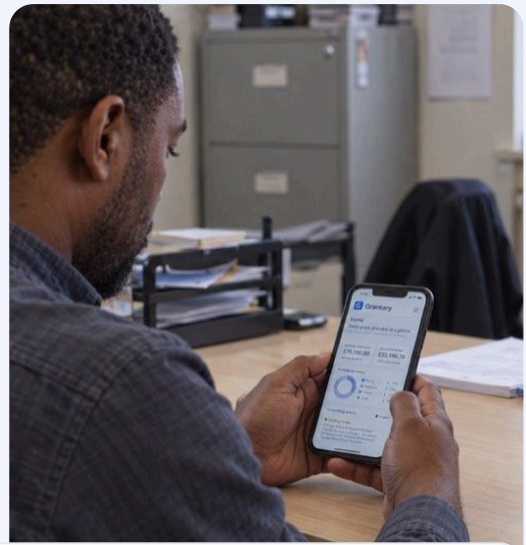


The hidden cost of grant administration

Find where grant work repeats, put a value on your team's time, and decide what is worth changing.

For funders and grantees



ONE GRANT

One record. Both sides.

INSIDE THIS GUIDE

Follow one grant

Seven stages, and where each one repeats itself.

Two checklists

Ten questions for funders, ten for grantees.

A costing worksheet

Hours, rates and annual value, with your own figures.

A case for change

One page for colleagues or trustees, and a thirty-day test.

One fact. Entered three times.

A registration number is typed into a funder portal, copied into a spreadsheet, then filed again as a document. Nobody chose that. It is what happens when the two organisations are connected but the information is not.

FUNDER PORTAL

Typed here

Applicant registration no.
935AZBT

THE SPREADSHEET

Re-typed

Grants_Master.xlsx, cell
B12

COMPLIANCE DRIVE

Re-typed again

registration-evidence.pdf

THIS GUIDE

Counted

How often it happens, how long it takes, what it costs

— HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

A measured answer, not an assumption.

Follow one grant from application to close, estimate what the administration around it costs, then test a single change before you commit to it. Work through the guide in order, or use only the sections you need.

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Who it is for

Anyone who runs a funding programme or manages funding their organisation has received. No finance background is needed.

What you need

One recent grant or programme, a colleague from finance or delivery, and roughly half a day spread across a month.

What you will have at the end

An estimate of the staff hours your current process uses each year, a costed proposal for one change, and a way to test whether it worked.

The words we use

Funder means the organisation awarding the money. Grantee means the organisation receiving it. Plenty of organisations are both, so the guide asks you to complete both sets of questions where that applies.

You can use this guide with the systems you already have. You do not need a Grantary account.

The two worked examples on pages 11 and 12 are invented to explain the method. Their workloads, rates and reductions are assumptions, not industry averages or measured results.

— INTRODUCTION

Start with the work you already do.

If you have ever spent an afternoon looking for a receipt, copied the same charity details into another application, or pulled a report together from several people's inboxes, you already know how much work sits behind a grant.



The aim is not less accountability. It is less work finding and repeating the information behind it.

Intergenerational Music Making, a Grantary pilot partner.

Some of that work is essential. Funders need to make sound decisions and understand how their money is being used. Grantees need clear records of spending, delivery and results.

The difficulty is knowing how much of the work helps achieve those things, and how much comes from entering, finding or explaining the same information again.

These tasks can feel too small to measure individually. Across a year of applications, grants and reports, however, they can take up a considerable part of someone's working week. They also make it harder to answer straightforward questions about progress or spending when the information is held in several places.

So the question this guide asks is not whether your process is good. It is how much of it you are doing twice.

THIS GUIDE WILL HELP YOU

- 01 Follow one grant and find where it repeats
 - 02 Estimate the time and what it is worth
 - 03 Test one change on a real grant
 - 04 Build the case for keeping it
-

FOLLOW THE RECORD

Where does the work repeat?

Take a recent grant and follow the information from the first application through to reporting. Look at what people were asked to provide, where it was stored, and what happened when somebody else needed it.

01 Programme design

Funders agree what a programme will support, who can apply and how decisions will be made. This is also the point to decide what information is needed. For each question or document request, ask who will use the answer and what it will help them decide.

03 Assessment

Funders need time to consider the application and any risks. Check how much additional time goes into chasing information, copying answers into review documents, or working out which version is correct.

05 Delivery and spending

Teams record what happened, what was spent and any agreed changes. Look for separate records of the same budget or activity, and for approvals and receipts held only in an inbox.

