Jodi and Laurel's Favorite Grant Tips

Dos

- Do read the guidelines carefully. Be sure your request matches the guidelines. Ask only for the expenses that the guidelines indicate can be funded by the grant.
- Do follow application instructions carefully. Submit everything required in the correct order and in the correct format.
- Do use the "grandmother test" - have someone unfamiliar with the project read (and proofread) the proposal to be sure it's free of jargon, unsupported acronyms, and that the narrative makes sense. Watch for copy and paste errors.
- Do proofread your work. In almost every grant review meeting, we hear comments about typos, proofing, or bad grammar, and those applications never do as well.
- Do follow a logical order and make it easy for your readers. Write clearly and concisely. Think of your audience when you write your grant.
- Do show that your project is organized and well planned: What are your goals? What is your timeline?
- Do contact staff with questions.
- Do ask for feedback, whether you get funded or not.

Don'ts

- Don't assume that everyone knows you or your project.
- Don't wait until the last minute to get started on your application.
- Don't be desperate, instead be capable and credible. Grantmakers don't want to buy deck chairs for the Titanic.
- Don't use too many statistics or too many stories. Partner stories with statistics and vice versa; the pairing of the two is more powerful.
- Don't forget to talk about evaluation. You need to show progress toward your goals and objectives. Measure outcomes, not just outputs.
- Don't use an incorrect budget. Pet peeves: large, unexplained line items or budget jumps, inconsistencies within the narrative, or numbers that don't add up.
- Don't allow writing "by committee" to be obvious. Grants often require several people to participate, but be careful to develop a single "voice."
- Don't use overblown, vague, or abstract language, or jargon.
- Don't overstate your cause or the reach of your organization. If you are the best ABC Festival, but your application is being reviewed by the director of the XYZ festival, how do you think it will do in the review?