

1) How much can one get as a grant?

The amount of a grant varies considerably, from under \$3000 for a Creative Spark (City of Vancouver) grant to support an arts-based project that engages young people to five figure project grants from the Canada Council for the Arts to support major writing projects for those fit the CC designation of a professional writer. Often targeting smaller grants can be a good strategy as an emerging writer so that you can build your profile in order to one day qualify for the more major grants.

2) I'm wondering if any of these opportunities are open to non-Canadian residents as well.

This is a great question! Unfortunately, many Canadian-based grants are only open to citizens, and sometimes also permanent residents, and/or those with refugee status. This is true, for instance, of both the B.C. and Canada Arts Council grants. There are some grants that have different eligibility criteria. For instance, the aforementioned Creative Spark grants require residency in the city of Vancouver, but not necessarily citizenship or other formal documentation. If you hold citizenship elsewhere, another option is to explore funding options available in that country or region that might be open to you. Unfortunately, there isn't one central database that lets you search all of the available grant opportunities by their eligibility criteria! However, this is an area where I can help. If you have a specific project and timeline, we can talk about grants to target and strategies for pursuing grant funding to support your work.

3) What kinds of grants should we prioritize applying for?

There are a couple of answers to this question. The first focuses on the kinds of grants you should prioritize applying for while you're a student. The second response looks to the kinds of grants you should prioritize applying for when you're no longer a student. I'm going to focus on the first response here, and see my response to question four as well, which takes the perspective of an early career writer who is no longer be a student.

This may be an unexpected response, given my job, but I don't necessarily think you should prioritize *applying* for grants while you are a student. I think you should prioritize *learning as much as you can* about the process of applying for grants while you are a student so that you are well-prepared when you graduate to begin seeking this kind of funding to support your writing career, if that is what you choose to pursue after graduation. There are a couple of reasons for this: the first is, you will not be eligible for many grants because of your student status. Granters assume you have access to other kinds of financial supports as a student, so they often will not fund you while you're still completing a degree. The second is, applying for grants requires a lot of specialized knowledge that it takes time to learn. The more you know about it before embarking on putting together your first application, the better positioned you will be to be successful. For instance, it is worth thinking through who you might want to ask for letters of reference now and begin cultivating those relationships—make sure your potential referees have chances to read your work or see you in action so that when you later approach them for a reference, they feel they know you and your practice well and can write a strong reference.

Now I'm going to contradict my first answer. While I don't necessarily think you should *prioritize* applying for grants as a student, there is one area where I think students can make good use of grant funding, and that is in applying for grants that will support a collaborative project that includes your creative practice. This might be a project you embark on with a community partner—staging a one-hander play at a local theatre, running a creative writing workshop with elementary students, writing materials for a local museum, etc. It's worth considering how your writing and career goals might fit into a collaborative project, which you can develop and pursue funding for with the support of the Arts Amplifier. This kind of work can give you a track record to draw on as you position yourself in future grant applications, as well as giving you experience in drafting a grant application.

4) Could you speak on grants for early career writers (with few publication credits)?

This question was asked in various ways by quite a few of you, unfortunately there are no silver bullets: grants often want evidence of expertise, and it can be challenging to secure funding to support acquiring that expertise. That said, there are ways to work towards developing your profile and targeting grants that can make getting grants more likely.

First, read through the response to question 3, above, which has some advice on how to prioritize your thinking about grants as you move into a more professional space after graduation. In addition to what I've written there, there are a few considerations for early career writers who are trying to position themselves for grant success.

Start small—don't expect (or attempt!) to secure the Canada Council's major project grant out of the gate. But, do look at whether these funders—the Arts Council for your province or territory, if there is one, and the Canada Council are offering early career funding options that might suit your work. As I mentioned in the webinar, the Canada Council is currently running a pilot funding program for emerging artists that I very much hope will be continued. As well, the BC Arts Council offers funding for [internships and mentorships](#) that are targeted at early career individuals (who are no longer full time students), providing both financial and an opportunity to build your professional network and (helpful for future grant applications).

There are a few sources of funding that either exist specifically for emerging writers, or don't explicitly require a professional profile. Sometimes, these are genre specific, as in the grants offered by the [Speculative Literature Foundation](#) or like the North American Guild of Beer Writers' [Diversity in Beer Writing Grant](#). Sometimes they come in the form of a prize (and may require an entry fee), like *The Arkansas International* [Emerging Writer's Prize](#) or the [RBC Bronwen Wallace Award for Emerging Writers](#), though we are getting a bit beyond the scope of grants in this category. There are also any number of artist residencies, ranging from fully-subsidized to fully fee-based, some of which are open to emerging writers (and residencies really fall outside the scope of this discussion of grants).

