Slide 1:

Hello and welcome to a webinar of the New York State Council on the Arts (also known as NYSCA).

This is our webinar presentation 10 Tips on Prequalification.

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In this webinar, we are going to provide a few tips on the Prequalification requirement for NYSCA applicants. We are not trying to replace the wonderful training and instruction provided by Grants Gateway directly. At the end we will remind you of where those helpful training materials can be found.

Just to run through the basics for a minute, nonprofits must Prequalify in the Grants Gateway before they can compete for state grants from NYSCA (or any other New York State agency)

For our newcomers, to "Prequalify" your organization there are three basic steps:

Step 1 - Your organization registers with a NYS website called Grants Gateway by emailing in a notarized registration form. Grants Gateway is run by NYS and all agencies that give out grants to nonprofits must use it.

Step 2 - After registering, your organization uploads core governance and financial documents and answers questions in the Grants Gateway. When you save documents and answers to grants gateway questions, they are stored in your document vault. Your organization chooses a primary agency they plan to apply for grants from.

Step 3 - If you choose NYSCA, once you submit your Vault for review, a Prequalification Specialist from NYSCA reviews it and either approves it or requests modifications through Grants Gateway.

At the end of these steps, if your application is approved, your document vault will be Prequalified. You have to upload updated financial documents and submit your vault for review every year to remain Prequalified.

My name is Marnee Geller. I am a prequalification specialist here at NSYCA. I am very pleased to be narrating this webinar today.

NYSCA has worked with thousands of arts and cultural nonprofits from all over the state that are successfully Prequalified each year before our grant application deadlines. We want you to be successful too.

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Now we will talk a little about Step 1:

Step 1: Register your organization in the Grants gateway: Take the first step **now** by emailing the Grants Gateway team at grantsreform@its.ny.gov to request registration.

You will need to complete, sign, notarize, and email the forms found at here: https://grantsmanagement.ny.gov/register-your-organization. Attachments must be in Microsoft Office compatible form (i.e. Word, Excel, PDF, etc).

Grants Gateway will then email you your sign-in instructions and a Grants Gateway Document Vault ID number. (Tip: Write down your Vault ID number as you will need it to apply for a NYSCA grant.) Another tip: Grantsreform@its.ny.gov is a special email address just for registration.

Please Note: your Vault ID is SEPARATE from a NYS vendor ID that you may receive.

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Now we will talk about Steps 2 and 3: Create your Document Vault by populating it and submit your vault for state review to become Prequalified.

To populate and submit a Document Vault for Review, have the documents ready and Log onto the Grants Gateway website as a Delegated Administrator. You will fill out online forms about your governance policies and practices and upload key documents like your certificate of incorporation, bylaws, charities bureau filings, form 990 and financial statements.

A Prequalification Specialist here at NYSCA will review your Vault and either "Prequalify" you or request modifications through grants gateway and direct email where required. You can find basic instructions and checklists at the URL presented here: https://grantsmanagement.ny.gov/get-prequalified.

Please contact the NYSCA Help desk at: help@arts.ny.gov if you have any questions.

And now here are our top 10 tips for getting and remaining Prequalified.

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Tip #1. Start early!

You may prequalify at any time; however we strongly recommend that you start now.

NYSCA and Grants Gateway are not likely to resolve any issues by the application deadline in any Vault submitted less than 7 days before an application deadline.

Grant applications received from nonprofit organizations that are not Prequalified in the Grants Gateway at the application deadline will not be evaluated.

We don't want to disqualify anyone because they didn't get prequalified on time.

The amount of time it takes depends critically on the quality and completeness of a submitted vault. Also, keep in mind we may have many hundreds of submissions at a time. Grants Gateway instructions note that it can take up to 10 days to review a submitted or resubmitted vault.

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Tip #2: Be sure all contact information in Grants Gateway is up-to-date!

If the email addresses on file are incorrect, you may miss important notifications, instructions, and requests regarding your prequalification status.

