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A History of Philanthropic Foundations

A History of Philanthropic Foundations

by

Randal J. Givens

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The position of grants within the philanthropic landscape is anchored by its funders. Without the funders who make grants, the picture of philanthropy would be vastly different. Modern American society would also be substantially “poorer.” This is true since our civil society takes shape around the fundamental notions of care and concern for others, which are given expression through philanthropy. One such major expression of this concern is grants. Grants come from a number of different funding sources, not the least of which are philanthropic foundations. Foundations, particularly since the tax reform act of 1969, have been legislatively defined as entities concerned about the “public good” to one extent or the other. An important element of the public good is the enhancement of civil society. One key civil society enhancement tool is social capital. This article will examine the history of philanthropic foundations through the ages and give attention to their historic tendency to promote the development of social capital.

Foundations

The modern, formal, bureaucratized, professionalized foundation stands as the ultimate expression of institutionalized, nongovernmental philanthropy. The evolution of the foundation and of the notion of social capital is intertwined with the evolution of the notion of philanthropy itself. The very origin of the word ‘philanthropy’ dates back to the ancient Greek language—φίλεω (brotherly love) and ανθρωπος (mankind). Likewise, the concept and practice of philanthropy dates back to ancient times, even predating the Greek city-states. In an attempt to examine the identity and nature of the modern foundation, one must therefore begin by looking backward. As we proceed, attention must also be given to the reality of social capital and its inevitable reciprocal mingling with foundations.

Initially, a few inescapable realities must be acknowledged. First, the assertion that the modern foundation is of modern origin is both true and false. The American private, independent, philanthropic, nonprofit foundation is indeed unique to the modern era. However, the notion of an ‘organization’ which provides money or goods for philanthropic purposes has ancient roots. Secondly, as implied by the first reality above, terminology is of vital importance. Just as language itself evolves, so, too, does the notion of a foundation and that of social capital (that facilitation of coordination and cooperation
for mutual benefit) which foundations (particularly community foundations) historically seem to engender. (For a more detailed discussion of social capital see: Randal J. Givens, “Social Capital: The Currency of Grant Professionals,” Journal of the American Association of Grant Professionals, 2, Spring/Summer, 2004.) An ancient classical Greek foundation was not necessarily an ancient Roman republican foundation, nor a Roman Byzantine foundation, etc. Clearly, there are obvious distinctions between the ancient and the modern, as well as similarities. Thirdly, the modern foundation is, in many ways, what it is thanks to the ancient patterns most distinctly visible within the Greco-Roman environment. Other cultures and influences have affected the development of foundations, but none so “clustered” as those of Greece and Rome. Fourthly, the foundation--ancient or modern--cannot exist without a larger social, cultural and legal context. These are the influences which, in fact, finally determine the practical manifestation of organized philanthropy--be it small or large, formal or informal. Such influences likewise have lateral and collateral impact on the situational mix, stimulating the social context making social capital conceivable and possible. Each society (sometimes intentionally, sometimes inadvertently) has made some formal and some informal attempts to foster the establishment of norms between groups of people for the betterment of their society. We will see occasions where such instances are intertwined with the evolving development of the roots of what we know as foundations.

With these realizations in mind, an examination can begin by looking at the larger philanthropic context. In noting the environment surrounding the ancient peoples, one can contextualize the ground upon which the ancient foundations were constructed. We will center our overview of the ancient period on the Greek and Roman empires. Other civilizations also had seeds of organized philanthropy, but the clearest roots are visible within the formalities laid out by the Greco-Roman systems. Further, the documentation for the Greco-Roman world is far more extensive than it is for most other societies. With that understanding, and without pursuing a thorough history, specific manifestations which bear a resemblance to our modern foundations can be examined, and the rationale can again be contextualized for examining the impact of foundations upon social capital development.

The Philanthropic Background of Ancient ‘Foundations’

It is vital to develop a perspective of the philanthropic landscape of the ancients, since the meaning of their type of foundation can only be understood from within their mindset. Put another way, to see ancient foundations one must look through ancient glasses, for our modern glasses would not provide a clear vision of what they saw within their world. For example, Hands, a noted researcher, observed that it is not correct to say that the philanthropy and charity of today—to the extent that those terms are broadly defined, including pity for the poor within our larger mix—are the same as that practiced in ancient Greece and Rome. Pity for the poor was not characteristic of the ancients. “It is impossible to confine the term charitable to acts or institutions, the performance or creation of which are motivated only by pity” (1, p.12). In the place of pity, a more basic emotion present was that of fear—fear of the poor banding together against the rich and usurping their place of power (Ibid., p.79). These emotive influences are important in our examination of the philanthropic background of the ancient time period inasmuch as they assist in our understanding of the broader social ethos of the age. To examine these
factors, one must give some attention to the general philosophy of life, the political 
structure, the legal system, and the religious environment.

One approach is to examine the closely interwoven attitudes of philosophy and 
religion. There existed a philosophical impact even upon the vocabulary of the times. 
Today’s modern word for “humanitarian” stems from the Latin concept of *humanitas* 
which originally served as a statement of a mutual expression of a common culture, 
irrespective of barriers of race or legal status. The term was originally used to express 
what the Greeks called *παιδεία* (education), and it thus came to convey that kindly or 
humane attitude which one educated person might be expected to feel for another. Later 
the term became assimilated in meaning rather to the Greek *φιλανθρωπία*, which had 
itself “...by the Hellenistic period (which may have been seen as expressive of the ideals 
of fourth century Attic society), come to indicate something like a feeling of human 
decency. But the term *φιλανθρωπία*, by reason of its very derivation, tended to suggest 
the relation between social inferior and social superior” (1, p.86). This should not imply 
that there was an absence of feeling or relative sense of caring on the part of donors, 
although the lowest classes might have been excluded from the distribution altogether. If 
the overall mentality, however, was a sense of human decency for everyone, as in the 
landscape of the Greek city-state, then the overriding concern for philanthropy seems to have 
been a larger concern for the populace or citizenry in general versus individual segments 
thereof. This remains an important conceptual distinction in modern civil society as it 
seeks to foster social capital. The core philanthropic spirit assumed the inherent value and 
presence of social capital.

Motives changed; particularly the pre-Christian Greek and Roman environments 
tended to engender philanthropy based on socio-cultural influences most often related to 
politically oriented concerns. These became increasingly more ‘selfish’ and ‘self-serving’ 
as the Roman imperial system developed.

Perhaps one way to demonstrate this background more clearly would be to provide 
specific examples of ancient philanthropy (*εὐεργεσία*). It has already been observed that 
the notion of giving either money or things was strongly related to philosophy and 
religion. The ancients seem to have lived in a world which was ordered and dominated by 
religion in every aspect of life, more so than today’s modern society which seems to 
compartmentalize religion, relegating it to only a small portion of life’s activities. Thus, it 
is not surprising to see Xenophon’s fourth century B.C. statement that “The generals 
offered sacrifice, so that they could begin the march at the moment they thought 
best....[As a rule it was immediately before an army set out that sacrifice was offered]” 
(2, p.492). Modern American culture actively keeps government and religion separate, 
while paying lip service to religion as an important tool for instilling morals and ethics 
within the society—one individual at a time versus the ancients’ more collective approach. 
This in no way implies that giving to modern religion is any less prevalent among 
believers. Certainly, the operative term from ancient to modern society might be that 
distinction not drawn then but evident now—the term “practicing” believer. The ancient 
cultural world view tended to be more directly involved with religion and its offshoots 
than we see in modern society’s cultural secularization of religion. Social capital is 
clearly important to each society, even though it is derived from different philosophical, 
social and cultural stimuli and their corresponding interpretations. Social, cultural and 
religious forms, functions, and meanings have evolved, yet social capital is still activated,
promoted, and developed by some of the same motives and some of the same processes. One cannot help but notice that there is also a slow but progressive evolution within the reality we refer to as institutional philanthropy.

Note that Pliny, in his letters, presents reflections of the philanthropic expressions exhibited during the Roman imperial rule of Trajan. For example, there was the construction of a public theatre on the part of several private persons (3, p.325). Some of these situations may have been caused or at least exacerbated by the custom, both Greek and Roman, of “paying” for public office by giving to public, philanthropic works. Thus, one may reasonably make very little if any distinction between the private and public actions of the rich, since their gifts, due to the absence of independent philanthropic institutions, had to be publicly administered.

The identity of, the motive for, and the application of philanthropic action in Greece and Rome were widespread, important, ever-changing, and complex in character. Attention will now be turned to a somewhat more technical consideration of the ancient associations and their legal contexts and constraints within the larger philanthropic context.

**Organized Philanthropy**

**Ancient Associations**

The unique socio-cultural environment as driven by the specific political structures of Greece and Rome, respectively, engendered a special blend of public and private institutions. The existence of Greek and Roman foundations was made possible and further limited by the constraints of the mentality of the Greco-Roman environment as regulated by the respective legal systems. It is suggested that a distinction be identified between informal social networks and formally organized associations. Wilson recognizes that the two may overlap, but insists that in principle the diverse networks may be different from and work independently of connections forged in an association (4, p.11). From a more socio-anthropological view, a voluntary association might also be defined as “...an organized association of persons who come together on a voluntary, contractual basis (rather than kinship, caste, national or geographic association) in the pursuit of common interests, both manifest and latent. To the association each member contributes, by contractual agreement, a part of his/her time and resources” (5, p.131). Ramisch claims that “...where the traditional political, economic, and social institutions of a society fail to provide for the needs of individuals, voluntary associations will arise to fill those needs” (p.132). In other words, the engenderment of social capital, then as now, comes from the associational urge which can be facilitated by organized philanthropic institutions, the roots of which we see beginning to develop within the ancient times.

Only two significant and discernible social institutions existed in the first century world–kinship or family, and politics or government. Other social institutions so clearly and distinctly discernible in today’s world, but which were literally nonexistent in ancient times as separate, differentiated, and distinct social institutions, were those of religion, economics, and education (Ibid.). Thus, voluntary associations were, for the most part, local phenomena–autonomous bodies without any kind of translocal organization (Ibid.). In each case, one sees foundations which were able to form around the family structure
without a “legal personality.” Notice here that these “family foundations” were often for the express purpose of promoting social capital, albeit on a confined and limited scale.

**Foundation History**

**Ancient History and Definitions**

There is much difficulty with terminology related to the word ‘foundation.’ Feenstra has observed that for the Romans, there was no recognized and consistent term for ‘foundation’ or ‘founder’ (6, p.249). Nonetheless, Feenstra does identify three characteristic features of a “typical” foundation: 1) it had a special fund; 2) it had a specific identifiable goal; and 3) it had an organization sufficiently sophisticated to assure that the money be delivered as intended by the donor (Ibid. p.249). Le Bras defines the word by saying “Le mot fondation, dans son sens général, designe l’affectation perpetuelle d’un fonds à un but déterminé” (7, p.24). That is, the word “foundation” in its own general designation indicates its perpetual intention as being specific and predetermined. He says that which distinguishes a foundation from a simple act of generosity is the intention of the donor to give regular amounts of money toward a specific usage over an extended period of time, if not perpetually. This reflects remarkably in our own legal conception, to be examined shortly.

Feenstra also acknowledges that technically from a judicial perspective, the foundation during the classical period was not as formalized as it is today. He states “...le mot Fundatio n’a été employé que dans le sens de ‘acte de fonder’ et que ce n’est que plus tard--à la fin du moyen âge--qu’il a pris également le sens de ‘ce qui a été fondé,’ c’est à dire le sens dans lequel il est employé dans le langage juridique moderne” (8, p.441). That is, the word “foundation” was not used except for ‘an act of the founder’ and it was not until later during the middle ages that it took on the meaning of ‘that which was founded,’ the meaning in which it is used in modern legal language. The founder almost always gave to an intermediary and not directly to the intended recipients, but the intermediaries were as a body sworn to uphold the benefactor’s wishes (7, p.39). This is clearly more like the modern day foundation.

The initial formulations of foundations occurred during ancient times, and what one sees are the early stages of a process of evolution. Thus, it is not surprising that even the ancients were not consistent, and in certain places and at certain times the terminology of the original sources comes more or less close to what is today called the construction of the legal personality.

**Motivations and History of Ancient Foundations**

The evolution of the philanthropic spirit began somewhere in the distant past. Initially, in “pre-civilized” environments, all the social needs were met by the immediate community which jointly occupied itself with the welfare of the god, the tribe, the family, and the individual. In such primitive societies, foundations were simply unnecessary. The societal culture inherently produced mass social capital—those networks and shared values or norms (of trust and reciprocity) that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit. Social capital was, in one respect, more common than monetary capital, since private property, except for the most personal objects, essentially did not exist, thus there was nothing to give since everyone held everything in common (9, p.575). These roots of
modern foundations are commonly traceable to many different locations, cultures, and religions. In these early societies, the social needs were limited enough to be maintained by the innate social capital of the primitive society. However, as societies grew in their complexities, the levels, opportunities, and structures for providing sufficient social capital were significantly diminished. The deepest roots went unnoticed until civilizations developed sufficiently to amass enough excess wealth to permit “sharing,” and until social needs progressed to the point that the community was unable or unwilling to meet the needs of at least a minority segment of the population. Only at that point did foundations become needed and possible. Not coincidentally, it was also the period during which “engineering” of the facilitation of social capital became desirable on a basis larger than a family unit. The parallel evolutionary developments of foundations and social capital continue to overlap.

Such wealth was accumulated early in ancient China, India, Egypt, and other ancient civilizations of the Near East like Babylon. The Book of the Dead, a major religious text, records examples in about 4000 B.C. of charitable giving, and constitutes “...the most rudimentary form of the foundation” (10, p.8). A tablet dating to 1280 B.C., recounted how King Maroutach of Chaldea bought land from his vassals, built a temple on it, dedicated it to the god Marduk, and endowed a college of priests to operate it. “These are the earliest known efforts at projecting private will beyond life for general purposes” (9, p.576). Kiger observes that by 150 B.C., Roman law had evolved that permitted the establishment and perpetual legal status of associations (i.e., foundations) and a consequent growth in their number, kind, and assets.

The reign of the Roman emperor Constantine (324-337) was marked by his conversion to Christianity. “Simultaneously, he issued decrees that legally recognized the Christian Church as, in essence, a foundation and forbade the alienation of funds entrusted to it for purposes other than that envisaged by state or private donors” (10, p.10). By the time of Hadrian (117-138 A.D.), the Roman foundations existed in the form of food or feeding foundations, and the foundations for the worship of the Emperors. Note here that even though the “alimentary foundations” as well as the broader “Bread and Circus” entities (which, at least in the former case may be referred to as rudimentary “foundations”) had at their heart an inherent social capital facet. Contextually, the foundation and social capital facilitation went hand in hand.

**Legal Personality**

Hollis introduces us to the notion of legal personality, which proves to be a major historic landmark in the development of the foundation concept as we know it. In reference to the social foundation, Hollis says that it took 500 years for the Romans to invent a living legal heir as a substitute for a natural heir, and then he could receive wealth only from living donors with the consent of natural heirs, if any. “It required almost another half-millennium to extend to this ‘unnatural heir’ the right to receive bequests and to translate the concept of a ‘living legal heir’ into the abstraction of ‘an immutably legal person’—that is, to recognize a foundation or corporation as a person before the law” (9, p.576). The first change permitted a living donor to establish a perpetuity for someone other than natural heirs, providing that natural heirs indicated their approval by signing to that effect. “The courts were lax in enforcing penalties for discovered malfeasance or misfeasance, beneficiaries had no rights in court, and when a
faithful and efficient steward died, the court might replace him with a less competent one” (Ibid.). The uncertainty of the perpetuity was so significant that frequently donors preferred to use a bequest to natural heirs, pledging them to carry out the benevolent intentions.

