

Tool: Grant Build Kit

This lightweight framework and organizing tool saves time, safeguards institutional knowledge, and lets any team member start drafting a proposal in minutes.

Get Organized

A central digital space and a defined process to store grant materials allows any staffer to access and repurpose documents. This avoids duplicative work and maintains consistent organizational storytelling (brand).

Set Up Folders:

- 📁 Funding Opportunities
- 📁 Past Grant Proposals
- 📁 Program Narrative Templates
- 📁 Legal & Financial Documents
- 📁 Organizational Documents

Ready to apply?
Start with the "Funding Readiness Checklist."

Populate each folder:

📁 **Funding Opportunities** - create subfolders for each grant opportunity that will be pursued using this file name structure: Funder type_Name of Funder_Year

↓ Save the related proposal documents in each folder:

- Narrative
- Budget
- Timeline
- Staffing Plan
- Partners + MOUs
- Other Attachments

↓ Save the [Funding Sources Tracker](#), found on the Eyes Up Appalachia website, which organizes key details about potential funding opportunities.

Once you've received a decision on a grant application:

- If not selected, request feedback from the funder
- Move the folder to "Past Grant Proposals"

📁 **Past Grant Proposals** - create subfolders labeled as:

- "Funder type_Name of Funder_Year"
- Include the respective proposal submission, attachments, and the solicitation/original funding opportunity for context.

📁 **Program Narrative Templates** - include documents labeled as:

- Need Statement_Template
- Approach_Program Activities_Template
- Mission_Template
- Outcomes_Template
- Partnerships_Template
- Sustainability Statement_Template

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📁 **Legal & Financial Documents** - save the organizational budget, 990, audits, W9s, articles of incorporation, tax exempt status letter.

📁 **Organizational Documents** - save the vision and mission, bylaws (policies, procedures), org chart, board of director bios, staff bios.

Develop Narrative Templates

Whether writing from scratch or using an AI tool for initial drafts, there are key elements to include for each narrative template. Create generic templates that you can use to respond to future funding opportunities. The “building blocks” guide you to include details funders often want to know.

Artificial intelligence (AI). Free versions of AI tools like [Claude](#), [Gemini](#), and [ChatGPT](#) can help write initial drafts, copy-edit and even score a grant application using the rubric included in the grant solicitation. The quality of AI-generated responses depends on the clarity of the instruction and background information you enter into the tool.

If creating narrative templates with AI, the building blocks in this section ensure that initial drafts include the right information. Review these articles for [important considerations and ways to leverage AI to support grant application development](#). Do not enter confidential or sensitive information into AI tools, and always thoroughly review AI responses for accuracy.

Needs Statement Building Blocks

Use research-backed data to define the issue. **Include:**

- The problem
- Severity of the problem (how many impacted)
- Trends over time /local context
- Target population and geography (who is affected and where)
- What causes, leads to or worsens the problem?
- How does the problem impact the community? (Articulate the “So What?” Specifically, what happens if the problem remains unaddressed?)
- Funder priority alignment

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Examples of Data Sources:

- [Allies Against Slavery State Human Trafficking Report \(2026\)](#): Uses five different datasets to assess national human trafficking incidents and responses by state.
- [National Human Trafficking Hotline \(Polaris\)](#): National human trafficking hotline data.
- [Human Trafficking Incidents Reported by Law Enforcement \(Bureau of Justice Statistics\)](#): 2022 law enforcement reported data on human trafficking.
- [Domestic Violence Statistics](#): From the scientific literature compiled by the National Domestic Violence Hotline.
- [In Harm's Way \(Polaris\)](#): 2023 report capturing national survey findings about human trafficking from survivors' perspectives.
- [Federal Human Trafficking Report \(Human Trafficking Institute\)](#): Data from every federal criminal human trafficking case handled annually by U.S. courts. Objective summary of how the federal system holds traffickers accountable.
- [Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force State Data Dashboard](#): Summarizes Ohio human trafficking cases and survivors identified through state agency protocols.
- [Office of the Ohio Attorney General Human Trafficking Annual Reports](#): Self-reported data by local law enforcement agencies of suspected violations of Ohio's human trafficking statute.
- [Appalachian Regional Commission Chart Book](#): Socioeconomic statistics (e.g., poverty, income, education,) by Appalachian county, state, and national benchmarks.
- [Appalachian Ohio Child & Family Health Data](#): 200 community indicators of Appalachian Ohio community health and well-being data about Ohio children.
- [Ohio Network of Children's Advocacy Centers Reports](#): Series of reports (e.g., community assessment needs, statewide factbooks, and economic and societal impact) about juveniles using Ohio children's advocacy centers' service data.
- [Shared Hope International Resources](#) and the [Shared Hope International Ohio State Report Card & Toolkit 2025](#): Legal analysis benchmarking, policy research and advocacy toolkit for addressing unjust criminalization of youth sex trafficking.
- [SOAR December 2025 Executive Summary](#): Discusses research-based mental wellness, resilience and prevention opportunities and trends for Ohioans.

