



AN ARDENT WORKSHOP PRODUCT

# Organization Boilerplate Builder

The two blocks every application asks for, each also written out in full.

Free from Ardent Workshop · 2 of 43



# The paragraph you will paste for the next five years

Almost every application, sponsorship deck, press release and portal field asks a small nonprofit the same thing first: **who are you, and how big are you?** Most organizations answer it slightly differently every time, because nobody ever sat down and wrote it once.

This is that hour, done. Two blocks — a **60-word boilerplate** for anywhere you have less than a paragraph, and the **150-word organization description** most applications actually ask for — lifted unchanged from the Nonprofit Grant-Writing & Funder-Communication Swipe Bank, plus the fact-gathering sheet that makes the blanks answer themselves.

Both come the way every template in that bank comes: **twice**. The first version is the template, with every blank in brackets. The second is the same passage written out in full for an invented organization, so you can see the register before you write a word — how much detail is enough, and where a claim becomes an overclaim. Read the finished one first.

## THE ONE RULE BOTH OF THESE ARE BUILT ON

**Write the fact, not the feeling.** “Committed to empowering underserved youth” costs you eleven of your sixty words and tells a reader nothing they can picture. “We keep a room open from 3:00 to 6:30, four afternoons a week, for young people ages 9 to 14, and we feed them” is a picture — and a picture is what gets remembered on the fourth application of the morning.

**To use one:** paste the template into the field and replace everything in [BRACKETS]. A bracket that starts with **OR**, **IF** or **CHOOSE ONE** is a choice rather than a blank — keep the option that applies and delete the rest. Before you submit, search your draft for an opening square bracket so none are left behind.

Free to use. Nothing here asks for an email.

**A note on what this is.** These are writing templates and general guidance. They are **not legal, tax, accounting, or grant-compliance advice** and are not a substitute for any of them. The example organization — Ninebark Commons Youth Project, its funders, its EIN and every figure attached to it — is invented; its numbers are illustrative and are not benchmarks.

## BLOCK 1 OF 2 · SECTION 01

# Your fact base and boilerplate

### The 60-word boilerplate — the one that goes at the bottom of everything

01.1

A form gives you a 500-character box labeled "Brief organization description," or a sponsor asks for a line for the program, or a reporter asks what you do. You write it fresh every time, slightly differently, and none of the versions match.

#### WHERE IT GOES

Short application fields, press releases, sponsorship decks, the foot of a letter, your email signature block.

#### HOW TO USE IT

Write it once and freeze it. Paste it unchanged — the whole value is that it stops varying.

#### LENGTH & TIMING

50-75 words, or about 400 characters. Refresh once a year, when your numbers change.

**WHEN TO USE IT** Any time you have less than a paragraph. This is also the version everyone else quotes you in, so it is worth more care than its length suggests: it should survive being cut in half by someone else's copy editor and still say what you do, for whom, where, and since when.

#### BEFORE YOU WRITE, HAVE THESE IN FRONT OF YOU

- Your legal name and the name people actually use
- The year you were founded
- Who you serve — the ages or the population, and the place
- The one number you are happiest defending
- Your 501(c)(3) status, if you want it in there

#### Heading: Organization boilerplate — short

Founded in [YEAR], [ORGANIZATION NAME] [VERB: runs / provides / operates] [WHAT YOU DO, IN SIX TO TEN WORDS] for [WHO YOU SERVE] in [PLACE].

[LAST YEAR / IN FY[YEAR]], we served [NUMBER] [PEOPLE / FAMILIES / STUDENTS] through [PROGRAM NAME] and [PROGRAM NAME].

[ORGANIZATION NAME] is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

**A GOOD OUTCOME LOOKS LIKE** Someone who has never heard of you can repeat back, correctly, what you do and who for. If they can't, the fault is almost always that the middle clause is about your values rather than your activity.

**IF NOTHING COMES BACK** Not applicable — but watch for the failure mode: three different versions of this paragraph circulating in three different staff members' sent folders. Put the approved one in a shared file and delete the others.

**MAKE IT YOURS** Resist the urge to open with a feeling. "Committed to empowering" costs you eleven of your sixty words and tells a reader nothing they can picture. The verb should be something you physically do.

