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Show You the Money (or: Crush That Grant Application)

You've got an idea. An idea that will change the world for the better. Maybe it's a story that needs telling, or a work of art, or a community project, or a green initiative. Or something completely different. To make it happen, you need funding - so you want to apply for a grant.

Grant applications can be intimidating. But they don't have to be. Here are five ways to get friendly with them.

1. **Know the funder:** Before you start filling out forms, make sure that you've found a good match - shared values, common goals, similar interests. Read the funding program eligibility requirements carefully and be honest with yourself about whether your idea or organisation can meet them. Look at what kinds of projects the funder has supported in the past. Would you fit on the next list?
2. **Know your idea:** Be clear about what you hope to accomplish and how. What are your goals for this project? What kind of impact do you hope to make, and where, on what, or on whom? What's your starting situation? What are the steps you need to take to complete it? Who will you work with? How will you measure your success? And last but not least, what's exciting about this project? Show the funder that your idea is not only worthwhile, but well thought out. Show them that you know how to make things happen.
3. **Get real:** When you're making your project budget, don't guess at numbers. If you need supplies, equipment, or hired services, get estimates. Have multiple revenue sources if you can. If you're using in-kind donations, know what they're worth. Funders want to know that you've got a realistic picture of what your project will cost and how you're going to cover those costs.
4. **Answer. The. Questions.:** This may seem obvious - I hope it does - but its importance can't be over-stated. Not all applications are equal, and not all funders require the same information. Read the application carefully, and make sure that you understand what the questions are asking. If something's not clear, contact the funder and ask for help. Then give the details they're looking for. (Not just any details! The specific details that that specific funder wants.) Use their budget template, if they have one. Check and double-check that you've included any necessary supporting materials. And please proofread.
5. **Make your story a success story - and invite the funder to be part of it:** Most funders genuinely want to make a positive impact through their contributions. They want to help create success stories. If you've been successful with similar projects in the past, mention that - a good track record always helps. Keep the tone of your application positive and engaging, even if you're tackling a difficult challenge. Show that you're determined. Show that you care, and that others care too. Enthusiasm is infectious, and funders are not immune.

Good luck! And if you need a hand, give me a shout - contact info below.