07 Closing the grant

Both sides should be able to confirm requirements were met and understand what was learned. Look at whether the record is already complete, or whether somebody has to reconstruct it before the grant can be closed.

02 Applications

Grantees explain their organisation, the proposed work and the budget. Look for details that are typed out repeatedly, or documents uploaded again despite remaining current. Separate those from questions that need a specific answer for the programme.

04 Award

Once funding is agreed, both sides need clear conditions, dates and responsibilities. Look at how much approved information is copied into a new agreement, spreadsheet or grant record. Every handover is worth checking for repeated entry and mistakes.

06 Reporting

A report should explain progress and results using the evidence behind them. Check how much time is spent interpreting that evidence, and how much is spent finding it, correcting gaps or putting it into another format.

08 Check the other side as you go

Saving a funder an hour is not useful if it adds two hours to the grantee's workload. Record both changes so you can judge the overall result rather than one organisation's share of it.

— FOR FUNDERS

How does your funding process work?

Think about one recent programme, including the applications you did not fund.

YOUR ANSWER	YES	PARTLY	NO	NOT SURE
01 Do we know roughly how much staff time each programme takes to administer, including the applications we do not fund?	☐	☐	☐	☐
02 Can we explain why we ask for each piece of information in an application?	☐	☐	☐	☐
03 Can applicants reuse current organisation details and documents, confirming or updating them where necessary?	☐	☐	☐	☐
04 Does approved information carry into the grant record without several people entering it again?	☐	☐	☐	☐
05 Are conditions, milestones, reporting dates and responsibilities clear to both sides from the start?	☐	☐	☐	☐
06 Can we find the current position of a grant without checking several records or asking colleagues for an update?	☐	☐	☐	☐
07 Can we easily find agreed changes and the person who approved them?	☐	☐	☐	☐
08 Are our evidence and reporting requirements proportionate to the purpose, value and risk of the grant?	☐	☐	☐	☐
09 Do we ask grantees how long our requirements take to meet, and use their feedback when reviewing programmes?	☐	☐	☐	☐
10 Can we explain a funding decision, or review a completed grant, using records that are already available?	☐	☐	☐	☐

If your organisation also receives funding, complete page 6 as well. Then choose three answers marked No or Partly and carry them through to the worksheet on page 10.

— FOR GRANTEES

How does managing your grants work?

Think about recent applications and live grants, including the applications that were unsuccessful.

YOUR ANSWER	YES	PARTLY	NO	NOT SURE
01 Do we know roughly how much time we spend applying for and managing funding, including unsuccessful applications?	☐	☐	☐	☐
02 Are our current organisation documents easy to find, with somebody responsible for keeping them up to date?	☐	☐	☐	☐
03 Can we reuse existing information without creating conflicting versions of it?	☐	☐	☐	☐
04 Does each grant have clear conditions, milestones, reporting dates and named people responsible for the work?	☐	☐	☐	☐
05 Do finance and delivery colleagues work from the same information about each grant?	☐	☐	☐	☐
06 Do we record evidence during delivery, and make clear which requirement each item supports?	☐	☐	☐	☐
07 Can we find the approval for changes to budgets, activities or dates where approval was needed?	☐	☐	☐	☐
08 Can we prepare reports from existing records without spending a long time rebuilding the information?	☐	☐	☐	☐
09 Could another colleague take over a grant without relying on one person's inbox or memory?	☐	☐	☐	☐
10 Do we tell funders when requirements repeat work, and suggest a simpler way to provide what they need?	☐	☐	☐	☐

Choose three answers marked No or Partly. For each one, write down a recent example, who did the work, how often it happens and how long it took. Those three are what you cost on page 10.

— CALCULATE THE BASELINE

Put a value on the work.

Choose the programme, grant or team you are assessing, and the period you want to cover. Use the same twelve months throughout if you want an annual estimate.

01 Frequency

How often does it happen in a year?

02 Time

How many staff hours each time?

03 Cost

Which hourly rate applies?

04 Source

Measured, sampled or estimated?

What to record

For each activity, write down how many times it happens in a year and the total staff time each occurrence takes. Include everyone involved. A meeting lasting one hour with three staff members uses three staff hours.

Next, record an hourly staff cost. Use employment costs and annual working hours to calculate a consistent rate, and explain how you arrived at it. Where people cost substantially different amounts, calculate their time separately.

Finally, note where the figures came from: a sample of recorded time, calendars, task records, or your team's estimate. Mark estimates clearly so you know what still needs checking.

Keep substantially different types of grant separate. A small unrestricted award may involve very different work from a complex programme lasting several years. Count application work separately from the administration of awarded grants, and include applications that were not successful on either side.

