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November 6 — 8, 2003

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AAGP Mission:

The American Association of Grant Professionals (AAGP), a nonprofit membership association, builds and supports an international community of grant professionals committed to serving the greater public good by practicing the highest ethical and professional standards. To achieve this mission, AAGP:

- Serves as a leading authority and resource for the practice of grantsmanship in all sectors of the field.
- Advances the field by promoting professional growth and development.
- Enhances the public image and recognition of the profession within the greater philanthropic, public, and private funding communities.
- Promotes positive relationships between grant professionals and their stakeholders.

AAGP values, embraces, and supports the rich diversity within the grant profession.

About This Publication:

The *Journal of the AAGP* is a professional journal devoted to the improvement of the grants professional and the profession. It is a resource for teaching and learning within the profession and provides an outlet for sharing information about the profession. It also provides a forum for the discussion of issues within the grants profession and the expression of philosophical ideas.
Welcome Letter

Dear Readers,

As Chair of the *Journal of the American Association of Grant Professionals* Editorial Committee, I would like to welcome you to the second issue of the *JAAGP*, Spring 2003. We have some exciting articles included that I know you will gain knowledge from and enjoy.

As is our policy, we have a variety of articles from the scholarly to the how-to:

- In Phyl Renninger’s series *Interview with a Program Officer*, you will see the grant world from the other side of the fence. Phyl’s article gives a great look at the funder’s perspective on the grants process.
- Paula Shambach and Jennifer Guevarra show us how to get that all-important support for our grant departments.
- Asuncion T. Suren and VC League give some insight into the need for good evaluation.
- Gary Lee Frye and Charles A. Reavis present their research on the creation of the grant proposal writer’s position in the public schools and make a case for the process.
- Deanna Nurnberg discusses professional competencies and compares the Association of Fundraising Professionals’ certification process with the needs of the grants professional.
- Finally, Randal J. Givens presents the history of our organization with insight and accuracy and a look to the future.

There are also useful Web reviews and a book review. We hope those of you reading this issue will join these authors and contribute your knowledge and skills to future issues. AAGP is a member driven organization meaning this publication is yours. Feel free to shape it as you wish.

My thanks go out to the Editorial Board for their hard work, ideas, time and energy. On behalf of the Editorial Board, I would like to thank the authors included in this issue. It is through your efforts and work that we have succeeded in publishing this issue of the *JAAGP*.

Thank you all, and enjoy your reading experience.

Sincerely,

Iris A. Coffin
Chair, *JAAGP* Editorial Board
Founding Member, AAGP
Interview with a Program Officer

By Phyl Renninger

Phyllis Renninger is the Supervisor for Planning & Development at the Duval County Public Schools and resides in Orange Park, Florida. She is currently President of AAGP and is also a founding member.

In our quest to enhance our profession, it is important to get perspective from all angles of the grant process. AAGP decided that an interview of those who run grant offices might offer that perspective. I conducted these interviews by phone and email. All program officers were asked the same questions. The answers varied, but often confirmed or validated what we know as professionals. This article is the first in a series of interviews with the program officers. The following two interviews were conducted with one federal and one state program officer.

- Emily Wurtz, program officer for Smaller Learning Communities Grant, US Department of Education, Washington, D.C. Emily is the Team Leader for the program.

- Joe Follman, program officer for Florida Learn & Serve, Community/Higher Education/School Partnership (CHESP), and Title IV Community Service Grants, Tallahassee, Florida. Joe is the Director for the programs.

How important is personal contact in the award process?

[Emily Wurtz] Personal contact is not important in our process.

[Joe Follman] In our programs, the person is vital — s/he usually is the one who has written the application. The contact has a lot of knowledge about the program and can and will give feedback on applicant ideas for all who make contact.

What is your selection process?

[Emily Wurtz] The process used is a peer review against selection criteria published in the Federal Register

[Joe Follman] It varies a little by program, but the general format is there are 3-5 reviewers for every proposal as part of the recommendation process. All reviewers are trained, and they can include applicants. Applicants do not, however, read any
proposals from their region, and they do not participate in subsequent recommendation processes.

The second part is to determine an average score for each proposal. Again, this varies a little by program, but there is always a process to deal with cases in which there are wide disparities in reviewer scores. This process typically involves either having additional reviewers, or dropping the "outlier" score. The third part of the process is review by program staff and others who have no conflict of interest. The group discusses proposals in order by average score — highest scores first — and resolves differences in reviewer scores and recommendations to make a final recommendation by consensus. The Florida Department of Education must then validate and approve this process and recommendations before awards are issued.

**What is your reporting process (if you have one)?**

*Emily Wurtz* The Smaller Learning Communities grant requires periodic reporting within the USED and to Congress.

*Joe Follman* Reports are sent from the state program to the federal funder on a scheduled basis. Local project award winners typically must submit a mid-term (short) and final narrative report. In addition, grantees must also account for their claimed match and submit a final financial statement.

**What kind of projects do you favor or require?**

*Emily Wurtz* Projects should be designed to restructure large high schools (with enrollment over 1,000) into smaller groupings of students and teachers, often focused on an area of personal and career interest to the teachers and students.

*Joe Follman* Based on the federally approved guidelines for each program, the awards have specific guidelines. Learn & Serve projects must engage K-12 students in service activities that apply curricula. CHESP projects must bring together K-12 and higher education in joint service learning projects or integrate service learning into teacher education. Title IV grants must engage in meaningful service students who have been suspended or expelled or placed in alternative programs in lieu of expulsion. We "favor" the best and most solid plans and the ones that best meet the application criteria!

**What changes have you witnessed in philanthropy over the last 5 years or so from the program officer's point of view?**

*Emily Wurtz* The change that has affected the Smaller Learning Communities application the most is that [the Bill and Melinda] Gates and Carnegie Foundations are also funding smaller learning community efforts.

*Joe Follman* The Florida offices are not really in a position to respond generally. There has been greater foundation support for service-learning projects nationally, but no increase in federal support.

**What advice could you give someone submitting a proposal?**
The best advice is to read the selection criteria carefully and organize your proposal to address them clearly.

Foremost, make sure what you want to do is what the grant wants to accomplish — if your goals match the grant's you'll automatically be a step ahead of half the applicants.

2. Use the guidelines/application sections as the template for your proposal and follow them slavishly. Doing this make scoring and review much easier on the reader, this is very much in your favor.

3. Don't ask for more than you need.
4. Justify/explain all major budget requests — this is where the rubber hits the road.
5. Don't use jargon.
6. Don't send more than is allowed.
7. Call the program contact and run your idea by that person.

Could you include a summary of your guidelines (or a web site or mailing address where applicants can get the guidelines)?

www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/SLCP

Most are available at www.fsu.edu/~flserve

Could you provide a brief program history?

www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/SLCP

Learn & Serve began in 1991 under President George HW Bush, and has continued as part of the national service program. It is about $44 million nationwide for K-higher education. CHESP began in 2000 and funds about 28 states. Title IV is new in the federal "No Child Left Behind" legislation, and states are using many different approaches.
Developing Support For Grant Projects Within Your Organization

By Paula Shambach and Jennifer Guevarra

Paula Shambach is the Grants Development Coordinator and Jennifer Guevarra is the Grants Writer at Cumberland County Schools in Fayetteville, North Carolina. You may find more information at their website: http://www.ccs.k12.nc.us/grants/grants_default.htm.

Serving as the grant proposal writer for a large organization can be a wonderful and yet overwhelming experience for those new to the field. While there is much potential to make a great difference in the organization, expectations are often inflated by those unfamiliar with grant proposal writing. Some believe that the grant proposal writer will immediately and single-handedly begin pulling in millions of dollars in government, corporate and private foundation grants. A common mindset held by those in leadership positions is “Finally, someone will be able to solve all our financial woes!” Entering the grant proposal writing field for a large school system only a few years ago, I received this greeting from many of my fellow staff members. While all this blind faith was enjoyable for a short time, we all soon learned that it takes more than a capable grant proposal writer at a computer to write winning proposals.

Requests for funds soon began coming in from central office departments, schools, and individuals. With a grants staff that consists only of a Grants Coordinator, Grant Writer, and part-time administrative assistant to serve more than 6,000 employees and 85 schools, we quickly learned that we could not do it all. Writing grants is so much more than just writing. You have to develop solid programs to include staff development plans, budgets, evaluation procedures, timelines, and much more on a multitude of topics. I needed to get everyone on the same page and moving in the same direction by developing procedures to implement a proactive approach to grant proposal writing.

Below are some of the methods that we use to manage the grants process for Cumberland County Schools in Fayetteville, North Carolina. Although some of these items speak specifically to schools and educators, most would apply to any large organization.

**Involve top leaders in the planning process:**

Leaders within the organization are critical to grant success. When the leader of an organization believes a grant program is worthwhile to pursue, they can often convert even the most skeptical naysayers to enthusiastic supporters of the project. Communications throughout the grant process ensure that there are no surprises that will hinder the project or staff morale. As most leaders are usually swamped with responsibilities, they often appreciate advanced warning about worthwhile, yet time-
Developing Support for Grant Projects Within Your Organization

consuming projects such as grant proposal writing. An annual grants planning calendar will help everyone understand the types of grant opportunities that are available and when their deadlines expire. Organization leaders can then prioritize these opportunities by which programs are aligned with the goals and mission of the organization. A draft of this calendar should be given to your head administrators for input and approval.

Once the calendar is approved by administrators, it can be shared with others so they may plan to help in the drafting of the proposal. Of course, we don’t always have the luxury of 12 months’ notice before a grant becomes available. In cases of short deadlines, direct contact with the appropriate department leader will determine appropriate steps to decide whether or not to pursue the grant. Presentations at board meetings and staff meetings with various departments will also keep top leaders aware of current grant opportunities and initiatives.

Provide information on grant sources:

In order to keep all staff informed, we have created a comprehensive grants website. This site includes the monthly online newsletter, links to funders, direct links to the Grants Office, list of grants received, and many other resources to help grant seekers. In order to be thoroughly useful, this website must be updated regularly with the latest information. All staff members can also sign up for our e-mail alert system to receive our newsletter electronically. Hard copies of the monthly newsletter are sent to board members, principals, and superintendents. This allows everyone to review upcoming grant opportunities and determine which fit their needs.