▶ Flag for funders that human trafficking incidents are grossly underreported, as discussed in the [Ohio Attorney General's 2021 Data Collection Practices Report](#).

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Report accurately. Be aware of data limitations. Do not misrepresent information if comparing data across years or sources.

Needs Statement Flow. Create a compelling narrative by describing the problem at the national level then drilling down to state and local incidents (If available). Highlight if your state or locality is experiencing the problem more severely than the nation. Introduce the local context by describing the environment in which the issue thrives (e.g., poverty, undereducation, homelessness) and how your target population may be particularly vulnerable according to demographic information. After using cited data, layer in your own data (e.g., anecdotes, service numbers).

Funder Alignment. Select data that aligns to funder priorities. If the funder's priority is:

- **health** - emphasize mental health, behavioral issues, detrimental coping mechanisms (e.g., substance use, self-harm) related to this trauma.
- **economic development** - highlight how survivor's lives are interrupted, and education attainment, earning power, and job employment stunted.
- **children** - focus on how young survivors can be, the percentage of incidents that occur among youth, and the traits of at-risk youth.

Program Activities Description Building Blocks

Funders want to understand what you do and how you do it. Your program activities must address the issues you identified in your needs statement. This allows you to draw a logical step from the problem → your activities → desired change. Whenever possible, distinguish your approach from others. **Include:**

- What services does your organization offer and at what frequency?
- How do you recruit education participants or find survivors to support?
- How do activities directly address the need, leading to desired outcomes?
- Is there a unique approach, targeted subgroup or learnings that shape the program design? How is your work different from others?
- Why should this work be funded now? Articulate momentum that the funder does not want to miss. **Urgency can be:**

- A **new federal, state, or local policy** that unlocks resources (e.g. access to health or legal services, job skill development, housing).
- A **shift in national or local attitudes** and/or media attention about sexual violence or human trafficking that opens opportunity for new partnerships, greater receptivity or increased reach.
- A longstanding misconception or **historically overlooked group** (e.g., human trafficking is viewed as an urban issue.)
- Your organizational data demonstrates **unmet or growing demand**.
- A **new coalition** that coordinates human trafficking support services uniquely.

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- Is your program tested and proven (done for many years with successful results), evidence-based, or innovative (with preliminary positive outcomes)? Provide details.

Consider **leveraging evidence-based approaches** in your programming:

- [Beyond Statistics: A Survivor Centered Analysis of Human Trafficking Patterns and Effective Interventions](#): Outlines critical trends in trafficking victimization, service needs and evidence-based intervention strategies from a survivor's perspective.
- [Domestic Violence Evidence Project](#): Details evidence-based approaches for supporting survivors of domestic violence.
- [Institute for Survivor Care Research Library](#): Features studies on how to advance restorative care for victims of trafficking and exploitation, with a focus on residential programming.

Mission Building Blocks

An organizational mission states who you are and what you seek to accomplish. It should be brief and understandable to a general audience. If a funder asks you to describe your mission, **try hitting these points**:

- What do you do, for whom and what is the intended outcome?
- What drives your mission? Why does your non-profit need to exist?
- What values or priorities guide your work? (e.g. trauma-informed/responsive, survivor-centric, equity, diversity, cultural-sensitivity, asset-based)
- What types of groups does your organization partner with to execute your mission? How do these partnerships improve the quality of the work?
- How does your organization's work align to the funder's priorities and values?

Performance Measures Building Blocks

Gathering, analyzing and storytelling with program data demonstrates to funders that the work is making quantifiable change and merits investment. Funders usually want a plan for how the impact of their funds will be monitored and reported. **Include**:

- What training or services are delivered? (outputs)
- What changes result from those training or services? (outcomes)
- When and how is the data collected?
- Who is collecting and analyzing the data?

