



## **Securing Financial Resources to Achieve Your Artistic Dreams: Submitting Successful Grant & Fellowship Proposals**

**Instructor: Krista Smith**

### **Introduction**

- I don't know about you, but I spent years trying to figure out the most efficient and cost effective way to build the financial resources needed to support my community-based artistic practices. Then I applied for and received my first grant, allowing us to more sustainably support ourselves while further investing in artistic programming and practices that uplift our communities. In this series, I will share what I have learned about submitting successful proposals and navigating what can often feel like a rollercoaster ride in the spirit of supporting other marginalized artists to secure the financial resources you need to sustainably achieve your artistic dreams. Quite literally, an investment of 40 hours of your time can yield grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$100,000 and even more. My name is Krista Smith. I'm a white, fat, Queer femme, born and raised in Kentucky who is passionate about working with artists and arts organizations to create art and culture that uplifts racial and cultural equity and social justice. As my alter ego, Kentucky Fried Woman, I have produced, presented, created, and performed in hundreds of Queer multidisciplinary arts and culture productions. At my peak, I was bringing in half my annual income through my artistic practice. In 2015, I left my full-time job and founded Krista Smith Development, which provides grant writing services, proposal reviews, coaching, and strategic consulting for BIPOC, Queer, trans, and disabled-led arts organizations and artists, and I've never looked back. Since 2015, I've submitted over 1500 proposals for my clients with an 80% success rate and have had the opportunity to consult with dozens of arts organizations and artists, and I have learned so much in this process. Two values guide my business. First, I work to support arts organizations and artists to have the financial resources they need to sustainably create and produce artistic programming. Second, I believe that all labor, whether artistic, administrative, or technical, deserves to be fairly compensated. I see grant funding as a way to ensure fair compensation for all who provide creative and other labor for your organization or artistic products. In this course, I will share with you best practices, strategies, and some skills to support you to successfully navigate the grant and fellowship proposal world. Individual videos in this course will focus on researching grants and fellowship opportunities, the basics of proposal writing, proposal summary statements, writing your organizational or artistic

background, creating a basic project statement, identifying your intended audiences, participants, and community, creating a realistic budget, and artistic work samples and additional supporting materials. Additionally, you will get to meet one of my favorite artists, musician and filmmaker StormMiguel Florez, who has submitted many successful grant and fellowship proposals that have supported him to fund his artistic work. However, before going any further, I must contextualize the historical and continuing inequities and white supremacy that exist in the philanthropy world. For many artists that I work with, particularly other Queer and fat artists, BIPOC, immigrant, trans, and gender-nonconforming and disabled artists, submitting grant proposals can be a fear-inducing and even traumatizing experience. Funders present many barriers that make it more difficult for non-dominant identity people to apply for and receive funding. The proposal process forces us to get intimate about money and finances, and many people feel uncomfortable writing in English. Submitting grants that are declined for funding can lead to feelings of inadequacy or a sense of failure or that your art or your communities don't matter. I really want to stress here that receiving or not receiving grant funding or a fellowship in no way defines who you are as an artist. While the grant and fellowship world was created and has been dominated by white, cisgendered, heterosexual, non-disabled people, there has been massive changes in the past decade, and for the first time in the history of philanthropy, more grants are being administered by and awarded to BIPOC, Queer, trans, gender-nonconforming, and disabled-led arts organizations and artists. I am bearing witness to millions of dollars being pumped into our communities and am excited to see BIPOC, Queer, trans, gender non-conforming and disabled-led arts organizations and artists reap the benefits of these shifts in philanthropy. Right now, I am all about securing this money for our people to create art and culture that will shift our world into one where all people are able to thrive. There is a historical shift moving away from previous models, where white-led organizations, centering Eurocentric arts practice and lacking cultural competencies went into communities of color to provide arts and culture education, events and opportunities, consistently creating harm, perpetuating trauma, and not allowing those communities to self-determine their own art and cultural production work. You might notice that I keep mentioning organizations led by BIPOC, Queer, trans, gender non-conforming and disabled people. That is because I am part of a growing movement of cultural workers who believe that art and cultural production work must be of, by, and for the communities we serve. There is a huge difference between inclusion and self-determination. BIPOC, Queer, trans, gender non-conforming, and disabled communities deserve to self-determine the artistic and cultural programming that serve their own communities. In today's grant and fellowship world, organizations and projects that are of, by, and for the communities they serve are the most successful in securing grant and fellowship funding. I want to, again, stress the high return on investment grants and fellowships can yield and note that foundations and government funders are deeply investing in BIPOC, Queer, trans, gender non-conforming, and disabled communities. If you also feel excited about what this can mean for your own artistic practice and your people, I hope you will join me for this course, and I heartily cheer your efforts as you invest in yourself and your communities this way.