The Grants Office also houses an extensive collection of reference materials and manuals on everything from finding the perfect funder for a program to evaluation styles and budgeting. We allow those interested in writing grant proposals to check these resources out of our collection — always with the understanding that if they need extra help, they can ask the Grants Office staff.

Provide training to empower others:

We have found that one of the best ways to get people involved in developing a grant proposal is to make it easy for them to learn about the grant proposal writing process. The Grants Office provides training and one-on-one support as needed to guide the process and get the necessary approval on all grants. We have an open-door policy to help anyone who makes the effort to write grant proposals. Those who are really committed understand that we are available to help, but cannot do all the work for them. Since the Grants Office does not manage all grant projects, it is important that the grant team take ownership for the entire project from day one. Proper training provides the level of confidence that will allow this ownership to fully materialize.

Only large federal or state grants and those involving several schools are written by Grants Office staff members. Smaller grants are written by school or department teams with the help of the Grants Office. Team members are encouraged to attend grant proposal writing training sessions offered throughout the year. Beginning, intermediate, and advanced sessions are available for continuing education credits throughout the year. A new addition to our grant training is our online learning initiative that allows staff
members to take a grant course online. Many of our staff members find these online courses more convenient than classes requiring a physical meeting over the course of a couple of months. If your organization possesses online learning capabilities, research ways in which staff training can benefit.

Establish a network of Grant Contacts:

A Grant Contact person is designated at each of our 85 schools and all departments. The Grant Contact is the primary contact for all grant correspondence and activities. At the Central Office level, the contact is the Superintendent or department director. Depending on the school, the Grant Contact can be the principal, assistant principal, or other dependable staff person. Monthly correspondence such as the “Grants Guide,” specialized semi-annual training sessions, and a comprehensive website ensure that Grant Contacts are kept up-to-date on news and expectations from the Grants Office. They also keep the Grants Office aware of the needs of their particular school/department so we can research funding options. If a teacher wants to find funds for a butterfly garden and lab, he or she can visit the Grant Contact for the latest information from the Grants Office on grant opportunities. If the Grants Office needs to know the status of the budget for a larger proposal, we can just call the Grant Contact. Grant Contacts help the Grants Office by becoming the single point of contact for grant activity at the school thus streamlining the sometimes intricate data-gathering and drafting processes.

Establish grant teams:

Grant proposal writing cannot be a solo venture. Each grant project requires a team of professionals dedicated to achieving a common goal. Preferably, the team is established to research and strategize on a particular problem or need before grants are ever mentioned. Members of the grant team should come from various backgrounds and disciplines. This diversity will create a well-rounded vision of the program. Often through this team approach many useful resources in the community can be identified and utilized in planning and implementing a program. Grant Contacts are asked to help create the grants team, or teams, at the school level. Community members, business leaders, and others from outside the school are often recruited to serve on teams for various projects. A Central Office grants team is also needed for large, systemwide projects. These grant teams are usually called together by the Grants Office Staff.

Recognize those who make the effort:

It’s important to remember that a little sentiment goes a long way. Writing grant proposals is a lot of hard work, and these efforts should be recognized. We need to keep those first-timers and veterans writing applications. Realizing that most people who write grant proposals do not get paid for their efforts, ways to recognize everyone’s hard work must be developed. In our system, we distribute a quarterly newsletter called “Good News about Grants” to all personnel, board members, and local media outlets to announce winning grant projects. The person responsible for writing the grant proposal also receives a personal phone call or “Thank You” note from the Grants Office, superintendent, or board chair. Some administrators or staff may also host a small event.
to celebrate the completion of a proposal or award of a grant. Local news stations and newspapers often pick up these stories and “good news” bites that air throughout the state.

Keep it simple:

The biggest barrier facing potential grant projects is the fear of the process. The Grants Office eases this fear by providing information, training, and easy-to-use forms to report on progress. We try to steer new grant proposal writers toward foundations that have simpler applications and have shown interest in similar projects in previous funding cycles. Encouraging newcomers to begin with smaller grants that require minimal paperwork will help them “get their feet wet” in a positive way. Many times, local foundations provide the best starting points for those with no grant experience. After these novice grant proposal writers are awarded a smaller grant, they often want to continue searching and writing proposals for more money to fund larger projects. Success breeds confidence and can lead to bigger and better projects in the future.

As you involve staff and keep them abreast of grant opportunities and initiatives, the network of support will continue to expand throughout the organization. The Grants Office should be viewed as a resource that will provide support and assistance for projects, not as the sole grant proposal writing entity. Proper planning, training, simple reporting procedures, and teamwork allowed Cumberland County Schools to more than double the amount of funds brought into the system through competitive grants over previous years. The time and effort expended are necessary and worthwhile investments toward developing grants procedures to serve the unique needs of your organization.
The Grant Developer’s Dilemma: 
A Call for Understanding Program Evaluation

By Asuncion T. Suren, Ed.D., & VC League

Asuncion T. Suren, Ed.D., is a former faculty member at Indiana University in Bloomington and Florida State University in Tallahassee. She has written and consulted with a number of organizations on program development and evaluation. She works with the Detroit Evaluation Project as an evaluator and manages the triangulated evaluation program that involves 20 diverse health and social service agencies funded by the Detroit Empowerment Zone Development Corporation.

VC League is a founding member of AAGP. He is Team Leader of the Detroit Evaluation Project, has consulted with over 2,500 organizations, and conducted hundreds of training programs and workshops on program planning and proposal writing.

Introduction:

Six weeks remaining, excellent timing for XYZ agency to complete their research and begin writing the proposal for the $200,000 demonstration grant they are seeking. They are well-respected for having a long history of exemplary work in adult skills training. While the agency has a litany of anecdotal data and a proven record for securing grant dollars, the Government Performance and Results Act is challenging their grant developers’ steadfast writing style. With this mandate imposed, by the funding source of the demonstration grant, the grant developers intend to use testimonials, as well as output and input data, as the impetus for designing the evaluation plan. Their hope: to camouflage their lack of knowledge in designing outcome measures demanded of human service professionals. XYZ agency plans to rely on their reputation as well as their grant awards record to compensate for the poor evaluation plan they intend to incorporate into the grant proposal.

Although this scenario is fictitious, it arguably illustrates an accurate depiction of the grant proposal writing practices executed by a myriad of human service agencies nationwide. Since the 1993 Government Performance and Results Act, not only are human service agencies expected to incorporate a sound program evaluation plan as part of a federal grant request, but they must also report hard data that shows a high level of accountability to their clients and the funding source. We recommend that grant developers also follow this practice with other funding sources. Yet, despite the stricter requirement for evidence, grant developers continue to view evaluation as an after the fact endeavor that generates impractical strategies and useless information that’s difficult to both understand and report. While this may be many a grant developer’s attitude, it is surely not the attitude of funding sources and the public who demand evidence that
demonstrates changed attitudes, values, behaviors, or conditions of grant dollar recipients.

**Program Evaluation Planning Dilemma:**

When reviewing grant proposals for our clients and funding sources, one significant fact emerges: the evaluation section is often the least developed and weakest part in the document. Too often human service professionals succumb to writing vague generalities that say nothing, and that certainly do not provide much guidance for implementing an evaluation plan. Moreover, while facilitating grant proposal writing workshops and program development training sessions, our experiences lead us to believe that the dilemma of designing a program evaluation plan is due to deficient skills and a lack of knowledge about program evaluation. Consequently, this ignorance nurtures a debilitating fear of, and dislike for, program evaluation. This results in program planners giving it low priority when they develop their plans.

When low priority is placed on program evaluation at the grant development stage or program execution stage, the result will be inaccurate knowledge and reporting of a program’s worth. While it is important for program planners to put energy into writing a precision process-based program, it is equally important to write a precision outcome-based evaluation plan. How else will an agency accurately know what its program accomplishes as well as what barriers impede the best managerial practices? It is essential to remember that for most funding sources the evaluation plan is a critical step in the program development process. To that end, the importance of a properly written and executed program evaluation plan is paramount, and a grant developer’s attitude about the utility, relevance, and practicality of evaluation should reflect that fact.

**The Purpose of this Article:**

This article attempts to reduce the fear and anxiety associated with writing a practical program evaluation plan for a grant proposal.

For a grant developer to write a well-written explanation on how the program will determine its success, we must first explore the fundamentals of program development. One problem affecting the evaluation section of a grant proposal, as we have experienced, is inherent in the program development process. Additionally, it is appropriate for grant developers and program planners alike to have a clear understanding of, or operational definition for, program evaluation.

**Some Thoughts on Program Development:**

Grant developers must give significant thought to the program development section of a grant proposal. Ideally, conceptualizing the framework for the program occurs before writing the proposal, and planners should give attention to the needs of a program’s consumers and other stakeholders. The program development process should include identifying and documenting the problem or need and determining strategies to ensure change. This process should include developing an implementation plan as well as considering issues relevant to capacity building and sustainability. The program
development process also includes two aspects directly related to evaluation: first, creating an evaluation plan so that program personnel will be able to determine what they have accomplished and what barriers directly link to financial and other deficiencies; second, establishing in the plan the direction toward the attainment of the program’s expected outcomes.

Effective program development is outcome-driven. For the purpose of this article, we adopted the definition of “outcomes” as measurable statements of the expected change in the underlying conditions stated in the proposed program’s need assessment or problem statement. Notably important, however, is the extent of change in targeted attitudes, values, behaviors, or conditions between baseline measurements and subsequent points of measurement. Effective program development is outcome-driven. For the purpose of this article, we adopted the definition of “outcomes” as measurable statements of the expected change in the underlying conditions stated in the proposed program’s need assessment or problem statement. Notably important, however, is the extent of change in targeted attitudes, values, behaviors, or conditions between baseline measurements and subsequent points of measurement. In essence, outcome measurement provides a learning loop that feeds information back into the program, alerting the agency on how well they are doing. It offers evidence they can use to adapt, improve, and become more effective.

Grant developers occasionally develop programs driven by methods, and perhaps the major mistake made in program development is confusing outcomes with methods. It is important in the initial phases of the program development process not to focus on a particular method but to target the expected benefits. This will allow for more flexibility in identifying and selecting a range of methods and will allow the program planner to consider other ways of achieving expected outcomes.