Over time, this legal concept became applied to members of varied philanthropic associations “...such as festival groups, colleges of priests or augurs, funeral associations, and the like. As living persons (not as corporations) they were permitted to receive gifts in perpetuity from the living but not through bequest” (Ibid., p.577). ‘Legal personality’ refers to the fact that the foundation itself can be the subject of certain rights, and that physical people are considered as representatives of the foundation (6, p.250). One can also say that the notion of legal personality is that “…according to which a charitable fund is conceived of as ‘existing in its own right,’ independently of the continued existence of the particular body which may be administering it at any given time” (1, p.17). “Modern lawyers would consider a foundation of legal personality to be the ‘true’ foundation instead of an indirect or dependent foundation without a ‘legal personality,’ i.e., a trust” (6, p.247).

The thinking of the ancients was that since one could not totally count on individuals to indefinitely carry out their wishes, both personal and religious, they needed to depend on the city or the corporations who could serve as agents to carry out religious duties for them. There needed to be some sort of legal structure. One who wanted to give to the citizens would give to the city or the corporations, but the issue of ‘legal personality’ at first posed problems. How does one give to or leave money to everyone or even to a large group? Who is their representative? In fact, people did leave money in their wills to the city and even to the state (the Roman Empire). However, during the second century, laws which gave “...le droit d’être instituées héritières était partiellement reconnu aux villes. Les villes sont désormais des ‘universitases.’ Elles se composent, normalement, d’une collectivité...et par quoi elles s’apparentent à la fondation” (7, p.34). That is, laws which gave the right to be instituted as an heir were recognized by the cities. The cities were, from then on, a sort of ‘university.’ They were normally composed of a network of people which constituted a foundation. The cities therefore gained the legal right to essentially become community foundations to do social service, a part of which was the facilitation of social capital by “oiling the early machinery” of social structures and networks. However, toward the end of the second century, unlike modern community foundations, they did not have separate accounts and separate grants; all the funds were kept together intact and permitted to grow. Near the end of the Roman Empire, certain foundations used their legal personalities to exert more influence, and thus gained the right to make use of some of their own funds. (Ibid., p.36).

Through various cultural improvements, the legal systems continued to develop the rights of foundations, and as time passed, increasing possibilities lay before them for personal, religious and societal intervention and aid. However, Feenstra points out that it was not until the beginning of the nineteenth century that authoritative recognition of the possibility of a full institutional legal personality for providing benefits to others began (6, p.261). Thus, the potential for systematic and strategic social capital engenderment can be seen to be linked to the legal “blossoming” of foundations.
Particular ‘Foundational’ Expressions in the Dark Ages

Following the fall of the Roman/Byzantine Empire, very little of a positive nature developed to affect the notion of foundations. However, just as the customs of passing on the family inheritance changed to permit bequests to philanthropic institutions, so, too, did the system for governing philanthropic entities. This latter process owes much to the “...medieval Augustinian and Benedictine rules, which gave order to daily life in monasteries, hospitals, almshouses, and other religious bodies; these rules and statutes pointed the way toward our modern structures of trusteeship and corporate governance” (11, p.35). Amorim and Mazurczak, however, declare that ‘foundations,’ as institutions, originated in Italy in the Middle Ages, at a time when powerful Italian city-states dominated the landscape. “Significant changes in the political and economic balance in Europe in the sixteenth century led to the impoverishment of many of these city-states and consequently to their philanthropic traditions becoming dormant.” (12, n.p.)

Actually, modern foundations are much more similar in many respects to the Greco-Roman “foundations” than to those of the medieval period. Amorim and Mazurczak do acknowledge that these instances of community philanthropy typically occurred “...in the form of ‘community chests’, mainly linked to the charitable activities of the Catholic Church” (Ibid.). They mention similar arrangements in twelfth-century Poland, and in nineteenth-century Germany.

The period remains essentially dark as concerns the nature and legal personality of foundations. Thus, one comes to the modern period where the evolution of foundations picks up speed. The “fullness of time” produces in America a distinctly unique institutionalized expression of philanthropy due to the particular amalgam of the effects of location, time, culture, philosophy, economics, law, and many other evolutionary factors. As in classical days, those influences converge in unique ways to identify the potential for conscious development of social capital.

Modern History

The American experiment in democracy and capitalism has been complex and in some ways mysterious. As Tocqueville saw, “from the beginning,” the philanthropic status quo owes much to that sociocultural, eco-political reality behind the United States. (See 13) Notice the development and current identity of foundations within the impact of the American context.

The actual legal basis of American philanthropy in the U.S. can be traced to the English Statute of Charitable Uses, enacted in 1601 (14, p.15). Apparently, the first two American foundations, in the form of “Funds,” were the 1867 Peabody, and the 1882 Slater. That which made them different from their predecessors was that both had trustees selected from the nation’s popular leaders, including Civil War generals, ex-Presidents of the United States, and distinguished justices from the court system. “The purpose was to associate the funds with public distinction rather than wealth. Its most ‘modern’ step was to put money into the broad field of education rather than founding individual schools with it” (15, p.54). The creation of these first foundations coincided with the creation of several charity organizations/societies in various American cities during the 1870s and 1880s. Therein were “...the beginnings of both a more professional approach to charitable activity and a search for methods of addressing social and economic problems that would
be grounded in science and rationality rather than simple altruistic sentiment” (11, p. 36). Smith identifies the early twentieth century as a period of philanthropic revolution—a period when wealthy people like John D. Rockefeller, Sr., Andrew Carnegie, and Margaret Olivia Slocum Sage pioneered in creating a fundamentally different kind of philanthropic institution, foundations which had general and broadly defined purposes. Their governance was to be private, relying on self-perpetuating boards of trustees or directors, but their missions would be to serve the public good.” The scale of the new philanthropic trusts brought with it an obsession with organization and structure.” (Ibid.).

The period around the turn of the twentieth century saw the development of institutionalized philanthropy—perhaps as a pragmatic response to the fact that social needs were increasing while governmental desire and capacity were not positioned to supplement the existing services. Thus, “…the foundation world that came into being after the turn of the century was based on the assumption that there would be no government programs” (11, p. 58). The logical alternative of independent volunteer “associational” organizations was a natural, if not inevitable, consequence of the form of government set up in the constitution, which permitted such an informal and unofficial government existing within the socio-cultural frameworks of the populace. Ever since the time of Benjamin Franklin, people had been banding together to facilitate social progress. By the dawning of the twentieth century, this next logical step of increasing institutionalization was not surprising. Historically, the classical “pre-foundations,” those associations which sprang up to fulfill common felt needs, grew at times from grass roots movements. However, due to the governmental, economic, and cultural variance, the similarity between ancient and modern foundations, in this regard, stops there. The controlling legal structure of antiquity did not provide a fertile soil for multi-variants of the association to take root. Instead they became focused into narrow tracts of interest such as those mentioned above: the funerary, the alimentary, the Emperor worship, et. al. Hence, the cultural milieu permitted an awareness of the need for what we call social capital even in ancient times, but it took the “fertilizer cocktail” of the American experience to provide an amenable structure in which to actually attempt to “breed” social capital.

The “American experience” is a process which has not come together overnight. It developed through actions like those of Rockefeller who sought to have his foundation chartered by Congress in 1908, but Congress refused. “But it would see to the...regulation [of foundations] by 1917 by tax laws that did not exist at the time of their invention. It was really not until Congress began to feel threatened by the continuing power of foundations to influence public policy that the subject became part of open debate” (11, p. 59). Again, pragmatism ruled as Congress then chose to create foundations as corporations, chartering a corporation that could exist in perpetuity without having to specify what its business was or would be. This also alleviated the need for “charity laws” (as the British “Poor Laws”) since the foundations exist neither as trusts (perhaps reminiscent of some Roman foundations) nor as charities—yet able to fulfill charitable purposes, and to even make conscious attempts to foster social capital.

On a more local level, “community” philanthropy was also taking on an institutionalized persona, as well. In 1914, Frederick Goff, a banker in Cleveland, Ohio, started the first American “community foundation.” As noted above, there have been expressions of community philanthropy through the ages, but Goff’s innovation lay in his
ability to see the potential for establishing an endowed fund whose revenue from investments could be used for the benefit of the local community. He thus created an institution that allowed private giving to be used expressly for local communities and permitted the good of the community to be the most important giving motivation. “With time, the initial objective of making the management of trusts more flexible gave way to a truly community-oriented approach, where giving by local people for local people came to be seen as the mission of the community foundation” (12, n.p.).

Covering the whole of the twentieth century, Hollis identifies three foundation policy periods (16, p. 46). The first period ended with World War I, when foundations made grants to the general endowment of colleges. The second period ended in 1924 and was a period of grants for special purposes, e.g., medical education, teachers’ salaries, and postwar emergencies. The third period lasted from 1925 to the late 1930s. In this period, foundations directly influenced the quality of education by giving grants to specific projects. “Between 1960 and 1982, the composition of the foundation field changed. Small grantmaking organizations doubled in number, but only six giant grantmakers emerged” (8, p. 21). As Boris says, “Americans continue to provide, through foundations, a source of flexible nongovernmental revenue for ideas that promise to improve the quality of life” (17, p. 33).

However, not everyone agreed that the foundation “picture” was so bright and positive. Barry and Manno, in their investigation of philanthropy and civic renewal (18) saw a modern philanthropic failure among foundations. They believed that foundations were not playing a significant enough role in dealing with the challenges of increasing levels of social problems. These authors suggested that organized philanthropy had turned into administrative bureaucracy, which had limited both creativity and action on the part of many foundations. Such a situation is strongly reminiscent of the situation mentioned above wherein the Greek city-states operated from the “basis” of social capital until the city outgrew its ability to “associationally” handle social problems. Barry and Manno attribute the problem to the presence of highly professionalized foundation bureaucracies, which have had two major consequences: “(1) the triumph of short-term, targeted project grants as the dominant form of funding; and (2) increasing homogeneity and ideological convergence across the entire field due to excessive inter-foundation collaboration and the emergence of philanthropic norms” (Ibid., p. 84). It is widely accepted that these trends were triggered by the first set of regulations upon the American philanthropic foundation as seen in the Tax Reform Act of 1969.

To a degree, history repeated itself. We noticed above that the “foundations” of Italy in the Middle Ages died out, as did Italian philanthropy in general. This happened when Italians became so overwhelmed with giving attention to the single social problem of the plague. The situations are vastly different contextually, but there seems to be similarity in the “short-term project grants” and the “inter-foundation collaboration.” The American experience was judicially and legislatively equipped to deal with the problem, whereas the Italian experience was simply not as well evolved, either judicially or linguistically/conceptually. Salomon (19, p. 44) notes that foundations in America had operated for nearly a century without a strict legal definition until the 1969 Act. This Act differentiated foundations from other nonprofit institutions that have endowments, and imposed extra restrictions on the foundations. The key defining feature of foundations as opposed to other nonprofit institutions is that they typically receive their support from a
single individual and utilize their resources chiefly to make grants or other “qualifying
distributions” to other nonprofit organizations. In other words, all nonprofits (also known
as 501(c)3’s, which refers to the section of the IRS tax code regulating them) are initially
considered/assumed to be independent foundations unless they declare otherwise. To be
treated as other than a foundation, nonprofit organizations must first make the claim and
then meet a “public support test,” demonstrating that they receive their support from
multiple sources. Community foundations, however, receive their support from multiple
sources and fall into a special category in the law. Specifically, the Tax Reform Act of
1969 “...set requirements for annual spending and reports to the federal government,
some of which were ultimately believed to be needlessly punitive and costly for
foundations—non-public charities (15, p. 63).

The post-Soviet Union era of the 1990s saw international expansion of the American
notion of foundational philanthropy. Countries in Central and Eastern Europe began
experimenting with the idea of private local philanthropy. However, most of those
communities had no means to build an endowment. Many of the people in these countries
were interested in finding an organization that could serve as “…a neutral convener
among different sectors in the community (e.g., local government, business and civil
society institutions) rather than the idea of a ‘growing pot of money’ to support other
people’s activities” (12, n.p.). This is a modern example of a call for increased social
capital. It is a call answerable by foundations—in this case, community foundations.

Judy Curtis, the executive editor of “Foundation News and Commentary,” has called
the 1990s in the United States the ‘Re’ decade because of the use of ‘re’ words such as
reexamination and redefinition which have become common as foundations struggle to
reevaluate missions and reinvent strategies. “But the current reassessment of mission is
not the first; many large foundations have intermittently reevaluated their philosophy,
priorities, and framework of operations… The present reexamination, however, may be
the most widespread in the history of foundations” (16, p. 2). In his review of the
literature, McIlnay finds (16, p. 42) one of the major, common themes relative to the
internal and external environment of foundations to be “…increased professionalism in
foundations through the addition of staff or by cooperation between foundations in
‘Regional Associations of Grantmakers.’ ” One area in which this cooperative sense has
been expressed is in the field of education which “…by all odds [is] the field to which
foundations have, up to the present time, given most of their energy, thought, and
money....the bulk of their funds has been devoted to higher education” (20, p. 125).

A History Summary

The story of the roots, evolution, and development of the modern foundation goes
about as far back as civilization itself. This is true since the philanthropic spirit underlies
the foundation. Even social capital concerns have ancient roots, as philanthropic activities
of old expressly sought the betterment of the people by enhancing their interaction and
mingling the classes, for their good and the good of the state. While philanthropy is a
broad concept, foundations are a specific physical manifestation thereof. Something of a
“cross-section” of the ancient evolution of both the philanthropic concept and its
“foundational” manifestation has been noted. It has been shown that the words to
describe each of the referents (philanthropy, foundation, and social capital) are many and
varied. They are also very culturally-based. Even within any given culture, they change
relative to the societal needs, desires, and opportunities practical, religious, legal, and economic–afforded the members of that society.

As ancient and modern foundations are compared and contrasted, many similarities and differences are noted. Only a few roots have been mentioned. However, the ones mentioned seem to be among the most prominent and the most important. The motivations are fundamentally the same–that of providing assistance to others, whether they be fellow-citizens or a particular group, such as the poor. Other examples show the desire to provide occasions for social interaction–perpetually (an early attempt to foster social capital). Also, donors do obtain some benefit from giving, be it a sense of community pride, a tax break, public office, honor, etc. The desire to have an ongoing impact is also important, even though the duration of that impact may vary significantly. The question of public versus private giving was and remains a question from several perspectives. Some sort of structure for the implementation of the donor’s wishes seems to be inherent in this process at one stage or another. Such concerns impact the level of sustainability for ongoing strategic social capital furtherance. Finally, the support of the legal system at some level is essential in facilitating the accomplishment of the donor’s desires. These and other aspects have been found to be important in ancient times and remain so today. The level of the importance of this “anchor” to the grant professional is hard to minimize. We benefit thanks to the evolutionary result of ancient sensitivities and ancient structures.

References


Resources


Grant Writing in the Age of Collaboration
by
Susanne Carter

Susanne Carter, MS, has been the grant writer for the University of Missouri-Columbia College of Education for the past five years. She has more than 25 years experience teaching and working in the field of education. In addition to being a university grant writer she is a freelance writer and she serves as a consultant to the Western Regional Resource Center and Consortium for Alternative Dispute Resolution in Special Education.

One of the most fascinating yet challenging aspects of grant writing in higher education is facilitating collaboration. In this essay I discuss the grant seeking world’s movement toward increased collaboration among diverse groups and strategies grant writers can use to build and guide interdisciplinary teams.

Introduction

Over the past five years I have worked with groups of university faculty and staff members, representatives of non-profit agencies, K-12 school personnel, and private consultants to plan projects and develop grant proposals. These groups cover the entire spectrum in terms of their experience with, and effectiveness of, collaboration. Some people seem to have a natural ability to connect with others, set aside egos, compromise when necessary, share the workload under tight deadlines, and devote the time and resources it takes to collaborate. Others call or e-mail a colleague the day before the proposal is due and invite him/her to be a co-investigator and call it “collaboration.” I have worked with faculty members who bring a group together one time, solicit ideas, and then write a “collaborative” proposal that only reflects their original ideas. Then there are the junior faculty members who want to collaborate with more veteran faculty but don’t know how to begin the process and must carefully balance collaborative work with individual research to insure being granted tenure. As a grant writer, I work with all of them.

