



WINNING LIBRARY GRANTS

Turning
Community Needs
into Funded
Projects

April 7, 2026



AGENDA

- Understanding the Grant Process
- Identifying Community Needs
- Designing Grant Projects
- Using Best Practices and AI Tools

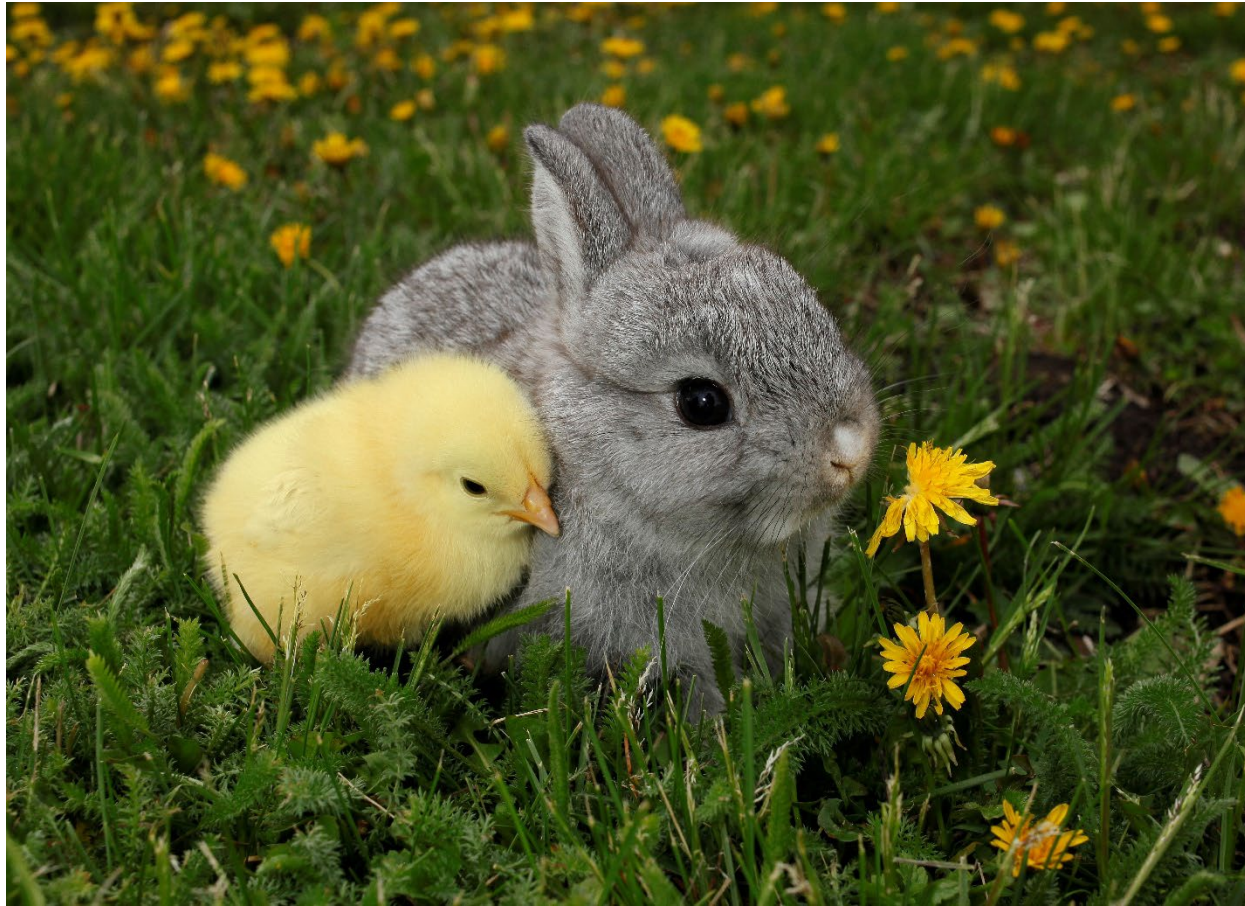
JOIN OUR POLL



You already have the skills!

Grant Work Builds on What You Do

- ✓ Research
- ✓ Answer questions
- ✓ Write and edit
- ✓ Solve problems
- ✓ Serve the Community
- ✓ Build Relationships
- ✓ Manage Projects
- ✓ Think Critically



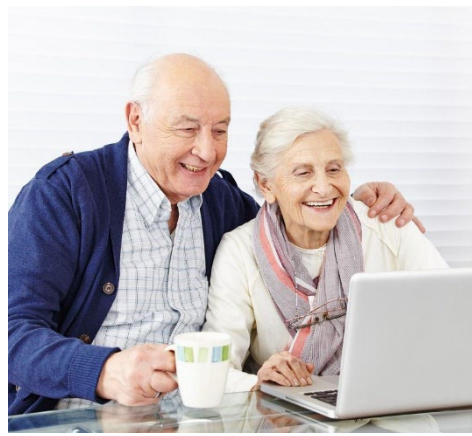
**Libraries
have great
reputations.**

**You're starting
from a position
of trust.**

#ITIP

FOCUS ON
PEOPLE.

not money,
not “stuff.”

