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AAGP Mission:

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

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

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

About This Publication:

The Journal of the AAGP is a professional journal devoted to the improvement of the grants professional and the profession. It is a resource for teaching and learning within the profession and provides an outlet for sharing information about the profession. It also provides a forum for the discussion of issues within the grants profession and the expression of philosophical ideas.
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In recent years we have all been tasked to report on outcome measurement. Funders want and deserve to know how much bang they get for their buck. In an era where all funding has become competitive funding, it is commonplace to include a section in an application for funding detailing how your agency plans to measure effectiveness.

When an agency is committed to taking steps to reach this goal, be it through written surveys, comment cards or focus groups, attention is often on getting the report off in the mail to the funder, breath a sigh of relief the task is done, and move on. Not only the funder, however, can benefit from this information. This paper takes a look at who else deserves to see that report, and how the information can be used.

The agency I work for has completed almost three years of program evaluation, resulting in an accumulation of raw data about our programs and the perceptions of people we serve. Compiling this information into a report and then disseminating the report, with regard to communicating the lessons learned from the program evaluations themselves, are the next steps in the process. The trick is to do this in a way that is timely, honest and consistent. It means getting the word out to all stakeholders that are involved in and supportive of our programs. By disseminating information about our programs, we can:

- Provoke thinking and discussion about issues that stakeholders (staff, parents, program participants, community) and staff have with the program;
- Encourage others to take action on the issue;
- Attract volunteers and in-kind resources from local citizens and agencies;
- Attract new funders to our giving campaigns;
- Maintain (or renew) an interest and commitment in our programs;
- Let people know what we’ve been doing to improve the quality of life for youth and people in our communities.

“It is not sufficient to merely conduct evaluation as an information-gathering activity. It is also important to disseminate and communicate evaluation results to key stakeholders and other audiences as soon as possible and in forms that are easy to understand and use” (Office of Oversight and Evaluation). If we approach evaluation as an opportunity and a responsibility to learn and change, then we need to think strategically about what to do with evaluation findings. This
includes engaging in a systematic process whereby the evaluation results can be reported with as great a deal of reliability and validity as the evaluation process itself. This process includes:

1. Identifying our audience.
2. Determining what information our staff and stakeholders need to know.
3. Sharing the results of the evaluations.
4. Assessing the quality and effectiveness of those dissemination activities.

What my agency did at first was disseminate results only to the Vice Presidents that have direct supervision of the program being evaluated. It turned out that’s where the report stopped: the information did not reach those with responsibility for making important decisions about the program, implementers of the program, or any other potential users of the information.

**Who is our audience? What information do they need? Why do they need it?**

“Feedback is the breakfast of champions,” a quote used to inspire personal effectiveness and leadership, is equally relevant to public health efforts. Knowing what is working and what is not working and considering corrective action make a healthy and necessary “breakfast.” This breakfast may or may not taste good on all days but will nurture continuous improvements and drive systemic and evidenced based contributions to the common goal of improving health status (Stolzfus and Pillai).

Two years ago, I spearheaded a process of program evaluation to judge the worth and merit of our programs. In January 2003, I implemented a comprehensive system of evaluation and researched based practices. Through the use of written survey evaluation tools, a strategy was implemented to measure the effectiveness of promoting agency initiatives. Evaluations were used to identify program strengths and weaknesses in an effort to improve every program.

Four levels of information were gathered from program participants, including getting their reactions and feelings; learning (enhanced attitudes, perceptions or knowledge); changes in skills (applied the learning to enhance behaviors) and effectiveness (improved performance because of enhanced behaviors). Beginning in May 2003, surveys were administered at appropriate intervals throughout the year to all participants of all programs. Where past measures of success were based on attendance, these surveys now allowed the agency to compare baseline data and effectively measure individual achievement levels and outcomes of programs and services.
**What information needs do our staff and stakeholders have?**

We engage in a process of evaluation because “…programs without evaluations represent a missed opportunity to generate information needed to advocate for and leverage resources and attention for addressing…” (Stolzfus and Pillai) problems and issues within the agency.

