

GRANT TEMPLATE

If you are reading this, you may have seen me speak or heard my loudmouth at an event. You may have heard I've won over \$200,000 in grants, which is a feat, but I promise you I have probably applied for over \$1,000,000. I say that to say this is a game of numbers, and the competition increases every day. I developed this template to have all the standard answers to most of these questions on hand so that I could copy and paste them whenever I found an open grant. So, this isn't my grant template. It's yours. Write out all your answers in this document and keep it with you. I'll give some examples of what I said, but write what you think, and if you keep coming across a question, add the answer to your document to have it on hand. This is a living document meant to be updated; check on it every 6 months to a year to ensure it all makes sense.

Top Pitfalls

1. **READ THE RULES:** as we grew in age and revenue, we began to get disqualified for grant programs, so rather than waste time, I read the rules/qualifications page; when in doubt, apply anyway
2. **USE THE SPACE:** If it's a 1000-word max, go for it and thoroughly explain yourself without fluffing it up. Write up to 1000 words for each answer here and cut out anything if the word count is lower for the grant.
3. **DON'T FRONT ON 500:** Those lower grant amounts often have a lower barrier and are easier to win. You can rack up the grants others ignore if you already have your answers.
4. **SPELLCHECK:** Download Grammarly or some other app to check your spelling
5. **THERE IS NO HACK BETTER THAN YOUR VOICE:** yes, there are AI and Fiver and all the different hacks, but call me old school. Let the grant administration know how important this money is to you and how important your business is. There is no hack to having someone connect with your voice.
6. **DOWNLOAD YOUR ANSWERS:** You will be applying for a bunch of grants. Don't forget your answers in case they ask follow-up questions.

Grant Questions & Answers

WHAT IS YOUR BUSINESS?

Describe your business clearly and directly.

Example

Harlem Chocolate Factory is an artisan chocolate company where we convey the various cultural experiences of Harlem through our premium chocolate products. We started with the names of iconic Harlem destinations and historical sites, such as Stivers' Row and the Pan-Pan Diner, and developed recipes that could tell those stories. Each of our premium chocolate bars is shaped like a Harlem brownstone and wrapped in a picture of Harlem. We say, "We are lovers of Harlem & Chocolate, sharing our love for Harlem & Chocolate". Our goal is to bring diverse voices to the forefront of the chocolate industry.

WHO ARE YOU?

Write a short & sweet bio that highlights your experience or expertise.

Example

I am a self-taught chocolatier and have worked with chocolate since I was 9. I discovered my love for chocolate work while trying to get around my mother's strict no-sugar rules. My mom, a chocolate connoisseur, took me to every Salon du Chocolat, the annual event where you can taste chocolates worldwide. I've spent my life eating chocolate, seeing the trends come and go, yet never seeing anything that reflected my culture. If chocolatiers worldwide represented their cultures, I should, too. My only "real" jobs have been marketing or design, but I've always been drawn to entrepreneurship.

I met Asha, my business partner, while attending Spelman College. We worked together freelancing in New York City after graduation; Asha and I worked in marketing, and Asha worked in corporate events. Asha was the first person I called after deciding to start Harlem Chocolate Factory. We spent nights and weekends in the Hot Bread Kitchen making and wrapping chocolate bars for local markets. Together in 2018, we opened our flagship retail and production kitchen in the Historic Strivers' Row district of Harlem. Today, Harlem Chocolate Factory continues to achieve new heights, from being featured on The Today Show to being one of Oprah's Favorite Things 2020.

WHAT'S THE STORY BEHIND YOUR BUSINESS?

Give a short breakdown of your business's story and how it came to be.

Example:

I'm obsessed with chocolate. I grew up in an anti-sugar home, but one exception to this rule was CHOCOLATE, specifically high-quality chocolate. In my pursuit of sweets, I tempered my

first batch of chocolate at ten years old. My mom and I have attended every chocolate show and tasted treats worldwide. I've spent my life eating chocolate, seeing the trends come and go, yet never seeing anything that reflected my culture. I have always been drawn to entrepreneurship, and I started Harlem Chocolate Factory to honor my community and bring a new perspective to the industry.

WHO IS YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE?

I found many grant applications that asked this, so I put it in my template.

Example

The US chocolate industry will be over \$19 billion in 2021, and the edible gifting marketing will be \$87 billion. We focus on two segments: professional female parents making over \$75,000 annually and businesses making over \$5,000,000 with corporate gifting programs. Our research shows a massive gap in the market, especially at retail, for a well-branded premium chocolate brand with solid ethics, authenticity, quality products, and a clear commitment to social causes. We have done corporate gifting for Kate Spade and the Kate Spade Foundation, Bain, Google, JP Morgan Chase, Samuel Adams, The Executive Leadership Council, Halstead, Airbnb, and multiple financial and law firms. These gift recipients often turn into direct consumers. The potential for consumer gifting is excellent as we receive waves of press and people begin to see our products in the hands of their favorite celebrities and influencers.

WHAT MAKES YOU UNIQUE?

Example

Harlem Chocolate Factory bridges the gap between the mass market options and a premium chocolate experience. We provide an elevated chocolate experience reserved for small brands with large-volume capabilities. We focus on creating superior, fair-trade, fresh chocolate products all wrapped in packaging that reflects the elegance of Harlem. Each of our bars is molded in the shape of a brownstone and packaged in a box designed with a photograph of Harlem.

WHAT'S YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO YOUR COMMUNITY?

Example

Harlem isn't just a namesake we've placed on our products for a buzz or attention; it is our home. I was born and raised in Harlem and care deeply for my community. We always try to support the people, the cultural and historical institutions, and even other small businesses. For

example, I sit on the board of a local non-profit that provides economic stability to black single mothers. Our goal is to eventually create a training program that allows single parents to learn the chocolate trade. We aim to build a company that supports Harlem's cultural institutions and most vulnerable populations while being dedicated to fair treatment for all persons in our supply chain. Ultimately, we want to provide jobs with above-average living wages to members of our community.

HOW WOULD THE FUNDS BE UTILIZED IF YOUR BUSINESS WERE TO WIN THE PRIZE?

This question is tricky cause it will change depending on the grant, and you want to be specific to the grant amount. So, write different plans for standard grant amounts like \$1,000, \$2,500, \$5,000, \$10,000 & \$25,000.

Example

If we were to win the prize, we would immediately apply it towards upgrading our website. We manually process corporate orders, wholesale orders, and virtual event bookings; this is a nightmare. When we have a great experience with one client, they will refer someone else, and we desperately need a forward-facing system that integrates all these separate sales channels into one. We have identified the applications we will add to our website and need \$3,000 to build the system. \$4,000 will be used to hire an additional staff member in our kitchen and purchase a professional printer so we no longer have to outsource custom inserts for corporate clients (our most significant request). The final \$3,000 will be utilized to purchase shipping supplies and packaging. Last year, we had to close for the summer because we could not afford the bulk ice packs and insulation.