Collaboration is collective learning; it is the sort of thing which happens when research teams or working parties fuse well together. Colleagues share insights and knowledge and together move towards a fuller shared understanding. It is not a situation where individuals compromise themselves; indeed, they exert themselves, but they do so with the aim of furthering understanding and working towards resolving a shared problem, not exercising their own egos. (1 p.96)

Why collaborate?

Collaboration has become “essential for survival in today’s fast-paced, complex world” (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 2004). The increasing levels of complexity in our world require individuals to develop expertise in highly specialized fields; no one person has the capacity to accumulate all the knowledge in any given field.
We are well past the point at which the knowledge required to enhance the health and well-being of individuals and communities can come solely from lone investigators trying to unlock nature’s secrets, or from the offerings of any single discipline. The myth of the solitary scientist in search of truth is a romantic notion whose continued existence serves as a major barrier to progress in bringing the collective weight of the sciences to bear on the problems of humankind. And the idea that all scientific progress takes place within the boundaries of current disciplines is historically invalid and currently counterproductive. (2)

In today’s world, the adage “the whole is greater than the sum of the parts”—regardless of the field—is becoming more and more descriptive of the synergy that happens when specialists work collaboratively instead of in isolation. To tackle 21st century challenges such as trying to quell the SARS epidemic, establish a lasting peace in the Middle East, or to explore the outer limits of the universe requires an interdisciplinary team.

As I monitor daily requests for proposals from funding agencies, I see evidence of an increasing trend and preference for interdisciplinary projects from both federal agencies and private foundations. The Lone Ranger approach to research is becoming increasingly rare. My grant writing experiences with groups have proven to me that “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts” when collaboration works well. I believe a proposal is stronger when it reflects thoughtful and collective planning. Creativity, perspectives, and passions can expand and grow under the guidance of several collaborators’ expertise.

It has been my experience that the individuals who collaborate well believe in the collective strength and energy of the group, demonstrate mutual respect, tolerance, and trust in their actions, are not threatened by differing viewpoints, are willing to compromise, are comfortable being leaders as well as followers, and thrive in the environment of ongoing learning that is created when individuals with diverse expertise and perspectives come together (3).

The problems and challenges of collaboration

Not all faculty members see the value of collaboration. In the world of academia, faculty are not trained to work together, and the reward structure is usually biased toward individual, not group, efforts (4). Administrative structures tend to be protective of their turf and often neither promote nor reward collaborative work, especially if it is cross-disciplinary. And, many faculty members’ experience with “collaboration” may have been primarily attending endless, process-intensive, committee meetings where little seems to happen.

Collaboration does require more time than working alone. Trusting relationships are integral to building an effective collaboration. It takes time to build that trust. Individuals must also devote time to learning to speak a common language with shared concepts and to address institutional barriers, even before the process of brainstorming and planning begins. Collaboration also requires a certain degree of compromise and the setting aside of egos. A faculty member may put an idea on the table, only to find it changing forms many times as the proposal evolves until the final project is very far removed than the original idea he or she first presented. Solo ownership is lost.
While grant writers can act as catalysts in bringing faculty members with valued expertise to the table, can make sure everyone’s voice is heard and that each person feels valued for his/her contributions, and can provide assistance throughout the proposal development process, we can never guarantee that the “right chemistry” will be present (or evolve) to insure faculty members work together effectively. Sometimes faculty members naturally connect and blend personalities, developing a level of comfort, trust and commitment as shared ideas begin to evolve into solidly designed projects. But sometimes the chemistry simply does not work, despite our best efforts. Personalities don’t mesh, territorial issues loom too large, priorities remain too far apart, work styles don’t coincide, or the group is unable to establish a balance between individualism and integration.

The role of the grant writer in collaborative efforts

The roles we assume as grant writers vary from collaboration to collaboration and project to project. Oftentimes we don’t know what our designated role will be ahead of time, especially when we work with new groups. Grant writers must develop good working relationships with all group members before faculty recognize the value we, too, bring to the collaborative process.

Although there are clear guidelines and procedures for many of the tasks grant writers perform, there are no hard and fast rules that govern the art and science (for it is both) of collaboration. Learning to facilitate collaboration is something we learn through careful observation of individuals who do it well (and not so well), through experience, and much trial and error.

At times we grant writers find ourselves acting as advocates for the process of collaboration. Although the initial investment of time may be intensive, we assure skeptical faculty members, the rewards of developing a good working relationship with colleagues may last for many years. We try to convince faculty that the broader views and diverse perspectives around the table will, in the end, result in a stronger project that has commitment from everyone because each team member helped craft it. We point out the advantages of sharing the workload and that making new connections will undoubtedly lead to other connections and future successes in the grant-seeking process. We emphasize that funding agencies view collaboration as a strength, as a priority, and more and more as a necessity to receive grant awards.

While there may be few directional signs to guide us, there are many ways grant writers can encourage effective collaboration, resulting in stronger and more competitive proposals. In my thinking about collaboration, these ways fall into seven broad areas:

- making connections;
- helping new faculty chart their course;
- facilitating long-range planning;
- matching interests with funding opportunities;
- coordinating logistics;
- guiding the proposal development process; and
- maintaining momentum.
Making Connections

Many faculty concentrate so intently on their own research that they are unaware of what their academic neighbors are studying. Grant writers can connect people. We assume the responsibility of learning what each faculty member’s interests are and knowing what projects are currently happening across the campus (and beyond). This enables us to suggest linkages around common interests shared by colleagues. Fellow grant writers in other schools and colleges within our university setting also serve as sources of knowledge about particular projects and possible collaborators. As we form connections with increasing numbers of faculty members we cross disciplinary lines and the possible combinations of collaborators multiplies.

Helping new faculty chart their course

We work closely with junior faculty as they begin their careers. Some of them come from graduate programs with strong grant-writing cultures. Some are not. Wherever they may be in their grant-seeking experience, we shepherd these faculty members into the world of grant writing and help them chart a course for tenure and beyond that will allow them to collaborate in a way that will enhance their individual research agendas and contribute to their long-term professional goals.

Oftentimes new faculty want to collaborate with faculty who have similar or complementary research interests but they aren’t sure how or where to begin. We use our growing network of grant writers, the collaborative relationships we have developed with faculty from other disciplines, and the Community of Science expertise database to find and bring together potential collaborators.

Some academic departments value and encourage collaboration while others place more emphasis on individual research. We urge new faculty members to learn their department’s tenure philosophy so they know the nature of the challenges they are facing.

Facilitating long-range planning

As faculty share research interests in the early stages of collaboration, grant writers can help the group identify ideas that have the potential to evolve into grant proposals that are specific enough to provide a group focus around a shared goal yet broad enough so that each member of the group has room for exploration according to his/her research niche.

While we work with groups to prepare a collaboratively driven grant application, we encourage them to think beyond the proposal at hand. We guide them to envision a larger picture and the long-range goals that they would like to achieve. We then help them divide up the overall plan into fundable and manageable “chunks” that will result in a series of interconnected projects that successfully build one upon another and complement the research interests of each collaborator. Teams that come together solely for the pursuit of a particular request for proposals are usually “one and done” if the proposal is not funded. Teams that think in terms of long-range goals, who take time to celebrate (and recuperate) after submitting a proposal and then continue planning toward the next step, are more likely to be rewarded for their persistence. Their good ideas invariably evolve into even better ideas as they continue collaborating and working together.
Matching interests with funding opportunities

We urge faculty members to start the collaborative process before they pursue funding opportunities. As they brainstorm (a time-consuming but integral part of the process) and ideas begin to gel, the grant writer can begin matching project ideas with potential funding sources. The initial relationship building and idea-sharing process builds a solid framework based on shared interests and commitment. This foundation allows team members to come together on quick notice, should a request for proposals appear that has a tight timeline.

Coordinating logistics

One of the most time-consuming tasks involved in collaboration is the coordination of logistics. Grant writers can assume many of these responsibilities, including scheduling meetings, reserving meeting space and equipment, mailing directions and parking tags, ordering food, arranging conference calls, contacting individuals to write letters of support/commitment, gathering data, collecting vitae, coordinating the scope of work and budgets with subcontractors, gathering information for the never-ending array of forms required with federal proposals, and collecting necessary signatures before proposal submission. All of these tasks allow the Principal Investigator (PI) and co-investigators to devote more of their attention to developing proposal content.

Guiding the proposal development process

Our roles generally help to guide the proposal development process and navigate inevitable hurdles in the process as they arise. Grant writers are the interpreters of the proposal guidelines and the keepers of the draft narratives and budgets as they go through numerous iterations. Grant writers are the reality checkers when group ideas grow larger than the scope of the proposal at hand or veer off course. Grant writers are the central point of coordination for all forms, letters, vitae, etc. that must be collected. Grant writers are the timekeepers who mind the calendar and clock as deadlines approach. Grant writers are the tactful naggers who remind faculty of proposal parts we need from them. Grant writers are the logistics coordinators and are the primary contact when collaborators have questions. In short, in the midst of the flurry of ongoing activity during proposal development, grant writers are often the calm eye of the hurricane around which everything else revolves at dizzying speed.

Maintaining momentum

Busy faculty members’ time and energies are often torn in different directions. It is vital that the momentum that brings people together initially be maintained over time. We know through experience that the ideas that begin to evolve and take shape as collaborations develop “have to be kept alive and humming through regular meetings and communication” (1 p.104). Otherwise, even with the best intentions, faculty interests get diverted in different directions and the group loses momentum.

Although the PI’s leadership of the group is crucial to maintaining momentum, there are ways grant writers can contribute to group momentum as well. One of the most exciting things grant writers do is to take group ideas as they evolve and begin to mold the “lump of clay” on the table into something resembling a draft proposal. As the beginning of any writing activity is usually the most difficult part, grant writers often
help faculty over that initial hurdle by starting the process and giving them something to which they can respond. Even if the finished draft looks very different from the grant writer’s initial efforts, what we initiated represents a starting point that maintains momentum.

The larger the size of the group, the more difficult the collaborative process often becomes. Grant writers can sense when this is a problem and can recommend a “team within a team” approach. Once the large group has had an opportunity to begin brainstorming ideas, a smaller, more manageable group meets to refine those ideas and develop a working draft to which the larger group can respond. Grant writers often facilitate the work of both groups and act as the liaison between the two.

Grant writers also try to keep groups “on track” during meetings so that the collective energy keeps focused on moving the proposal forward. Timely alerts of funding opportunities, regular communication with group members, and occasional reminders of information still needed and milestones reached along the proposal development timeline also help to keep the momentum going.

Reflections

No two collaborations are the same. I learn something new from each group experience that I can then add to my growing “toolbox” of grant writing skills. Regardless of the composition or experience of the group, however, I believe there are multiple ways grant writers can help build and guide interdisciplinary teams whose collective strength reflects the belief that their interactions are synergetic.

References


Resources

Michael Wells is a partner in Grants Northwest, a consulting firm in Portland, Oregon. He is a charter member of AAGP and has served on the Board of Directors since 2000. Michael is currently serving as the Treasurer of the AAGP Board of Directors. He also teaches grant writing at Portland State University in Portland, Oregon.

To some grantwriters, the budget seems cut and dried. It tells how much money you need to carry out the project described in your narrative. It’s often left for the fiscal or program folks to develop. This “hands off” approach misses the opportunity to use the budget to support your narrative and strengthen your proposal.

Budgeting is another way of telling your story through the process of translating your project into fiscal terms. It’s important that it describe the same project, and the reader should be able to guess what the project is, just from reading the budget. This works in two ways:

- A single theme should run through your whole proposal. The written narrative, goals and objectives, timeline, evaluation and budget should describe the same project and include the same items.

- Your budget categories should tie to the narrative. Since in many nonprofits personnel can be 80% of your costs, “personnel” shouldn’t be just one budget line -- “line item” out each position. Be sure that you use the same job titles in the narrative and the budget -- not “counselor” in one section and “case manager” in another. If you attach job descriptions, they need to use the same titles too.

Showing Total Funding

Use the budget to put your best foot forward. If you’re only requesting partial funding for a project, show the project whole budget -- especially if you’re spending your own funds. If you have or are seeking other funding, tell where it’s coming from. Showing other funds for the project always strengthens your position, even when no match is required.

The budget below was for a small performing arts organization to expand its marketing efforts and build audience. The group was already spending 10% of its budget on marketing, so the “other funds” didn’t require any extra expense. But it showed that the foundation was only being asked for 60% of the project cost, even though the other sources of funding aren’t identified.

Also look at the budget categories. This is pretty obviously a marketing grant. You could get an idea of their project strategy without even looking at the narrative. If you knew this was a performing arts organization, you could guess it was for audience development.
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**THREE YEAR Other**  $65,570  
**THREE YEAR This Grant**  $88,365

**Sustainability**

Increasingly, funders are asking about project sustainability. They want to know how your project will continue to be funded after their grant period and how the grant project will help strengthen your organization. Since this is often a question in the funder’s guidelines, it’s generally addressed in the narrative (with some hemming and hawing). If you know how you’re planning to continue funding, you can strengthen your case by showing future funding in the budget.
The example below was for a multi-program Community Action Agency. In a common scenario in recent decades, as their government funding was cut they were looking to preserve programs by aggressively seeking private funds. The proposal was for a 3-year grant to develop fundraising capacity by strengthening their development program and increasing their private funding across the board. We wanted to show how the development program would not only pay for itself, but strengthen the agency’s social service programs during and after the grant period.

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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>252,422</td>
<td>508,387</td>
<td>667,000</td>
<td>833,000</td>
<td>1,000,000</td>
<td>1,050,000</td>
<td>1,110,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Development Expense     | 170,000     | 170,000     | 310,000 | 320,000 | 330,000 | 340,000 | 350,000 |
| Funds Contributed to Agency Programs | 82,422 | 338,387 | 357,000 | 513,000 | 670,000 | 710,000 | 760,000 |

The budget layout for this 3-year grant covers 8 years. The two years before, three years of declining grant funding, and two years afterwards. Aside from a big jump in corporate giving (which they had already been working hard), there isn’t a huge income increase in the first grant year (2000). But by the end of the grant period, every category has been incrementally strengthened, building a diversified funding base that continues to support the agency’s services. (By the way, in 2003 they raised $1.1 million in private funds).

**Combining Budget with Project Phases**

You can also develop a functional budget, which allocates funds to project phases for funders who reimburse for milestones, or if you want to show your cash flow needs. You’d probably also want to provide a conventional line item budget. This example also allows you to tie your budget to goals and objectives and to the timeline.
Developing the Budget to Support Your Story

In good practice you design your grant project, establish staffing, then develop the budget. But don’t stop there. Take the budget to the program manager who will implement it and see if they have any additions or see any holes. Then use the budget categories to judge your narrative. See if everything in the budget is included in your program description and goals and objectives. You may have to go back and add wording to make them consistent. Of course, turn this around and be sure everything in your narrative is budgeted for, even if it’s to be paid from other sources.

When writing your budget narrative or justification, don’t just include basic information. Briefly tell what the major project staff will do and show how you arrived at significant numbers (Staff will be paid at agency rates, equipment bids from suppliers, rent prorated according to FTE project personnel, 400 chairs @ $5 each, etc.).

Finally, make the budget easy to read. I like to present a complete budget on one page so the reader can get an overview of the project and see relationships at a glance, even if its just a summary. In some cases, such as complex projects or construction, you may need to include a more detailed budget breakdown as an attachment.

Developing the grant budget can be part of your grant strategy. Can you strengthen your case for funding through your choice of budget format? Does the budget make the project easier for the reader to understand? By thinking of the budget as another narrative element which helps tell a story, like the needs statement or evaluation, you can add interest to the dry numbers at the end of your proposal.