Funders may request evaluative activities in different formats such as a detailed timeline, data table, or narrative description.

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 **Behavior Change** A powerful metric to demonstrate education program success is behavior change. Capture this using post-program intention-to-act scale questions:

If you were to observe X, how likely would you be to do Y?

Outcome: Following training, 50% of participants reported increased likelihood of taking appropriate action if trafficking indicators are present.

Survey participants 30, 60, 90 days or up to 1-year post-program to capture actual behavior change:

Since attending X training, which of the following prevention strategies have you used?

Outcome: Within 60 days of training, 30% of participants report applying one or more prevention strategies in real-world situations.

Find output and outcome examples in Section III of the Funding Readiness Checklist (page 36) in [Future-Proofing Compassion: Tools for Sustainable Service Delivery for Organizations Serving Survivors of Human Trafficking, Domestic Violence, and At-Risk Individuals](#).

Partnership Building Blocks

Collaboration strengthens the quality of work, fosters innovation, expands reach, and maximizes efficiency. Funders value organizations that partner to reduce duplication and strategically coordinate service delivery. **Include:**

- What organization(s) do you work with to execute your programs?
- What skills or strengths does the partner organization have?
- What gap(s) do partners fill in your program delivery? (e.g. additional capacity, expanded service territory, deep expertise with a subgroup, program refinement, streamlined access to services for survivors)?
- How do you maintain communication with partners to ensure on-time project implementation and data collection?
- If applicable, how have you worked successfully with the partners in the past?

Go to Strategic Partnerships (page 16) of [Future-Proofing Compassion: Tools for Sustainable Service Delivery for Organizations Serving Survivors of Human Trafficking, Domestic Violence, and At-Risk Individuals](#) for best practices.

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Sustainability Building Blocks

Funders want to know how the work will continue once their funding has ended. Describe the proposed plan to maintain activities beyond the requested funds.

Include:

- What is your 2- to 5-year plan to maintain this program?
- State startup costs that initial funding would cover, ultimately resulting in decreased cost for future programming.
- How much does the minimal viable product (MVP) of the program cost?
- Identify a mix of *specific* grants, earned income and/or donor fundraising activities and calculate anticipated funds to be raised through each channel annually.
- Are there ways to distribute and institutionalize the program cost effectively? For example, with this initial investment, can you develop toolkits, guides, implement train-the-trainer models or set up an ambassador program? What partnerships can enhance the success of these efforts?
- How will you measure and track your sustainability efforts?

The **MVP** is your program in its simplest, "no frills" form without compromising overall effectiveness.

Review sample narratives in the [Grant Application Narratives](#) resource, found on the Eyes Up Appalachia website.

Customize Narrative Templates

For each grant opportunity, use your corresponding narrative template as a starting point. Depending on word limits, the proposal question and funder priorities, add or remove details. Use the strategies below to determine how to customize template responses for a specific grant opportunity.

- ✓ **Understand the funder's "why" for offering funding.**

Review the mission and values of the funder closely. (Typically, it's in the "background" of the funding opportunity.) Read the funder's About Page on their website for more context. How does your organization's values or approach align? Emphasize these points in the proposal.

- ✓ **Read project summaries of past awardees and grant award press releases.**

This provides a sense of what kinds of organizations and projects the funder prioritizes and is proud of. Does your organization or its work have these attributes? Emphasize them.

- ✓ **Speak the funder's language.**

While funders want their funds to do good, they must foster change in their target issue area(s). Discuss and focus on the impacts that align to the funder's measurements of desired change. What is the funder's goal? What types of data does the funder report in their annual report? What language does the funder use to highlight their impact?

- ✓ **Don't marry yourself to your template.**

Read the proposal question carefully and answer fully. Funders receive many applications so be direct and provide the information requested. Include supporting evidence that establishes your organization's expertise and credibility by sharing details that show your organization has successfully done similar tasks before.

Create a Project Budget

Most funders ask for a budget. Government budgets tend to require more detail and a strict format (i.e., costs entered a government-issued form). Clear, detailed budget descriptions show funders how each cost supports project activities and why it is necessary (justification).

Follow steps 1-5 in the Return on Investment Guide (page 29) of [Future-Proofing Compassion: Tools for Sustainable Service Delivery for Organizations Serving Survivors of Human Trafficking, Domestic Violence, and At-Risk Individuals](#) to create a standard annual budget for key programs.