We should start planning for dissemination of all written reports at the beginning of any initiative and continue to revisit the dissemination goals as the process unfolds. There is a need to determine what knowledge and information generated by the evaluations that would be most useful to them. From the beginning of an initiative and throughout its implementation, we need to be cognizant of the needs of staff and stakeholders. What information do they need to do their jobs better? Why do problems persist? What changes are needed to influence the system?

These needs for information should come from staff themselves, parents, and recipients of services. This research will also help refine and even refocus evaluation questions and results so the evaluation tool itself is useful to external audiences. Gathering these needs can be done through the use of focus group discussions and personal interviews with stakeholders.

“There is value in involving stakeholders in data collection, analysis and interpretation if it fosters greater ownership and acceptability of findings and follow-up action” (Stolzfus and Pillai). Each time evaluations are administered they generate new, useful and practical knowledge about program practices. Communication of program evaluation findings is vital to improve programs and to advocate for continued or additional program support, both internally in the agency and from outside funding sources.

**Sharing evaluation results**

Reporting to the Vice Presidents was important, but the evaluation results should have reached a wider audience. “Don’t bury your evaluation results in a filing cabinet! Evaluation results should be popularized and used in other aspects of your organization’s work like advocacy or public education” (Gender Evaluation Methodology).

Ways to share evaluation results may include written materials (reports, case studies, profiles, etc), meetings, the agency web site, in PSA’s, just to include a few. One interesting way to get the reader’s attention is to document program achievement through a “story.” Inserting quotes or human-interest stories keeps the material interesting.

Another part of the report should also include failures of the evaluation tool as well. Lessons are often learned more from failures than from successes, and therefore have an obligation to report these findings.

In addition to delivering a final report, it may be useful to organize meetings with various stakeholders and, using a variety of techniques such as visual
displays (charts, graphs) and oral presentations to communicate evaluation results, help stakeholders interpret the information.

The evaluation results proved useful information to staff wishing to enhance their programs. There is also an opportunity to change program policy by informing key staff of promising avenues for change. Additional benefits include increasing employee and public awareness issues in their programs and finally, accountability to grantors. “Beyond valid data and rigorous methods, the measure of a successful evaluation must be how useful and useable the findings are to the intended audience” (Evaluation at the James Irvine Foundation).

**Assessing the quality and effectiveness of our dissemination activities.**

Evaluation at the James Irvine Foundation reports that we can avoid the typical pitfalls of dissemination – and ultimately achieve our goals influencing practice in the field by doing these three things:

- Communicate evaluation results in a way that is credible and clear for all our readers.
- Be selective about which lessons we share.
- Share discoveries and insights as we learn them throughout the evaluation process.

Evaluation results can be used to communicate and build relationships within the community we work in, other organizations with similar missions, with grantors, be used for information in our annual reports, and as a powerful marketing tool. Information can be useful in all reports and newsletters, internal and external.

For all, an explanation of what we wanted to learn from the evaluation and what methods were used to conduct the evaluation can go a long way to teach while keeping an eye on the goal.

Through this final report it can easily be seen if goals and objectives have been reached. At last it is easy to determine the impact the program had on program participants through measurable outcomes.

Disseminating evaluation results does not ensure implementation of recommendations and use of lessons learned. Active follow-up is necessary to implement recommendations made to program managers and to incorporate lessons learned.

**Works Cited**

Gender Evaluation Methodology, “Putting Evaluation Results to Work! Worksheet Two: Planning How To Disseminate or Share Evaluation Results” <http://www.apcwomen.org/gem/go4gem/element4w2.htm>


I heard a story once that gave me pause, and had me thinking about AAGP. The story begins with a farmer who was working in his field when a beautiful BMW pulled up – out stepped a good-looking man wearing Ray Bans, Gucci shoes, and an Armani suit. He walked up to the farmer and said, “If I can tell you how many sheep you have, will you give me one?”

The farmer looked surprised, thought a minute, then said, “Well, I reckon.”

So the young man pulled out his laptop, typed in the coordinates of his location, and hit “send.” The information went to a corporate office in Europe and linked to the corporate satellite. The satellite found the coordinates and took a picture. The picture was sent back to an office in New York, where it was quickly scanned and analyzed. Within minutes, a message popped up on the young man’s BlackBerry. With a smug look, he turned to the farmer and said, “You have 1,225 sheep.”