Capacity Building Grants: Funding Your Mission from the Inside Out
by
Barbara Polston

Barbara Polston has been a nonprofit consultant since early 2002, specializing in grantsmanship fundraising and has held high level management positions at various nonprofit organizations, successfully raising friends and funds for each. She is certified to instruct the Grants USA/Just Grants Arizona method of fundraising through grantsmanship and has developed several original curricula. Barbara holds a B.S. in Marketing from Northeastern Illinois University, an M.A. in Theological Studies from San Francisco Theological Seminary, and a Certificate in Nonprofit Management from Arizona State University. She serves on the board of directors for the Arizona Quilters Guild as community service chair. She is a former board member of the Association of Fundraising Professionals, Greater Arizona Chapter and the Alliance for Companion Animals. Barbara is a member of the American Association of Grants Professionals.

For the grants fundraising professional, it’s no secret that grant makers prefer to fund projects and programs with measurable outcomes. This emphasis by the corporate and foundation funding community leaves nonprofits with the challenge of funding organizational development through other means. While this encourages and necessitates a balanced fund development program, the fact remains that, in order to be good service providers, our nonprofit organizations must also be healthy businesses. Some funders are now beginning to think that the concentration on funding programs may have been at the expense of nonprofits being healthy, growing, thriving businesses engaged in providing needed public services. The funding community’s response is the “capacity building” grant.

Capacity Building Defined

First, let’s define what is meant by “capacity building.” Capacity building refers to activities that strengthen a nonprofit organization’s internal operating structure so that it can be more effective and/or more efficient in working toward fulfilling its mission. Breaking down the definition, we note that there is activity involved, but the activity will be focused on the internal operating systems of the organization, rather than in service delivery to a client population. This activity is meant to effect a significant change in the organization and is designed to leave the organization more effective or more efficient in how it conduct its business. Perhaps the most important point in the definition lies in the last six words. The purpose of the activity undertaken is to leave the organization more able to do its work in the world, that is, execute its mission. The organization should be left with an ability to serve more clients, or serve them in better ways, than before the activity was undertaken.

Capacity building activities can range from small to large undertakings. Let’s consider a sample of a small undertaking. A small nonprofit organization does not have a photocopier machine. Staff members must leave the office, travel to the local copy center and return with the necessary copies. Staff is reimbursed for their copy expenses by submitting expense reports, which takes their time to complete and the bookkeeper’s time to process. The grants fundraising professional seeks a capacity building grant to
purchase a copy machine for the agency. She argues that the presence of a copy machine will save staff time. As part of the proposal, she estimates that the time saved will allow the organization to serve an additional five clients per week or 250 more clients per year. She has provided the potential funder with a logical path from providing an office tool to making better use of staff time to serving more clients, better fulfilling the organization’s (and the funder’s) mission.

Let’s also consider a larger project, one undertaken by a one of my clients. The organization in question offers individual and community mentoring for seriously at-risk urban youth. The agency receives eight inquiries for every youth they are able to serve. It seems clear that more program sessions must be offered. To do so means the organization’s annual fundraising goal will increase by at least $75,000. Fundraising is the responsibility of the Board and the Executive Director. Each board member agrees to raise $10,000 annually when they are elected, but most have failed to reach that goal in anyone’s memory. The organization determines that board training is necessary to assist members in achieving their objectives. The organization proposes hiring a fundraising consultant to work with the board and provide the organization with a model for an annual campaign. A capacity building grant is won to hire the consultant and, at the conclusion of the project, the funds are in hand to expand program offerings. Additionally, the organization is confident that it can continue to achieve this higher annual fundraising goal because they now have a model in place to replicate each year. The organization is now able to serve twice as many at-risk teens.

The Rules for Seeking Capacity Building Grants

The rules for successfully seeking capacity building funding follow the rules of The Grantsmanship Game (1). The following will explore the basis for each rule and highlight differences when seeking capacity building funding. Remember, good grantsmanship means following these rules in order rather than starting from “who has money and what do we need to do/be to get it.”

**Rule 1 – Know Yourself.** The first order of business is to know ourselves as an organization. What are our mission, our vision and our values? Have these been clearly articulated and committed to writing? Even when seeking capacity building funding, it is important that there be a mission match between the funder’s philanthropic mission and the actionable mission of your organization. However, when seeking capacity building funding, “know yourself” goes to a much deeper level.

To develop the case for the capacity building project, the organization must have a clear understanding of “why this project” and “why at this time.” Perhaps there exist several different capacity building projects that could help the organization move to the next level. How have these been prioritized? Most capacity building funders recommend conducting an organization “lifecycle analysis.”

Most funders interviewed point to the work of Susan Kenny Stevens in her book *Nonprofit Lifecycles, Stage-Based Wisdom for Nonprofit Capacity*, as an excellent model for organizational analysis (2). Another good source, which includes an on-line assessment quiz to help score your organization, is *The 5 Life States of Nonprofit Organizations* by Judith Sharken Simon (3).
Following Kenny Stevens’s model, questions and points of discussion are provided to guide staff and volunteer leadership in an analysis of organizational programs, management, governance, financial resources, and administrative systems. This analysis allows you to plot the position of each of these fundamental organizational elements in their respective “lifecycle stage.” These stages are defined as idea, start-up, growth, maturity, decline, turn-around and terminal. The concept behind this analysis is that, for an organization to exhibit a healthy profile, all areas analyzed must fall within the same lifecycle stage. For example, an organization determines that programs, management, financial resources and administrative systems all fall within the growth stage. However, governance lags behind in the start-up phase. The organization then knows that the most meaningful capacity building project they could undertake would be in board development to bring that area into the growth stage and achieve a balanced organization.

What if the analysis reveals that all areas are solidly within the same lifecycle stage? In most nonprofit organizations, growth is led by program offerings. To move to the next level, projects should be undertaken that would determine what new program offering, program enhancement or program expansion is most needed by the organization’s target service group. Growth in programs will necessitate corresponding growth within the organization to bring all areas into lifecycle stage alignment once again. In either case, part of the argument for undertaking the capacity building project must circle back to your organization’s mission and “how much more” or “how much better” you will be able to achieve your mission through the project.

A few general words about the lifecycle stages: It takes a long time to move from stage to stage and the stages can last many, many years. Also, it should be noted that the “turn-around” or “terminal” stages are not necessarily the goal, but acknowledges that the changing environment both within and outside of our organizations sometimes find us in these situations. Volunteer leadership and senior staff must make a series of sometimes difficult decisions when faced with an organization in these stages.

**Rule 2 – Building True Partnerships**  Most grants professionals understand the value funders place on true collaborations wherein all partners share the responsibilities, risks and rewards of service delivery. But, when we discuss capacity building projects, which concentrate on strengthening the business side of our organizations, is there a role for partnership or collaboration? I believe that the answer is “yes.”

Many of our organizations have the same needs. Working together to fulfill these needs makes better use of resources and strengthens several organizations at once. In our community, one of our major foundations provides technical assistance to groups of nonprofit organizations that convene around a particular topic. A consultant with expertise in the topic area works with the entire group. Representatives of the participating nonprofits take their learning back to their organizations and are the facilitators of growth and change. Topics covered have included fundraising, board development, building collaborations, and much, much more.

Through our professional networks, we can discover other nonprofits needing similar capacity building work and combine our needs to make an attractive collaborative partnership for funding. Remember to share with your potential funding source the increased service delivery to the community by each of the partner organizations as a result of their investment in your respective organizational structures.
**Rule 3 – Plan, Plan, Plan…Plan** With your lifecycle analysis completed and with an understanding of the one project that will strengthen your organization (and perhaps that of a collaborator) you’re ready to develop your business plan. It’s time to get down to the specifics. What exactly is it that you want to do? What is your time frame for accomplishing the project? Who will be involved in carrying out the project? Where will the work take place? What is the total cost of the project? And, probably with the most importance, why this project? When working on this plan, detail and specificity are necessary. Not only are you constructing a solid business plan, a road map to follow when funding is achieved, you will use this work to demonstrate clarity of purpose to your potential funder.

In the realm of capacity building projects, it is not often within the abilities and talents of the nonprofit to accomplish the project without outside assistance. It is often necessary to engage an outside consultant or technical expert. Part of your planning should be to outline a scope of work, in other words, what activities you expect the expert to conduct or lead your organization through. To develop your project budget, you will want to have preliminary discussions with several individuals or companies that you would consider working with. Have them cost out their fees based on the scope of work and factor this information into your project budget.

As part of this work, you must relate your reasons for undertaking this project to your mission. It’s “keeping your eye on the prize.” If your organization accomplishes this project, how will it assist you in achieving your mission? How many more people will you be able to serve? Will service delivery be “better” than it was before and, if so, how will you quantifiably demonstrate that it is indeed better? Will the project result in additional resources coming to the organization? How will those resources be used to further your mission? Remember the example of the grants professional seeking a copy machine for her organization. The “prize” isn’t the copy machine; it’s being able to serve 250 more people annually.

**Rule 4 – Know Your Funding Source** You’re now ready to seek a funding source for your capacity building project. Of course, you will follow the basic rules of good funder research, meaning, you will look for potential funding sources who share a passion for your mission, provide funding within your geographic area, and provide the type of funding (capacity building) that you are seeking. Currently, the last criterion mentioned provides a bit of a challenge. While the term is beginning to show up with greater frequency in funder profiles, many of the nationally recognized databases don’t yet offer “capacity building” as a standard search term. Fortunately, this is changing with the funding environment. In fact, the Human Interaction Research Institute hosts a searchable database concentrating specifically on capacity building funders and currently profiles 318 funding organizations (4).

In specifying search terms for your project, beyond “capacity building,” think about the nature of the project. Does “technology” better define your new networked computer system proposal? One of my clients is seeking funding for a program assistant position. The nonprofit sees this as a capacity building project, enabling the organization to recruit and train more volunteers and serve more clients. However, our targeted funding source doesn’t “do capacity building grants” and classifies the request as a program grant. Don’t let the terminology eliminate potential funding sources.
In seeking funding sources, don’t overlook current donors. The corporate or foundation that has already supported your program may be very interested in helping you provide more or better service through assisting with your capacity building project. Use your professional relationship with your funders to explore this possibility. Also, don’t overlook the chance that individual donor(s) might be willing to support the project. Your capacity building project might be used as the topic of a direct mail appeal. Your major gifts officer might present the proposal to a donor. Individual givers are invested in seeing your agency be a healthy, growing organization too!

Finally, engage your target funder. Discuss the project with them, sharing the exciting changes that will occur both within your organization and for your clients as a result. Emphasize how this will affect your ability to execute your, and their, mission. Getting your targeted funder “on board” before you send in the proposal will help measurably in successfully achieving funding for your project.

**Rule 5 – Create the Winning Proposal** Some of creating a winning proposal, one that gets funded, relates to the funders’ rules. Make sure that:
- you “dot the i’s and cross the t’s,” in other words, present your proposal to the potential funder the way they want it presented.
- the proposal arrives in the funder’s office on time. It makes no difference if you’ve created the best, most fundable proposal in the world if it arrives too late to be considered.
- you have demonstrated a clearly thought out business plan. In other words, you have articulated what you will do, when it will be done, who will be involved, where the project will take place, and what the project will cost.
- you articulate how investing in your project will further the funder’s own philanthropic mission. This is perhaps the most important, and most often forgotten, point in capacity building proposals. While the project makes your organization stronger, remember, that’s not the “prize.” The “prize,” for your organization, for your funder, and for your clients, is an increase or betterment in the execution of your mission.

**Conclusion**

Receiving word that you’ve successfully achieved a grant for your organization always makes the day a good one. But, for the grants fundraising professional, there’s something particularly exciting about achieving funding for a capacity building project. You’ve shared in a vision of an improved organization, providing more or better services to your community, and had a hand in making that vision a reality. Congratulations and best of luck in funding your organization’s mission from the inside out!

**References**


Resources


Shelley Uva has worked in non-profit development since 1979. She began her career as a grant writer and manager of prospect research at New York University. Ms. Uva was a consultant for 18 years. Her clients included universities, hospitals, social service agencies, museums, secondary schools and arts organizations. Since 2001, Ms. Uva has been the Director of Development at Project FIND, an agency serving low-income seniors on Manhattan’s West Side.

The world of non-profit organizations encompasses a wide variety of institutions and groups. While some non-profits are large enterprises with offices located in multiple locations and staff as large as many a corporation, many other non-profits are small with very few paid staff. In many instances, the development office consists of just one person.

When you are a one-person development office, you may be asked to assume responsibility for a wide variety of fund-raising activities, including:

1. Researching prospects.
2. Writing grants.
3. Writing reports to funders.
4. Writing direct mail appeals and handling the actual mailings.
5. Writing articles, taking photos, designing layout and dealing with printers for newsletters.
6. Writing copy, taking and/or selecting photos and working with a designer and printer for brochures.
7. Writing and sending out press releases.
8. Preparing reports for Board meetings.
9. Developing and maintaining mailing lists.
10. Entering data in donor databases.
11. Cultivating individual donors.
12. Working with program staff to develop programs.
13. Working on special events.
14. Providing information on planned giving.

When you are a one-person office, no task is either too small or too large for you to handle, and the reality is that even small tasks can take up a lot of time. Learning how to budget time and set priorities is an absolute must.

Setting Priorities

How do you set priorities? There are two criteria. The first is to meet all deadlines. The second is to focus first on activities that actually raise money because that is the primary purpose and goal. If you must choose between getting a report to a funder on time or getting a newsletter out by a particular date, pushing the newsletter’s publication date back a few days is the best option. Deadlines set for oneself are helpful guidelines. Funder deadlines are absolutes.
Meeting deadlines: All of us knew people back in college who lived by the “incomplete.” Even on the very first day of class, these professional procrastinators were scurrying around the professor’s desk trying to find out how they could get an “incomplete” rather than a grade in the class. The idea was that they would turn in the required work later on. Incredibly enough, at least in my day, lots and lots of professors allowed this kind of thing.

Funders who set deadlines are not quite as warm and fuzzy as my old professors. In my experience, the “incomplete” does not exist in the fundraising world. If the foundation you are applying to says their deadline for proposal submissions is September 1, don’t plan on calling up a program officer on August 31st to get some kind of extension. And be sure you read all the requirements. Few things give you a worse feeling than finding out your proposal has been rejected because you sent one copy instead of the required six or failed to include a copy of your 501(c)(3) letter.

Development Office Skills

A one-person development office includes jobs that require different types of skills. In a large development office in which jobs are divided up between many people, writing may not always be the primary skill required. For example, if your job is prospect researcher, you may need to write up reports on your research, but your writing will be limited and only read internally. Good research skills may be more important than good writing skills. However, in a one-person office, you have to be able to write quickly and with a high degree of skill.

Writing skills: From the language I used in my list, it is obvious that writing is a primary required skill. Fundraising depends on good writing – in letters, proposals, reports and publications – and in a one-person office, there is no one else to do it. So, if writing is not one of your most highly developed skills, don’t even think about working as a one-person office.

Of course, all of us are not equally good at all tasks. There are some jobs you really have to do yourself in a one-person office, but there are other jobs for which you may be able to turn to other staff, consultants or volunteers.

Working with available staff: If you are going to ask other staff in your agency to help you out, you also should be prepared to volunteer to help them out occasionally. In many smaller agencies this may not be a practical idea. A non-profit organization that maintains a one-person development office does not have much staff to begin with, so everyone in the organization is already wearing multiple hats. Keep in mind that no matter how busy you are, the people down the hall from you are probably equally busy. Now and then, someone may be able to pitch in for a few hours or even a day but it is not a good idea to impose on their time on a regular basis. You need to find ways to get your job done with consistency and in the most timely manner. Relying on someone else’s occasional free time is definitely not the way to go.

Working with consultants: Hiring a consultant for a particular, specialized job can be an excellent use of resources. It is important to remember that consultants are always working on the clock, so be prepared to make the best use of your time with them. Before the meeting, make sure you have an agenda, have all the materials prepared, and keep the consultant on task. Thinking through all the questions for the consultant ahead of time can save you money and insure that you get the services you need.
I Am My Own Development Office

For the most part, my experience as a one-person development office has not included the luxury of assistance from other staff. Occasionally, I have been able to use consultants, but only for very specialized and limited kinds of work (such as event planning). In general, I think that the assistance most often available to those of us who work in one-person development offices is provided by volunteers.

