



# Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity

## Common Missteps in the Grant Application Process

### Summary

Grant applications undergo a thorough [Merit Review Process](#). Not all applicants are successful. Compiled within this resource are the top five reasons for application denial, and a list of tips and resources to increase success.

### Top Five Reasons for Denial

1. Applicant was not registered in the GATA Grantee Portal
2. Applicant was not Pre-Qualified by the grant application deadline
3. Grant Application package missing required documents
4. Grant application contained inadequate information
5. Grant Application submitted past the deadline

#### 1. GATA Grantee Portal

To apply for grant funds, applicants must register themselves and their organization in the GATA Grantee Portal. GATA stands for the Grant Accountability and Transparency Act, which adopted federal grant guidance and regulation codified at [2 CFR part 200](#). The GATA Portal is a system used for grant activity across all state agencies.

- To register, visit the [GATA Grantee Portal](#)
- Use the instructions provided in the [GATA New User Guide](#) to complete registration
- [GATA Portal FAQ](#) provides answers to common portal related questions

#### 2. Pre-qualification

Applicants must obtain [Pre-qualified](#) status by the grant application deadline. The State of Illinois has defined a set of requirements for all organizations seeking to receive grant funding. Pre-qualification demonstrates that an organization has met all legal requirements, obtained all the necessary registrations, and has a proven track record of compliance. Pre-qualification status must first be obtained by an organization, but this status must then be maintained for the entire lifespan of the grant program, or if your organization wishes to continue to apply for and receive grant funds. Grantees can track and manage their Pre-qualified status in the GATA Portal.

### **Pre-qualification requirements:**

- Active and public registration in [Sam.gov](http://Sam.gov) including a valid Unique Entity Identifier, or UEI
- Valid Federal Employer Identification Number, or FEIN
- A Certificate of Good Standing from the [Illinois Secretary of State](#)\*
- Not on the Federal Excluded Parties List
- Not on the Illinois Stop Payment List
- Not on the Illinois DHFS Sanctions List

\*Certificate of Good Standing only applies to Corporations, Not-for-Profit Corporations, Limited Partnerships, Limited Liability Companies, and Limited Liability Partnerships

### **3. Application Documents**

Grant applications require additional documentation upon submittal. The Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) will address these required documents in Part D, Section 2 Application and Submission Information. Content and Form of Application Submission. Required documents can include but are not limited to:

- Uniform Grant Application in fillable PDF format
- Uniform Budget utilizing template provided by DCEO for the specific project
- Conflict of Interest Disclosure
- Mandatory Disclosures
- Program Application

It is important to note that not all grant applications will require the same set of additional documents. Grant applications must include all required documents, or the application package will not progress to Merit Review. Applicants should be mindful of completed all required documents and use the NOFO as a checklist to ensure the relevant materials have been included.

### **4. Inadequate Grant Application Information**

Applicants should develop a grant proposal that accurately captures the intent of their program, the potential impact of their project, and that addresses a need within their community. Unsuccessful applicants fail to convey the importance of their project and leave reviewers with unanswered questions. Language should be clear and concise but detailed enough to provide a clear picture of the organization and the proposed project.

- Avoid jargon by explaining terms or acronyms associated with your project
- Assume reviewers know nothing about your organization or project
- Provide examples of similar programs or projects and their success
- Be descriptive but maintain objectivity
- Back up your proposal by citing statistics, research, facts, and studies

## 5. Missed Deadlines

Grant application deadlines are clearly stated within the NOFO in Part D. Application and Submission Information, section 4. Here, potential applicants are given the exact date and time that the grant application window closes. This is a hard deadline. Applications are automatically timestamped upon submission, and those submitted past the deadline will not progress to Merit Review.

- Do not wait until the last minute to start completing your grant application
- Prepare for your application well in advance of the application deadline
- Do not submit applications or application materials via email
- Use the Smartsheet application link provided Part D. Application and Submission Information to submit your application and required materials
- If you have questions, contact the Program Manager identified in Part D. Application and Submission Information, Section 1

## Resources

The Technical Support Team of the Office of Accountability is proud to offer a collection of resources to assist grantees throughout the application process and during their grant lifecycle. We encourage potential applicants to take full advantage of our trainings, guides, tutorials, and Help Desk to build their capacity as future grantees.

- Bookmark our [DCEO Grantee Resources](#) page to stay up to date on available materials and opportunities
- Browse our collection of [Video Trainings and Resources](#)
- Join us for [Upcoming Grant Trainings](#)
- Sign up [Grant Management Training Invitation List](#)
- Visit the [GATU Resource Page](#) to learn more about grants with DCEO
- If you have questions, contact [CEO.GrantHelp@illinois.gov](mailto:CEO.GrantHelp@illinois.gov) or complete a [Help Desk Inquiry Intake Form](#).