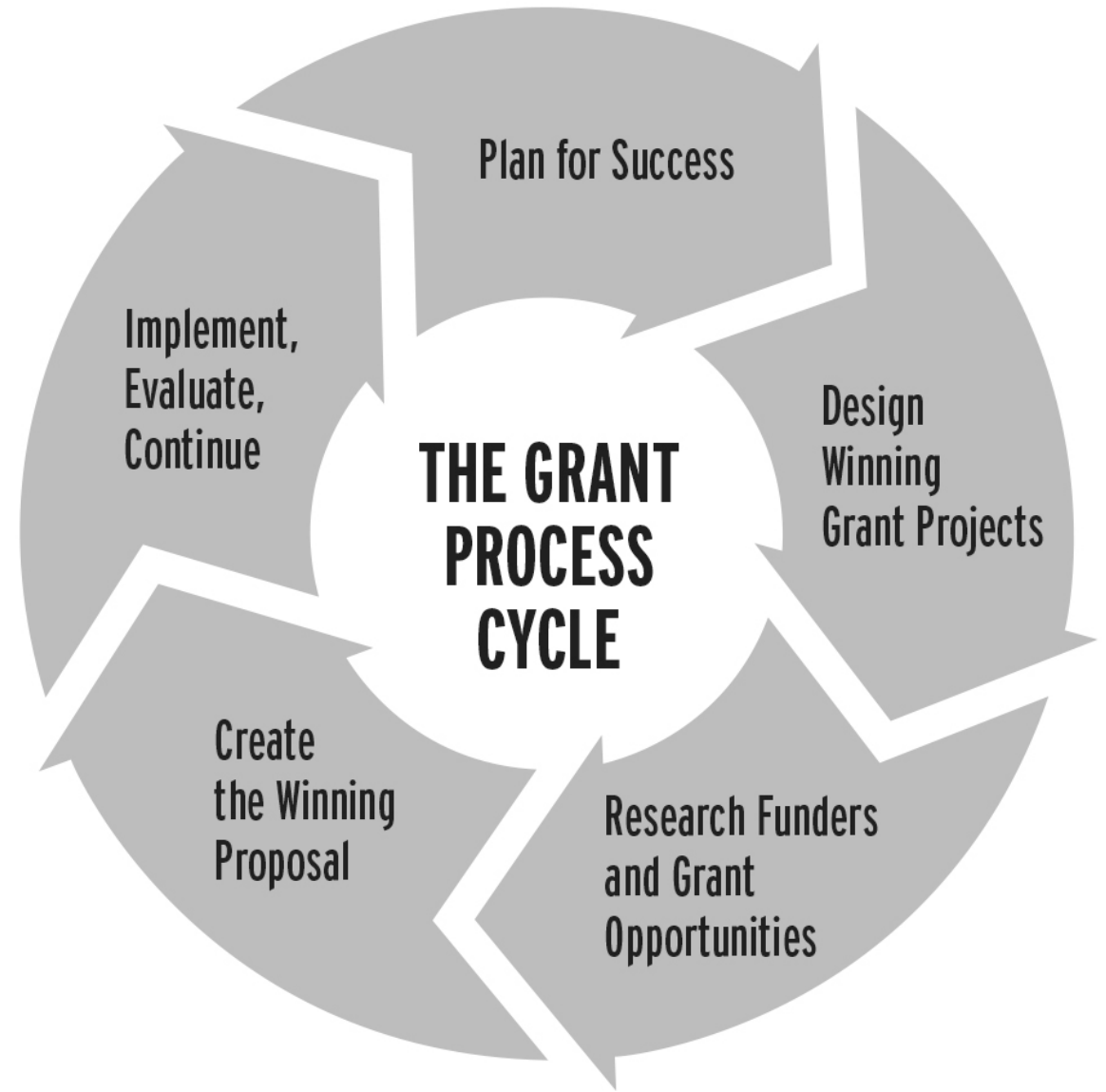


JOIN OUR POLL



THE GRANT PROCESS CYCLE

Strong library grants start with real community needs.



*Winning Grants:
A How-to-do-it Manual for Librarians, 3rd Edition*

Grants are:

- a community investment
- a tool for change
- a way to build partnerships
- a way to strengthen mission and sustainability
- a great accomplishment
- an ongoing benefit



Grant work is about meeting the **needs** of the community served.

OUR COMMUNITY. OUR WELL-BEING.