Keep in mind that all of these funding possibilities are competitive and the applications require time and effort (and sometimes money!) to complete, so consider carefully if they fit your broader objectives and are worth the time and effort to pursue. And always make sure you read the eligibility criteria very carefully.

Another resource for early career writers (though not providing financial support), [Diaspora Dialogues](#) is a mentorship program for emerging Canadian writers of any age. If you are selected for the program, you will be paired with a mentor who will read and provide feedback on a final or near final draft of your work, with the goal of readying it to be sent out for publication consideration. There is no financial cost to the mentee in this program. In terms of grants: this kind of mentorship can help you make professional connections (valuable for letters of reference!) and, ultimately, your publication credentials, which would help you in meeting the eligibility requirements of the Arts Councils.

My last piece of advice for those who are starting out is to focus not just on what grants you might be eligible to apply for, but also on how you can work on your own professional development so that you are better positioned to be chosen for a grant, when you do apply. Think about building and maintaining strong relationships with the people you go to for reference letters. Keep track of positive feedback you receive for your work or performance (save emails in which people mention your achievements or praise your writing, for instance). Get involved in your field in other ways: attend events or webinars for writers, join a professional association, seek out mentorship, look for opportunities to contribute and meet people. Finally, know the eligibility requirements for some of the larger grants that sustain longer-term projects and work strategically to meet those requirements, i.e. does a grant require publications of a certain length? A certain number of publications? A certain number of publication outlets? If so, send out submissions that will meet those requirements.

And, while the rejection can be brutal, it might help to remember that there is value in simply applying for grants. Federal and provincial funders can demonstrate the need for additional funding by showing that numbers of grant applicants are increasing, so even if you're ultimately unsuccessful in securing funding, you can know that just by submitting you're doing something that can bring more funding to your field.

5) Where are grants listed? Which websites do you recommend checking for grants?

Unfortunately there isn't one massive, searchable, online database that is regularly updated and lists all current grant opportunities and their eligibility criteria. There are, however, some good places to follow in order to find out about open grants, new grants, or changes to familiar grants. If you live in BC, I recommend following the [BC Alliance for Arts and Culture](#), which sends out information about some grants, as well as other professional opportunities. If you're on social media, it's also a good idea to follow the [Canada Council for the Arts](#) and your relevant provincial arts council—in B.C. that would be the [B.C. Arts Council](#). Some cities have their own Arts Councils as well, like [Toronto](#). In Vancouver, you want to keep an eye on the City of Vancouver's arts and culture [grants page](#).

Grants are listed all over the internet. If you have a specific type of project, it can be worth Googling the key terms to see if there are any grants supporting that particular area. For instance, if you're looking into writing residencies, you'll find a number of blogs and websites that list opportunities. Keep in mind, though, that these links get stale quickly and not many of these sites are regularly updated with new opportunities.

6) Does one have to be registered with a professional association as an 'artist' or 'writer' to qualify for funding as a writer/artist?

No, not necessarily. In the case of the Arts Councils, your status as a professional writer will be determined by the profile you complete in advance of filling out an application for funding. That's part of why it's crucial that you complete the profile early. Most often a writer's professional status is linked to their publication output. So for instance, to apply for Level 1 funding (for earlier career writers) through the B.C. Arts Council, you must meet the following indicators of professionalism:

- Have completed all basic training and not be enrolled in full-time studies.
- Have one book professionally published, or an equivalent, which is defined as:
 - Writers of fiction: 120 pages of fiction in literary magazines, recognized periodicals, or anthologies published by recognized professional publishing houses.
 - Writers of nonfiction: 120 pages of articles in literary magazines, recognized periodicals, or anthologies published by recognized professional publishing houses.
 - Writers of poetry: 40 pages of poetry in literary magazines, recognized periodicals, or anthologies published by recognized professional publishing houses.
 - Playwrights: a minimum of two short works or one full-length work professionally produced, published or publicly workshopped.
 - Spoken word artists: have received payment for public literary professional performances on at least three separate occasions.

If you are *self-published* acceptance into a professional association like the Writers' Union of Canada or the League of Canadian Poets can indicate professionalism in addition to output at the levels described above.

7) I've gotten feedback on grants stating that the jury "would have appreciated more project description" -- Do you have any advice or a kind of checklist that can help round out a project description?

My experience is that this kind of feedback can indicate that you were not specific enough in your description. It can be hard to describe a project you know intimately at the perfect level of detail for a grant application—too specific and you can get lost in the weeds, too broad and your project comes across as under baked. It can help here to have someone who doesn't know your project well or at all to read over your application, then ask them to tell you what they thought the project was about based on their reading. If their account of your project misses key details, that's

a clue that you need more specificity. You can also ask them if they found anything confusing, or if they had any questions. These can also indicate areas where you need to say more or revise your language to be clearer.