INCLUDE

Organisation information and document handling

Application preparation or assessment

Grant setup and agreements

Routine updates and chasing information

Spending records and reconciliation

Evidence handling and report preparation or review

Changes, approvals and closing the grant

Any other administration not already counted

Keep volunteer hours separate. If you give those hours a financial value, explain the rate used and report it separately from paid staff time and expenditure.

— UNDERSTAND THE RESULT

From hours to a useful decision.

Two calculations: what the process costs now, and what it would cost after the change you are considering.

01 Current cost

Multiply the number of times an activity happens each year by the combined staff hours it takes each time. That gives you its annual staff hours. Multiply those hours by the hourly staff cost to estimate the value of the time used.

Add existing software and external administration expenditure separately. The value of staff time is already part of your employment costs, so it should not be added to payroll again.

Check that you have counted each task once. If preparing a report includes collecting evidence, do not count those same hours under evidence handling as well. Keep time spent waiting for a response separate from time spent actively working on the task.

02 Proposed change

Describe what you intend to change and which tasks it affects. Estimate how long the work would take afterwards, including any new tasks the change creates.

If a change adds work, show the increase. If it affects several roles, work out the difference for each role separately. If you introduce it partway through the year, include only the activity it will affect during that first year.

Subtract the proposed annual hours from the current annual hours to find the time you could release. Multiply that difference by the relevant hourly staff cost to estimate its value.

Run a cautious version as well as the one you expect

Consider what happens if a report takes half an hour less rather than the full hour you hope to save. If the case still holds at the cautious figure, it is a decision. If it only holds at the optimistic figure, it is a hope. Explain the assumption behind each version.

INTERPRET THE RESULT

What does the number mean?

Separate time released from money that can genuinely be taken out of the cost base. They are not the same thing, and treating them as one is the fastest way to lose the reader.

01 Time released

Staff have more hours available for other work. Its financial value helps you judge the scale of the benefit, but it does not by itself reduce what you spend.

02 Cash savings

Amounts you can actually stop paying, such as a software subscription you can cancel or paid overtime you no longer need.

03 New costs

Any software, support or other ongoing expenditure the change requires. Record setup, migration and training costs too, with internal staff hours shown separately.

04 Double counting

If fewer staff hours lead to a real reduction in overtime payments, identify that overlap rather than adding the value of those hours to the overtime saving.

Subtract new recurring expenditure from expenditure you can avoid to calculate the annual effect on cash spending. For the first year, also deduct setup expenditure and allow for the date the change begins. Keep a separate record of the results that matter but do not carry a price: fewer missing documents, reports submitted on time, outstanding queries, and feedback from the organisation on the other side of the grant.

WRITE UP YOUR FINDINGS

State how many staff hours the current process uses each year and the estimated value of that time. Then explain how many hours the proposed change could release, and what your team would do with them.

Show any cash savings separately, alongside new costs and setup effort. Finish by naming the assumptions that matter most and how you plan to check them. A useful estimate explains its assumptions as clearly as its result.

— USE YOUR OWN FIGURES

Your costing worksheet.

Use one sheet for each programme or group of similar grants. Record annual activity and show your assumptions.

Organisation and programme

Period covered

Source of figures and hourly cost method

Activity	Times a year	Staff hours each time	Annual hours	Hourly cost	Annual value
Organisation details					
Applications					
Grant setup					
Updates and chasing					
Spending records					
Evidence and reports					
Changes and close					
Other					
Total					

Annual hours = times a year × staff hours each time. Annual value = annual hours × hourly staff cost. Count each task once.

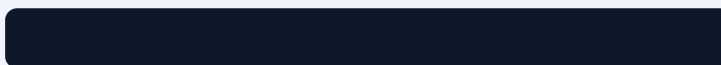
— FUNDER EXAMPLE

A funder reviewing progress reports.

Invented to explain the method. The workloads, rates and reductions are assumptions, not industry averages or measured results.