Affordable Housing



Food Security



Education



Internet Access



Affordable Housing



Living Wages



Literacy



Healthcare



Relaxation



Sleep



Mental Health





DREAM BIG



Grant work is about meeting the needs of the community served.

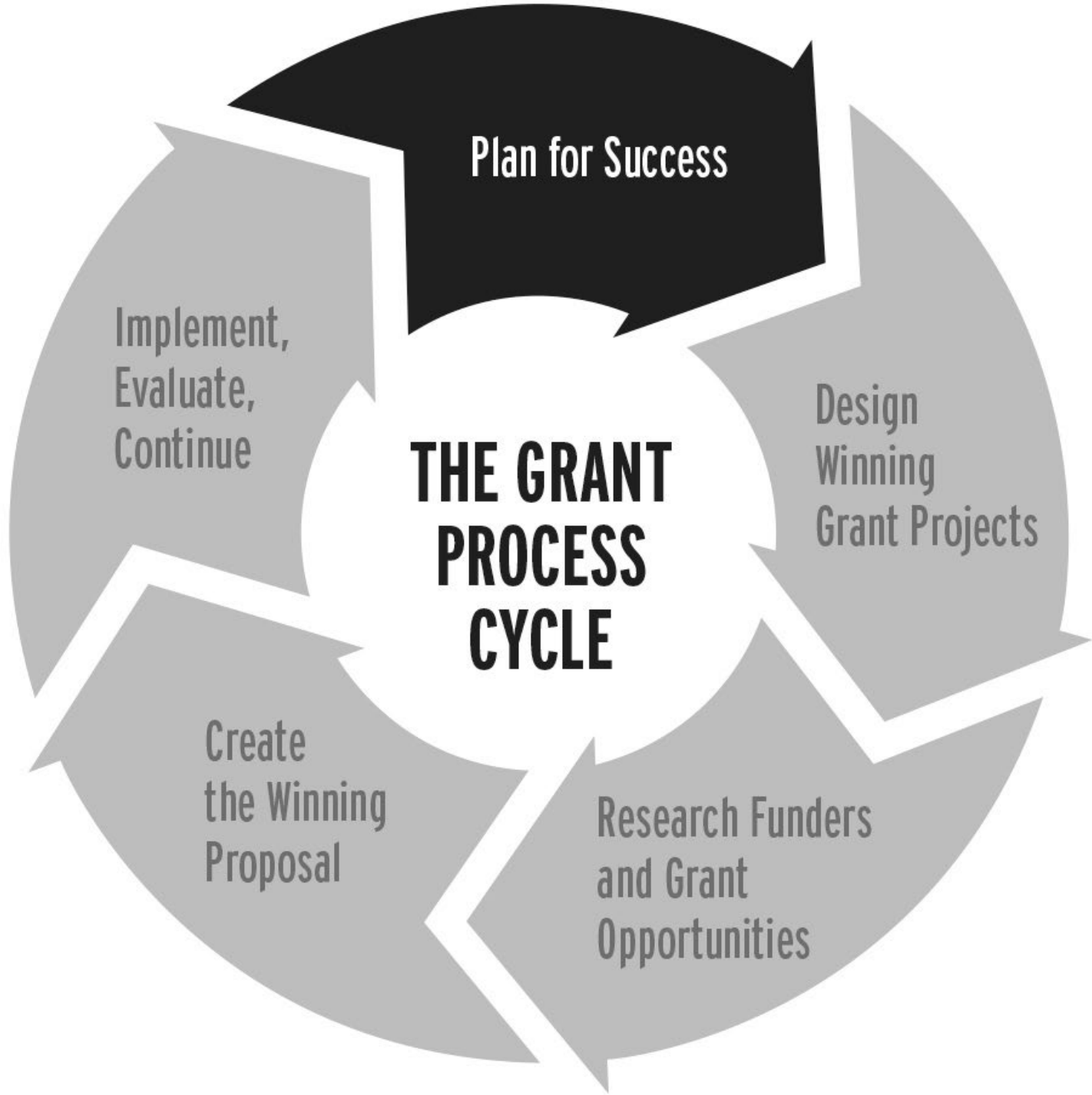


How can the library help?

WHY START WITH NEEDS?

1. **Understand the Community**
2. **Get People Involved**
3. **Use Resources Wisely**
4. **Build Trust with Funders**
5. **Make a Lasting Difference**





**SUCCESS=
PREPARATION +
OPPORTUNITY**

*WINNING GRANTS:
A HOW-TO-DO-IT MANUAL
FOR LIBRARIANS 3RD EDITION*

USE WHAT YOU ALREADY HAVE.

The components for proposals & inspiration for grant projects are in strategic plans.