Understanding Program Evaluation:

A review of the literature on evaluation reveals that there is no widely agreed upon definition for program evaluation. In our opinion, having an understanding of evaluation is an appropriate first step toward reducing the fear of evaluation; and, most likely, it will encourage a sense of urgency for conducting a program evaluation. We want to be clear that program evaluation may range from tightly defined sound statistical studies to a much more casually constructed effort to measure program quality and effectiveness. Suvedi reports a comprehensive definition proposed by Andrews and Werner: To evaluate is to make an explicit judgment about the worth of all or part of a program by collecting evidence to determine if acceptable standards have been met. This definition of evaluation has two key terms: standards and evidence. Standards are ideals or desired qualities or conditions against which the program will measure actual objectives. Evidence is information necessary to help confirm whether the program has met the required standards. For example, the explicit technique(s) adopted and applied by a participant that attended a professional development training are the standards. The effects of the technique(s) and its benefits to the participant over time are the evidence. For our purpose, we find C. McNamara’s definition, as stated in his article “Some Myths About Program Evaluation,” the most helpful:

Program evaluation is carefully collecting information about a program or some aspect of a program in order to make necessary decisions about the program. Program evaluation can include any or a variety of at least 35 different types of evaluation, such as for needs assessments, accreditation, cost/benefit analysis, effectiveness, efficiency, formative, summative, goal-based, process, outcomes, etc. The type of evaluation you undertake to improve your programs depends on what you want to learn about the
program. Don't worry about what type of evaluation you need or are doing — worry about what you need to know to make the program decisions you need to make, and worry about how you can accurately collect and understand that information.\cite{5}

Regardless of the definition, the ultimate goal of program evaluation is to show whether an effort is having a positive or negative effect on the targeted community. When an evaluation is an integral part of a program rather than just an afterthought, it can be an important tool for the ongoing improvement of the quality of the program.\cite{6}

Combating the Dilemma:

In an effort to combat the dilemma surrounding evaluation that some grant developers face when writing a grant proposal, we suggest writing a program evaluation plan that is both practical and manageable. During the grant proposal writing stage, keep in mind the following: Core expectations of the funding source; realistic outcome measures; resources necessary to achieve the outcomes; an understanding that evaluation plans are flexible, thus allowing for change as needed; a commitment is needed from all pertinent staff to execute of the evaluation plan after the grant is awarded.

While the benefit of a well-written evaluation plan is to prove the quality and benefits of a program, agencies often have limited resources, which challenges the level of priority placed on gathering information to that end. Although agencies want to know everything about their clients, programs, and services, often a lack of resources forces them to take a critical look at what needs to be examined for them to make effective decisions. Therefore, a practical and manageable evaluation plan will aid in the effective use of resources and sound decision-making, and at the same time, it will maintain the integrity of the grant guidelines.

Planning for Program Evaluation:

As a grant developer just starting out in program evaluation, or as a program planner with limited resources, there are various methods to get a good mix of essential information [data] about the program. Consider the following key questions when planning a program evaluation.\cite{7}

- What are the purposes of the evaluation; that is, what do you want to be able to decide because of the evaluation?
- Who are the audiences earmarked for the data from the evaluation; for instance, customers, clients, funding sources, boards, management, and/or staff?
- What kinds of data are needed to make the decisions you need to make or to enlighten your intended audience; for example, data to really understand the process of the program, strengths and weaknesses of the program, benefits to customers or clients, how the program failed and why?
- From what sources should you collect data; for instance, staff, customers, clients, collaborating partners, groups of customers or clients and staff together, and/or program documents?
• How can the program collect data in a reasonable manner; for example, providing questionnaires, conducting interviews, examining pertinent documents, observing customers or staff, conducting focus groups among clients or staff?
• When will you need the data? When must you collect the data?
• What resources are available to collect the data; that is, are you using existing dollars or incorporating the evaluation process within the grant proposal, from the start to the end of the grant?
• Who has the expertise, time, and willingness to conduct the evaluation; for instance, internal staff or an external evaluator or consultant?

Considering the aforementioned questions and incorporating the answers in the grant proposal will aid an agency down the road, because it will be easier for them to show how they’ve made a difference in the attitudes, values, behaviors, or condition of a client. The ability to do this pays important dividends. For instance, a practical and manageable evaluation plan can help an agency:

• Recruit and retain talented staff;
• Enlist and motivate able volunteers;
• Attract new clients or customers;
• Garner support for innovative efforts;
• Be identified as a model or demonstration site;
• Retain or increase funding;
• Encourage political policy;
• Gain favorable public recognition.

Conclusion:

We wrote this article to help grant developers better understand the importance of writing and conducting a program evaluation, so as to gather data on the effectiveness of their programs. This data will then assist them in optimizing outcomes, developing efficient strategies, and knowing the qualities of their program or service. For program evaluation to have substance, however, the planner must be willing to commit to understanding what is really going on. Imagine, if you will, being on point about strategies that are making a difference, and being able to prove it — talk about powerful results and accountability. To be able to demonstrate subjectively and objectively what program development steps, service components, or managerial practices are positively impacting customers or clients will lead an agency in the direction of financial sustainability and perhaps public recognition.
References:

Factors that Lead to the Creation of the Grant Proposal Writer Position in Public Schools


Gary Lee Frye is currently Lubbock-Cooper ISD Grant Writer/Dyslexia Coordinator. He holds a Master’s in Special Education along with 13 provisional and 5 professional certifications from Texas Education Agency, and is a Doctoral student in Educational Leadership at Texas Tech University. He has presented at several state and national conferences on the subject of grant proposal writing and served as a grant reviewer for TEA and the Department of Education on numerous grants.

Dr. Charles A. Reavis has directed a series of dissertations focusing on the cognitive components of Educational Leadership. He has published over 50 articles, has presented at over 50 national and state conferences, and has led workshops on the Four Cornerstones of Effective Schools, based on his research spanning 14 years. Currently he is professor of Educational Leadership at Texas Tech University.

Abstract:

This was a qualitative autobiographical active participant form of self-study research on seven school districts that created or contracted for grant proposal writing services in Texas. Two pilot studies were used to identify the basic factors used as the lens to view the data collected in this study. The finds from this combination of data sources was primarily that an expanded vision for what the school district could become called for additional funds and was the major reason that school districts developed the grant proposal writer position. Six themes were identified as contributing to the decision to create the grant proposal writer position or contracting for these services:

1. The school district or staff member(s) of the school district developed a vision for what the school district could become;
2. This vision called for programs beyond the current scope of funding;
3. The school district perceived grants as being a method of providing this source of alternative funding;
4. The school district developed a method to write grant proposals either through creation of the grant proposal writing position or contracting for these services;
5. An advocate for the creation of the grant proposal writing position as a means for the funding of this vision emerged; and
6. A belief that a designated person can successfully merge grant proposal writing with the vision for what the school district can become.

Thus, a clear vision for what the school district can become, not just a need for increased funding, was found to be the starting point for development of the grant proposal writing position.
Introduction:

School districts are under growing pressure to have ever-increasing student achievement performance scores as measured by state standardized tests. This translates into the desire of school districts to have additional curriculum programs to improve all students’ scores along with specialized programs to target improving at-risk students’ scores, since their scores tend to be the lowest in most school districts. Within this dynamic the lack of additional fiscal resources limits the new programs a school district can initiate. Since the 1980s, researchers have been discussing that “tightening of the financial belt” (Seldin & Maloy, 1981, p. 330), “dwindling budgets” (Maloy & Seldin, 1982, p. 65), the financial straitjacket caused by a “triad of budget woes of shrinking tax dollars at the local, state, and federal levels; ever-rising fixed expenses; and skyrocketing personnel costs” (White & Morgan 1992, p. 260). Researchers demonstrate that these factors have led public school systems to increasingly seek federal and state grants to support new and innovative educational programs that are designed to accomplish the aforementioned goals. The major problem with tapping into grants as a source of funding is developing and writing the grant proposal. This problem exists because the current structure of staff duties in most school districts does not provide free time for staff to write grant proposals. Therefore, if a school district or campus within a school district wants a grant proposal written, staff members must usually do it at night and on weekends (Frye & Reavis, 2001 & in press).

The new methods of testing students led many school districts to review current programs and assumptions. For some, this review lead to redefining of their vision of what the school can become. This need for a redefinition is evident as it is no longer enough to have a teacher standing in front of a class imparting his/her wisdom and then asking students to recite that wisdom on a conventional assessment measure. Instead, “reformers call for teachers to be facilitators of instruction, students to be involved in relevant, real-life experiences, and the curriculum to provide the skills, processes, and knowledge for productive citizenship in the third millennium….None of these changes come without a price tag — yet the needed funding is often outside the reach of the school district’s regular operating budget…” (Schnitzer & Nichols, 1998, p. 1). For this reason, Schnitzer (1995) made a strong suggestion that principals must become the driving force behind obtaining grants for their campus if they are to acquire their campus’s fair share of available grant money. The general consensus from the twenty-plus years of discussion about alternative methods for funding public education is that a coordinated effort to develop additional funds would yield real benefits to public pre-K-12 education, allowing it to achieve the new vision of what an effective public education system means.

The role of vision within the educational system has changed as public expectations for schools have changed. Thinking in the late 1980s through the present has shifted to recognize vision as an essential characteristic of educational leaders (ASCD, 1987 & 1992; Bolman & Deal, 1991; Deal, 1992; Fullan, 2001; Hord, 1992; Kouzes & Posner, 1987; Murphy, 1990; National Leadership Network, 1991; Renchler, 1991; Seeley, 1992a; Sergiovanni, 1987; Sergiovanni, 1990; Sheive & Schoenheit, 1987; Thomson, 1992; Tobia & Hord, 2002). This shift has occurred because the public, the press and the professional school practitioners share a keen desire for their schools to become a place where all students achieve high standards which lead to demands for major policy reforms (Fullan, 2001). The National Governors' Association highlighted the need for
educational restructuring, in *From Rhetoric to Action*, making it clear that "leading and managing a restructuring effort requires communicating a vision for systemic change" and that principals "must provide the vision to help shape new school structures and organizational arrangements" (1991, pp. 42-43).