The farmer said, “Well, that’s exactly correct.” The young man proceeded to walk into the field, scoop up the sheep of his choice, and carry it back to his car. The farmer said, “Wait a minute. You’re a betting man… If I can tell you what you do for a living, will you give my animal back?”

The young man thought for a minute and said, “I guess that would be a fair wager.”

The farmer said, “You’re a consultant.”

The young man was surprised, and said, “Yes, how did you know that?”

The farmer said, “Well, you came here **uninvited**, you obviously **know nothing** about what I do, you proceeded with an analysis that **I did not request**, and gave me an **answer for something I already knew**. Now, could you put my dog back?”
Although a funny story, it did make me think about what we do for a living. In order to keep our profession at a high level, we must ensure that we, as grant professionals, are not making the same mistakes as the consultant in the story.

**When we are not invited**

We usually do not find ourselves in “uninvited” situations; most often our organization or our clients request us to find funds for a particular project or need. We often respond to an RFP, so we are invited to bid. But there are times when you might not be “invited.”

- You may be asked to help find funding for a project that needs seed money, which may require you to seek support from a number of organizations. Quite often that is done in the form of a concept paper. In sales parlance, you will be making “cold calls.” True, some funders have an outline of what they would like you to tell them, and they let it be known that they are open to proposals. But you must be careful to avoid the “shotgun” approach, where you take one concept paper and send it out to numerous potential funders. Each of your applications should be tailored to the focus of a particular funder.

- At the end of the fiscal year or at the end of the legislative session, extra funds may be available for programs. You need to develop a relationship with an organization or program officer so that you might find out about these opportunities. Usually, these applications involve a concept paper, white paper, or an RFP, but because of the nature of these funds (usually a short turnaround), developing your reputation for reliability, responsiveness, and efficiency will make you a viable contender for these opportunities.

- Unsolicited proposals or white papers are sometimes sent to appropriate funders. Here you will have to do your homework in order to know which agencies accept unsolicited proposals. Again, your reputation and the relationships you have cultivated will enable you to be successful with unsolicited proposals. The main thing to remember is that the proposal must match the funders’ directives and requirements.

**How do these issues differ across the country?**

- Funders may differ according to the industry in the area. You probably aren’t going to be writing a federal Department of Agriculture proposal for New York City or an urban/inner-city HUD grant for a country club.
neighborhood. But local funders usually match the community needs, so look close to home for the most appropriate applications.

- What if there are not enough industries or funders in your area? In that case, you may want to look for funders in locations that have similar demographics to those in your area.
- Make sure you also consider looking outside of the “usual” locations for funding. For example, if you are affiliated with an education institute, not all of the grants that you write need to come from the Department of Education.
- Use the networks and contacts that you establish at grant workshops and conferences. Look around the room, network, and offer to help each other. We as grant professionals can be partners in efforts that involve dissemination, collaboration, evaluation, etc.

**When we know nothing about what the client, or project, does**

Quite often we are expected to go into a project and develop a proposal for a subject that we do not know. It could be anything from an environmental project to storm water mitigation to photonics, holography, and laser technology. Sometimes at the start of a project, we probably couldn’t even give a definition, but by the time the project is complete, we could actually have a conversation about the subject. That learning curve can keep a grant professional energized about the grant vocation—it is never dull, it is full of new learning opportunities, we meet people we might never have met before, and we can carry on a conversation at any party!

So that you don’t become the consultant in the story, who knows nothing about the subject at hand, how should you approach a subject that you know little about?

- When working on a project with new or unfamiliar subject matter, seek out the information from content area experts. This might require scheduling an interview to get the answers.
- Another method would be to form a team to develop the proposal. The team might be composed of content experts and you would serve as the facilitator of the team, drawing out the information needed to answer the questions in the proposal. If content experts are not readily available, you may need to rely on the Internet or library to find the information you need. A combination of all three (interviews, design teams, and research) is usually required for any thoroughly explained proposal.
- Sometimes we know little about the company or agency. Whether that company is the funder or the client, information that will help you can be found in annual reports, comprehensive plans, state or national standards,
PR materials, and on the Internet. The more you know about the company or organization, the more accurate you will be in your request.  