1. Strategic plans are the best shortcut!
2. Library and community plans
3. Needs assessments
4. Existing data (Edge, Census, Public Libraries Survey, usage stats)
5. Patron feedback
6. Staff observations



PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS



Community Service Organizations

Cultural Organizations (Museums, Historical Societies)

Chambers of Commerce & Economic Development Orgs

Healthcare Providers

Local Businesses (Banks, Retail, Restaurants, Realtors)

Local Government (Social Services Agencies)

Media (Newspapers, Radio, and TV stations)

Nonprofit Organizations

Other Libraries

Religious Organizations and Churches

Schools and Higher Education

Senior Centers and Technology Centers

Youth Organizations (Boys and Girls Clubs, Childcare Facilities, Home School Groups)

**A grant project is
the solution to a need in the community.**



It's About People...

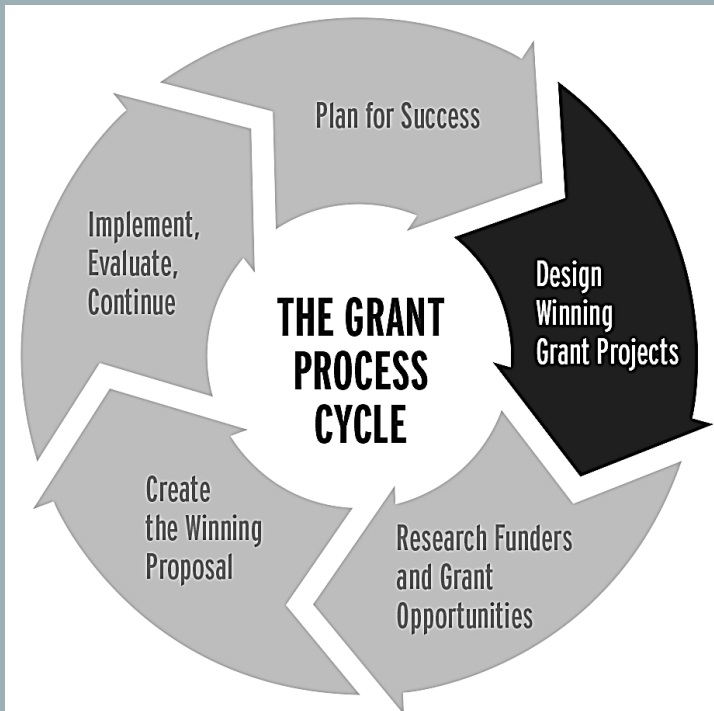
YOUR PROJECT HELPS PEOPLE.

Thing: *The Library needs **computers**.*

People: Job seekers, students, seniors, new device users



PROJECT PLANNING STEPS



Step 1: Community Need

Step 2: Project Idea

Step 3: Project Goals, Objectives and Outcomes

Step 4: Activities

Step 5: Timeline

Step 6: Budget

Step 7: Evaluation Plan

Goals, Objectives, Outcomes

Keep the logic simple and connected.

1 Goal

The broad direction
of the project

Example:

Improve digital literacy
for older adults.

2 Objective

A specific, measurable
target

Example:

1. 30 older adults participate in a series of beginner digital skills classes over 8 weeks.
2. Partner with the local senior center to expand digital skills support for older adults.

3 Outcome

The change in the
people

Example:

Older adults will
increase confidence,
skills, & independence
in using digital tools for
everyday life.

Quick check: What do you want to change,
by how much, by when, and for whom?



Haddonfield Public Library, New Jersey



Scott County Library System in Eldridge, Iowa

Practical Impact Evaluation (PIE)

How will you know you made a difference?

What will change?

How will you know?