## The same block, written out in full

### The 60-word boilerplate — the one that goes at the bottom of everything

WORKED  
EXAMPLE

#### Heading: Organization boilerplate — short

Founded in 2011, Ninebark Commons Youth Project runs free after-school and summer programs for young people ages 9 to 14 on the Eastside.

Last year we served 214 young people through the Afterschool Studio and Summer Bridge, with an average of 61 attending on any given day.

Ninebark Commons Youth Project is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

**WHY IT READS THE WAY IT DOES** Resist the urge to open with a feeling. "Committed to empowering" costs you eleven of your sixty words and tells a reader nothing they can picture. The verb should be something you physically do.

## BLOCK 2 OF 2 · SECTION 01

# Your fact base and boilerplate

## The 150-word organization description — the one most applications ask for

01.2

The application has a box called "Organization Background" or "About the Applicant," with a 1,500-character limit, and it is due Friday. This is the block that fills it.

### WHERE IT GOES

The organization-background field on most foundation and community-foundation applications, and the opening of a letter of inquiry.

### HOW TO USE IT

Paste it, then spend your five minutes of tailoring on the last sentence only — the one that connects you to this particular funder.

### LENGTH & TIMING

150-200 words. Rewrite properly once a year; adjust the numbers whenever they change.

**WHEN TO USE IT** This is your default. Four movements: what you do and since when, who you serve and how they reach you, what scale you operate at, and what a reader should conclude about your competence. Nearly every application wants exactly that, in exactly that order.

### BEFORE YOU WRITE, HAVE THESE IN FRONT OF YOU

- The short boilerplate, finished — this is that plus evidence
- Last year's unduplicated number served, and how you counted it
- Your operating budget and staff count
- One partnership or credential a stranger would recognize
- One outcome number you can produce data for if asked

### Heading: Organization background — [ORGANIZATION NAME]

[ORGANIZATION NAME] [runs / provides / operates] [WHAT YOU DO] for [WHO YOU SERVE] in [PLACE]. We were founded in [YEAR] when [THE ORIGIN, IN ONE CLAUSE — a specific problem, not a feeling].

Our work centers on [PROGRAM NAME], which [WHAT IT ACTUALLY IS: days, hours, format], and [PROGRAM NAME], which [WHAT IT IS]. [HOW SOMEONE BECOMES A PARTICIPANT — referral, enrollment, walk-in.] There is no charge to [PARTICIPANTS / FAMILIES]. [OR: Fees are [AMOUNT], with [SHARE] of participants receiving a full waiver.]

In [FISCAL YEAR], we served [NUMBER] [PEOPLE] on an operating budget of [\$AMOUNT], with [NUMBER] full-time and [NUMBER] part-time staff and [NUMBER] active volunteers. [ONE OUTCOME SENTENCE — the number and what it measures.]

We work in partnership with [PARTNER], [PARTNER], and [PARTNER], and our work has been supported by [FUNDER], [FUNDER], and [FUNDER].

**A GOOD OUTCOME LOOKS LIKE** A program officer can tell, without asking you, roughly how big you are, whether you are the right size for their grant, and whether your work fits their guidelines. That is the entire job of this paragraph.

**IF NOTHING COMES BACK** If funders keep coming back to ask how big you are or what exactly the program is, this block is doing its job badly. The usual cause is that the second paragraph describes intentions rather than a schedule.

**MAKE IT YOURS** The last sentence — the partners and past funders — is doing more work than any other. It is the one that answers "has anyone competent already checked these people out." Name real partners only, and name the funder who would confirm it if called.

## The same block, written out in full

### The 150-word organization description — the one most applications ask for

**WORKED  
EXAMPLE**

#### Heading: Organization background — Ninebark Commons Youth Project

Ninebark Commons Youth Project runs free after-school and summer programs for young people ages 9 to 14 on the Eastside. We were founded in 2011 by three parents and a retired shop teacher after the district closed the last two after-school sites in the neighborhood in the same budget year.

Our work centers on the Afterschool Studio, which runs Monday through Thursday from 3:00 to 6:30 during the school year and combines homework support, a hot meal, and an arts and music studio; and Summer Bridge, a six-week full-day program in July and August. Young people enroll directly or are referred by counselors at Alder Ridge Middle School. There is no charge to families.