- Quite often the roles and responsibilities are not clear for both developing the proposal as well as in carrying out the proposed project. For this, you may have to rely on one-on-one interviews to figure out how best to work with the individuals. You might even look at job descriptions to help you identify your key players.

The opposite issue may arise, and it might be the client, not the grant professional, who “knows nothing.” In this case, you have to set a clear understanding at the initial interview or meeting.  

- Be clear about what you will do in the development and what you expect the client or staff to do. This may change from project to project; discuss who will be facilitating meetings, gathering data, collecting letters of support, and all other details that will be involved with the final proposal packet.

- It is also important that you help the client understand the RFP. This might be accomplished through a technical assistance or orientation meeting, an outline of the proposal and requirements, or a PowerPoint presentation of the highlights. It is essential to get everyone on the same page of music from the beginning and not assume that they will read the RFP and understand the direction the project must take. It is often a good idea to use email to collect forms and information. This will help you avoid retyping and enable you to translate the RFP for the client.

- Ensure that implementation happens as planned by including the people who will be implementing the project in the project planning.

The last player who may “know nothing about what we do” might be the project partners. Make sure they are invited to meetings, that they have input in the proposal development, and that their support listed in the proposal matches the statements in their letters of commitment.  

If possible, get the letters of support and commitment at the beginning of proposal development so that you not only make sure the proposal matches the letters, but you also avoid the “deadline scurry” when you are trying to get everything gathered.

- It may not be possible to get the letters up front if the partners insist on reading the proposal before they give their letters. This may require a meeting with them to explain the process and deadline. In this case, you may want to have them approve a draft letter so you can proceed with the proposal. If all else fails, move the deadline for completion earlier than the needed mailing date.
Keep in mind that people have different learning styles and communication methods. You’ll have to be on your toes to figure out who needs things in writing or orally. Some may even need things repeated and others just may need direct statements with deadlines.

Whether it is the grant professional, the client, or the partners who “know nothing about what we do,” a good method of getting everyone on the same page of music is to use a logic model. The great Yogi Berra said, “If you don’t know where you’re going, how are you gonna’ know when you get there?” To help our design teams, clients, or even ourselves know where we are going in the proposal, the logic model can give you a picture of how the organization does its work, the outcomes expected in the proposal, and the activities or processes of the program. Two good sources of the logic model are the Kellogg Foundation (www.wkkf.org) or United Way (http://national.unitedway.org). The logic model keeps everyone focused and even helps during development of the proposal to make sure the project remains focused.

**When we give a wrong analysis**

In the story, the consultant did not get to the “real need.” Knowing the number of sheep was not the “need,” but the need might have been sheep health issues, predator issues, or building construction in the area encroaching on pastures. How can you get to the need when working with a client? The sad fact is that sometimes they do not know—they have a “want list” and confuse that with a need.

- You might start with an interview or an orientation meeting. Dig for the issues, find out the strengths, and identify the concerns. Do not make assumptions about the need. Make sure you are basing the need on facts.
- Find the statistics, facts, and trends. These will help you paint the picture for the funder.
- Look at organization goals or strategic plans. This could be the basis of the need. If an organization has no goals, the consultant might have to end up serving as a coach first before the proposal can be developed.

**When we give an answer the client already knew**

Here your challenge may be to help the organization or client separate what they think they know from reality.

- Be sure to keep your opinion or their opinion out of the proposal. You can quote a source that has the same opinion. If you use opinions, you chance having a reader who disagrees with your statement. They can’t disagree with a quote.
• What if no data is available or the data is outdated? A method that could be deployed is to use surveys to collect information and create the data. This doesn’t need to be a highly developed survey, but enough to support your statement without having it sound like opinion.

• There are a lot of ready sources available to you: Use Internet searches to locate research in that field, research cited by the funder, newspaper articles, and local agencies (e.g., police departments).