Vision has become that cluster of beliefs and images involving — in the case of educational visions — such components as "educational philosophies, values, missions, goals, school cultures" (Renchler, 1991, p.1). Although often described or symbolized by a single, simple image or slogan — "A man on the moon by the end of the decade"; "Quality is Job 1"; "No Child Left Behind" — a vision is in fact almost always a cluster of beliefs and images that provides a sufficiently coherent and comprehensive picture of a desirable and feasible future state to motivate action in a purposeful way. Clearly the underlying reason vision has become such a prominent concern is the increasing demand for much higher levels of achievement in American education. To produce better results means changing what is being done, and changing what is being done requires having some vision of what changes have to be made to produce the desired results. Schools "are being thrust into the national spotlight, and with them school leaders. As public expectations for schools rise, as the president's six national educational goals contrast with the growing dysfunctions of classroom and family, the citizenry looks increasingly at principals and superintendents for answers" (Thomson, 1992, p. v). Deal (1992) reminded us:

In normal times, people look to managers for predictable, smooth-running, cost-effective operations. Managers help to supply the clarity, certainty, and efficiency required to get the job done right. In times of crisis, however, good management is not enough. People facing uncertainty turn to leaders for direction, confidence, and hope. Leaders encourage long-range vision, spirit, and cohesion when no one is sure about what the right job really is anymore (p. 1).

So long as there was not such an emphasis on measurable results, a school administrator could make a reputation as a visionary leader by installing flashy new programs and innovations whether or not they actually produced increased learning for students. Now that people are focusing on outcomes, there is an increasing demand to show that the innovations will actually produce the desired results. Therefore, demand for increased educational results is forcing educators and the public to define more carefully what results they are really looking for. What is being found is that the system itself has to be changed in fundamental ways, and this has created a demand for a different kind of vision for public schools. The way in which modern management and leadership theory sees vision operating to produce effective organizations is highly compatible with the emerging new system vision for public education. Instead of the old bureaucratic model for command and control, modern management theory sees far more productivity and excellence coming from vision-driven organizations, with much more autonomy for carrying out the vision delegated to those producing the product or dealing with the customers or clients, and much more collaboration among the participants on the grounds that success requires "virtually everyone's commitment" (Peters & Waterman, 1982, p. 17; Blankstein, 1992; Bonstingl, 1992; Deming, 1988; Fullan, 2001; Kearns & Doyle, 1988; Rhodes, 1992). A compelling vision reflects the values held by the staff and stakeholders and drives all decisions made at a school. “In order to foster a common
understanding about the vision, effective leaders use every opportunity to refer to the vision of the school during school and community meetings, personal interactions, and written communications” (Tobia & Hord, 2002, p. 2). Kindred (1996) gave a method for the effective setting of goals for a school district. The major focus was that school district administrators need to be proactive in communicating their vision to both the public and the staff. Keeping both of these groups informed makes the process of school change more effective. Meek (1999) reflected this same theme.

Staffing decisions are one of the more important responsibilities that administrators have in public schools which extends to creating new positions. These decisions directly affect the quality of the education that their students receive and account for almost 80% of a normal school district’s budget (Smith, 1998). Webb, Greer, Montello, and Norton (1987), described the effects that filling a position can have on a school district as being “One of the quickest ways to make an important improvement in the services of a school” (p. 77).

All of the aforementioned items have come together to make the time right for a study of the factors that lead a school district to create the grant proposal writer position. The discussions of the position in the literature are growing. Levenson (2002) stated, “There is a critical need for increased funding to the public schools. The tax base, just like the tax base for state colleges and universities, is not enough to provide a ‘world-class’ education for all our children….Public schools must look beyond their traditional external funding sources if they are to stay competitive….The schools have such great potential to raise serious money. All they have to do is find out how, and ask!” (p. xi).

Such books as Grant Writing for Dummies are a response to the increased awareness of the public about the need for the position. Articles like Frye and Reavis (2001; in press) on creating the position are appearing in professional education publications. All of this points in the direction that more and more individuals are coming to believe the grant proposal writing position is one that school districts need to add. Levenson (2002) went further and stated: “School districts must begin to employ full-time development staff and consultants to assist the schools in learning how to ask for and obtain major grants and gifts” (p. 29). Schnitzer and Nichols (1998) stated: “Finding novel ways to fund projects that do not fall under the regular operating budget is important to school leaders in today’s budget tightening world…. In order to help solve the problem of finding funds…many school districts have turned to developing and writing grant proposals…How this is done and who is responsible for such grant development varies from district to district, but the expense and time can be well worth the effort if approached in the right manner” (pp. 1-2).

In summarizing what they had learned in the development of the grant office, Schnitzer and Nichols stated: “While all of these functions can be performed by personnel assigned other duties, our experience in the Norfolk Public Schools has been that if the grants functions are not assigned to someone specific, they somehow receive inadequate attention or ‘fall through the cracks’ altogether. Therefore, our school district found that it was economically feasible and advantageous to have one professional devoted exclusively to the competitive grants arena. Such positions will more than pay for themselves as an organized effort is made to seek and win competitive grant funds” (Schnitzer & Nichols, 1998, p. 6).

Even with all of the aforementioned items, the basic question remains: “What are the factors that need to be in place in a public school system for it to consider creating the position of grant proposal writer?”
Design of the Study:

“… in research, finding the right questions to ask is half the battle, the idea being that only after you know clearly just what it is you want to learn can you proceed to come to grips with your problems” (Pfeiffer, 1968, p. 4). Thus stated, the issue is to seek the most effective method for identifying the factors that contribute to a school district’s decision to create the grant proposal writer position. Studying multiple cases where school districts have created the position would provide greater insight to the factors that contribute to the formation of the position.

This collective case study methodology allows for both within-case (unique to the site) and cross-case (common to several sites) analysis (Stake, 1994). This form of multi-site case study relies “on the presentation of solid descriptive data, so that the researcher leads the reader to an understanding of the meaning of the experience under study” (Janesick, 1994, p. 215). The methodologies from qualitative research procedures and techniques proposed by Strauss and Corbin (1990) and developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) were employed in analysis of the multiple case studies. In the final interpretive phase, the researcher reported the “lessons learned” from the cases (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Glaser (1978) recommended using this final interpretive phase or conclusion as an opportunity to show the contribution of the work to formal theory by “brief comparative analysis with data from experience, knowledge and the literature, and by raising the conceptual level” (p. 133).

This study was divided into three phases: The two pilot studies, the designed study, and the post-member checking study additions. The pilot studies were used to establish initial thoughts, interview questions, and background information concerning the factors that contribute to a school district’s decision to create a grant proposal writer position. Also, data from these pilot studies were reanalyzed in terms of the final question developed for this study. The pilot study phase begin during the 1999/2000 school year in response to the course requirements for the qualitative data analysis series of courses offered at Texas Tech University. The researcher chose the topic of ‘factors that contribute to a school district’s decision to create a grant proposal writer position’ because he held that position at School District A. From the initial courses in qualitative data analysis until the present, the researcher has held this position and been actively researching this subject. This close personal relationship to the topic creates an opportunity for an autobiographical form of self-study research. Therefore, the cautions from Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) that the researcher and the reader of the study must be aware of the potential for the lack of objectivity and biases must be considered. This awareness is needed even though this type of self-study research could illuminate a new area of study in a manner that is impossible without this level of intimate knowledge of the subject.

The purpose of this study was to discover the factors that contributed to a school district creating a grant proposal writer position through a multiple case study design. It is intended that knowing these factors will assist the central office administration and school boards of school districts in deciding if the creation of a grant proposal writer position at their school district would have a positive effect on achieving the vision of the school district.
Summary of the Data:

The data from the pilot and research study phases tended to support similar findings. These findings are:

1. Someone at the school district must have a vision for what it can become;
2. The extra funding that grants provide will accelerate the realization of this vision;
3. A person with the ability to take this vision, school district culture, and current curriculum needs and create a fundable grant proposal must be found; and
4. When the above factors come together, a successful system for obtaining alternative funding of public education is developed.

The reduction of factors from the initial six was because these four items were the critical ones across the school districts. The data gained from the peer review conducted with other grant proposal writers extended and supported the aforementioned findings.

The general statement of the need for a grand vision of student success can be seen as the glue that helped bring the factors together for the creation of the position. The vision, not a need for increased funding, appears to be the starting point for the school districts that have created or contracted for grant proposal writing services.

The findings also show that forces outside of public education are promoting the creation of the position. The inability of states to fund all school districts at a maximum level supported the need for alternative funding sources. Also, the need for specialized programs to meet specific sub-group student population needs was identified as another reason why the position is needed. Lastly, the linkage of the school district needs to larger community needs was identified as an additional factor in the public’s support of the position after its initial creation.

The unusual finding was at larger school districts. It appears that school district politics can limit the long-term effectiveness of the grant proposal writer. This seems to relate to the finding that the grant proposal writers can, in effect, establish school district policy through the grants that they receive. If an inappropriate administrator receives credit for the resulting policy, others will work to undermine grant proposal writing efforts. The issue of politics was found to be a reason why one successful grant proposal writer moved from one school district to another. Thus, this was identified as another factor that must be considered in a school district’s decision to create the position.

Interpretations from the Data:

The finding that the development of a vision for a school district was the prime factor in the creation of the grant proposal writer position or contracting for these services was an unexpected result. It would seem that school districts with the greatest financial needs would be the most likely to develop the position. However, as Born and Wilson (2000), in a discussion of school districts attempting the initiation of school-wide reform, pointed out, those school districts most in need of supplemental funding have the fewest resources to commit to securing these funds. This need for the initial support for the program of grant proposal writing led them to conclude: “…support appears to gravitate toward the larger districts with the resources to hire a grant proposal writer…” (p. 7) and “Districts that year after year receive the most significant philanthropic support appear to
be those that use the funding in systematic, coherent ways…” (p.9). However, another way to look at these findings is that school districts that see grants as a viable means to support their vision of reform are willing to commit resources to the position. Also, from personal knowledge that this researcher has from being a member of the focus group that Born and Wilson (2000) used as one of the data sources for their monograph, some of the discussions focused on how school districts with a clearly developed long-range performance plan, were the ones who seemed to have developed a program of grant proposal writing.

