fit the grant

Professional photos & video vs. terrible snapshots hastily taken

Consistent messaging online vs. clashing messaging between grant & public facing presence

40 hours research, 8 hours write/apply vs. panicked search and instant application

Staff for reporting/compliance vs. ED handle everything



KDACC GRANT

Grant seeking to support arts organizations and artists with specific projects across 14 counties in the Central Valley

Goal of the funds was to create jobs in arts & create projects that fall in line with the four program focus areas:

- (1) public health awareness / COVID-19;
- (2) water and energy conservation, climate mitigation, and emergency preparedness, relief, and recovery;
- (3) civic engagement; and
- (4) social justice and community engagement.



KDACC GRANT

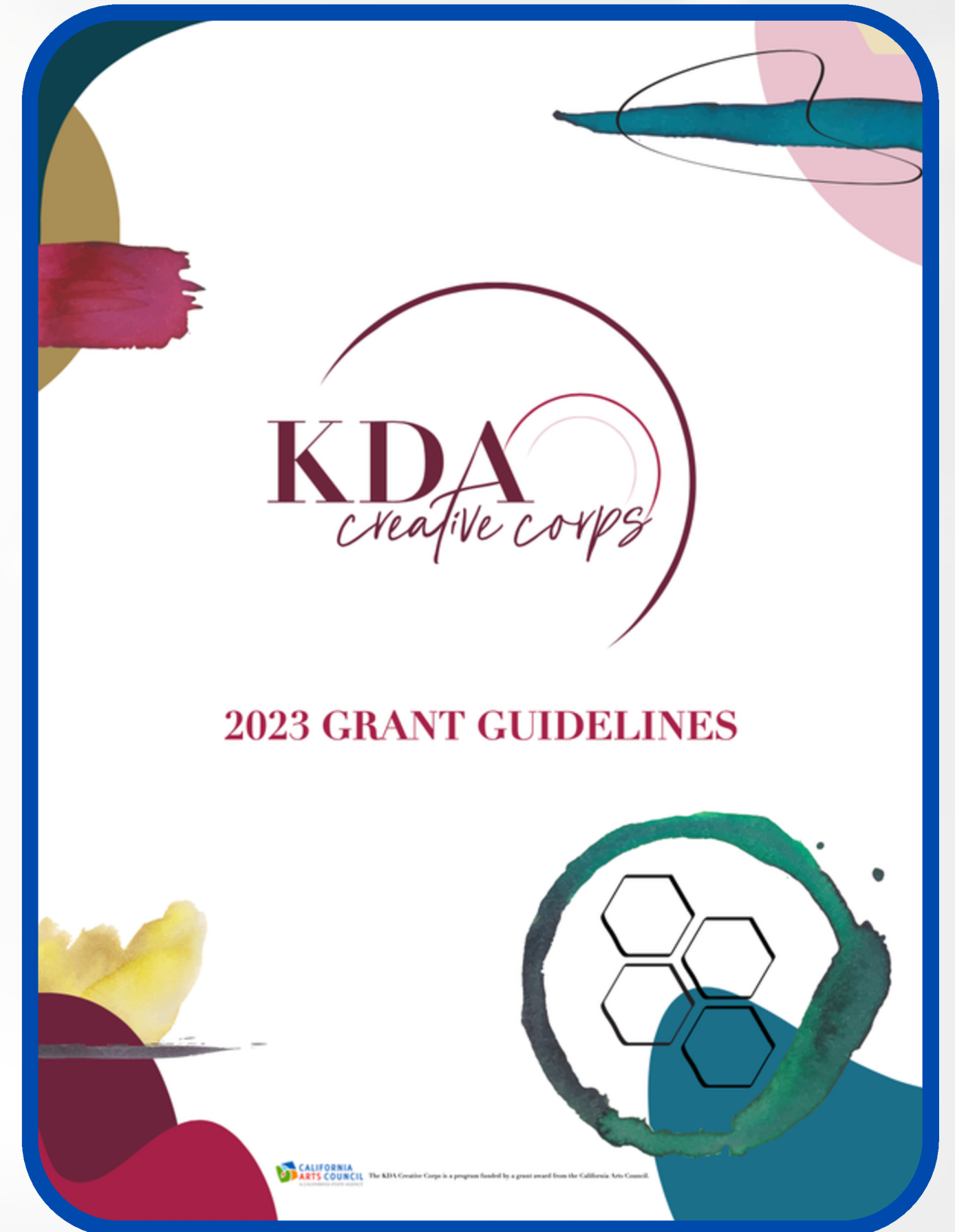
Our grant project: The Big Tell, a regional documentary filmmaking program that focuses on stories from the Central Valley

Pitched CMAC as a **media arts** organization

Used the funds to pay 26 local filmmakers \$8k each to produce their film (job creation)

Wrote into the grant that the topics of the documentaries would align with one of the four focus areas outlined in the guidelines

Asked for \$300,000 / Received \$255,000



TIPS & TRICKS

Reminder: Not every grant will make sense for your organization.