So that we do not end up as the consultant in our story, we need to –

**Raise the quality of our products, and our own skills, in order to raise the standards in our profession.**

So, when setting your “community or organization needs” in your grant development activities, don’t forget to set your “professional needs” and join your peers and fellow professionals in developing your line of work. Networking and communication will always be essential in our field. We can keep the lines of communication open by being members of professional organizations and chapters. You can also stay in communication with your peers through web sites, newsletters, forums/listservs, professional journals, and national conferences.

Attending conferences and workshops will help you maintain a high level of professionalism. The only caveat is to be sure to discriminate in the types of training you attend by making sure they practice what we hold as the standard in our industry. Also, be sure to distinguish between the “certificates” available to us as professionals. As our field grows, so do the for-profit organizations who want to attract you to their training. Often, people mistake “certificate of completion” with “professional certification” or ”credentialing.” Pauline Annarino, President of the Grant Professional Certification Institute, explains that “A certificate of completion states that an individual has completed a course and achieved a certain level of success in understanding the principles taught in the course. It could be part of a good grant professional’s portfolio that adds some credibility, but it is not enough alone.

“Unfortunately, many of our colleagues in the field are not aware that a difference exists between a certification and a credential. The Grant Professional Certification Institute (GPCI) explains, “in the realm of testing and credentialing, a professional credential must be developed following rigorous psychometric protocols.” These protocols include, among many others, the following:

- An educational program cannot also issue a professional credential upon completion of coursework. Look at some that can be found on the Internet. Are they offering the training and the certification?
The psychometric protocols used to design and implement the certification tool, including validity and reliability outcomes, must be published.

The test’s content must be validated, in part, through a statistically designed task analysis that canvassed our profession.

“Currently, there appears to be no other certificate being offered today that has completed these or any other established protocols. GPCI is striving to meet this need.”

We must also uphold a code of ethics such as the AAGP code. Some of our members put the Code of Ethics in their portfolio for their clients. This is a good practice, especially if the client has any question, such as asking about percentage-based pay. Having a code of ethics to cite, instead of giving your opinion, adds to your credibility. If you work within an organization, is your code of ethics displayed in your office?

If you are not already doing so, develop a portfolio and an annual report (you have to be your own best salesman). Quite often an annual report is not required by your organization, but it should be your chance to show (statistically) your level of success, professionalism, and results.

Put together a “package” that shows your credential – one part of any of the items above is not enough as a stand-alone. And remember, there are ways to: make yourself and your profession desirable (as opposed to uninvited); make sure you know about what you do and what your client does (instead of knowing nothing); analyze information and make sure you are meeting the needs of your client or organization (rather than providing information not requested); and develop grants that produce a solution and desirable outcomes to solve the needs of the client or organization (instead of telling them something they already know).
Freelance Grant Writers

By
Shelley Uva

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.

All development offices are different in the ways that they approach not only the larger issues in fundraising, but also the most basic concerns, such as staffing. I began my own career in development in 1979 at a large urban university with a staff of more than 20 people devoted solely to fundraising. Currently, however, I am a one-person development office in a community-based social service agency. I have also worked as a freelance grant writer for 18 years. Some of my clients were smaller organizations that had no grant writers on staff. Other clients hired me to supplement full-time staff writers who were overloaded with projects. Still others hired me to fill in until they were able to find a full-time staff member. Whether you are a freelance grant writer or an employer, you will find the following article helpful.

The Market:

Many national organizations employ large numbers of development officers deployed in multi-state locations. Larger organizations usually have both greater numbers of full-time development staff and more sizeable budgets that allow them to hire more freelancers. The size of an agency, however, does not necessarily determine whether or not freelance personnel are used. Many smaller organizations also hire consultants.

Some agencies restrict their use of freelance staff to specialized areas of development, such as event planning. Although grant writing is a specialized area of development, many fundraisers don’t think of it that way. After all, all of us went to school and all of us learned to write. Many people, no matter what their actual job title, seem to believe that almost anyone is capable of producing quality written material. “I would do this myself if only I had the time,” is a comment every freelance grant writer has heard. The fact is, however, that time alone does not make a good grant writer.