The data from School District C and School District D support this conclusion in the sense that these school districts had a vision of how they wished to improve the education of their students that was developed in their campus and district improvement plans. When given the opportunity to partner with School District A in grant proposals, they were willing to join into the proposal, while other school districts in the area with greater fiscal need were not.

At School District A the superintendent stated: “…while it might have been easier for me to create the grant proposal writer position since [school board member] was pushing for us to write grants…. we really didn’t have, in the district, a very well developed improvement plan. We did not have a strategic plan….in fact our performance plan…was just one sheet of paper. I could not justify going to the board and asking for a grant proposal writer when I didn’t really know exactly what we needed as a district.” Once the long range performance plan or vision was developed, School District A did create the position and has been able to secure large amounts of grant funds to achieve this vision.

The most telling statement about the need for the vision can be found in the following comment. School District F’s assistant superintendent stated: “…if [School District F’s] grant proposal writer would have walked in here three years ago I would have enjoyed the interview but there wouldn’t have been enough ground work to say there’s a need in the district. Now, though, it matched an identified need and a growing consensus of a need in the district…” In other words, the linkage of vision of what the school district can become and how grant funds can assist in achieving this vision must be in place before the administration of a school district can be convinced of the benefits of the position.

In all the school districts where interviews were conducted, the researcher’s field notes commented on how the staff members appeared to communicate a clear vision for improving the education of their students. The interviewees when talking about this vision made the point that the programs they wished to develop exceeded the current level of traditional funding. This was the main reason they stated they had begun to consider grants as a means of providing the alternative funding for these programs.

At the smaller school districts, comments were made that lead this researcher to believe that they might not have thought of grants initially as a method to fund these needs. When they had received funds from the jointly developed proposals, however, they then were aware of the potential for grants to fund the programs that “…we thought we could only dream about having” (School District C). This is why they were anxious to enter into a formal contractual agreement for grant proposal writing services. They now view grants as a method of funding programs that would not have been possible with the normal funding methods, because at School District C approximately an additional ten percent and at School District D approximately an additional twenty percent has been added to the yearly operational budget from grants.
In other words, “…[G]rants are more important than other [fiscal] sources because all of these funds stay at [School District G].” Though the total percentage of operational budgets from grants is not as high as those in the small school districts, they were the sole source of funding for the programs. For example from School District G, “All of our after school programs and ESL programs now come from soft money. Without the Title VII grants [School District G] couldn’t have these programs…I don’t know where we would get the money.”

The basic factor that was identified when using the lens of grounded theory and systems analysis to interpret the data was that developing the vision for what the school district could become was the starting point for determining whether the creation of the grant proposal writing position was warranted. When this researcher begun studying this question, the methodologies from grounded theory and systems analysis became the framework for understanding the important role that a vision for what a school district could become played in the development of the grant proposal writer position. This researcher believes that this theme was observed because the development of the vision shows that the administration is operating from a value added (Sergiovanni, 1990) or transforming leadership (Burns, 1978) perspective.

This would mean that the administration takes a proactive stance towards problems and developing the solutions. By having developed vision, the school leaders show they are “leaders who combine hardheaded realism with a deep commitment to values and purposes larger than themselves” (Bolman & Deal, 1991, p. xiv). They bring something more to their school district, and one would expect that they would be on the cutting edge of developments that would allow them to reach their vision. They exemplify Deal’s (1992) statement that “Leaders encourage long-range vision, spirit, and cohesion when no one is sure about what the right job really is anymore” (p. 1). If the state will not fund programs at the level where student needs are effectively met, this type of leader will discover another method to fund the needed programs to meet all students’ needs. In other words, “the establishment and maintenance of a vision is thought by scholars in leadership and school effectiveness to be a cornerstone, or absolutely essential to the functioning of an institution such as an effective school” (Dantley, 1989, p. 245).

In this researcher’s opinion, without this type of vision to act as the guiding force behind the grant proposals that are written, a successful program of grant proposal writing cannot be developed. This strong statement is made because of the researcher’s unique position of being School District A’s grant proposal writer and the administration being visionary in the aforementioned sense of the word.

For School District A, because of this researcher’s unique position, the effects of having a successful grants development system will be discussed. Before the position was created, a detailed vision of what the school district could become was developed by the administration. The ability to implement this vision was limited, however, by the available funds; grants were seen as a method to reach this vision. There has been a program of grant proposal writing for five years at the time of this writing. During this time period, the funding from grants has surpassed $3 million and supports numerous programs that target specific population and general student needs. Examples of these program are: After school and summer programs, character education programs, class-size reduction programs, comprehensive school reform programs, credit recovery programs, delinquency prevention programs, English as a Second Language programs, reading academy programs, and technology enhancement programs. These programs have allowed the school district’s initial vision to be achieved and led to an expanded
vision of what the school district can now become. School District A went from operating under Texas Education Agency monitoring to achieving a school district exemplary rating — the highest rating that this agency gives.

The funds generated by grants were seen as having this disproportional effect on student achievement because they are used almost exclusively for programs that provide services to the students, their parents, and/or the staff. Therefore, the approximately $1 million from funded grants in the 2001/02 school year went to programs which met identified needs from the campus and district improvement plans. This compares to the approximately $12 million general budget in the following manner. When salaries and non-operating expenditures are removed, only 17.3% or approximately $2,200,000 remain. Thus, the grant funds add almost an additional 50% to the funds available for programs for the students that provide direct services. This is why grant funds can be used to accelerate the achievement of a school district vision.

References:


Identifying Professional Competencies

By Deanna Nurnberg

Deanna Nurnberg is the Director of Grants and Foundation Services at Lewis University in Romeoville, IL. She is a charter member of AAGP and currently serves on the AAGP Board of Directors.

Introduction:

• What exactly is a grant professional?
• What do grant professionals know (or need to know)?
• How do you know if a grant professional is competent?
• Are grant professionals fundraisers — do they need the same skills and knowledge?

Many of us have to answer questions like the ones above, as we explain our work to coworkers, governing boards, organizations we serve, and others. These questions are but a few of the many questions that are being addressed, and must be answered in the coming years as American Association of Grant Professionals (AAGP) examines certification or credentialing of grant professionals and looks to further expand and refine its educational programs and services for its members.

I had the opportunity this year, with the open input and generous contributions of AAGP members to begin to answer some of these questions. I was seeking to identify the skills, knowledge, and expertise grant professionals consider necessary for demonstrating competency within the field. Through this effort, I found that there are seven basic competency areas for the grants profession.

In the paragraphs below, I briefly present these core competencies and how they compare with those that are tested in the Certified Fundraising Executive (CFRE) credential, to see how grant proposal writing and fund raising competencies are alike and different.

Part I: The Core Competencies of the Grant Profession

(1) Proposal Development. As might be expected, one of the largest and most significant areas of competency for a grant professional is the development of grant proposals. These skills and knowledge generally fell into two categories:

• Coordination, in which a grant professional was involved more in a coordination than a writing role — working with others to develop a program, write proposals, and implement a project.
• Writing, in which a grant professional served as the main program developer and/or proposal author.
Grant professionals are responsible for compliance and management in a number of areas, such as regulatory compliance; grant acknowledgement, project oversight, and reporting; maintenance of grant-related records; and financial management of grants and grant-funded activities.

Grant professionals must collect and analyze data on grants and foundation trends, activities and services as well as identify prospective corporate, foundation, and government donors through a variety of research tools. Vitally important is the ability to “qualify” donors by matching funders’ interests with an agency's needs and determining a donor’s potential interest and the feasibility of requests and projects.

Grant professionals need to be competent planners and should be able to help their programs or organizations conduct strategic/long-range planning. They also need to be able to develop measurable goals and objectives for the organization, the programs for which they are seeking funding, and their own unit within the organization. Finally, they need to be able to help their agency/clients identify and prioritize needs and funding opportunities.

Grant professionals need to be able to communicate effectively with both internal and external audiences. They must possess solid written and oral communication skills. For instance, they need to be able to communicate with agency staff and leadership to share opportunities for funding and program development and to seek buy-in and involvement from administration, the board, and front-line program staff in grant programs and initiatives. They also need to be able to communicate with external audiences. Often, they fill public relations and marketing roles as part of carrying out their grant responsibilities, including acting as a spokesperson for the organization and coordinating written communications regarding the organization.

An important competency is the development and nurturance of key relationships necessary to support grant acquisition and implementation. For instance, external relationships enable professionals to solicit feedback on proposals, represent their organizations, and visit with potential donors. Internally, grant professionals need to communicate about programs and grant opportunities, as well as prepare staff to seek and manage grants.

Grant professionals require knowledge related to evaluating and monitoring programs and initiatives to ensure that programs are achieving the objectives promised to funders. Many grants require evaluations, and professionals often identify and work with evaluators to design project evaluations; coordinate follow-up and evaluation of funded projects and proposals; and coordinate data collection for their agencies for a variety of purposes.

There are several different views about where the grants profession fits in the fundraising field. No doubt you have, at some time or another, heard one of these views. For instance, one view is that grant professionals are not to be fundraisers at all — and fundraising competencies are different from those needed for grants. A contrary view is that the grants profession is a specialty within fundraising.

I am not attempting to support either view in this article. However, I want to share some information I have gathered that compares core fundraising competencies with grant professional’s competencies.
In 1997, Certified Fundraising Executive (CFRE) International commissioned a formal study called a “job analysis” to identify the knowledge, skills, and abilities involved in the fundraising profession. The current CFRE credential is based upon their 1997 Job Analysis.

The seven grant-related competencies were compared against the fundraising competencies identified in the CFRE Job Analysis, which was graciously provided by Morgean Hirt, executive director of CFRE International. According to the CFRE Job Analysis, there are seven core competencies for the fundraising profession. In order of importance, these are:

1. Solicitation;
2. Donor relations;
3. Prospect identification;
4. Stewardship;
5. Management;
6. Volunteerism; and
7. Public policy.