Volunteers

Almost all non-profit organizations rely to some degree on volunteers. Some volunteers help you run your actual programs. These kinds of volunteers may deliver meals to the homebound or tutor children in after school programs. Other volunteers perform filing and collating and general office tasks. Many volunteers assist with fundraising. In fact, years ago, most fundraising was done entirely by volunteers, but today, that is no longer the case. As fundraising has become more sophisticated and complex, almost every non-profit organization has moved from the use of volunteer fundraisers to professional fundraisers.

In this climate, using volunteers and using volunteers well are two very different things. By definition, a volunteer is not a paid employee, but a person who is donating his or her time and talents. Some volunteers are highly skilled and up to almost any task while others bring enthusiasm but little else to the job. Your goal, as a development professional making use of volunteers, is to make sure your volunteers keep their enthusiasm for your organization while helping you get a job done. One way to accomplish both goals (maintaining enthusiasm and getting a job done) is to make sure you match up volunteer and job appropriately. Another credo to follow in using volunteers is never to ask a volunteer to assume your responsibilities but do ask them to help you meet your goals.

Community volunteers: Direct mail provides one example. Writing a direct mail letter requires specialized skills and is my specific responsibility. I would not ask a volunteer to write the direct mail letter unless he or she had real expertise in this area. I would, however, ask my volunteers to help me get the letter out by stuffing envelopes and sorting my mailing labels by zip code for bulk mail. Another example is producing brochures. I would not ask a volunteer to write the copy for my brochure. But because photography is not one of my real skills, I would consider looking for a volunteer who is a good photographer to shoot the pictures that go with the stories I write.

Business volunteers: In my office, in addition to writing publications, I also prepare the layout using Quark and Photoshop. If graphic design is not one of your skills, see if you can find a graphic designer to volunteer to work with you. In the current economic climate, it may be difficult to find an established design firm that can afford to take on a volunteer job, but a young designer who is just starting out and needs experience may agree to forego a fee in return for a credit in your publication.

College volunteers: If you don’t know any designers, try calling local colleges or universities that teach graphic design. You may be able to make contact with a student who needs to do a design project as a graduation requirement.

High school volunteers: Schools can be an excellent place to find volunteers for a variety of jobs. These days, many high schools require students to complete a certain number of hours of community service in order to graduate. Making use of high school students can not only save you time, but also make your programs more attractive to
funders. My agency, for example, works with senior citizens, and many funders are especially attracted to programs that have an intergenerational component.

**Training volunteers:** Of course, there are instances in which volunteers are more trouble than they are worth. We have all been involved in events in which volunteers spent most of their time socializing with one another and generally getting in the way. If you use volunteers, make sure you provide them with at least some guidelines and/or training so they know what’s expected of them.

**Scheduling volunteers:** As a one-person office, you may always feel you need more hands, but don’t bring in too many volunteers for a given job. Only experience can help you determine if you need five volunteers or 25 to handle your particular job. When you have too many volunteers, people end up doing nothing and feeling that you have wasted their time, and they are less likely to volunteer again with you or with anyone else.

**Board members as fundraisers:** Development officers like to say that Boards raise money; fundraisers help facilitate that activity. Boards, however, often feel that once a fundraiser has been hired, they no longer have any role to play in raising money. If you have a Board composed of wealthy and well-connected people who love to help raise funds, you are way more than halfway there. But if you live in the real world and your Board is not that wealthy and not all that connected and more than a little reluctant to use the connections they do have, there is still hope. Begin small and help your Board grow into their proper role. All of us know people, so ask your Board for names to add to your mailing lists. Ask the Board members who are most likely to have connections to see if they do know anyone you are considering as a prospect and, if they do, to sign a note to that person asking for their support. If you don’t have one, form a Board Development Committee and try to meet with some regularity. If your Board does not embrace fundraising on their own, you have to find ways to give your Board members a sense of ownership.

**Conclusion**

One final thing you need to remember always is that a one-man (or woman) band can only play one song at a time. As I have noted, if you are a one-person development office, it is most likely that you work for a smaller organization, and in many such organizations, it is common for employees to wear more than one hat. It is important to make sure your hats complement each other.

Development and public relations fit together in a logical way, and these tasks often are taken care of by one person. Fundraising and volunteer activity are another pair of tasks that often are linked together. Sometimes people have special skills that make it logical for them to handle certain functions. For example, through the years, I worked on many publications so it makes sense for me to lay out, as well as write, my newsletters. Problems occur when people are asked to combine all kinds of jobs that really have very little to do with each other. Your organization may be small and need to save money every place it can, but no one person can handle fundraising, public relations and volunteers and, as an after thought, keep the books, translate documents, maintain personnel records and drive the van. Sometimes it’s hard to say no, but if you intend to raise money for your organization, you have to make sure that all of your various activities contribute to that effort.
Grantee/Grantor Relationships: A Research Study

by

Saadia Faruqi

Saadia Faruqi, currently employed by Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Houston, has more than 5 years of fundraising experience in the nonprofit sector. She has worked in children’s health, domestic violence, science education, youth mentoring, adult and family literacy, and the arts among others. Saadia offers her consulting expertise and volunteer services to nonprofit organizations throughout the world. She has received the President’s Student Service Award. She holds a BS in Business Administration from the University of Central Florida, where she also received the Knight In Shining Armor Award and the Student Government Service Award & Scholarship for her community service. She has completed a Bachelor of Business Administration from the University of Karachi, in her native country of Pakistan. She is a member of the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP) and the National Committee on Planned Giving (NCPG).

Introduction

Foundation and corporate grants are perhaps the single most important source of revenue for many nonprofit organizations in this country. They are certainly the lifeblood of most smaller organizations; smaller not necessarily in terms of size – although that is also a consideration – but also in terms of reach, impact and population served. Interestingly enough, grants also seem to form a large percentage of revenues of several of the largest organizations, despite the fact that these entities have at their disposal fundraising professionals and techniques that others do not.

Fundraising 101 teaches that 75% of all donors to all nonprofits are individuals. Taken as an aggregate this may surely be the case, but individually, the majority of nonprofits cannot reflect this trend on their financial statements. I can vouch that it is not true for any organization I have ever worked, consulted or volunteered for. Even with the awareness that in order to be a viable and self-sustaining organization other avenues of funding need to be cultivated, the emphasis of fundraising is often towards foundation and corporate grants. Whether an organization employs a hundred people or just one, whether it has been in existence since 1950 or since last week, the first step to fundraising is inevitably the cry “let’s write a grant for it.”

Are Grants the Solution?

Most grant writers will agree that it’s not that simple. We spend half our careers trying to convince our superiors and colleagues that good writing – even a good program – are not the guarantees for success as far as grant funds are concerned. How many of us have heard our program staff say, “this is a great service, I am sure we will get the money to keep it going?” Even if they understand the level of competition for limited grant money, how many of our board and senior staff still ask us to “do that thing we do” and conjure up a proposal that will wow foundation officials? How many grant writers fruitlessly ask their senior staff and board to talk to their friends/colleagues/golf partners about a proposal before it is submitted to the foundation?
The question arises whether it is really possible to write a grant to an unknown funder and be funded solely on the basis of the program or organization’s merit? Those who write grants day in and day out will usually answer NO. Those who sit on the other side of the boardroom table will usually say YES. But there are dissidents in each camp, as there are in any camp. The need of the hour is to have some documentation or research that will prove beyond a shadow of a doubt which side is right: is it the proposal that gets the grant, or are the relationships between grantors and grantees the deciding factor? Unfortunately no such research has yet been done that will prove anything beyond a shadow of a doubt. But this article will try to lend a first hand to the effort.

Some Issues For Consideration

Discussions with fellow grant writers over the course of several years have focused two major issues in my mind. One is the fact that grant writers undeniably feel the pressure to churn out grant proposals in the “formula” expounded by how-to books, online courses and professional development conferences. A general search on Google will explain this formula to those who are not yet familiar with it – or worse, who think this is something they have cleverly designed themselves and is a secret to all others. We are taught from the first day on the job that a grant consists of (in this order) a summary or cover sheet, needs assessment, program description, goals and objectives, evaluation, budget, etc. While there is nothing wrong with this formula – and indeed a good proposal does include all these components – we are left to discover on our own that it is by no means the only factor for success, and in fact by itself it will seldom be funded. Of course there are always exceptions to any rule, and I have no doubt that hundreds of grant writers all over the country have at this very moment received an acceptance letter from a previously unknown foundation which surprises them to no end. It is this surprise that I want to focus on.

When we conduct basic research on a foundation’s interests, determine that its priorities are a good match to our services, and write a “formula grant,” we are usually surprised when it is funded. It is a pleasant surprise but unexpected nonetheless. It may be for two reasons: either we are just starting out in the field and so every acceptance is wonderful yet surprising; or we cannot believe that the formula worked! So what are we complaining about exactly? We know we are good writers, we are positive that the program we are writing about is an effective program, yet we think it strange if we send out a proposal without any previous connections or relationships with the funder, and it gets funded. Are we not following the books and online courses to the letter?

The answer lies in the fact that after a few rejections earlier on in their careers, most grant writers try to dig deeper into the reasons for their perceived failure, and inevitably come up with dubious answers. A friend of mine who recently decided to write grants for a living was extremely disappointed when her first proposal was rejected; and after talking with other people in her field came to the conclusion that the rejection was due to the fact that her board did not have any connections to the foundation board. Sound reasonable? Maybe, maybe not.

If she had come to this conclusion after several months, if not years, of grant writing, it would have been more believable. I myself fell into this trap early in my career. After a few initial rejections at my first job, I went back to the library and came across the advice that including a post-it on the cover sheet with a handwritten note to a foundation official
will increase its chances of being read because the receptionist will assume that you have a prior relationship with the trustee being addressed and hence will include your application with those lucky enough to make it to the boardroom. Is this true? I tried it on my next grant (to a foundation that had never been approached before) and lo and behold: it was funded! Needless to say every grant from that point on included a post-it with a handwritten note. When those grants were rejected I tried to find some other justification—and so the myth was born, in my mind at least. I am positive all grant writers will have similar stories if they think hard enough.

The second issue in my mind that I seek to address is if in fact the foundation grant business is truly a relationship-building business. I use the term business in the most benign sense, partly because my own academic background is business, and partly because every exchange of give and take (whether of products for money or donations for services) can be called a business. What I realized after years of listening to the complaints of other grant writers—complaints which I find myself echoing many times a day—was that there is a formidable school of thought in the nonprofit world that believes that personal or professional connections between foundation officials and nonprofits result in larger and more frequent grant awards, and that it is almost useless to expect grants to be funded if there are no such connections. Hence the surprise when occasionally that does happen.

The Research

In order to address the issues above—and give grant writers the world over some ammunition when they go to their senior staff and trustees to convince them of the value of cultivating relationships—I recently conducted an informal research poll using a sample of 47 respondents. These respondents work and live in a variety of states across the country (including Texas, Oklahoma, Virginia, New York, Ohio, Wisconsin, and many more) as well as in organizations of all sizes and budgets, ranging from less than $500,000 to more than $5 million. A questionnaire was developed which asked 23 objective-type questions concerning the relationships that board, senior staff and grant writers have with foundation officials, which may include foundation staff or trustees. The objective of the research was to explore the relationships between grantors and grantees, and the effect these relationships have on grant proposals. The results were very interesting, although by no means conclusive. It is up to the reader to decide whether relationships indeed determine funding, and if so, to what extent. Several respondents also included comments and observations that further elucidate—or cloud, depending on your point of view—the issue.

The Findings

As mentioned above, the research sample consisted of 47 respondents interviewed through written questionnaires. The respondents were a mix of staff and consultants, senior management and lower level employees. Through accident rather than design, 44% of respondents belonged to larger organizations with over $5 million budgets; the smallest group (11%) belonged to organizations with budgets less than $500,000. The vast majority had other job responsibilities apart from grant writing: running the gamut from major gifts and planned giving to marketing, accounting, etc.
Board Relationships

The survey showed that most organizations do have connections with funders through their board of directors: 83% of respondent boards had some kind of personal or professional relationship with a private or corporate foundation; 15% however, did not. Despite the small size of the sample, I feel that this is a worrying trend, especially since further calculations showed that 28.5% of those nonprofits with absolutely no board connections to foundations also had the smallest budgets (less than $500,000). Does this prove anything? Not really, since it is impossible to determine which is the cause and which is the effect; namely, is it a lack of highly connected board members that results in a smaller budget (a likely scenario since budgets are based on forecasts of how much the board and staff can fundraise), or is it a smaller budget that attracts board members with fewer connections (an equally likely scenario since powerful people usually don’t sit on boards of smaller, lesser known organizations)? Nevertheless the fact remains that less than 8% of organizations with well-connected boards had budgets of less than $500,000. The largest group (47%) had budgets in excess of $5 million.

The survey also discovered that, among well-connected boards, not surprisingly 54% of board members had relationships with foundation trustees, and 18% with both foundation staff as well as trustees. Although this is to be expected, it still provides a powerful argument for grant writers reminding their boards of the importance of cultivating such relationships. Further, among well-connected boards, 25.6% had relationships with 1 to 3 foundations, and 30.8% with more than 10 foundations. Again, these numbers can serve as a basis for informing boards about practices of other organizations and the probable reasons for their success as fundraisers.

Now come the harder questions: whether any of these board relationships actually resulted in a grant, and what percentage of total grants these were. 84.6% of all respondents did indeed indicate that board relationships were crucial in being funded; a mere 2.6% said that connections had no bearing on grants awarded. 51.5% of those who said yes also revealed that in the last fiscal year 1 to 3 grants were obtained as a result of a well-connected board; 18% obtained 4 to 6 grants, and 24% obtained 7 to 10. For the largest number of respondents (30.3%) this formed 10-25% of total grants received during the same time period; a close second was 27.3% of respondents for whom these grants were 5-10% of their total. Interestingly enough, 6% of well-connected boards obtained 60-75% of their total grants due to their relationships, while 3% of them obtained 90-100% of their grants due to connections to foundation officials.

All this might be worth mentioning to our senior staff and board members in order to encourage them to participate in donor cultivation and solicitation. While many boards are willing to do so for major gifts, capital campaigns and even planned giving, they often expect foundation cultivation to be purely a staff function, sometimes delegated to the grant writer who may not even be senior staff. The findings above are a start in the right direction as they provide some data to back the claim that board member connections need to be made before the best of grant writers can be consistently successful in bringing in grant money.

Senior Staff Relationships

The second part of the survey discussed senior staff relationships with funders and the effects of these relationships on the grants awarded. Senior staff was defined as CEO,
Executive Director, Vice President or Director of Development, etc. 72% of respondents confirmed that their senior staff had relationships with foundation officials; 21% did not. While these are lower percentages than those for board members, they are not unexpected, since boards are in a better position to cultivate such relationships and indeed their responsibilities do include it; senior staff on the other hand may or may not be in the position to have such connections.

As far as budget size is concerned, the numbers are higher than for board members: 36.4% of senior staff with no connections belonged to organizations with budgets of less than $500,000 – leading to the conclusion that staff have much less ability to cultivate and take advantage of relationships with funders, and this has a bearing on the organization’s budget. The importance of board participation in such circumstances becomes even more crucial. Among well-connected senior staff, the majority (51.4%) belonged to organizations with budgets over $5 million. This finding speaks for itself in my opinion and needs no further clarification.

Who in foundations do senior staff have relationships with, and is this different than board relationships? The survey found that 34% had relationships with foundation staff, while 51.4% had relationships with both trustees and staff. Only 14% had relationships with trustees. This varies markedly from board connections and suggests that senior staff are more capable of cultivating foundation personnel who are not trustees, while board members have more access to the powers-that-be – a fact that can be used to great advantage if boards and staff members work together to form a two-pronged strategy for cultivation and solicitation.