The first question to be considered when thinking about using freelance grant writers is: What is a logical assignment for a freelancer and what might better be done in-house?
Reasons for Hiring a Freelance Grant Writer:

Special Proposals: The reason why many organizations use outside consultants to oversee special events is that these types of events are, in many ways, separated from regular, daily development functions. Therefore, it makes sense to many agencies to use a consultant for these kinds of projects. When it comes to grantwriting, many organizations will hire an outside consultant for a major proposal that is outside of the usual requests sent to foundations and corporations on an annual basis. For example, many agencies bring in an outside writer to work on a Kresge Foundation Grant or an application to the National Endowment for the Humanities. In fact, there are freelance grantwriters who specialize in preparing proposals for specific large funders, such as the Kresge Foundation.

Special Projects: Some non-profits use freelancers only for other types of special writing, such as newsletters, brochures or other publications. Non-profit organizations with a multi-person development office, may find that including one or more freelance grant-writers best meets their needs for these kinds of special projects.

Potential Conflicts:
As a freelance grantwriter, I had good relationships with most of my clients. However, I did experience difficulties in working with a few organizations. Sometimes the problem was a poor mix of personalities, but much more often, the issue came down to a fundamental lack of understanding of how to effectively use a freelance grantwriter. What makes the relationship between organization and freelance writer work or not work is not necessarily the assignment itself, but how the organization works with the freelancer. A good professional grant writer should have no trouble delivering BUT the employer has to articulate what that is. A freelance grant writer cannot be expected to guess what is needed.

Too Little Information:
Far too often, the first and largest stumbling block appears at the outset when the organization assumes too much knowledge on the part of the freelancer. Whether you hire a writer to prepare a newsletter, a Kresge Foundation grant or a series of proposals seeking annual renewal funds, it is critically important for both parties to realize that the freelance grant writer is an outsider who lacks insider knowledge. In other words, no one who works with an employer on a consulting basis is ever going to know as much about the organization as the employer and staff members. This may seem obvious, but all too often organizations fail to grasp this simple fact. It is critically important to realize that the freelance grant writer will know only as much about the non-profit as the employer and staff are willing to share.
**Too Many Changes:**
Freelance writing also should not be viewed as a multiple choice type activity. Asking a freelance grant writer to create three or four different versions of one proposal so that the employer or board can pick the best one is a waste of both time and money.

**Recommendations to prevent conflict:**
It is absolutely essential that the writer has the tools needed to effectively complete the assignment. Those tools should include sample past proposals, newsletters, brochures and annual reports, as well as access to staff and, in some circumstances, board members.

If the employer finds it difficult to express what is needed in the proposal, a negative example could be provided, because sometimes it is easier to articulate what we don’t like than what we do like. If proposals are being rewritten because they need to be updated and freshened, this approach will not work. But if proposals are being redone, then the freelance writer needs to know that he or she has been hired to break the mold and not to just clean it up. Sometimes showing a person what you don’t like can help them grasp what you do like.

The employer must know what they want before hiring the writer. Not only will this save time and money, but knowing what is needed can help the employer decide what writer to hire because some writers are better at some things than others.

**Essential questions to ask:**
Once you know what you want, hire your writer and articulate your vision of the piece to be written, be sure that you understand the parameters of the job to be done. After the freelance grantwriter is hired and supplied with both basic and specific program information, the next question is: what does the agency need?

- A general support template proposal?
- A proposal prepared for a specific funder with detailed guidelines?
- A proposal that includes quotes from clients?
- Charts and statistical information in your proposal?
- A proposal that is very fact-driven or one with more human interest?

**Compensation:**
Freelance writers use different fee procedures. Some writers use an hourly rate; some charge by the page; others charge by the day. Some writers use a fee per project.

**Fee per Project:** From the point of view of an Executive Director or Director of Development hiring a freelancer, a fee per project may be easier to work with but it really does not save money. Most freelance writers have a strong
idea about what they expect to be paid and the method you use for determining the fee does not change the actual fee. With fee per project freelancers, it is important for both parties to know exactly what the fee will cover. For example, when I wrote freelance proposals on a fee per project basis, my general rule was that the fee I charged covered meetings, interviews, research, a first draft, one rewrite and one polishing. If my client wanted to keep rewriting, that time became part of an hourly fee charged in addition to the agreed-upon set fee. Very few freelancers are going to keep rewriting drafts for one fee until the employer makes up their mind. Once again, it is important to get details and put as much as possible in writing.