As might be expected, there were a number of areas of overlap and similarity between the fundraising and grant profession’s areas of competency, and many of the grant-related competency areas fit within these seven areas, although the grant competencies are more specific and detailed because of its specialty nature within the larger nonprofit and fundraising fields.

One of the most interesting findings was that the CFRE Job Analysis showed that grant-related fundraising carried a heavy weight within fundraising’s technical areas. Five of the ten fundraising techniques specifically and directly pertain to the grant profession. These included federal giving, proposal writing, corporate and foundation solicitation, and grantsmanship.

This finding appears to contradict the opinion that the CFRE does not measure the grant profession and is not a relevant measure of grant-related skills and knowledge competency. Further, this finding raises questions about the CFRE process. For instance, is the credential really favoring individual fundraising versus grant-related or organizational fundraising? Or does this indicate that perhaps the CFRE is not being adequately explained and marketed to grant professionals? This finding has been shared with the CFRE International board and will hopefully be addressed by them in the near future.

Conclusion:

In the coming years, as AAGP and the grant profession as a whole continue to grow and develop, it will become increasingly important for us to tailor and advance an educational agenda that will provide training at all levels in the core competency areas for our field. This research was an initial step in identifying what those core competency levels are, as well as gathering data that will inform the dialogue within the association about how we want our profession to evolve. I look forward to seeing the grant profession’s body of knowledge continue to expand in the years to come!
A Professional Association: The First Five Years

By Randal J. Givens

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Beginnings are exciting and births are amazing. So, too, is the creation of a new professional association. In this article, we will examine the courtship, the conception, the birth, the weaning, and the first steps of an American association — the American Association of Grant Professionals. First, we will take note of the general value and place of such an association of individual professionals. Then we will examine the details of its growth from thought to reality — the first five years.

Introduction:

As an association, the American Association of Grant Professionals is a particular expression of a global trend. Pick up any major American newspaper and you will see articles on an association being developed somewhere — perhaps in Russia, Hungary, France, Latin America, or Asia. You may notice the World Bank encouraging the development of nonprofit associations around the world. Such realities exemplify what is referred to as a revival of civil society. Here, the word “civil” pertains to the relations of citizens one with another or with the body politic (the whole people, united under a single political authority — a politically organized society). Thus, civil society is the set of associations that produce the thought, protection and considerations of philanthropy. While civil society is not democracy, Toqueville asserted that democracy needs a civil society. Civil society is the counterweight to government and to individualism; it is the glue that holds society together. Civil society is the engine by which we develop our moral sense; it is the church, the club, and the professional association.

Herein, we focus on the professional association and note that the conception, birth, and development of a professional association has value not only to the professionals who comprise it, but also generically — to our society as a whole. The very existence of AAGP is a tribute to the possibilities fostered by our socio/political/cultural context. It is testimony of a minority of people (grant professionals) within society who voluntarily choose to band together, ostensibly to improve their careers and further the profession — a self-help group. Concurrent with the “internal/self-interest” motivation is another factor, ultimately of greater importance. The “social” interaction of an association of grant professionals has a potential for impact upon the entire philanthropic sector. Social interaction is more than a qualitative social characteristic. It is an empirical matter, to the extent that “…social networks provide the channels through which we recruit one another
for good deeds, and social networks foster norms of reciprocity that encourage attention
to others’ welfare” (Putnam, p. 117).

To see this process at work in the philanthropic sector, we may turn to the position
occupied by grants and the people who seek them. We know that grants from foundations
or corporations have impact well beyond their dollar value. “Many current and potential
donors see foundation and corporate support as an independent, objective measure of
institutional quality….A strong record of receiving grants is thus a positive factor in
attracting support from other foundations and corporations and individuals” (Gooch, p.
125). The point is that the underlying interests and the values in this process are all-
pervasive. The scope of the philanthropic mind-set and its practical impacts are even
more encompassing than the nonprofit sector itself. We should not even think of the third
sector as a single thing, rather “…it takes different forms in different places reflecting the
particular constellation of cultural, historical, political, and economic forces that are at
work” (Salamon, Anheier, List, Loepler, Sokolowski, 1999, p. 24).

The grant professionals association is a logical connector within the institutional
expression of the philanthropic sector. As grant professionals, we serve as institutional
“boundary spanners,” linking societal needs to institutional philanthropists. Certainly,
through the association of multiple grant professionals, philanthropy can be augmented
by enhanced “connections.” The connections we make with each other can improve our
network and our practice. Associationally, through collaborative momentum we
accentuate the voice of philanthropy as we nurture the development of processes to fulfill
the missions of philanthropists and to meet societal felt needs. Simply meeting societal
need, when considered collectively — politically/societally — can sometimes become
mere pragmatic political protectionism. When considered from the individual
perspective, meeting societal needs can more genuinely become philanthropy. When
considered from the individual

Year One: The Idea and the Recruiting:

In late 1997, while working as the Director of Grants and Program Development at
York College in Nebraska, this author (hereafter, Randy) began to inquire into the
existence of an association for “grants professionals.” He found a few large general
organizations of fundraisers — like CASE, NSFRE (now called AFP), etc. — which had
or supposedly had something to offer grant professionals. Also, he found some “interest
particular” groups within the grants area — like SRA or NCURA, etc. But there was
nothing that would faintly resemble an association of professionals in the field of grants
— to include grantmakers and grantseekers, administrators and evaluators, public and private, etc. He therefore posed a question on a few list serves, wrote letters, and made phone calls. Several people then made contact with him. They responded that they had never found such an association, but they thought the profession had “come of age” sufficiently to merit such an organization, to give a wider national voice to the profession as a whole and provide direct assistance to us respectively in our own career development.

The first several individuals who contacted Randy were both excited about the idea and curious about how much work it would involve. They rather quickly decided that it would be too much work for them, at that time in their career. One person said “That is a great idea. I wish you luck in getting it started, but I don’t have time to try to start a national association from scratch. If it does turn out to be something good, let me know and I’ll join.” Seems reminiscent of the story of the Little Red Hen! There were several dozen people who made contact by late 1997 and early 1998. Randy compiled a list of respondents and their comments, dividing them into those for, those against, those with an “alternative,” and those with questions.

Now, rereading those comments, it is amazing that many of those early “musings” have blossomed and grown into realities, thanks to the dedication of several talented grants professionals. Fortunately, there were those who were sufficiently dedicated to the notion to put their expertise, time, money, and effort on the line. The first person who showed significant interest — who strongly encouraged Randy to pursue the idea, and persisted with the idea herself — was Iris Coffin, a grants officer at Drake University in Iowa. Next was VC League, at the time a private grants consultant and trainer for the Grantsmanship Center of California. VC had had this same idea in the back of his mind for years. Then Mike Brock, a private consultant from Michigan specializing in environmental and conservation grants, contacted Randy and wanted to be involved. Next, Phyl Renninger, the current AAGP Board President, contacted Randy. She lived in Florida, and at the time was a private consultant specializing, among other things, in government grants for K-12. Next to make contact was Rachael Sherard, a grants developer at Avera McKennan Hospital Foundation in South Dakota.

For a few months, Randy communicated with these individuals separately, attempting to sift through ideas and possibilities as they examined their level of commitment to the daunting prospect of establishing a new national organization. Randy then arranged a conference call so that the “group” could all communicate together. The call took place on April 2, 1998 — the first “meeting” of what would become AAGP. Participating in the call were Randy, Iris, VC, Mike, Phyl, Rachael and one of her Avera McKennan Hospital Foundation colleagues, Brad Knudson (the current AAGP Immediate Past Board President). Following the call, Rachael decided to abandon the project due to her heavy work obligations. However, Brad “took her place” within the group.

From that first call, we cemented our determination to pursue our investigation into the feasibility of establishing an independent association. The primary task we took on was to conduct some informal “market research.” That is, we agreed to contact existing associations to identify the extent to which they were committed to serving grant professionals. Secondly, we agreed to search for any existing national association for grant professionals. Finally, we determined to informally survey as many colleagues as
we could to determine if there really was a substantive desire on the part of grants professionals for a separate and independent national association “of our own.”

Over the course of the following six months, we learned that there was a significant “market” for such an association among a number of our colleagues across the country. We were unable to find any national associations of grant professionals, with the exception of several private groups which were, for the most part, for-profits selling training courses. Some of those were fine organizations; however, conceptually and philosophically, they were a far cry from an independent, nonprofit, national association of grant professionals.

Telephone calls were made by the group to existing associations. These calls proved to be very enlightening. We called the presidents of several organizations like NSFRE, CASE, APRA, NAPC, etc. Our research indicated that the status quo (existing organizations) was content to maintain its umbrella groups to deal with us — in a conversation Randy had with one President, she said “No, don’t fragment the discipline with another association; we’ll take care of you grants people.” Their desire was to continue the traditional approach of “dealing with us” as an adjunct to the fundraising/development world. Since in those preexisting fund-raising associations, the grants area was seen as supplying perhaps 10% of the average organizational budget, only about 10% of the association’s time would be spent dealing with the problems, prospects, and potentials of the “grants people.” Other, more specialized associations didn’t particularly care about grant professionals or the profession as a whole, outside of their own niche or special interest area, and tended to be relatively small.

With six months of research behind us, we felt that the situation was clear. We decided to proceed to come together for the purpose of establishing a national professional association devoted exclusively to grant professionals of all types and of any orientation or interest group. We chose to meet face-to-face for the first time, in a conference format. Iris Coffin agreed to set up the meeting at Drake University on October 24, 1998. A lecturer from Drake’s Department of Philosophy, Dr. Jennifer McCrickerd, made a presentation on “The Credibility of Ethics.” The second presenter was VC League, who spoke on “The Role of Ethics in the Grant Process.” There were two local proposal writers who sat in on the lectures — total conference attendance was eight people from five states.

The first organizational meeting, held prior to the lectures, was attended by five of us: Iris Coffin, Mike Brock, myself (Randal Givens), Phyl Renninger, and VC League — due to work responsibilities, Brad Knudson was unable to attend. We identified our associational mission statement. We settled on the name American Association of Grant Professionals (AAGP). We also determined that the fee for “Charter Memberships” would be $50 for all members signing up within the organization’s first year — charter members who never let their membership lapse were guaranteed a lifetime membership fee of $50 a year. At the meeting we selected a logo and the organizational colors of burgundy and teal. We also determined to have a conference in Chicago (where VC had a branch office) in mid-November 1999.