200 REVIEWS EACH YEAR

Current process



600 hours

Proposed process



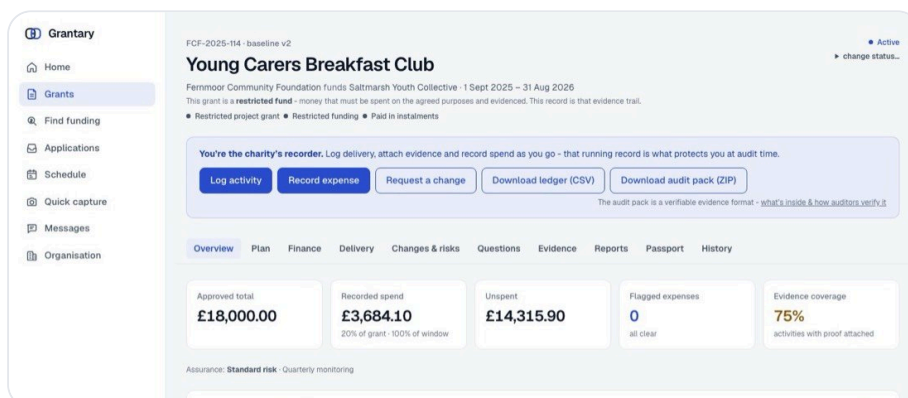
400 hours

200

hours released

£7,000

value at £35 an hour



A funder manages 100 active grants, each requiring two reporting reviews during the year. That gives the team 200 reviews to complete. Each review currently takes three staff hours across chasing evidence, checking the information and updating records, so the annual workload is 600 hours.

The funder wants to agree reporting requirements earlier and keep the evidence with the grant record. It estimates that this brings each review down to two hours while keeping the substantive review and decision intact.

At two hours each, the 200 reviews take 400 hours. The reduction is 200 hours a year. At an assumed staff cost of £35 an hour, those hours are worth £7,000 before any new costs.

Whether spending actually falls depends on whether real costs can be removed. The funder would also need to account for software, setup time and any additional work the change asks of grantees, then test the assumption on one small programme before extending it.

Before new costs. Time released is not automatically a cash saving.

GRANTEE EXAMPLE

A charity preparing progress reports.

Invented to explain the method. The workloads, rates and reductions are assumptions, not industry averages or measured results.

24 REPORTS EACH YEAR

Current process

144 hours

Proposed process

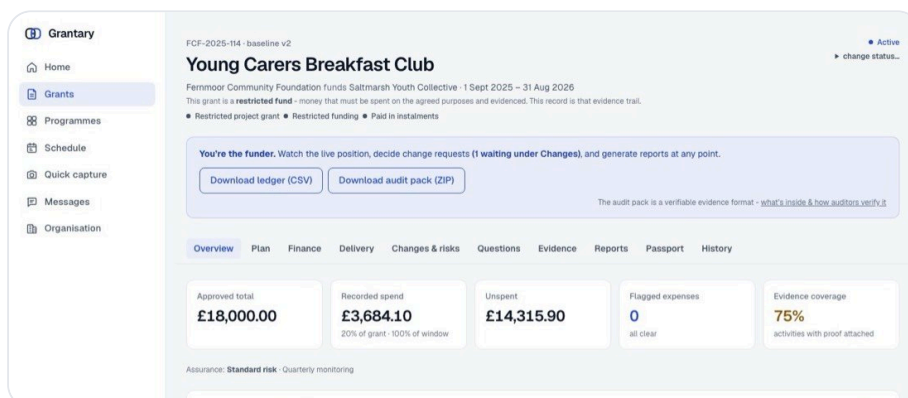
96 hours

48

hours released

£1,200

value at £25 an hour



A charity manages eight grants, each requiring three progress reports during the year, so it prepares 24 reports. Each report takes six staff hours to find evidence, check the figures and write the explanation. The annual workload is 144 hours.

The charity wants to keep evidence organised against reporting requirements during delivery. It estimates final preparation could fall to three hours per report, but that keeping records current adds one hour of administration in each reporting cycle.

The new process takes 72 hours for final preparation and 24 hours during delivery, so 96 hours altogether. Against the current 144 hours, that releases 48 hours a year, worth £1,200 at an assumed staff cost of £25 an hour, before setup effort or new expenditure.

Ignoring the extra work during delivery would overstate the benefit. The charity needs to measure the whole process, and check the reports still meet each funder's requirements.

Before new costs. Time released is not automatically a cash saving.

— START WITH ONE

Five changes worth considering.

Each one is small enough to test on a single grant. None of them requires new software to begin.

01 Decide where the current version lives

Agree where colleagues will find the latest budget, conditions, deadlines and approvals, and make one person responsible for each. Funders can start with the handover from application to award. Grantees can start with the information finance and delivery both use. Measure whether colleagues spend less time finding information or resolving differences between records.

02 Hold organisation details once

Maintain current organisation details and supporting documents, with somebody responsible for reviewing them. Check for changes before reusing them, and allow for specific programme requirements. Funders can review which information genuinely needs requesting again and which could simply be confirmed. Track repeated uploads to see whether it helps.