Should senior staff be making more contacts with foundations than they currently are? The survey shows that the largest group of staff members (29.4%) had relationships with more than 10 foundations – a percentage almost as high as boards that have connections with the same number of foundations. This is a very encouraging fact and again may be ammunition for grant writers whose senior staff does not follow a similar pattern. The largest group (35%) had relationships with 4 to 6 foundations; this suggests that even though fewer organizations have well-connected senior staff as compared to boards, the ones that are, have more connections than the ones that are not.

Unfortunately, senior staff relations may not be as useful as board relations in terms of grants awarded: 73.5% of respondents revealed that such relationships resulted in a grant for their organization. This number is higher for well-connected boards. Interestingly, almost 21% said that they did not know whether these relationships were a contributing factor or not. Hence it may be much harder to gauge the direct impact of staff cultivation, whereas board connections seem to have a much more direct and obvious influence on obtaining grants.

What exactly is the impact in dollars? 44% of well-connected senior staff obtained 1 to 3 grants due to their connections, 36% obtained 4 to 6 grants. Furthermore, for the largest number of respondents (28%) this formed 5-10% of total grants received in the last fiscal year. This percentage is very close to well-connected boards. For 4% of respondents, relationships resulted in 90-100% of total grants received.

Grant Writer Relationships

The last section of the survey is perhaps the most interesting for grant writers who are at lower rungs of the ladder in their organizations. First of all, 55.3% of all
respondents were not considered a member of the senior staff. This shows a very close race amongst those who write grants only, and those for whom grants are just one of the many hats they wear. Keep in mind that respondents include consultants who do nothing besides write grants, but are doing so for several different organizations at the same time. This section of the survey is completed only by grant writers and consultants who are not senior staff, since one of the objects of the survey is to understand the dynamics of various roles and positions in the grant writing process.

The survey shows that 66.7% of these grant writers did have relationships with foundations – this is a very promising trend, since it suggests that even though they do not have big titles or great responsibilities, grant writers realize the importance of cultivating foundation officials and that they find opportunities to do so even though such opportunities may be much harder to come by for them than for board members or senior staff. The cause of grant writer relationships varied from professional acquaintance (57%) to previous job (9.5%); interestingly many grant writers (9.5%) had also cultivated these relationships in the course of other job functions. This leads to the conclusion that grant writers who are performing other functions aside from writing may be in a better position to form critical relationships with funders.

So the lesson for all of us introverts out there who would rather work at a computer all day than leave the office to interact with others: stand up and volunteer for some other tasks, or even apply for that promotion that would diversify job responsibilities a little! From personal experience I have found that working or volunteering at smaller nonprofits where everyone wears multiple hats is often more beneficial to a grant writer’s career than being a small fish in a very big pond where functions are extremely specialized and compartmentalized.

However, when relating this information to the size of the organization we see that only 7.7% of well-connected grant writers belonged to organizations with budgets of less than $500,000, whereas the clear majority (61.5%) of them had budgets of more than $5 million. 23% had budgets of $1-5 million. On the other hand, looking at grant writers who did not have relationships with foundations, absolutely none of them belonged to organizations with budgets of both less than $500,000 and between $500,000 and $1 million. Almost 86% belonged to organizations with budgets in excess of $5 million. This makes sense intuitively: grant writers who are not senior staff in their organization can have almost no influence on the size of their organizations; however, this is not a result of the task they perform (i.e. grant writing) but of the position they hold.

Who are relationships formed with and what do they translate into? The survey shows that 43% of well-connected grant writers knew someone at 1 to 3 foundations, and almost 29% at more than 10. The majority of relationships are formed with foundation staff – which is to be expected. A pleasant surprise is that 14.3% are formed with trustees and 28.6% with both foundation staff and trustees. Disappointingly, 50% of well-connected grant writers were unable to ever secure a grant due to their relationships, but 35.7% were able to do so at some time. 14% did not know whether they affected the outcome of their proposals. Again this seems to be a result of position rather than job function. In the last fiscal year, 40% of these connections resulted in 1 to 3 grants being funded, and another 40% resulted in 4 to 6 grants. 20% resulted in 7 to 10 grants being funded due to their relationships. Further, 60% of grants received formed 5-10% of the total grants in that year, and 20% formed 90-100%.
Conclusion

As I mentioned in the beginning of this article, the research thus conducted is preliminary and has room for improvements in sample size, design and statistical analysis. But I felt that a start was necessary if the field of grant writing was ever to come of age and gain a modicum of respect in the larger scope of fundraising. Using these results, I hope that many grant writers will be able to begin serious conversations with their board and senior staff about the importance of cultivation and solicitation for grant funds. I hope that in the years to come grant writing books and courses will include a chapter on “preparing the groundwork for grants through board and staff cultivation” and “how to use board and staff relationships in order to increase the chances of success.” I am positive that many of my colleagues out there – including some respondents of the survey – will have much to offer in this aspect; we all definitely have much to learn.

I have tried to remain objective during the course of the research, with the result that many of my own perceptions and ideas have been changed due to the results obtained here. Comments made by respondents suggest that many grants are indeed received without prior relationships with funders. After analyzing the results of this research I have admitted to myself that the possibility of formula grants actually working is not as far-fetched as I used to think. But I have also realized that many organizations in this country are doing a much better job than mine of using personal and professional relationships of their board members and staff in order to receive grants at a higher level and with more frequency. After all, isn’t that what fundraising is all about?

As fundraisers and development professionals, we aim to create relationships with people who hold our cause dear. We cultivate those relationships over time in such a way that they result in donations that not only help the cause/program/service flourish, but also provide a source of happiness and comfort to the donor, who considers the donation an investment in the future. Why should grant writing be any different? Would we send formula letters to high net-worth individuals who are potential donors, with the justification that it is enough to research their interests and giving histories? Fundraisers for annual campaigns, major gifts, planned gifts and capital campaigns will all tell you that it is the relationship that matters, not the ask. If a good relationship has been cultivated and nurtured, the ask will be easy and success will be almost guaranteed. Why should the same standard not apply to grant writing? Such questions were the impetus for this research and I hope others will follow.

Acknowledgements:

I would like to thank all the respondents for participating in the research; their only motivation was that the results might help them do their jobs better for the sake of the nonprofits they serve. I would also like to thank Samar Mumtaz for the multitude of calculations and analysis she performed until all hours of the night. I couldn’t have done it without her.

(See research questionnaire beginning on the next page.)

Copyright © 2004 Saadia Faruqi
Name __________________________________________________________________
Title ___________________________________________________________________
Organization ____________________________________________________________

Q1: Organizational Budget:
__ Less than $500K __ $500K - $1 million __ $1 mil - $5 mil __ More than 5 mil

Q2: Do your job responsibilities involve anything besides grant writing?
__ Yes __ No
(If yes, go to Q3, otherwise go to Q4)

Q3: What other fundraising activities do you perform besides grant writing?
__ All of Fundraising
__ Events
__ Annual Campaigns
__ Major Giving
__ Capital Campaigns
__ Other ________________________________________________________________

Q4: Does your board of directors have ANY relationships or connections (personal OR professional) with ANY foundations (private, public or corporate)?
__ Yes __ No __ Don’t know
(If yes, go to Q5, otherwise go to Q9)

Q5: How many foundations does your board have relationships or connections with?
__ 1-3 __ 4-6 __ 7-10 __ More than 10

Q6: With whom in the foundation are the majority of the relationships formed? (Check ALL that apply)
__ Foundation staff __ Foundation trustees __ Other _____________________________

Q7: Has any of these relationships ever resulted in a grant?
__ Yes __ No __ Don’t know
(If yes, go to Q8, otherwise go to Q10)

Q8: In the last 1 year, how many of these relationships have resulted in a grant?
__ 1-3 __ 4-6 __ 7-10 __ More than 10

Q9: What percentage does this form of total grants received during the same year? (Please give an approximate percentage) _______ %

Q10: Does your senior staff (Executive Director, Director of Development, etc.) have ANY relationships or connections (personal OR professional) with ANY foundations (private, public or corporate)?
Grantee/Grantor Relationships: A Research Study

__ Yes __ No __ Don’t know
(If yes, go to Q11, otherwise go to Q16)

Q11: How many foundations does your senior staff have relationships or connections with?
__ 1-3 __ 4-6 __ 7-10 __ More than 10

Q12: With whom in the foundation are the majority of the relationships formed? (Check ALL that apply)
__ Foundation staff __ Foundation trustees __ Other ________________________________

Q13: Has any of these relationships ever resulted in a grant?
__ Yes __ No __ Don’t know
(If yes, go to Q14, otherwise go to Q16)

Q14: In the last 1 year, how many of these relationships have resulted in a grant?
__ 1-3 __ 4-6 __ 7-10 __ More than 10

Q15: What percentage does this form of total grants received during the same year?
(Please give an approximate percentage)
_______ %

Q16: Are you a member of the senior staff (Executive Director, Director of Development, etc.) at your current organization?
__ Yes __ No
(If no, go to Q17, otherwise go to END)

Q17: Do YOU have ANY relationships or connections (personal OR professional) with ANY foundations (private, public or corporate)?
__ Yes __ No
(If yes, go to Q16, otherwise go to END)

Q18: What is the biggest cause of these relationships (check ALL that apply)?
__ Personal acquaintance __ professional acquaintance __ other job responsibilities
__ previous job __ other ________________________________

Q19: How many foundations do you have relationships or connections with?
__ 1-3 __ 4-6 __ 7-10 __ More than 10

Q20: With whom in the foundation are the majority of the relationships formed? (Check ALL that apply)
__ Foundation staff __ Foundation trustees __ Other ________________________________

Q21: Has any of these relationships ever resulted in a grant for your current organization?
__ Yes __ No __ Don’t know
(If yes, go to Q22 otherwise go to END)
Q22: In the last 1 year, how many of these relationships have resulted in a grant?
__ 1-3 __ 4-6 __ 7-10 __ More than 10

Q23: What percentage does this form of total grants received during the same year?
(Please give an approximate percentage) _______ %

END: THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION. I APPRECIATE YOUR TIME. I WILL BE SURE TO SEND YOU A COPY OF THE ARTICLE IF PUBLISHED!
The Joys and Sorrows of Grant Writing: Navigating the Unpredictable Waters of Higher Education
by
Michael S. Campbell and Susanne Carter

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Susanne Carter has been the grant writer for the University of Missouri College of Education for the past five years. She has more than 25 years teaching and working in the field of education. In addition to being a freelance writer, she also serves as a consultant to the Western Regional Resource Center and Consortium for Alternative Dispute Resolution in Special Education.

Introduction

In this essay we reflect upon the gifts we have received since we have joined this profession and some of the major challenges we have faced. We also share some possible solutions to challenges we have learned through experience and trial and error that have enabled us to persevere through the more turbulent waters of grant writing in higher education.

With a combined history of 10 years in this often bewildering but certainly never dull profession, we both agree that grant writing is the most challenging, rewarding, and downright frustrating job we have ever had. While we interact with some of the best and most creative minds on campus to develop competitive proposals, we wallow in a sea of seemingly endless forms with each submission. While we try to be as proactive as possible when we work on proposals, learning quickly that whatever can go wrong will go wrong at the last minute, we cannot change the propensity to procrastinate which governs the lives of many faculty members; their last-minute behaviors become our unwanted emergencies. More than one of us have pulled “all-nighters” to finish proposals when we thought we had left that behavior behind long ago, after our undergrad years. Many of us suffer from stress-induced migraines. And right when we think we’re on the verge of knowing just about all there is to know about grant writing, some new challenge surfaces to keep us humble and ever-vigilant.

Grant writing is really a misnomer for what we do, at least in higher education. Although we write parts of (and sometimes entire) proposals, we do so much more—we monitor funding alerts, bring together teams, facilitate meetings, develop timelines, conduct literature searches, guide the proposal development process, interpret guidelines, contact potential collaborators, call program officers, develop budgets, fill out way too many forms, teach workshops, write newsletters, update web sites, assist with Institutional Review Board (IRB) applications, and help orient new faculty members. We
are teachers, coaches, referees, guides, brokers, coordinators, planners, project managers, accountants, researchers, matchmakers, jugglers, AND writers.

None of us, as we narrowed in on our undergrad majors, or as we embarked on new careers fresh out of college, said, “I’m planning to become a grant writer.” In fact, until we plunged into this difficult and exciting sea, most of us hadn’t even heard the job title. But after a decade of navigating our way, we have come to realize that the complicated balance we maintain between professional and processor, between collaborator and facilitator, between manager and assistant defines a position whose place in the professional hierarchy is still very much under negotiation. So, what we find, as we accept roles in this shifting sea, is that in exchange for the variety that we love, we agree to ambiguity about the status we can claim and about the authority we may exert. And the final irony is that many times we must accept the burden of consequences for actions we were not responsible for, nor for which we were given the authority to affect. The long and short of this set of rules is that we grant writers must be flexible enough to accept a set of non-traditional and unevenly exacted rules. The ethics of grant writing is open and shifting – far from predictable. This requires that we move outside our comfort zone, both in terms of day-to-day logistics and in terms of the philosophy by which we evaluate success.

We who have stumbled into this profession come from varied backgrounds and life experiences. While some of us are probably still wondering what we’ll be when we grow up, others of us think we have “arrived” and discovered our niche. While some of us are “adrenaline junkies” who thrive under the pressure of working against deadlines, others of us fold under the last-minute stress and do everything possible to avoid it. We come to this relatively new profession with education, business, sociology, journalism, medicine, law, and history degrees. We have BSs, MAs, and Ph.D.s. Yet, for all of our differences, there are common characteristics that unite us as grant writers in higher education:

- We are “people persons” who enjoy interacting with others;
- We tend to be people with Renaissance interests who like to know a little about a lot of topics;
- We are service-oriented people who thrive on assisting (and sometimes rescuing) other people;
- Similarly, we are “can do” people who will do “whatever it takes,” from writing beautiful prose to running to the post office at the last minute, to make sure a proposal is on its way;
- We are people who thrive on variety and have jobs where no two days are ever the same;
- We are people who think “outside the system”;
- We are people who like to work outside of our comfort zone and be continually challenged; and
- We share a love of writing (even in bullet form).

In order to facilitate true collaboration from the conception of a project to completion, we have learned to navigate the professional hierarchy in both directions, up and down. We must show profound respect for the assistants who help us complete and process proposals, and we must be willing to exert expectations up the line of command.
We have found that the best way to initiate a productive, mutually respectful relationship with our investigators is to sit down and get to know them at the onset. We ask them what they are excited about and share their passion for the project at hand. Having begun a relationship of genuine interest, we can invest in their cause. Seeing this genuine investment, investigators who have become accustomed to a place of renown are willing to accept the following kinds of assistance we offer: shaping their text, setting firm deadlines, mediating between collaborators to bridge potentially fatal differences, etc. We respect our faculty as content experts. They, in turn, come to respect us as grant writing experts who will do everything in our power to help them submit a winning proposal.

**Gifts**

Despite the frustrations and wild roller-coaster rides that are an inevitable part of a grant writer’s life, we have discovered there are many gifts to appreciate in this profession. While our names never appear on grant proposals, even when we are the primary authors, we find great satisfaction in the anonymous, behind-the-scenes miracles we perform to help craft competitive proposals and make sure they get out the door on time.

**Idea Conception**

Before the collaborative and writing processes begin, an idea must be born and matched with likely funding sources. We feel very gifted to be involved in the earliest germination of these ideas. They often begin with a casual faculty brainstorming session. In this creative process, we learn the special language of the field, the driving forces that motivate the work—its benefit to the target audience and society at large. By asking the right questions and being careful listeners, we help faculty members begin to shape ideas into the beginning of a framework for a project. It is exciting to be a part of the process of “birthing” an idea.

We help faculty members take a nebulous concept (one of our faculty members refers to the proposal at this stage as a “lump of clay”) and begin to shape it into a specific work plan with goals and objectives, a specific audience, staff and budget. This transformation of ivory tower conceptions into real working plans is a process that benefits the citizens that our university serves and demonstrates that academe has a real and living purpose. As we help transform good ideas into concrete project designs, a cycle of success begins in which good ideas evolve into projects that spawn other great ideas and so on. Soon the participating faculty are working on an interrelated set of projects that both advances their research agenda and contributes to their growing list of publications and presentations. We have the satisfaction of encouraging the genesis and continuation of these cycles.