The intent of all these and the other actions taken was to express the idea of a national group which chooses to associate together on a professional level to enhance our common connection within the grants arena, to develop our careers, and to foster growth and maturity within the profession at large.
A Professional Association: The First Five Years

A founding board was elected. The founding President was Randal J. Givens; founding Vice-President was VC League; founding Secretary was Phyllis Renninger; founding Treasurer was Iris Coffin, and the founding Association Administrator was Mike Brock. Bylaws were drawn up. Mike Brock, on February 16, 1999, submitted our papers incorporating us in the state of Michigan (where Mike lived). We then made application to the IRS for the 501(c)(6) status as a nonprofit “professional association.” That determination was ruled on and approved in January 2000 and made retroactive to March of 1999. The expressed intention was to not be connected with any profit-making business entity, but to remain entirely an independent nonprofit professional association seeking to enhance the profession and give voice to it on a national scale for the benefit of the profession and the individual members thereof.

Even before the papers had all been filed and approved, AAGP was receiving requests for membership; by May 1999, we had 27 members. Among those early members was Kim Wuertz, a charter member who on April 17, 1999, was appointed to the board until the elections of November 1999. She served as co-chair of the conference committee with VC League. Just prior to the November 1999 conference, due to heavy work-load considerations, she resigned from the board.

Year Two: The Organization:

During that first year of official existence — November 1998 to November 1999 — the emphasis was on membership recruitment and organizational identification. The operational dollars were supplied from the beginning until January 1999, when AAGP first officially started accepting charter members, by the personal contributions of the six founding board members. Consideration was given to writing a grant proposal for start-up funding; however, no funding matches were found. One of the reasons was due to the fact that AAGP had not yet received its nonprofit status. A recruiting brochure was designed and printed, and each of the board members accepted the responsibility of mailing as many as they personally could. Some of the early mail-outs had envelope addresses done by hand, due to the breakdown of personal printers. On April 15, 1999, Randy sent an email to Stephen Nill of the Charity Channel asking if we could obtain a place there for advertisement and member communication exchange. All board members actively attempted to personally publicize the association in varying manners.

In preparation for the upcoming “first membership conference” to be held in Chicago in November 1999, the board held a midyear board meeting in Chicago to examine the proposed conference hotel location firsthand. The meeting was held on April 17 and 18, 1999. Among the important items discussed was the financial status of the organization. With 27 members, the balance stood at $1,100. That was sufficient to plunge ahead.

Consideration was given to “cleaning up” the AAGP code of ethics and bringing it up for a vote of acceptance (or rejection) by the membership at the November conference. The board felt that the organization had a large responsibility to promote ethical conduct in the profession and certainly among association members.

Another important consideration was the AAGP website, which Phyl Renninger had volunteered to begin and maintain. Initially, Phyl personally funded the early start-up costs. The two-day meeting held much discussion about organizational matters including bylaws, the possibility of AAGP chapters, membership recruitment and services, board
communication and committees, advertising, conference details, and finances. Within a few weeks of that meeting in May 1999, AAGP received its official EIN number.

By the time of the conference in Chicago on November 1999, the charter membership drive was ending, and at the conclusion of the conference, there were a total of 73 “brave and committed” Charter Members. With the conclusion of the charter membership campaign, regular membership fees were set at $75 a year. An official associational Code of Ethical Conduct was adopted on November 18, 1999, at the Conference. Two new board members were added — Michael Wells of Oregon and Deanna Nurnberg of Iowa. The conference was attended by 22 people from 12 states — more than doubling the first organizational conference in Iowa the previous year.

The membership meeting was characterized by the excitement of the networking potentials. The board meeting was animated, and several new ideas were presented. The officers elected were Randy Givens as President, VC League as Vice President, Phyl Renninger as Secretary, Iris Coffin as Treasurer, and Mike Brock as Association Administrator.

With the increased membership came an increased bank balance of just over $4,400. This enabled the board to begin to suggest growth possibilities. There was discussion about establishing a newsletter. Randy was to start a committee to investigate credentialing. There was commendation for Phyl and her work with the website, and for VC’s direction of the conference. There was discussion of the need for more publicity and the possibility of interacting with other organizations for the purpose of increased visibility. Discussion was also had on the desirability of registering a trademark. Plans were made for VC to host a conference in Berkeley, California, in November of 2000.

**Year Three: Forming a Presence:**

The midyear board meeting of April 2000 in Berkeley brought with it encouraging membership statistics — a major hurdle of 100 members had been reached. As president, Randy had appointed VC as chair of the credentialing committee. VC and the committee had done much initial research and discussion. Iris had been appointed as chair of the electronic communications committee, and a report was given on various communication options. Phyl updated the membership brochure to be mass-mailed to a database of 2,500 names which Randy developed and managed. Thanks to Avera McKennan Hospital Foundation, Brad was able to do the mass e-mailing of announcements. An auditing process was begun at this meeting as well. Randy was charged with the development of a membership survey and its maintenance in a database form. There was continued discussion on possible newsletter development and chapter formation. As the first preliminary foray into chaptering, VC and Phyl had formed regional liaison committees to assist in conference planning, information dissemination, and hosting in California and Florida.

The following six months saw much activity, and culminated in November 2000 in the second membership conference in Berkeley. By its conclusion, AAGP numbered 160 members, with 45 conference participants — doubling the previous year’s records. The end of the conference saw a better financial picture, with $13,200 in the bank. The new board members who were added were Cynthia Renea Ode of Indiana, Frank Mandley of Florida, and Gail Vertz of Missouri. Having served in the key leadership role for three years — the conception and birth processes of the organization — Randy decided to step
down from the presidency. He chose to run for board re-election, but not for the presidency due to work pressures and academic pursuits. There was, of course, no void since the board contained people of great experience, expertise, and energy. Randy became the Immediate Past President, VC League was elected as President, Brad Knudson as Vice President, Phyl Renninger as Secretary, and Michael Wells as Treasurer. Iris Coffin chose not to run for treasurer.

The observation was made that the conference and the organization was continually improving. There was, however, a need for enhanced image presentation; more publicity and marketing was needed. Much discussion centered on managing the membership renewals and recruitment, which were handled by Iris. More money was allotted to Phyl to improve the website. Brad, with the cooperation of his employer Avera McKennan, was able to offer the opportunity for board committees to do conference calling. New committees were formed, including Gail chairing the Nominating Committee, Phyl chairing Auditing, and Randy chairing Long-Range Planning and Bylaws. The creation of this latter committee was necessary for the accomplishment of the mandate given by the members at the membership meeting. The charge was to create a strategic plan with the formal assistance of an independent consultant specializing in strategic plans. The next conference was set for November 2001 in Florida.

Year Four: Growth and Excitement Develop:

With increasing board responsibilities, much activity occurred during the spring of 2001 prior to the midyear board meeting of April. During those early months of 2001, new president VC League secured a major grant contract with the City of Detroit, and at the same time began a national consulting firm. These tremendous work responsibilities forced him to reluctantly resign from the board, knowing that AAGP, the organization he had helped start, would require and deserve significant time and effort from its president. At the April board meeting, Vice President Brad Knudson stepped in as President, Phyl Renninger stepped up to Vice President, and Gail Vertz took the Secretary position. The board officers changed, but not the committee work. Reports were given on the progress that had been made. Among others, Randy reported on the strategic plan progress. We had secured a consultant, Dr. Jean Layton of South Dakota — a charter AAGP member who specialized in strategic planning. Surveys and analyses were conducted through the summer and fall, with reports being given at the conference in Florida.

The fall 2001 conference in Orlando was the largest to that point. There were 120 participants — doubling the previous year’s participants — and 212 total members. The financial position was good, with just over $16,600 in the bank and money market accounts. Iris Coffin retired from the board and did not run for re-election, but did accept the editorship of the first AAGP journal. The board grew with the election of three new board members — Rebecca Walsh from Iowa, Janel Patterson and Linda Lambert, both from Florida. The board officer positions stayed the same.

As a result of VC League’s resignation from the board due to job constraints, Randy Givens had taken over as chair of the credentialing committee, which distributed a survey at the conference and reported to the assembly concerning the research carried out to that point. The membership reconfirmed, by a positive vote, to continue pursuing credentialing. Frank Mandley then assumed the chairmanship of that committee.
Randy reported that the strategic planning committee had completed its task — more as a strategic planning task force than a full, formal strategic planning committee. Very broadly summarized, based on two membership surveys, the five items about which AAGP members were most concerned — in rank order — were: chapters, quality national and regional conferences, mentoring, publications and communication, and education.

Due to the resignation of Iris Coffin as chair of the Membership Committee, Phyl Renninger assumed the chairmanship. The president, Brad Knudson, undertook a major reorganization of the committee structure of the board. Keeping Phyl as chair, he changed the Membership Committee to the Membership Services Committee, and placed within its responsibilities the new journal under the direction of Iris Coffin, the new newsletter under the direction of Linda Lambert, the website under the direction of Phyl Renninger, and the membership registration and database management. Linda Lambert, with the help of Janel Patterson, was charged with the responsibility of writing a proposal for a possible AAGP Chaptering structure. Cynthia Oda was appointed as the Chair of the Finance Committee.

Discussion was given to the possibility of hiring either some part-time staff or a professional management service to deal with some of the growing administrative activities, which at that point had all been undertaken by the volunteer board members. The possibility of establishing a separate 501(c)(3) organization for fund-raising purposes was also discussed. The next conference was set for November 2002 in Portland, Oregon.

Year Five: Major steps:

Due to the increasing level of detail accompanying the growth of the organization, two board meeting conference calls were conducted prior to the regularly scheduled midyear meeting. These calls were held on December 5, 2001, and February 2, 2002. Thus, by the time of the April 2002 meeting, several reports and recommendations were ready for presentation to the board.