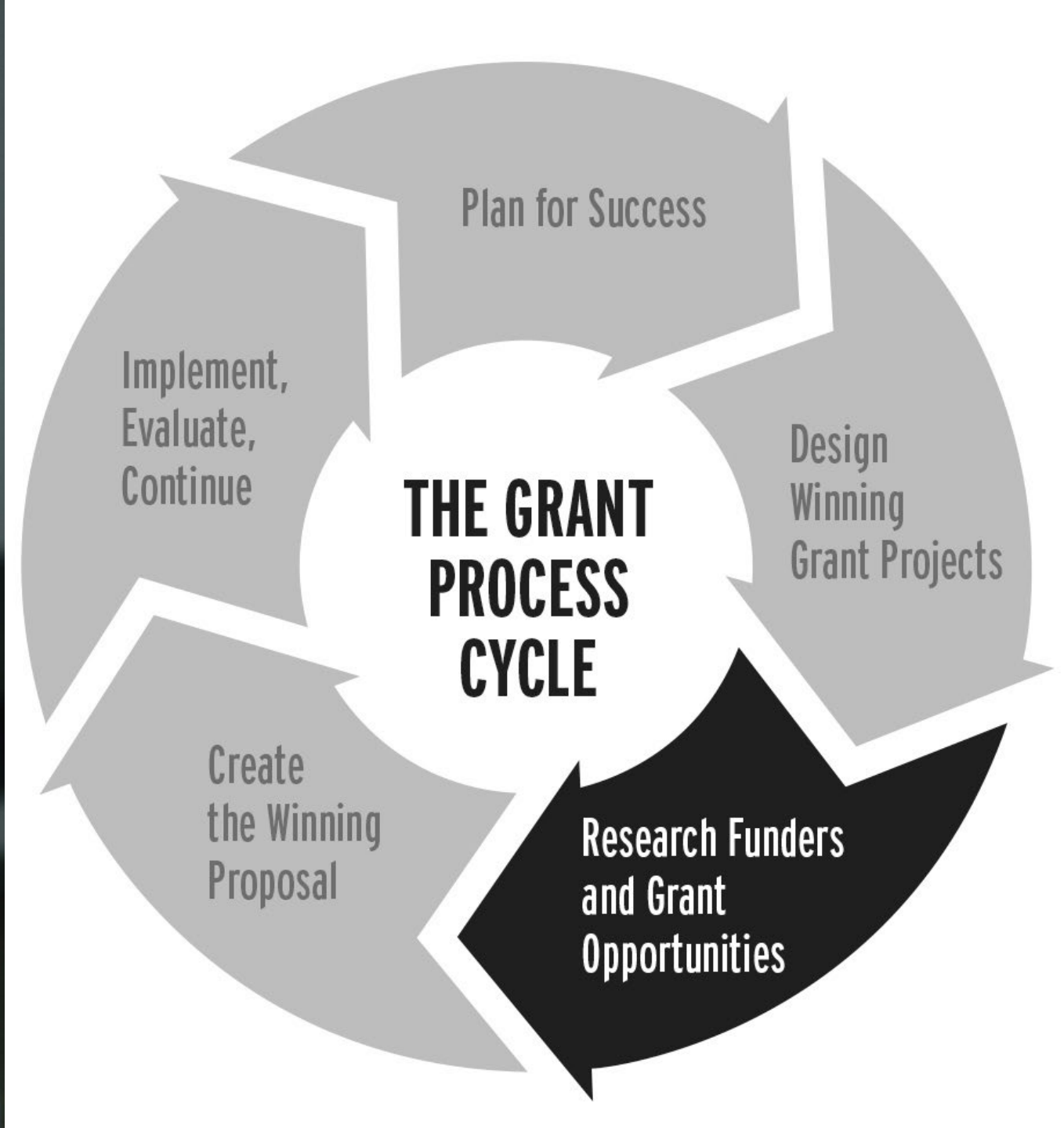
What simple method will you use?

(It's about the people.)

Do → Change → Show



Don't just do the work. Show the impact.





FINDING THE RIGHT FUNDER

“Just my size!”

START LOCAL

Federal (IMLS, NEH, NEA, ED)

State Library and Local Government (arts & humanities councils, city/county depts)

Local and Community Foundations

Businesses (local and national outlets)

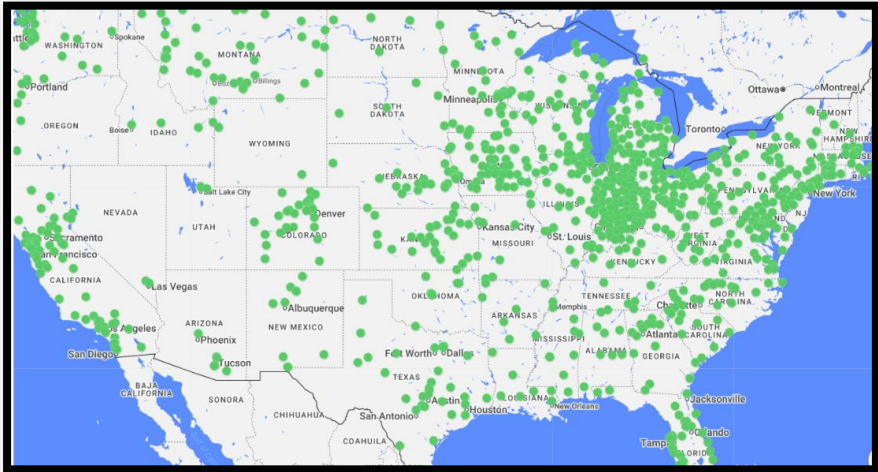
Service Clubs (Rotary, Lions, Kiwanis, etc.)



DOLLAR GENERAL LITERACY FOUNDATION

ADULT LITERACY GRANTS Creating access and opportunity for adults to learn.	BEYOND WORDS Rebuilding school libraries affected by disasters.	FAMILY LITERACY GRANTS Learning for the whole family.
SUMMER READING Keeping students engaged in	YOUTH LITERACY GRANTS	

An ideal funder matches your project and your capacity.