For example, if someone leaves your organization, immediately check grants gateway to make sure that your delegated administrator's information is current and update it if necessary.

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Tip #3. Check Your Document Vault

Check the current status of your Document Vault on Grants Gateway at any time. You can log on and quickly see key expiration dates and view notes posted for your review and action in your **State Prequalification Application Status Report**.

This is particularly helpful for ongoing grantees who may be Prequalified but want to make sure that they will still be Prequalified at a NYSCA application deadline.

It is your organization's responsibility to check.

You can find this report near the bottom of your Document Vault main page under the Management Screens section. This report will show your prequalification status, a list of all the sections in your Vault that were approved, and if any documents have expired, it will show the section expiration dates.

If you do not upload the relevant item or items by the expiration date, your Document Vault will expire on that date, and your organization will no longer be Prequalified. For example, every year, many of our grantees have Vaults expire in November or in May because they have not yet uploaded new financial documents or have not submitted their vault for review.

We recommend you check this report every so often just to make sure you're on top of these dates. Don't risk your organization falling out of prequalified status.

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Here is an example of a Prequalification Application Status Report.

You can see your vault status at the top and your key expiration dates highlighted in yellow.

This organization is Prequalified, however their vault is due to expire in November and will require updating at that time.

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Tip #4. Designate Roles Carefully in Grants Gateway

When you get your account in Grants Gateway, you set up roles. Please set them up carefully and remember who gets what role.

The Grantee Delegated Administrator is the only role that can make updates to the Document Vault and submit the vault for review. Make sure your Delegated Administrators are not away when you need to work on your Vault before your deadline.

Be sure the Delegated Administrator is available when you need to update and submit your Vault. NYSCA cannot submit Vault materials on your behalf.

Also, again, if there has been staff turnover within your organization, you may need to update who is serving as the Delegated Administrator. If you need help, contact the Grants Gateway Help Desk – we will share their contact information at the end of the presentation.

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Tip #5:

You will be asked if your organization either has or plans to adopt certain policies and procedures. NYSCA does not require any particular policy form or language, but you must answer "yes" that you do have certain policies for the reviewer to accept your answers. For example, if you state "no", you do not have a policy for doing business with Women and Minority Owned Businesses, your vault will not be approved and NYSCA will ask you to confirm that you have one during the submission process.

We recommend that you do not wait until the last minute to find out which policies and procedures are required for your organization.

Requirements vary based on the size of the organization. For example, organizations under $1M do not need a Whistleblower Policy, although it can be best practice to have one.

NYSCA understands that some of the policies can seem onerous for a small arts organization. For example, if you have no paid staff it may seem challenging to state that you have a staff code of conduct. NYSCA suggests you create a policy that fits your organization. So for example, a small arts organization with no current paid staff might be comfortable with a two-sentence policy that simply states that a longer policy will be implemented if and when staff are hired in the future.

While organizations are not currently being asked to upload their policies, you may be asked for copies of the policies you claim to have adopted in the future.

To find out which policies and procedures are required for your size organization, see page 12 of the Vendor Prequalification Manual published by Grants Gateway.

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Tip #6. Format Board Info

Grants Gateway requires that your board information be provided in a concise format. Please do not upload resumes or staff bios or a copy of a website page into the board of directors information section as these may not contain sufficient information.

There is a template available on the Grants Management site – here is the URL.

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Tip #7. Show Internal Controls for Contract Signing and Payment.

Each organization must have two or more individuals authorized to pay contracts and sign contracts.

Questions 8A and 8B in the Organization Compliance Section asks the name or title of the persons authorized to sign contracts and make payments. At least one person authorized to sign contracts should not also be the only person authorized to make payments. If you submit a Vault with only one name or roll indicated, you will not be Prequalified by NYS.