Read the guidelines carefully.

Note who and what the grant does not fund.



Be realistic

Seek grants to fund programs you are already doing. Be realistic in what you are asking for and what you will deliver as a result.



Be clear and concise

State exactly what you mean. Avoid fluffy, filler words.



Talk like the grantor

Use the language in the grant guidelines in your application. It's OK to restate the question in the narrative



Don't forget the *why*

When listing data points, remember to explain why they matter/what makes them worth mentioning.



Make a list

Comb through the application and make a list of what information you want to include in each section before you start writing the narrative response so you don't forget something important.

Be realistic

Seek grants to fund programs you are already doing. Be realistic in what you are asking for and what you will deliver as a result.



Grant window: May 2023 - May 2024

Max ask: \$300,000

Grant goals: job creator, build awareness of four focus areas, reach underrepresented/marginalized communities across multiple counties, 80% of funds go directly to artists

Be clear and concise

State exactly what you mean. Avoid fluffy, filler words.



*"We are proposing a fellowship program to empower marginalized individuals by training them in documentary filmmaking. **Guided by any one of the four focus areas** outlined in the KDACC grant guidelines, fellows will produce a short documentary film aimed at **shedding light on an issues impacting their communities**. CMAC will provide production gear, mentorship, and an **\$8,000 stipend to support their vision.**"*

Talk like the grantor

Use the language in the grant guidelines in your application.



*With the KDACC grant, we will onboard 30 filmmakers, prioritizing those living in the Central Valley's **lowest quartile on the HPI compared to Kings, Tulare, Fresno, Madera, Merced and Mariposa counties**. This will allow us to put essential media resources into the hands of historically marginalized and silenced communities.*

Don't forget the why

When listing data points, what makes them worth mentioning.



"According to the 2022 Representation Project report, only 21% of film directors in 2021 were women. The same report found that 30% of films in 2021 were directed by people of color and had no data for LGBTQ+ identified directors. [...] These numbers illustrate the need for more diversity behind the scenes."

USING AI

ORGANIZING YOUR THOUGHTS

Example Prompt: "I am looking at the [Grant] which focuses on [Goal]. What are three ways our Youth Voices Program specifically aligns with this funder's priorities? Identify any potential gaps where we might need to strengthen our argument."

SOUNDING BOARD / BRAINSTORMING

Example Prompt: "I am applying for a grant to fund new mobile production kits for CMAC. Help me brainstorm five data-driven arguments in the Central Valley that justify the need for mobile media tools in rural or underserved neighborhoods. Focus on the 'digital divide' and 'civic deserts.'"

SUMMARY GENERATOR

Example Prompt: Here is the current draft of my grant narrative. Help me condense it to just 500 words. [List the top three points that must be in the summary.]

CATCHING MISTAKES

Example Prompt: Here is the current draft of my grant narrative. It is meant to answer this question: [List question.] Identify any weak or missing points.

Be mindful about privacy

Anything you put into an LLM is saved and, in some cases, can be accessible to anyone. Don't put sensitive participant or user information into your chats.

Don't copy and paste

Even though you can train an AI bot to speak in your voice, it doesn't always filter out words or phrases that you wouldn't use or that don't make sense. Read through everything it creates and make edits.

Check the facts

AI bots and LLMs hallucinate often. Double check all information it provides and ask it to cite its sources.

Refine your prompt

The key to a good AI response is a good prompt. Explain exactly what you need, including tone and level of detail. Starting off with "You are an expert in..." and ending with "My job depends on this" will yield stronger results.



IMPORTANT NOTE WHEN USING AI

***AI can be a great tool, but should not replace human oversight.**

AFTER YOU GET **THE GRANT**



Read the grant agreement carefully. You will be held to what you said you would accomplish in your proposal, but the grantor will also have other requirements about things like logo usage and press announcements. Note reporting deadlines and what information you will need to collect throughout the grant cycle.

Start gathering data Don't wait until the end of the cycle to think about reporting. Look at what you promised in the application and make a plan to gather data throughout the grant period.



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SCAN THE QR CODE ABOVE TO ACCESS A DIGITAL LIBRARY OF PRESENTATION SLIDES, HANDOUTS, AND SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES FROM OUR 2024 SPEAKERS.

WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO FOLLOW ALONG IN REAL-TIME AND SAVE THESE MATERIALS FOR FUTURE REFERENCE AS YOU BRING FRESH IDEAS BACK TO YOUR COMMUNITY MEDIA CENTER.