LIBRARY GRANTS BLOG

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Library Grants

For anyone interested in library grant opportunities!

Friday, March 20, 2026

T-Mobile Hometown Grants (2026)

Deadline: March 31, 2026 (final application cycle)

Funder: T-Mobile in partnership with Main Street America

Award: Up to \$50,000

Eligibility: Nonprofit organizations, local governments, and tribal entities located in small towns with populations of 50,000 or less. Strong fit for libraries with **community space projects** (outdoor areas, meeting spaces, tech upgrades).

Purpose: To fund shovel-ready community projects that build, improve, or activate public spaces in small towns. Projects should create meaningful gathering places and strengthen community connections.

To learn more and apply: Visit the [T-Mobile Hometown Grants program page](#).

Posted by Stephanie Gerding at 11:21 AM No comments: 

Freedom to Read Foundation: 2026 Gordon M. Conable ALA Conference Scholarship

Deadline: April 3, 2026

Funder: Freedom to Read Foundation (FTRF)

Award: Conference registration, transportation, six nights of housing, \$300 stipend for meals and other expenses, and a one-year FTRF membership

Eligibility: Students currently enrolled in an ALA-accredited library and information studies degree program or an American Association of School Librarians-recognized master's program in school librarianship, and new professionals (LIS degree within the last three years). The recipient is expected to attend Freedom to Read Foundation and other intellectual freedom programs, consult with a mentor, and submit a report that may be shared as a blog post or FTRF news story.

Purpose: To support a library school student or new professional in attending the American Library Association Annual (ALA) Conference while advancing intellectual freedom and mentoring. The scholarship supports participation in ALA Conference events June 25–29, 2026, plus a dinner event on June 24 and a full-day FTRF meeting on June 25.

To learn more and apply: Visit the [FTRF webpage](#) and describe your interest in intellectual freedom, professional growth, and conference participation. https://www.ftrf.org/page/Conable_Scholarship

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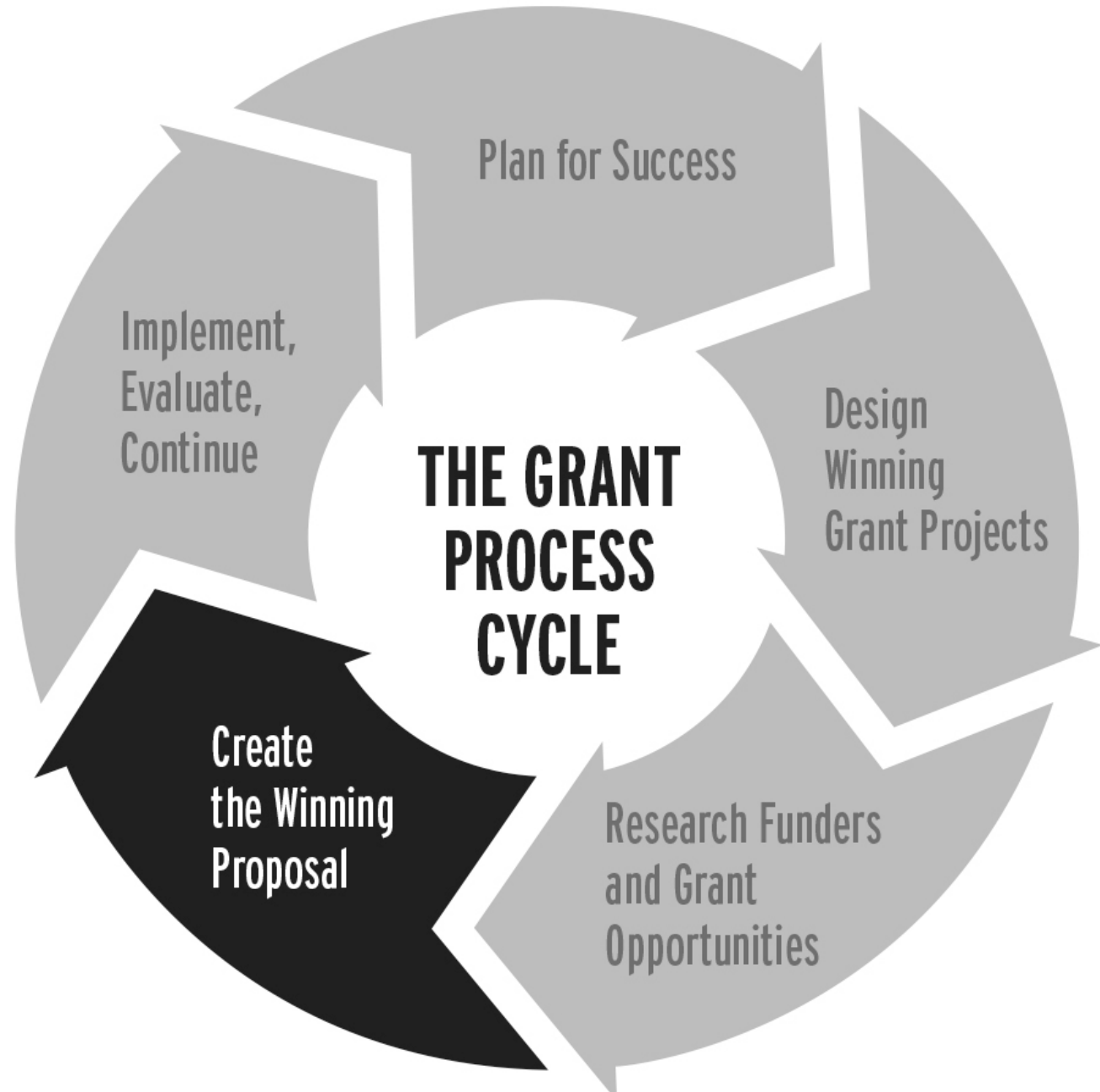
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**THE GRANT
PROCESS
CYCLE**