Going beyond project conception and planning, we constantly think in terms of what agencies might be motivated to fund these great ideas and plans. We function with a mindset that takes a mental database of potential funders, crosses some off, and then selects others to target for each project—a matching game of sorts. This act of selection and determination is very satisfying, in that we play a direct role in accessing public and private funds to better our part of the world.
Team building

Team building is one of the most important first steps in successful grant seeking, and many times it brings the highest return in gratification. The long-standing tradition of tenure-seeking and “publish or perish” competitiveness in the silos of academe have created a stubborn roadblock to collaboration. But in this post-information age, the odds of funding for the lone scholar in his silo are becoming increasingly slim. In monitoring funding alerts over the past five years we have watched collaboration evolve from a growing trend into an expectation in many agencies.

At times the roadblocks to collaboration seem insurmountable, and we find it is sometimes those most difficult collaborations that lead to the most fruitful projects. Most recently, a principal investigator (PI) at our land grant university submitted a large 2-year proposal to a major national foundation. Unbeknownst to us, a very small grass roots organization in our community had submitted to the same program. The foundation program director contacted both entities and urged us to work together and submit one proposal. The historical political interaction between both organizations within the field of work was tenuous, and there was significant trepidation on the other side. The budgeting was complicated, given that our institution has a large and complex fiscal operation, and the partner organization is a small non-profit living hand-to-mouth. We began holding meetings and directly addressed the concerns and fears on both sides.

After two years of collaboration, stakeholder meetings and collaborative work sessions with the foundation program director, we have been awarded a $1,000,000 grant; even more importantly, we have formed a lasting relationship with an organization in our community which now affords us openings to audiences we might not otherwise reach. Playing an instrumental role in bringing these groups together and orchestrating the process was rewarding.

Closure

We share the satisfaction that comes from carefully putting together all the numerous parts of a giant and often confusing jigsaw puzzle. Whereas many PIs and co-PIs primarily think of proposal preparation in terms of narratives and budgets, we are the ones who gather all the required parts that make the package complete. There is a certain satisfaction that comes from ushering a proposal from conception to completion in its final form. Of course, only a grant writer would find beauty in a completed proposal package, but those of us who have labored long and hard on a proposal recognize the special beauty of the finished product once it is finally done.

Teaching

We grant writers who have education backgrounds are given the opportunity to nurture the “teacher” in us by presenting workshops on grant writing to faculty, staff, and graduate students and working individually with faculty. We work intensely with new faculty members to teach them the basics of grant writing, especially if they had no grant-writing experience in graduate school, and help them achieve those initial successes upon which they will build their research careers. With the expectation now growing in higher education that all faculty will seek grant funding, we have the privilege of teaching to highly intelligent and motivated audiences who are eager to learn.
Breadth of knowledge

As grant writers we learn a little about a lot of topics—ranging from inquiry-based learning to virtual reality simulations to rural entrepreneurship to homeland security. In our discussions with faculty, planning meetings, research, and proposal preparation, we absorb a lot of content knowledge. Whereas the faculty we work with often have a great depth of knowledge in a very narrow range, we who work with faculty in multiple disciplines develop a breadth of knowledge over a varied range of topics. Along with this comes the capability to translate the jargon of faculty who know their area intimately into a discourse for the layperson, a discourse more comfortable for reviewers, and ultimately more successful in grant seeking. If the faculty member is originally from another country, we become double translators. One of the faculty members we frequently work with talks and writes in a unique “techie Iraqi-English” that we have learned to translate into understandable English. Many times we take “academese” written by faculty members and translate it into simpler and more direct “grantese.”

Improved writing

In the midst of the almost continuous cycle of editing and proofing and writing that absorbs us daily, we begin to realize yet another gift of this profession—we have become better writers. We are almost constantly rewriting text to make it clearer, more understandable, and more succinct, or we are reading text written by faculty members or fellow grant writers that is so flawless and well-crafted that we wish we had written it ourselves. This exposure to varying degrees of writing quality and our own continual practice in writing parts of (and sometimes entire) proposals helps us hone our own skills as writers.

Challenges/Solutions

We who are drawn to grant writing are the kinds of people who would not be happy for very long if our jobs did not continually challenge us. As rules and regulations governing grant proposals constantly change, new programs come and go, funding priorities shift regularly, and faculty change but deadlines persist, we face multiple challenges on a daily basis. Here are some of the major challenges we face working in higher education environments and some solutions that have helped us.

Procrastination

We work with many different faculty members who vary dramatically in work styles. While many are timely and mindful of deadlines, others are habitual procrastinators who ignore internal deadlines and always submit their proposals at the 11th hour for review, sending university personnel (including ourselves) into a frenzy as we drop everything to get the proposal submitted on time. No matter how proactive we try to be, we know we are not going to change the behaviors of these faculty members. When we work with them, we know that their last-minute scramblings to pull the proposal together will ultimately become our emergencies. We can count on working late at the office, attempting to beat a midnight deadline while our stress steadily rises.

Possible solutions:
- We distribute to the participants a timeline with internal deadlines that need to be met in order for the proposal to go out on time.
We accept what we cannot change.

We try to clear our plates of other work when we know deadlines are approaching, so that we may devote as much time as needed to finish the proposal.

We continue to model anti-procrastination behavior.

We continue to try to shape the procrastinating behavior to be less last minute (with tactful but persistent reminders of deadlines, effusive “thank you’s” for parts turned in on time, etc.).

If there are several faculty members on the team, we try to divide the workload so that the procrastinating faculty member’s assignments do not significantly bog down progress.

We sometimes volunteer to accept responsibility for proposal parts beyond what we would normally do to compensate for the procrastinating faculty member and move the process along.

We work to build relationships and demonstrate a willingness to help other grant writers, support personnel, fiscal officers, etc. who can, in turn, help us during crunch times. We remember that what goes around, comes around.

We give a “heads up” to other institutional co-workers who must review the proposal that it may not meet the university’s internal deadline for completion.

We never, ever take for granted the faculty we work with who do not procrastinate.

Last-minute stress

Despite our best efforts to be proactive and do whatever proposal-related tasks we can ahead of time, inevitably we find ourselves with our backs against the wall, staring at the clock, frantically racing against time to get a proposal out the door. And this is when Murphy’s Law invariably kicks in: Whatever can go wrong will go wrong (especially at the last minute). Photocopiers break down, faculty members who need to sign forms leave for Europe, printers run out of ink, children get chickenpox, grandmothers die, e-mail service suddenly becomes erratic, and we cannot locate the file one of the co-PIs claims he sent us yesterday. These are the times when we question our own sanity in voluntarily putting ourselves in this ulcer-generating position.

Possible solutions:

We put out the call for forms, vitae, letters of support and commitment, and supplements from the very beginning and set deadlines for their submission well ahead of the proposal deadline (with best intentions).

We profusely thank faculty who turn everything in to us on time.

We expect the unexpected to happen.

We continue to be as proactive as we can, doing whatever we can in advance, not to inadvertently contribute to the last-minute frenzy.

We try to clear our plates of other work when we know deadlines are approaching, so that we may devote as much time as needed to finish the proposal.
The Joys and Sorrows of Grant Writing:

- We work to build relationships and demonstrate a willingness to help other grant writers, support personnel, fiscal officers, etc. who can, in turn, help us during crunch times. We remember that what goes around, comes around.
- We occasionally practice Lamaze breathing, meditation, chocolate therapy and other creative forms of stress relief.
- We indulge in occasional fits of unmitigated laughter and silliness with our fellow grant writers to relieve stress in the midst of the storm.
- We never, ever take it for granted when the process goes smoothly (somewhat similar to airline travel) and without last-minute stress.
- We carefully debrief with the project team after the deadline has passed and analyze what worked to make the process go smoothly (and what didn’t go as smoothly as we would liked).
- We reward ourselves when the proposal is finally out the door (a glass of wine, a morning off after many nights of overtime, a massage, more chocolate).

**Asking the tough questions**

We are often the ones who take the responsibility to ask the tough questions during the proposal development process. *Is the idea really competitive? Are we demonstrating enough innovation? Is our collaboration strong enough and will all the partners come through? Have we strayed too far from the original intent of the proposal guidelines? Do we have enough time left to finish the proposal and do a decent job?* While these questions don’t always win us popularity contests, they need to be asked occasionally to insure we are submitting competitive proposals that will be given serious consideration by reviewers—and that we don’t submit proposals that are weak enough that our institution will be “remembered” by the sponsor for years to come. It is better for us to point out that the Emperor has no clothes rather than having the potential funder point this out after the submission.

**Possible solutions:**

- We have learned that with continued experience in grant writing comes knowledge of what makes a competitive proposal and the confidence to ask the tough questions.
- We research and share abstracts and copies of proposals with teams that enable them to compare their work with the quality of funded proposals.
- We arrange conference calls with program officers so that teams can get feedback on their ideas at the beginning of the proposal development process.
- When we feel uncertain, we often confer with other grant writers for another opinion of what questions to ask and how.

**Stress of responsibility**

Faculty members rely upon us to wade through and translate lengthy and complicated proposal guidelines, manage collection of all the required vitae, current and pending forms, assurances, certifications and other numerous parts; construct the table of
contents; check references; insure accuracy of the budget; gather letters of support and commitment; input all of the information into electronic systems such as NSF’s FastLane or prepare the paper version in the correct order, etc. While this level of trust and expectation is highly flattering (“You keep us honest,” says one of our faculty members) it can be daunting, especially when we are juggling several proposal deadlines at once and all the proposals begin to blur together in our overloaded minds. Despite checklists, post-it reminders stuck on our computer screens, and voice mail reminders we call and leave for ourselves, many of us suddenly wake at 3 a.m., panicked at the thought that we might have inadvertently forgotten something that will surely deal a life-threatening blow to the proposal.

Possible Solutions:

- We continue to make checklists, write post-it reminders, and call ourselves with voice mail reminders, especially if we are working on several projects at once. We never trust our memories during times of stress.
- We walk through the proposal package with the PI or a co-worker to make sure all the proposal parts are accounted for.
- We appreciate agencies such as the National Science Foundation (NSF) that have developed electronic submission systems with built-in checks to insure everything has been included before the proposal is submitted.
- We work with our Office of Sponsored Programs Administration personnel to get parts of the proposal to them ahead of the internal deadline, if possible, so that they can help screen the package for any mistakes or omissions.

Working with difficult collaborators

Although faculty members working on proposals have the ability to choose their collaborators on projects, we grant writers do not have this option. When faculty members in our respective colleges, schools, or programs need our help, we provide assistance. Not all of these faculty members, however, are effective leaders, collaborators or communicators.

Possible solutions:

- We accept what we cannot change.
- We meet individually with the PI on a regular basis to help brainstorm possible solutions to problems, including how to work with faculty members who prove not to be effective team members.
- If there are several faculty members on the team, we try to divide the workload so that if one faculty member does not come through, it does not significantly bog down progress.
- We engage in informal “water cooler” discussions with faculty to try to prevent problems and/or address problems as they surface.
- We discuss options and possible solutions with other grant writers in our network.
- We keep in mind a justification for abandoning the project if collaboration stalls beyond reconciliation.
Playing the role of the middleman

In our grant writing roles, we are sometimes the bearers of news that faculty members may not want to hear—changes in indirect rates, “unreasonable” internal deadlines, yet another IRB regulation, more forms to fill out, etc. Sometimes faculty channel their irritation at us, who do not make rules or set policies but have to abide by them.

Possible solutions:
- We try not to take faculty members’ discontent personally and realize it is the message we bring, and not ourselves, that is the source of anger.
- We try to communicate changes on a regular basis with our faculty so that they are not taken by surprise.
- We sometimes have to remind faculty members that we are merely the messengers of the bad news and that we sympathize with their frustrations.
- As tactfully as possible, we try to help steer the negative energy faculty exert in objecting to rules and policies into accepting what they cannot change and getting the proposal done.

Buried under a sea of forms

The preparation of the proposal narrative is where we want to place our energy, yet we often feel buried under the sea of forms required by most federal proposals. We proudly finish a 15-page NSF narrative only to discover that when we print it out, the entire package resembles a small telephone book. The inconsistencies among agencies drive us nuts—the National Institutes of Health (NIH) biosketch requests publications in chronological order; the NSF biosketch requests publications in reverse chronological order. NSF’s FastLane system automatically generates a table of contents and page numbers. The NIH paper system requires that this be done by hand. Some agency forms can be filled out electronically while others have to be typed. And why can’t all federal agencies use the same basic set of forms?

Possible solutions:
- We accept what we cannot change.
- As a university grant writers’ network, we have developed “templates” for many federal agencies where we already have routine information filled in.
- We reuse forms from former proposals to the same agency, changing information where necessary.

Managing time

All of us struggle with time management. Although we try to pace ourselves, we cannot change proposal deadlines and are often overwhelmed when several proposals come due in the same week. Although we were warned when we accepted our positions that there would be crunch times that would require overtime work, at times we feel like our lives are no longer our own.
**Possible solutions:**

- We continue to be as proactive as we can, doing whatever we can in advance.
- We try to clear our plates of other work when we know deadlines are approaching, so that we may devote as much time as needed to finish the proposal.
- We work to build relationships and demonstrate a willingness to help other grant writers, support personnel, fiscal officers, etc. who can, in turn, help us during crunch times. We remember that what goes around, comes around.
- We remind ourselves that the crunch times will not last forever (they just seem to while we’re living through them).
- We appreciate the occasional “down times” when they come around and never, ever take them for granted.
- We take time off when there is a lull in the deadlines, in order to recover and prepare for the next storm.

**Network support**

We have found that one of the most vital keys to survival in this profession is collegial support. The authors of this article were among the first grant writers hired among a growing network of grant writers at the University of Missouri-Columbia who are assigned to specific schools, colleges, and programs. Similar to our faculty who collaborate and share the workload on projects, we grant writers collaborate on team building, proposal and budget development, and other aspects of grant writing. We send each other funding alerts, we bring potential collaborators to the table from our respective academic homes, we teach each other to use FastLane, we edit each others’ narratives, and we support one another in times of overload and need for catharsis and consolation.

At least twice yearly in our regular biweekly professional development network meetings, we devote a special session to solving common problems. While it is helpful to generate possible solutions together, it is equally therapeutic to know that we are not alone in many of the problems we face. We, who are now seasoned grant writers, informally mentor new grant writers and try to encourage them through the first year of rough waters. We celebrate our funding successes and console one another when our proposals (and a small part of our egos) are rejected.

We realize that some higher education grant writers are an office of one in their institutions and do not have an internal network of support similar to this. We are lucky to be a part of this network—yet another gift of this sometimes crazy profession we have chosen is the friendships we share, the mutual respect we have for one another’s talents, and the unique bond we share in navigating unpredictable waters together.
Proposal writing represents the last phase of thoughtful project development. The process generally includes a team of people and starts with an idea that will enhance current operations or address a specific financial need required to augment the operating budget. Either starting point for an idea must link seamlessly to an organization’s mission and strategic long-range planning objectives. To effectively launch the project, the grant writer must be fully versed in these fundamental aspects of the organization.

The grant writer can be a staff member on the development team, an external consultant, or the person who will manage and direct the project. No matter who takes on this task, a unique combination of qualities and skills is needed to be successful. At the top of the list is the ability to ask probing questions that get to the core of the proposed idea, moving the project leadership from a general concept to a well-defined and persuasive case for funding. Running a close second is the need for expert organizational skills that make the process efficient, productive, and stimulating. Finally, the grant writer must be highly responsive to emerging ideas, and able to move swiftly to advance an initial inquiry from the concept phase to an actual proposal. With this combination of skills, the grant writer can play a central role in the organization helping to develop a cadre of staff who are equipped and motivated to pursue funding opportunities for their priority projects.