One such report was the proposal by Linda Lambert, Chair of the Chaptering Committee, and Janel Patterson on the formation of AAGP chapters. The board approved and charged Randy Givens and the Long-Term Planning and Bylaws Committee with the responsibility for submitting the proposed bylaw “Chapter Amendment” to the membership on July 1, 2002, for a vote. The vote was closed, as announced, on the last day of July 2002, and resulted in 101 votes for chaptering and 5 votes against. That committee was also charged with an examination of the whole of the bylaws — receiving all comments from board members and reporting the recommendations to the board at the November 2002 board meeting. Cynthia Oda supplied the board members with a complete Board Manual. Michael Wells submitted a proposed Board Liability Policy, which in light of our litigious society, was approved.

As in each of the board meetings, much time was spent discussing the upcoming conference. The conferences had become not only the primary cash producer for the association, but more importantly, the primary point of contact, networking, and training for the organization to this point in time. Conferences are now being planned four to five years in advance, to pursue the desire of the members (as expressed in the strategic planning surveys) to have quality national conferences. More discussion and review was given to the possibility of a 501(c)(3) supporting foundation and the possibility of
securing the services of an association management service or a part-time staff person. During the summer of 2002, Rebecca Walsh, due to heavy job responsibilities, resigned from the board. The summer and early fall saw substantial committee work in preparation for the fall conference.

The culmination of the first five years of AAGP — from inception, to birth, to the “toddler” stage and perhaps a little beyond — came at the latest conference, held in Portland in November 2002. There were over 350 participants. With a total of over 321 active members, the association took some major steps toward service to its membership and the profession at large. Under the direction of Linda Lambert, the first regular newsletter had been announcing the arrival of the conference for several months. At this conference, Linda also introduced the first movement into regional chapters. The first journal of the association was unveiled by Iris Coffin, the first editor. The credentialing business plan was presented by Frank Mandley, and the board and the membership gave their blessings to the pursuit of the credentialing process. Brad Knudson retired from the board, having completed his successful term as president. Reluctantly, this founding board member did not run for re-election due to increased job responsibilities. The new President was Phyl Renninger, the new Vice President was Gail Vertz, the new secretary was Linda Lambert, and Michael Wells remained as Treasurer. Two new board members were elected by the membership: Jerry Dillehay and Marilyn Boess, both from Arizona.

Conclusion:

The activities of a young organization, as certainly in the case of AAGP, inevitably place upon its board the largest portion of the work. The various references made herein are not intended to be a complete list of all the various activities of all the board members. Indeed, each one of the board members has put forth major effort in bringing this organization to its current level. Any inadvertent exclusion of particular person’s activities is not intended to indicate a lack of participation. Indeed, all of the board members significantly contributed to the organization in time, money, and/or effort!

Also, as with other young organizations, one would hope that the work-load begins to shift toward the membership as time goes on. From the beginning, AAGP has been designed to be a membership organization. With increasingly more members, there are increasingly more people who desire to be active participants in the efforts of the association. Due to space limitations, there was no attempt in this article to mention the many members who have increasingly taken various responsibilities, some of them very major. As time goes by, hundreds and indeed thousands of members will likely accept various levels of leadership with the newly developed efforts of chaptering, credentialing, publications, membership services of all kinds, and undoubtedly many new creative initiatives.

This is as it should be. This is what will grow the association, since we all seek the betterment of our own careers, the advancement of the profession in which we labor, and the improvement of the philanthropically-endowed civil society in which we live. Our success is limited only by our vision!
Bibliography:


Website Review
By Donna Fernandez

Donna Fernandez, creator of SchoolGrants, is the Director of Government Resources for Texans Can!, a nonprofit organization that operates charter schools in five Texas cities for high-risk youth ages 16-21.

SchoolGrants.org
http://www.schoolgrants.org
Last accessed February 20, 2003

SchoolGrants.org calls itself the “one-stop site for PK-12 grant opportunities.” The site features few bells and whistles or graphics, but contains a wealth of information for grantseekers. It was created in 1999 for smaller elementary and secondary schools that often do not have the resources available to purchase expensive print grant publications.

The site has grown over the years and includes such information as Grant Writing Tips, annotated federal, foundation, and corporate grant opportunities for elementary and secondary educators, and fundraising tips. Many users believe the myriad of sample successful grant proposals, contributed by generous grant writers across the U.S., are one of its most valuable sections.

In addition, there are hundreds of links to grant-related publications, grant management sites, federal agencies, and more. There are few advertisements on the Web site and most links are to information that is available at no cost to the user.

The Bring Home the Bacon listserv, sponsored by SchoolGrants, is a friendly email list that encourages the novice and experienced grant seekers who use it to exchange ideas, grant needs and opportunities, frustrations, and experiences. It is not an overly active list – there are usually fewer than five posts per day – so it is perfect for busy professionals who wish to exchange information without wading through many irrelevant posts.

There are two newsletters available through SchoolGrants. The free Bimonthly Newsletter provides grant resources and current grant opportunities every other month to its thousands of subscribers. The Biweekly Newsletter, available for only $35 a year, is a comprehensive newsletter that features an abundance of relevant, carefully researched grant-related information in each of its 18-25 page issues.

SchoolGrants.org is different from most large grant-related Web sites because it is owned and operated by a single individual. In recent months, it has not been kept as up-to-date as in the past and some links on the site are outdated. However, for those without the resources to invest hundreds of dollars to locate grant-related information, the site is still a welcome find for PK-12 schools.
Website Review
By Iris Coffin

Iris Coffin is the Development Writer for the Drake University Institutional Advancement Office. She is a founding member of AAGP

The Federal Register
http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/aces/aces140.html
Last accessed February 20, 2003
Updated daily

“The Federal Register is the official daily publication for Rules, Proposed Rules, and Notices of Federal agencies and organizations, as well as Executive Orders and other Presidential Documents” (quoted from the opening page). All Federal grant opportunities are published in this document.

There are several ways to get the information provided in the Federal Register including having grant opportunities sent to your e-mail. However, I prefer this site for its ease of use when searching and because it gives me the opportunity to also peruse other items of interest in the table of contents. If you keep the link at the top of your favorites or bookmark list, it is very simple to click on it every morning and do a quick search of funding opportunities.

When the page opens, click on “Browse Feature” then on “HTML” at the top of the next screen or scroll down to “HTML” and click. This will take you to the table of contents for that day. Simply scroll down the page for the information. If you spot an item that looks interesting and you want to see the entire document, click on either [TEXT] or [PDF] to the right and you will pull it up. If you like, you can click on “PDF” at the top of the second screen instead of “HTML” and get the contents as it looks in the hard copy version of the FR. However, there are no links to the full document in this version.

There are several search methods available for information in the archives and the online ones go back to 1995. You can pull up a brief instructional document by clicking on “helpful hints” on the opening page. If you simply want to view contents and know the date, you can go to the bottom of the page and click on the year in the “browse back issues” line and retrieve the contents from the list of days. These go back to 1998. This is handy if you are in the habit of checking the FR daily and have missed a day or two and want to catch up. The FR is published every day except Saturday and Sunday and Federal holidays.

This seems to be a very dependable page. The links along the left side of the page are an interesting sidetrack including Presidential papers the GPO search page, and congressional information as well. There have been a few days when the links were broken and occasionally some information is entered incorrectly. However, these problems don’t happen often. The page is managed by the Government Printing Office.
Book Review
By Iris Coffin, Development Writer, Drake University

Guide to Grantseeking on the Web
Published by The Foundation Center, Kief Schladweiler, Editor
Book $29.95, CD-ROM $29.95
Book and CD-ROM $49.95

This book has been published for several years and has grown both in girth and in its usefulness over time. My last two copies were received free as a result of filling out the yearly usage survey sent to those of us who subscribe to the FC Online service. One of its features is a very thorough guided tour of the FC Website. It seemed a bit strange to have a hard copy tour of a Web source but there are insights there that are quite helpful.

This is a strictly Web-oriented publication with graphics of Web pages throughout the book. Even if the page has now changed, you can still get a good idea of what information is contained there. It is divided into logical sections with a good deal of space devoted to grantmaking sources. Things not expected in a publication of this kind are the sections on online journals. These keep you abreast of recent developments in the world of philanthropy as well as providing information on a host of grantmakers.

There is also a chapter called “Building Communities:” that includes how to use the Internet to start discussion groups, listservs, forums, etc. This is one of our best ways to stay networked with others in our field, to problem solve, and to gather information. They may take time from your day, but I have found the information exchange well worth the effort.

If you are an online subscriber, the section on “Private Foundations on the Web” is somewhat redundant. However, our subscription is at a lower level so the section on “Corporations on the Web” makes up for that. You will also find sections on grantmaking public charities, community foundations sorted by state, and nonprofit organizations on the Web.

At times doing some individual research on foundation or corporate board members is in order. This publication has an entire chapter on the process including research strategies, forms for collecting information, an array of very useful sites and even includes a discussion of ethics and references to the main professional organization sites: the Association of Professional Researchers for Advancement (APRA) and the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP).

As with other hardcopy publications that include an extensive listing of Web resources, this one is quickly outdated. The Web changes with immense speed and hardcopy publication time does not allow for that. However, there is enough stable information involved to make this a very good buy. Its 764 pages do not make for good bedtime reading but as a grantseeker’s resource, it is a valuable tool.
Author Guidelines

Articles or article proposals may be submitted at anytime to the listed editors of the JAAGP.

All submissions accepted for publication (with a few exceptions, such as reprints of articles) will become the property of the American Association of Grant Professionals and will be subject to generally accepted copyright policies, including the right to publish submissions in print as well as any other medium.

All submissions being considered for publication are read by the JAAGP Editorial Board, which makes suggestions for revisions. Submissions are then returned to the author for actual revisions. The completed submission is then forwarded to the Editor for the final publication decision. The final decision is always made by the JAAGP Editorial Board, which often has to balance several factors in deciding when (and if) an article will be published.

Articles should be submitted as e-mail attachments or on computer disks. Hardcopy versions will be accepted; however, processing will be delayed. Electronic versions should be saved as Word documents in IBM format or as RTF files. Average length expected is 3-6 single-spaced printed pages. Any graphics must be compatible with Word or Microsoft software. Accepted articles will be published in the next available issue and/or at the discretion of the JAAGP Committee.

If you would like to advertise in the next issue of the JAAGP, please contact Iris Coffin at iacoffin@hotmail.com.