Sometimes this comment can also mean that your proposal is lacking a “so what?”—which means that the significance or importance of the project is not being adequately conveyed. You might exquisitely lay out the plot of your novel about a boatful of cats crossing the Pacific, but why should someone read this book? What does it have to say about the current moment? What is it contributing to literary conversations in Canada? How is it experimenting with form or genre? Keep in mind, always, that you’re writing for an audience who knows nothing about you or your project, though they WANT to care about it. They want to be excited and drawn into the work. Ideally, this is the reaction you are looking for from those who review your application for you as well.

8) How does one write persuasive grant applications if one does not have many highly visible creative writing accomplishments (i.e. large body of work, awards, publications)?

Focus on other metrics that can demonstrate your expertise or the significance of your work. If your writing focuses on a specific topic or theme, what experience gives you expertise or insight in that area? Can you quantify that expertise (i.e. through volunteer hours? Through specific training? Through successful projects completed in the past? Through references from those you’ve worked with in the past on similar projects?) If you have less-visible publications or more niche accomplishments, explain why these are valuable and what contribution they make to more specific cultures or audiences. If you’ve done similar kinds of work to what you are proposing in the past, include that information! In outlining that experience, include details that can mark your success: did you meet deadlines? Stick to budgets? Develop ongoing collaborations? The more specific you can be in outlining your successes, the better.

9) Any advice on letters of reference, specifically for emerging writers?

Think early and often about who could write a good reference letter for you, not just when you’re beginning a grant application. The relationship you have with a referee should be one that you cultivate. Make sure that your referees know about new work you’re doing and that they’re updated on your most recent accomplishments. If you have the chance to work with a referee in some capacity, that can be a great way for them to get to know you more deeply as a person, which will help them in writing a well-rounded letter.

As an emerging writer, if you’re trying to develop relationships that could turn into references, it helps to build your network and get out to meet people (more possible when there’s not a global pandemic!). If you’ve met someone a few times, even virtually, it gives you an entry point into asking for a reference letter. If you feel like someone could be a good reference, if only they got to know you better, invite them to do that: ask them to sit in on a workshop you’re giving, read a draft of something you’re working on, or come to your poetry reading. Remember, as an emerging writer, it is okay to ask for a reference letter from someone who is more senior in your field. But, be sure to give that person as much opportunity as you can to get to know you and your work so that they can write you a strong letter.

When asking a referee for a letter for a particular grant application, provide them with an overview of the project you’ll be submitting and send them any specific guidelines for reference letters listed in the grant’s applicant guide. You’ll also want to be very clear about the deadlines at this point, so that a potential referee can check their calendar. You want to ask them whether they feel they can write you a *strong* letter for this particular grant application. It’s important to give your referee the chance to say no, if they don’t feel like they can write you a strong reference for a particular grant or in the necessary timeframe. If they agree to write a letter, it can sometimes be helpful to create an outline for your referee showing how you see your work fitting into the grant’s guidelines. Ensure you are in contact with your referees well in advance of the deadline, this gives you time to find someone new if one reference falls through, as well as giving your referees enough time to put together a thoughtful letter.

10) I want to involve other writers or cultural creators in my work. How do I know how much I should budget to pay them?

You can find out the professional rates for creatives in all kinds of fields using CARFAC's (Canadian Artists' Representation/Le Front des artistes canadien) [Minimum Recommended Fee Schedule](#). You should compensate any artist involved in your project, including yourself, at the minimum rates set out in this guide. Failing to do so will negatively impact a grant jury's assessment of the feasibility of your project.

If you want to engage someone from outside of these fields, locate professional standards for payment in their profession.

If you want to hire an Indigenous Elder or Knowledge-Keeper to consult on or contribute to your project, you should pay them like a lawyer, i.e. compensate them in the range of multiple hundreds of dollars per hour. Underpaying Indigenous folks contributes to "elder fatigue," not to mention devaluing their contributions.

11) Do you know of any grants specifically for playwrights/filmmakers/writers of children's books/nonfiction writers/Indigenous writers?

Yes! There can be grants that are geared towards a specific genre, type of project, community, or even a project theme. There is not enough space in this Q&A format to go into all the potential grant possibilities that might be of interest to those who attended this webinar. But, if you're a graduate student or postdoc in the Faculty of Arts at UBC and you have something specific you're working on, reach out to the Arts Amplifier using our [Get Support](#) form and we can talk to you about the specific options that might work for you.