Grant Writer’s Role as Coach

As a coach, the grant writer poses many questions. In the early phase of project development, some of the central ideas that the project director, together with the extended team, will need to consider include the following:

- How does the proposed project link to the institution’s mission?
- If the initiative is a new activity, how does it advance the objectives set forth in the mission statement?
- When was the strategic plan for the organization, department, or unit developed and what was the genesis of its creation?
What aspects of the strategic plan for the organization, department, or unit does the project respond to?

With answers to these basic questions, the project can be set in a larger context. The grant writer’s inquiry serves to stimulate discussion and encourages broader thinking. For example, the first project meeting can be designed to assist the team as they formalize their vision for the project within the context of these broader questions. The grant writer should discuss the agenda and the key questions with the project director in advance of the first meeting. This approach helps to focus the thought process and provides the project director with an opportunity to refine his or her thinking. Participants should receive a detailed agenda prior to the meeting so they arrive prepared to address these central points.

In some cases, the grant writer will be familiar with existing funding priorities within the organization as a result of previous discussions and may be able to match the philanthropic interests of a particular private foundation or corporation with these project ideas. The grant writer can be proactive in this area by reviewing RFP (Request for Funding) announcements, annual reports, Web sites, and white papers produced by the donor. Some of the sources that provide an excellent resource for research in this area include the following:

- Foundation Center Grantmaker Web Sites – http://fdncenter.org/funders/grantmaker/index.html
- GrantSpy – http://grantspy.com (paid subscription)
- Abe’s Report – www.abespg.com (paid subscription)

When the process includes the identification of a specific funding opportunity that matches a priority project within a particular organization, department, or unit, the grant writer will need to integrate information about the donor into the first discussions with the project team. In addition to the meeting agenda and a list of the key questions, the grant writer should provide the team with the foundation or corporate funding guidelines and any other supporting written materials about the donor. Some additional questions that will need to be considered as part of the list provided above include the following:

- How does the priority project complement the donor’s stated funding interests?
- Does the funding timeline specified by the donor match the required implementation plan for the institution’s priority project?

As a coach, the grant writer serves to motivate the project team. Seeking funding is generally tied to institutional growth, and this is the point from which significant enthusiasm can be initiated and sustained. This energy can become an essential motivational component, helping to encourage all of the project team members to assume responsibility for various aspects of the work associated with designing a comprehensive project and developing a competitive proposal. The mission and strategic long-range planning discussion moves next to questions associated with the need for the project. The
grant writer can assemble some preliminary material related to the need question in advance of this discussion. Consider some the following:

- Identify resources for local and national statistics and research related to the topic.
- Conduct a sector search on the Foundation Center’s web site (1) to ascertain what other organizations and funding agencies have been considering a similar idea.
- Review web site postings, related funding from other sources, such as the federal government, and recent publications to further expand the base of knowledge associated with the targeted initiative.

**Grant Writer’s Role as Collaborator**

Project design is enhanced by the inclusion of various partners. Potential collaborators can be representatives from other departments within the organization. For instance, in a higher education setting it can be very useful for two different schools to launch a joint venture around a specified topic. The shared resources and expertise of the faculty in this situation can enhance the impact and scope in terms of the number of students served, and provides a strong foundation upon which a new initiative is built. Similarly, external partners representing other organizations interested in the same topic extend the potential impact of a project. When partnerships are developed thoughtfully, all parties involved play a central role identifying the need, constructing the solution, and taking ownership of the implementation steps to conduct the initiative. Early on in the process, the grant writer once again needs to ask questions to identify partnership opportunities if they haven’t been considered or to help further define those that have been initiated.

As a collaborator, the grant writer can ask a series of questions to help advance the potential of partnerships related to a specific project. The following are some examples:

**Internal Partnerships**

- What other departments or units within the organization have a vested interest in the outcomes of the proposed project?
- Does this department or unit have staff with specific expertise that will enhance the implementation of the project?
- What collective resources from all internal partners can be provided as part of the institution’s cost share?
- What components of the work will have permanent and lasting implications within the respective department or unit?

**External Partnerships**

- What other agencies or organizations within the community are concerned with the problem being addressed by the proposed project?
- Have these organizations conducted work that can be studied so that what is proposed next can build on earlier success and address any potential challenges previously identified?
- Does the organization have any existing relationship with the targeted external partner?
Who are the key players within the target organization, and have any discussions related to a joint venture been discussed?

Working with an extended team that includes internal and/or external partners requires high levels of efficiency and accountability in order to achieve success. The grant writer can play a central role organizing planning meetings, developing agendas, disseminating information pre and post meetings, and being accessible to all parties throughout the design phase as well as the proposal development phase. Creating project e-mail lists that can readily disseminate information, taking ownership of the communication piece, and being available by phone can go a long way in ensuring that the participants stay connected and deliver what is needed. In this capacity the grant writer serves as coach, collaborator, and process facilitator.

Grant Writer’s Role as Project Development Specialist

Once the project team has been expanded to include the appropriate internal and external partners, it is time to move beyond the conceptual phase of the project and into the articulation of the actual project. This process includes defining the project goal, anticipated outcomes, budget, and implementation timeline. At this stage, the grant writer works with the project team to articulate a clear and concise project goal with a series of anticipated outcomes. The achievement of the project outcomes is delineated through action items listed in the project timeline, tying seamlessly to implementation costs.

The use of various basic tools can be very helpful during this phase of the project design process. The grant writer can create a budget and project timeline templates for use with each project team. The project timeline provides information about the implementation activities, responsible staff, and timing for each action item. This form can be used as a handout in a planning meeting and helps to focus all of the participants on the scope of what is being proposed. Additionally, a budget template can be used in the same manner to help the project team consider staffing, materials, travel, marketing, equipment, and other costs associated with a project’s implementation. The resource package for this phase of the process can include a budget summary page that provides an explanation of the kinds of line items often included in a project budget. Use of sample budgets and project timelines from previously funded projects can effectively illustrate what these documents should contain.

As a project development specialist, the grant writer should make recommendations related to the appropriate use of external staffing resources. Designing an assessment framework for a project should be considered as an integral part of the project design process. There are various resources available that can help the grant writer to effectively introduce the assessment component to the leadership team, including:

- Learning as we go: Making Evaluation Work for Everyone, Peter J. York, TCC Group, New York, NY
  - Overview - [http://www.tccgrp.com](http://www.tccgrp.com)
  - Publication - [http://www.tccgrp.com/pdfs/LearningAsWeGo.pdf](http://www.tccgrp.com/pdfs/LearningAsWeGo.pdf)
- W.K. Kellogg Foundation
The grant writer can also identify an assessment consultant. This can be accomplished by making an inquiry to faculty at a local college or university, by asking other agencies that have received funding, and by talking to various local donors. Once a good assessment consultant is identified, information about this potential resource should be made available to staff so the consultant can be invited to join the project planning team. Some assessment consultants require a fee during the planning and development phase. Others may be willing to consider the scope of the assignment and provide recommendations for how they can help, inclusive of related costs, without charging a fee during the proposal development phase. For large-scale initiatives in the proposal development process, it can be a worthwhile investment for an organization to consider a funding allocation for an assessment consultant’s stipend. Building a solid relationship with an expert assessment consultant can be a very useful resource to your organization’s pursuit of funding opportunities.

The grant writer has the unique responsibility of assisting an organization in its attainment of long and short-term growth. Pursuit of funding for special projects and institutional programming requires an organization to think broadly about its priorities and how these priorities complement and advance the institution’s mission. The grant writer’s role as coach, collaborator, and project development specialist is centrally concerned with stimulating discussions that consistently clarify how a funding priority fits into a larger context within the organization. The grant writer is also in a unique position to study the field of funding opportunities and serve as a clearinghouse for this information sharing it with the leadership within an organization, department, or unit. Through a sequence of logical steps that move seamlessly from one phase of the process to the next, the project team will fine-tune the design, and a persuasive proposal for funding will emerge. The grant writer’s role as coach, collaborator, and project development specialist can effectively advance this important objective making a significant contribution to the growth of the organization.

(1) Foundation Center’s Sector Search- http://fdncenter.org/funders/web_search/web_search.html
Jeffrey A. Bastuscheck, Ph.D. is the Contracts and Grants Specialist for the Alabama Cooperative Extension System. He is responsible for identifying potential sources for program funding, and assisting Extension Specialists and Agents in defining their program ideas and preparing proposals for funding. He has over thirty years of experience in proposal writing, program development and management in the public and private sectors.

To grant professionals the term Research generally means one thing: looking for funding sources. As proposal developers we comb the Internet and other sources to search out government agencies, foundations and corporate givers that grant funds to meet our clients’ program needs. Seldom do we give much thought to the possibility that our profession, and the wider field of fundraising in general, could be an appropriate venue for scientific investigation.

When I volunteered several months ago to write a recurring column about research activities related to the grants and fundraising professions I wasn’t sure what, if anything, I would find. A Google search of the term, Grantwriting Research, turned up “about 147,000” responses. Enclosing it in quotation marks distilled the results to a more manageable 337. A quick sample of the entries revealed, not surprisingly, that they dealt primarily with the researching of funding sources, teaching grant writing courses, or writing research proposals.

The next step in the search for research led to the larger organizations serving philanthropic and nonprofit agencies: The Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University, The Foundation Center, the Association of Fund Raising Professionals and Association for Research into Nonprofits and Volunteer Agencies (ARNOVA) and the Council on Foundations. All of these organizations conduct and report on research related to the support and advancement of philanthropic and nonprofit organizations

The Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University (http://www.philanthropy.iupui.edu/research.htm) is working to develop a comprehensive program of academic training and research investigating philanthropic and nonprofit programs and practices. In addition to its advanced degree programs in nonprofit management and philanthropy, it has a number of ongoing research programs that study and report on giving and volunteering behavior of citizens, and policy and management challenges faced by nonprofit organizations in Indiana and nationally.

The Center sponsors a competitive research program directed toward building a broad base of knowledge about the causes and consequences of philanthropic behavior involving individuals, communities, and institutions.

The Foundation Center (http://www.fdncenter.org/), an invaluable source for research into funding sources, has a significant research effort, primarily emphasizing foundations’ philanthropic statistics and trends. Special reports are available in pdf format that analyze philanthropic trends in Health and the Arts, and a Special Report on Foundation Funding for the Humanities. The center also has a searchable database of literature in the nonprofit sector which accesses the collections in the Center’s nationwide network of libraries.
The two reports on health policy and funding published in 2004 will be of particular interest to grant professionals working in that field. The first, “Health Policy Research and Foundation Grantmaking”, chronicles the increasing role of foundations in the funding of health care policy programs. After the failure of the Clinton Administration’s comprehensive health care initiative, health policy activity shifted aggressively from the Federal government to the private nonprofit sector. As of 2002 Foundation support for health policy research exceeded federal funding by nearly 20%. The author found that foundations are playing an increasing role in keeping health policy in the public spotlight. Foundations also support a substantial amount of the academic research and training in health policy, although that role is not fully reflected in the amount of scholarly literature generated.

The second of the two reports, “Update on Foundation Health Policy Grant Making,” goes into considerably more detail regarding the specific areas receiving the funding support, and the top funders as of 2002, the latest year available. Through an analysis of funding trends since 1995, the report addresses the questions of which foundations are the leading sponsors of health policy programs, and how funding priorities have changed. The authors found that the number of foundations in their sample making health policy grants increased by over 50% and total grant dollars more than tripled from approximately $100 million to over $360 million. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, a longtime leader in the field, increased its funding significantly, providing 63% of the total dollars for Health policy funding in 2002. While giving increased across the board, it was greater for programs in reproductive health, health care access, and mental health and substance abuse.

The Association of Fund Raising Professionals (http://www.afpnet.org/) is the professional association for individuals who generate funding support for non-profit and charitable organizations. It has 26,000 members in 1,723 chapters. The AFP has a strong emphasis on research in the profession, both basic and applied. It reviews and revises its priorities to reflect issues that are critical to its membership. It conducts ongoing research and reporting on topics with day-to-day utility including donor motivation, giving demographics, financial, management and ethical issues and developments within the profession. Its strategic research agenda covers issues of the public trust and public policy.

In addition to its own association publication, AFP co-sponsors with the Center for Philanthropy at IUPUI the quarterly monograph series, “New Directions in Philanthropic Fundraising” published by Josse-Bass.

The Association For Research On Nonprofit And Voluntary Action. (http://www.arnova.org/) is an international membership organization dedicated to fostering, through research, an understanding of the nonprofit sector, philanthropy and volunteerism. ARNOVA brings together both theoretical and applied interests, helping scholars gain insight into the day-to-day concerns of nonprofit and voluntary organizations, while providing nonprofit professionals with research they can use to improve the quality of life for citizens and communities.

The association has four special interest sections, Community and Grassroots; Teaching; Theories, Issues, Boundaries; and Social Entrepreneurship/Enterprise. Each has its own focus, organization and newsletter, and serves as a forum for sharing theory, practice and policy related to the specific focus area.
ARNOVA’s principal publication, “Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly,” publishes papers reporting research on voluntarism, citizen participation, philanthropy, civil society, and nonprofit organizations. Abstracts are available in a searchable database on the ARNOVA web site.

The Council on Foundations (http://www.cof.org/) is a membership organization of more than 2,000 grantmaking foundations and giving programs worldwide. It provides leadership expertise, legal services and networking opportunities to its members and to the general public.

The Council's Research department prepares a number of surveys and reports which are designed to increase knowledge about the board, staff, and endowment management practices of foundations and corporate philanthropy programs. It publishes annual reports on grantmaker salaries and benefits, as well as a biennial Foundation Management series containing information on private foundation administrative expenses, and foundation governing board and staffing patterns.

Based on this first foray in the search for research about grants and grant making it appears that the emphasis is strongly on investigation into issues related to foundation and nonprofit management and funding. Government funding policies are addressed, in the case of health care policy, in terms of how foundations have stepped in to counter the effects of funding decreases and policy changes.

The search will continue. Suggestions for topics and sources are more than welcome, particularly in the areas of government funding, program development and proposal development and review.
Book Review

by Mary Hall & Susan Howlett
Portland State University Continuing Education Press, 2003. $34.95

Reviewed by Michael Wells

Michael Wells is a partner in Grants Northwest, a consulting firm in Portland, Oregon. He is a charter member of AAGP and has served on the Board of Directors since 2000. Michael is currently serving as the Treasurer of the AAGP Board of Directors. He also teaches grant writing at Portland State University in Portland, Oregon.

I’ve been using Mary Hall’s classic Getting Funded as the text for my university grantwriting class for a decade, but the third edition was getting a little dated. So I was excited to learn that she was updating it. I wasn’t disappointed, its still one of the most straightforward “how to” grantwriting books in a crowded field (Books in Print lists 75 titles under “nonprofit proposal writing”). For this edition, Hall has a collaborator, Susan Howlett, but I don’t know how they divided the work -- the book flows seamlessly.

The new Getting Funded keeps the same structure as the old book, dividing it into two sections: four chapters on Essential Planning Steps (including assessing organizational capability and finding funding sources) and nine chapters on Writing and Submitting the Proposal. But within this structure, she’s gone into more detail and made the book more practical. While the third edition seemed a little academic, this one is designed for someone working in a nonprofit on a real grant proposal.

In addition to the more practical approach, Hall has made it contemporary. The resources pages include web sites as well as books and publications. The evaluation section covers logic models and acknowledges that smaller grants don’t need fancy evaluation. The writing section talks about working in a team to develop a project.

Getting Funded is a perfect teaching tool. Its organization leads the novice reader through a logical progression to understanding the process of project planning, then each of the sections in a full grant proposal. The information is equally useful for foundation or government grants, and the differences are noted. Hall and Howlett are aware of the book’s long use as a text and have syllabuses in the back for a nine-session class or a one day workshop, as well as suggested assignments. My only complaint is that some of the one-page charts which I used in class have been divided between pages -- so I had to cut and paste to create overheads.

I would recommend the new Getting Funded to anyone in the grants field, whether you’re just getting started doing your first major proposal or you’re a working professional wanting a reference work.
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