Plan for Success

Design
Winning
Grant Projects

Research Funders
and Grant
Opportunities

Create
the Winning
Proposal

Implement,
Evaluate,
Continue

GRANT PROPOSAL COMPONENTS



- **Title Sheet**
- **Abstract/Summary**
- **Organizational Overview**
- **Statement of Needs/Justification**
- **Project Description**
- **Partnerships**
- **Timeline/Activities**
- **Budget**
- **Evaluation Plan**

FOUR QUESTIONS YOUR PROPOSAL SHOULD ANSWER



What **need** is being met?

How will you do it?

Who will be helped & **changed**?

Why should **your** grant proposal be funded?

PROPOSAL TIPS

*PASSION and facts.
Tell the story.*

Ask for what
is needed.

Pay attention
to the details.

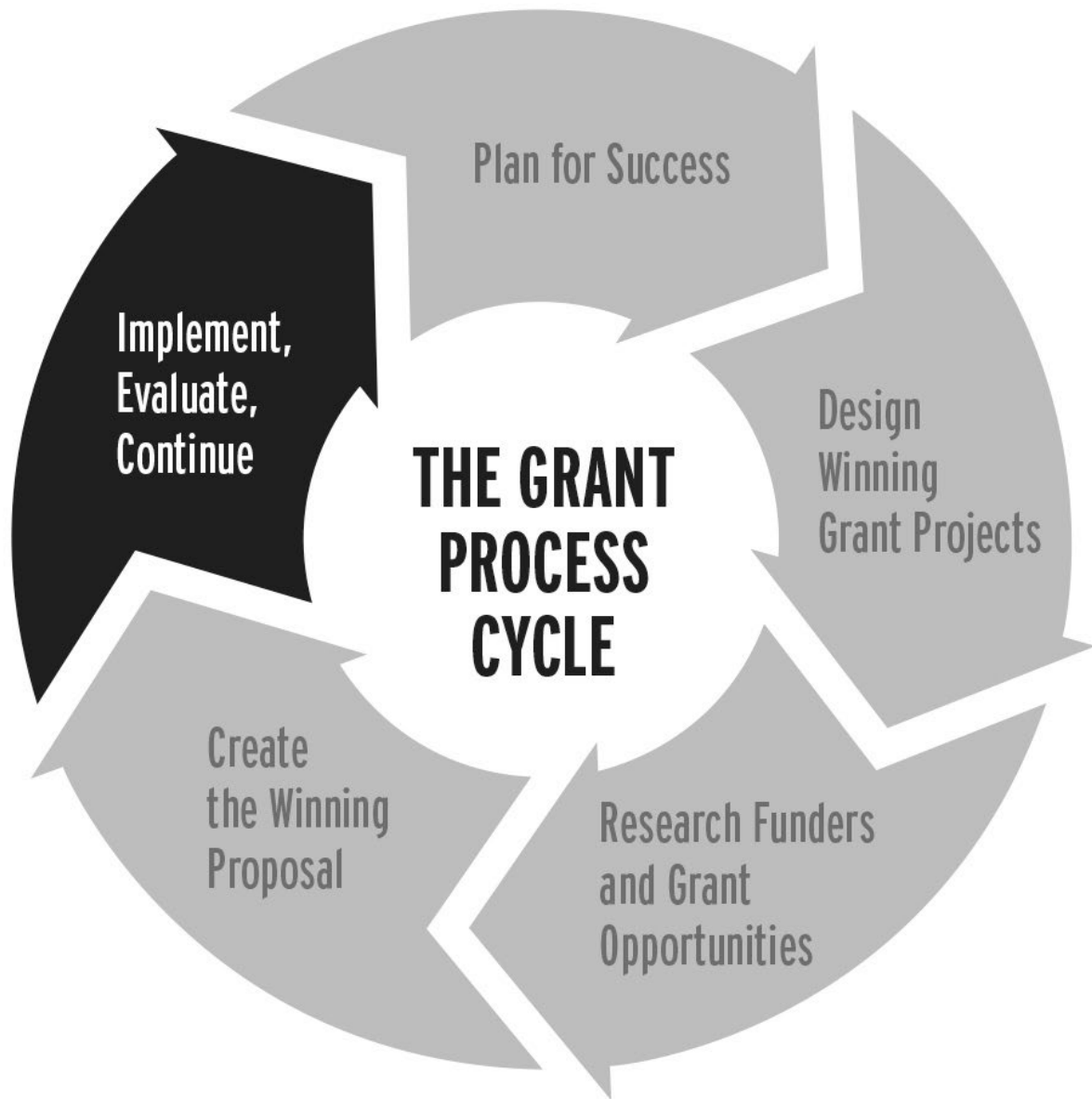


GRANT REVIEW PROCESS

- Build relationships with funders and know their priorities and methods.
- Decisions to give (like most human decisions) are emotional.
- Decisions are also arbitrary.



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Bonus Benefits of Library Grants



Increased Visibility

Showcases the library's impact and value to a wider audience.



Community Support

Strengthens relationships and builds a stronger, more engaged community.



Advocacy & Influence

Demonstrates the library's importance, influencing policy and funding decisions.



Enhanced Programs & Services

Creates new opportunities for learning, creativity, and enrichment for all ages.



New Partnerships

Builds collaborations with organizations, businesses, and institutions.



Technology & Innovation

Expands access to resources and introduces tools for the future.

Quick Wins for Grant Success

The Alignment Test

Strategic:

- ✓ Who is this for?
- ✓ Why now?
- ✓ Why us?
- ✓ Why this funder?

Outcome in a sentence

Turn vague → clear.

- ✓ Audience will [change/benefit].”



Micro-Evaluation

Offer 3 simple options

- Collect comment cards
- Take photos
- One-question surveys

If/Then Budget Logic

Justify your costs.










“If we buy X → we can deliver Y.”



Small steps that can **improve** grant applications.

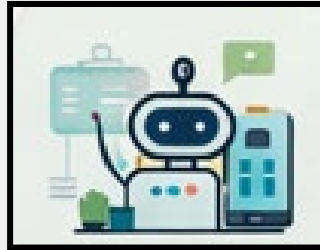
Library Grant Competencies:

Where AI Can Help and Where People Are Essential

Library Grant Competency	How AI Can Help	Where People Are Essential
 Community Needs Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Summarize surveys, feedback, and data	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Listening to community, building trust, prioritizing needs
 Funder Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Compare opportunities, summarize guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Judging fit, read priorities, decide whether to pursue it