Here's the reason why this is important to NYSCA:

NYSCA gives grants to many smaller organizations across the state. NYSCA needs to make sure that even the smallest organizations have basic internal controls. A simple way to think about internal controls is that you never want one individual to make all decisions on a transaction.

So please take a moment to study this question carefully.

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Tip #8. Remember to Update Documents Annually

Remember to submit the following documents on an annual basis:

- IRS 990

- Audit / Reviews and Findings or equivalent.

- CHAR500/CHAR410

These three financial documents expire on an annual basis. Nonprofits must upload current versions of these documents into the respective sections and submit their updated Document Vault for review and approval each year in order to maintain prequalification.

We see returning applicants who fail to ADD updated documents to these three sections by the deadline. Nearly all had the relevant filings completed and available before the deadline. Reminder on tip 3 – you can check your expiration dates at any time.

One more compliance point. There is a Document Vault section called "**AUDIT/REVIEWS AND FINDINGS**". Even organizations who are too small to need a financial audit under NYS law, or even a CPA review, need to upload something into this section commonly referred to as the "Audit Section." If your organization's revenues are below $250,000, we just need you to upload a *final, completed,* internal financial statement for your organization that shows profit and loss and liabilities and assets for the most recently completed fiscal year. There is no required template but make sure the document states your organization's name and the period covered.

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Tip #9: Check Dates and Documents

Make sure that financial documents are correct, complete and correspond to the proper fiscal year.

For detailed information on which documents are required for your organization, see section 4.4 of the Vendor Prequalification Manual.

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Tip #10. Don't forget to hit submit!

Like many websites, just uploading or answering a question on the site and saving it is not enough. You need to formally submit the document vault for review.

If you do not successfully submit your Document Vault for review, NYSCA is not able to review any Vault materials and you will not be prequalified.

How: To submit your document vault for review, scroll halfway down the document vault page and click the link to submit the document vault, follow the prompts to go back and update and/or save the sections indicated, click submit again, and then click "I Agree" to submit your vault. Your status will change to "in review" and an automated email will be generated and sent to the email addresses provided to Grants Gateway IMMEDIATELY

If you do not see a Submit button and a box to check that you AGREE, you may be logged in using a different role. It is your responsibility to use the correct role. Reminder on tip #4 – you need to be using the Grantee Delegated Administrator role to see the ADD, SAVE, and Submit buttons.

Document Vaults in modification, review or open status are not considered Prequalified.

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Here is a screenshot of the link to submit your vault

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So that wraps up our 10 tips.

As a last note, our colleagues at Grants Gateway have many great training resources. They even have a special website for training and materials at grantsmanagement.ny.gov.

Here are a few resources:

First and foremost is the Vendor Prequalification Manual. This is a great go-to resource that guides you through the entire prequal process and breaks down every question in detail.

Next is the Website Resources document. If in the process, you encounter a question that asks about a topic, a policy or procedure that you're not particularly familiar with, this document has links to many helpful resources that can help you answer the questions.

Also is the Get Prequalified Video. This is a Youtube Video that walks you step-by-step through the prequalification process. It is great for applicants who are new to Prequalification or just want a visual aide. It can help you learn how to navigate through the Grants Gateway system.

Finally, Grants Management holds weekly live webinars for organizations interested in familiarizing themselves with the Grants Gateway. The regularly scheduled session topics include Registration and Prequalification

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Here is the contact information to our in-house specialist, Marnee Geller, along with our help desk and the grants gateway help desk.

Any organization new to Prequalification that would like a one-on-one phone meeting with a prequalification specialist in our office can contact Marnee Geller. Please make sure that your organization is registered with Grants Gateway and that you have your login credentials prior to your meeting.

If you are having difficulty logging into the Grants Gateway or need password assistance, once again please contact the Grants Gateway Help Desk directly.

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Thank you so much for watching. We hope you've found this presentation helpful. If you have any questions, concerns, or recommendations for us, please let us know by emailing help@arts.ny.gov. We wish you the best of luck in the application process. Thank you!