In our last full fiscal year we served 214 young people on an operating budget of \$612,000, with 6 full-time and 4 part-time staff and 38 active volunteers. Of the 118 young people who attended 30 or more days, 104 shared a report card with us and 92 of those advanced to the next grade on time.

We work in partnership with Alder Ridge Middle School, the Eastside Branch Library, and the county parks department, and our work has been supported by the Ordwell Trust, the Alderbrook Fund, and Tessaro Community Foundation.

**WHY IT READS THE WAY IT DOES** The last sentence — the partners and past funders — is doing more work than any other. It is the one that answers "has anyone competent already checked these people out." Name real partners only, and name the funder who would confirm it if called.

## BEFORE YOU WRITE · SHEET 1 OF 1

# Before you write a word about your organization

Fill this in once, then keep it where you can find it. Every block in this section is assembled from it, and most of the applications you will fill in this year ask for the same handful of facts in a dozen slightly different boxes. Getting them onto one sheet is the single highest-return hour in grant writing.

Legal name, any name you actually go by, and your EIN

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Year founded, and the one sentence about why it was founded

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Mission statement, exactly as the board approved it

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Who you serve — ages, place, and how someone becomes a participant

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Number served last year (unduplicated), and how you counted

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Programs, staff (full-time / part-time), and volunteers

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Annual operating budget, fiscal year end, and last audit or review date

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Two outcome numbers you can evidence, and your three most credible funders

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**Then write:** The 60-word boilerplate; The 150-word organization description; The long organization description; The mission block, and the who-we-serve paragraph that has to follow it; Organizational capacity

# The other forty-one templates

The full bank carries **43 templates across 9 sections**, every one of them also written out in full — and all 43 worked versions belong to the same invented nonprofit, whose figures reconcile across the whole book.

| Section                                      | What it covers                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 01 · Your fact base and boilerplate          | The 60-word boilerplate; The 150-word organization description; The long organization description; The mission block, and the who-we-serve paragraph that has to follow it; Organizational capacity |
| 02 · Getting in the door                     | The fit check; The first approach to a program officer who has never heard of you; The letter of inquiry; The pre-application call; Inviting a funder to come and see it                            |
| 03 · The case                                | The statement of need; The program description; Goals, objectives and measurable outcomes; The logic-model one-pager; The evaluation plan                                                           |
| 04 · The money                               | The budget narrative; Justifying staff time; Explaining indirect costs without apologizing for them; Match, in-kind and leverage; Sustainability                                                    |
| 05 · Sponsorship and in-kind asks            | The corporate sponsorship ask, with tiers; The in-kind ask; Renewing last year's sponsor; The small local ask a board member can send in five minutes                                               |
| 06 · Individual donors                       | The major-donor ask; The lapsed-donor letter; The year-end appeal; The monthly-giving invitation; The gift acknowledgment                                                                           |
| 07 · After the decision                      | The grant award thank-you; Accepting the award and confirming the terms; Funded for less than you asked for; The declined-application follow-up; Asking a funder what would have made it stronger   |
| 08 · Reporting                               | The interim report; The final report; Explaining a budget variance; Telling a funder something has gone wrong; The no-cost extension request                                                        |
| 09 · Keeping the relationship between grants | The annual update to a funder who is not currently funding you; The one-page impact story; The renewal request; When the person the funder knows is leaving                                         |

**AND WHAT COMES WITH THEM**

A **44-entry Fact Base** — the answers every application re-asks, grouped, with why funders ask each one and a fillable spreadsheet tab. A **Start Here playbook** with the six rules, a twelve-pair rewrite gallery, and a section-by-section table of what a funder is actually reading for. **Nine print-and-fill worksheets. 43 plain-text files** so a block pastes into a portal box clean. And a **searchable index** — Ctrl+F and go.

[See the full swipe bank >](#)

If what you need is the tracking rather than the writing — which funder has a report due in March, which application is still in draft, how much of a restricted award is left — that is the [Nonprofit Grant-Tracking OS](#), a workbook for Excel and Google Sheets.

More Operator OS tools at [ardentworkshop.com](https://ardentworkshop.com). Free to use — please don't resell or redistribute it.