03 Agree the evidence before delivery begins

Discuss what needs to be demonstrated, which evidence is suitable and who will record it. Consider whether records already produced during delivery can meet the requirement. Keep the request proportionate to the grant and collect only what is needed. Measure clarification requests, missing evidence and the time grantees spend responding.

04 Build the report as you deliver

Store evidence, spending explanations and agreed changes with the grant they belong to, and check for gaps during routine reviews so they are resolved before a report is due. Allow time to explain results: even with complete records, somebody still has to consider what happened and what was learned. Measure total time on records and reports, and the quality of the finished report.

05 Test it with the other organisation

Choose one grant or programme and agree a small change with the organisation on the other side of it. Measure how the change affects both teams, not only yours.

Check decisions remain well supported and the evidence is still sufficient. If the change adds work for one side, discuss whether the overall benefit justifies it. Use feedback and recorded time to decide whether to continue.

— A SMALL LIVE TEST

Your next thirty days.

Choose one grant or programme and test a change before extending it anywhere else.



Test the process around real work, with the people who do it.

Intergenerational Music Making, a Grantary pilot partner.

01

Days 1 to 7

Choose one grant or programme and complete the relevant questions. Follow the information from the application to its current stage. Note where it is entered, requested and copied, and involve colleagues from finance, delivery and grant management where relevant.

02

Days 8 to 14

Record time spent on the three activities you want to improve, separating measured figures from estimates. Ask the other organisation where the process creates work for them, and agree which checks and evidence must remain in place.

03

Days 15 to 21

Try one or two changes within the agreed scope. Record the time needed to set them up and any new tasks they introduce. Make sure everyone knows who is responsible for each part of the revised process.

04

Days 22 to 30

Compare the results with your starting figures. Discuss what improved, what did not, and what you still need to understand. Decide whether to continue, adjust the change or stop it.

If your reporting cycle is longer than a month, use these thirty days to establish the starting figures and begin the test, then review the benefit after one complete, comparable cycle.

— ONE PAGE FOR COLLEAGUES OR TRUSTEES

Make the case for change.

Use this structure to write up your proposal. Replace each prompt with your own findings and keep it to a single page where you can.

01 What we propose

The process you want to improve, the programme or team involved, and the size of the initial trial.

03 What will change

The revised process and the person responsible for it. Name who carries out the necessary reviews and approvals.

05 How it affects the other organisation

Whether the change is likely to reduce or add work for the funder or the grantee, and how you will check that assumption.

07 The decision we need

The scope, staff time and spending you are asking colleagues to approve. Name the person responsible, give a review date, and explain what you would need to see before extending the change.

02 Why it needs attention

The repeated work or information gaps, who is affected, and the annual staff hours involved. Say how you arrived at the estimate.

04 What we expect to gain

The staff hours you expect to release and their estimated value, and what the team would use that time for. Show cash savings separately from staff time, and include new ongoing expenditure, setup costs and internal implementation hours. Make clear when the change begins and how that affects the first year.

06 How we will check the result

The trial dates or reporting cycle, and the measures you will compare: staff time, evidence quality and feedback from the other organisation. Explain what a satisfactory result looks like.

KEEP IT DECISION READY

State what will change, what it could release, what it will cost, and how you will know whether it worked.

— HOW GRANTARY CAN HELP

One grant. One record. Both sides.

Grantary is the shared grant record for funders and the organisations they fund. The application becomes the live grant, evidence stays attached to the work it supports, and reports are assembled from what is already there. Everyone manages grants. Grantary proves them.



Less time reconstructing the record. More time for the work it supports.

Intergenerational Music Making, a Grantary pilot partner.

- ✓ An audit pack a trustee or auditor can verify without a Grantary account
- ✓ Organisation status checked daily against four UK registers
- ✓ The 360Giving file produced from the grants already recorded
- ✓ No application scored, ranked or rejected by AI. People decide

Walk around a complete grant world

Two funders, a youth charity with six live grants, and rounds mid-assessment. All fictional, all on the product real customers use. No sign-up, and the demo resets every night.

Open the live demo at grantary.co.uk

Or tell us how grants work for you

Funders: bring a programme and a few examples of where administration takes longer than it should. Grantees: bring one live grant and its reporting requirements. A person replies, usually within one working day.

hello@grantary.co.uk

Free for grantees

Unlimited grants tracked, forever. No card and no trial clock.

Free oversight for funders

See and co-work every grant you fund at no cost, whichever side set it up.

Programmes from £4,800 a year

For running your own rounds, with unlimited users on every plan.

Grantary keeps the record of the money. It does not hold or move it. Built with Intergenerational Music Making as pilot partner.

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