

COMPOSING YOUR MAP FUND LOI NARRATIVE

This is a collection of general writing techniques that may help alleviate some of the anxieties caused by the grant-writing process. These are suggestions only!

THE “STARING AT A BLANK PAGE” STAGE

(Drawn in part from Sondra Perl’s “Composing Guidelines”)

- Sit down and close your eyes. Take a moment to feel yourself in the chair, your feet on the floor. Take a big breath. Open your eyes and begin.
- Take a blank piece of paper and write a list of all the things you *could* write about. The list can relate to your project or not, it doesn’t matter. The idea is just to get the whole jumble of your thoughts out of your head and onto the paper.
- Now take a clean sheet of paper. At the top, write the title of the project for which you are seeking MAP funding. Use your actual project title (can be a working title), rather than “MAP Narrative” or “MAP proposal.” Below the title, using the same stream-of-consciousness method as above, write down all the words, phrases or images that come to mind in relation to your project. Let this be fragmented and list-y, don’t make any effort at putting together sentences or coherent ideas. You are just inventorying. When you feel you have written down everything you might want to say, pause and double check. Is there anything more? If so, write that too. (If you find yourself stuck from the beginning, with no words or phrases coming at all, try asking yourself, “What makes this topic so hard for me?” or “What’s so difficult about this?” Again pause and see if a word, image, or phrase comes to you that captures this difficulty in a fresh way—it will lead you to some more writing.)
- Look over your list and notice what fragments, words or images seem most urgent to you, which of them resonate, which demand your attention. Choose no more than three or four and write them at the top of a clean sheet of paper.

“FIRST STAB” STAGE

Now you’ll begin to write your project description. As you go, check that the points you are making in your narrative are related to the “most urgent” fragments you’ve written at the top of the page.

- To begin, write down concretely, what you propose to create. Is it a play? A multidisciplinary event? A community-derived opera? A dance? Whatever it is, state this clearly and simply in the first sentence or two of your proposal.
- Imagine and describe what a piece will look, sound, and feel like in a fair amount of detail. Even if you are in the very early stages, it will serve you to provide a strong visual sense of where you intend to go. Doing so gives the reader/evaluator/panelist a map so they can follow your thinking into more abstract areas.

- Offer clear and efficient descriptions of the mediums / conventions / influences you are using. Restraint can be useful here. Saying the work will "mix poetry, burlesque, folk music, large-scale video projections and dance" suggests you are throwing a little bit of everything because you don't actually have a clear idea in mind. If each of those elements is, in fact, essential to the piece that's great, but then it's even more imperative that you explain precisely why.
- Be clear and convincing that you can pull off this project, especially in terms of technical expertise. If a central element is, for example, live video, and you have never before used that form of media, acknowledge that fact and talk about how (and why) you intend to master it. If, on the other hand, you are using this project to expand your current practice, state that clearly and describe a detailed plan for your own creative development in that direction.
- Talk a bit about why this project is right for you right now. Linking a new work to aspects of past projects is enormously helpful to your reader.
- BEGIN A NEW PARAGRAPH TO ADDRESS HOW YOUR WORK ALIGNS WITH THE MAP FUND GOALS:

MAP supports work that "embodies a spirit of deep inquiry." We aim to resource a wide range of approaches to experimentation and invention in terms of form, community, discipline, social practice, and any other element of live performance.

MAP is particularly interested in supporting artists that question, disrupt, complicate, and challenge inherited notions of social and cultural hierarchy across the current American landscape. We aim to resource projects that not only value diverse perspectives, but also practice rigorous inclusivity.

Please give serious thought to how your work touches on these principles and describe the alignment explicitly. There is no prescription for *how* your work may intersect with these ideas, but Readers, Evaluators and Panelists will rate projects on this basis, so it's in the applicant's best interest to be clear on this point. You will have about 250 words to address this question in the application.

NOW STOP WRITING AND DON'T REVISIT THE NARRATIVE FOR AT LEAST A DAY.

"INITIAL STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS COMPLETED" STAGE

Once you have created your first draft, consider the following prompts!

- Have you given enough concrete details such that another person who knows nothing about your work or history can understand/visualize your ideas?
- Have you addressed the question of how this work aligns with the MAP Fund goals in a way that feels honest and true to you?

- Have you conveyed why you care about making this project, and by extension why someone else may want to become passionate about it as well?

“FIRST COMPLETE DRAFT FINISHED” STAGE

Share this draft with one or more members of your peer network and with someone whom you trust, but who knows very little about your work. (Not all MAP Fund evaluators will be familiar with your work, so you want to ensure that an outsider can clearly glean your meaning.)

- Ask the readers to review your work carefully. Mutually agree upon a deadline to return constructive feedback.
- Remember that the feedback is intended to help you achieve as much clarity as possible. Multiple drafts are normal, especially when you may be trying to talk about a project that is in the early stages of conception.

“WRITE THE SECOND, THIRD, ETC. DRAFT” STAGE

- Go back into the narrative and apply the feedback that will help you achieve the greatest articulation of your ideas.
- Once you believe you have finished, re-read the draft and then re-read the above list of prompts again. Keep going until you believe you have satisfied these questions.
- If possible, leave enough time to share this polished draft with your colleagues again. This review of the narrative should be less time-consuming. Ask them to look at any of the sections that they flagged previously to see if you have made those points more clear.

“CLOSE TO SUBMITTING” STAGE

- Go back into the narrative once more to tighten word choices, grammar, sentence structures, and other minor typos.
- Make sure you have adhered to all of the instructions and word counts, and entered information into all of the required fields.

NOW HIT SUBMIT WITH CONFIDENCE!

You’ve done a great job, and dealt with a difficult and important part of your practice as an artist. Congratulations!