

Mini-Grant Budget Tips and Tricks

1. **UNDERSTANDING THE PURPOSE OF YOUR PROJECT BUDGET.** Your budget is a key element of your mini-grant application because it paints a picture of how the project will be managed and serves as a blueprint for spending the money you receive. The proposed budget must accurately represent the amount of all necessary project costs.
2. **GROUP YOUR COSTS IN A WAY THAT MAKES SENSE.** When thinking through your project budget, your goal is to illustrate what it takes to successfully complete your project. As you are thinking through all of the different costs, try grouping items into broader categories like Stipends, Travel, Equipment, Materials/Supplies, Food, Vendors, etc. Once you have your categories, assign dollar amounts to each one based on research for what categories might cost.
3. **USE REAL NUMBERS WHEN POSSIBLE.** A reasonable budget is one that is based upon actual costs when possible. It's more helpful to base your project expenses on the true costs of things. When it comes to things like materials and supplies, we recommend doing some research to estimate costs. A few good places to do research are:
 - a. Stores: What if you need to buy 100 binders for a project? We recommend checking out your local office supply store and see what their price is for the ones you want to buy.
 - b. Online pricing: Going online and finding a price for items can be a fast way to estimate costs. If you plan to order online, remember to include tax and shipping costs, if they apply.
 - c. Quotes from vendors: What if you need to work with another vendor to install a community garden or provide porta potties? We recommend getting a quote for what you need directly from the vendor, especially if it's a specialty service. This step will take the guesswork out of the final cost.
4. **TELL THE SAME STORY IN THE BUDGET AND PROJECT SUMMARY.** Sometimes applicants make the mistake of forgetting things in their budget that they discussed in their project summary and their budget doesn't match what they proposed to do. We want you to avoid that mistake! Once you've pulled together your budget, take a step back and ask yourself, "Do the words from my project summary and the numbers of my budget match?" To check, read through your project summary and every time you mention something that costs money, stop and double-check that it's in your budget!
5. **MAKE SURE YOUR NUMBERS ADD UP.** Spend time double checking the math in your budget. Even if your numbers were calculated using Excel before being transferred to your application, we recommend getting out your calculator to manually check the numbers too! Try to have someone else look at your budget and ask them to make sure your dollar amounts add up correctly.