 Project Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Brainstorm activities, draft goals/objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Design a feasible, effective project rooted in actual community needs
 Partnership Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Draft outreach, letters, and meeting agendas	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Build relationships, involve stakeholders
 Proposal Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Draft sections, refine content	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Making proposals accurate, persuasive, compelling
 Budgeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Draft budget details, suggest letters & reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Estimate meaningful costs, take financial responsibility
 Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Suggest outcomes, data tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Set meaningful measures, learn from results
 Equity & Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Create checklists, timelines, reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Leading, solving problems during implementation
 Grant Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Draft reports, summarize lessons learned	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Reflect honestly, plan long-term impact

Responsible AI Use

- Do not paste confidential or sensitive data into open tools.
- Verify facts, citations, costs, and claims.
- Document when AI is used in.
- Check equity impacts.



AI Tools that Support Grant Work

- ChatGPT, Copilot or similar LLMs
- Grammarly / editing tools
- AI summarizers for long RFPs
- Transcription tools for interviews

PROMPTING

First, assign a role:

"Act as an experienced library grant writer" or "Act as a grant reviewer."

- Summarize these survey notes into 3-5 community needs.
- Rewrite this draft needs statement so it is clear, specific, and people-centered.
- Review this project idea against the grant guidelines and determine missing criteria.



TOP TIPS FOR SUCCESS

1. Focus on the people
2. Plan ahead
3. Keep projects realistic
4. Look for local grants
5. Measure Impact
6. Stay positive and persistent

A strong grant project does not
start with perfect writing.

It starts with a real need and a
clear plan.

Winning Grants



Stephanie K. Gerding

3rd Edition

Good luck with your
grant work!

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stephaniegerding@gmail.com

<https://alastore.ala.org/wingrants3>

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