**By the Hour:** Some freelance grantwriters charge by the hour so if there are ten drafts of one proposal, the writer is not likely to object. After all, the clock is running and it's the employer’s money.

**Comparing Fee Structures:** When I was a freelance grant writer, I used a combination of an hourly rate for most jobs with a set fee per project for certain types of jobs, such as newsletters or brochures. Most of my clients accepted my hourly fee. Some clients preferred a set fee. When I was a freelance writer, using an hourly fee or a fee per project made little difference to me because when I worked on a fee per project basis, I figured out how many hours I thought the job would take, applied my own hourly rate and offered that as the fee.

**Revisions:**

Even when you have provided information, decided what you wanted and articulated it to your writer, the employer will still need to read, review and in some cases help rewrite. This is a part of the job that requires cooperation and collaboration.

**Acceptable Unpaid Revision Requests:** If the writer hands in a proposal or copy for a publication that is filled with factual inaccuracies, spelling mistakes and/or grammatical errors, the employer has a right to complain and request that the proposal be rewritten. Or if the writer did not prepare the proposal following the requested particular format or has ignored these instructions, then the employer clearly has a right to complain and request a free revision from the grant writer. Another example would be if the piece is supposed to be 6000 words and the writer delivers 500 words.

In my experience as a freelance grantwriter, the right to complain is often accompanied by an attempt on the part of the organization to reduce the writer's fee. Since fees often are paid in installments, some organizations, in these circumstances, will refuse to pay the last installment. If the employer truly believes that the freelance grantwriter has not met his or her obligations, then the employer can try to negotiate a reduction of the fee.

**Unacceptable situations or revisions:** It is unacceptable to blame the writer for the employer’s mistakes and then try to reduce the fee. For example, let’s say
you hired me to write a proposal for you. You tell me you are looking for a proposal you will send to several foundations. The proposal will be a request for $50,000 for a program the agency sponsors that helps children improve their reading skills. I write your proposal, but then you decide that the reading skills program is not your first priority right now. What you really need, you decide is a proposal requesting $50,000 for an after school safety program. As your writer, I will be happy to write this proposal, also, but this second proposal is a separate job and a separate fee. If you tell me you want one thing and I do it and then you realize you want something else, you cannot ask me to redo the project for free.

It is also, obviously not acceptable for the employer or freelance grantwriter to request to change the fee halfway through the job.

**Minor Revisions:** Finally, you may not reduce the agreed-upon fee because minor changes were needed in the writing. Many Executive Directors do not feel a written piece is really finished unless they put their own mark on it but minor changes do not constitute major revisions or a change in the fee structure. For example, if a comma is changed to a semi-colon, two paragraphs are rearranged or the words "at present" are substituted for the word "currently," there is no right to reduce a fee.

**Communication:**

Perhaps the most important key to making the relationship between an employer of an organization and the freelance writer work is communication between the involved parties. When there is a problem with a proposal written by a freelance grantwriter, the best idea is to pick up the phone and call to discuss it. The writer deserves a chance to correct the mistake before simply pulling the project away, refusing to pay part of the fee or declaring the freelance grantwriter persona non grata for all eternity. If the organization has hired a competent, professional freelance grantwriter, his or her advice may be far more valuable than the fee being paid. Careful thorough descriptions of the expectations and duties of each party will go a long way to ensuring a long standing, positive and professional relationship.
You’ve Got the Grant, Now What?
Post-Award Administration and the Grants Professional
By
Cheryl Kester

Cheryl Kester is the Director of Grants and Foundation Relations at John Brown University in Siloam Springs, Arkansas. She has 12 years of experience in higher education administration, coming to development in 1999. She also teaches courses for the English department and the adult degree completion program. She holds a bachelor's degree from John Brown University and a master's degree in English from Georgetown University. She is a member of AFP and CASE.

In prior Grants and Foundation Review articles Adriana Ercolano, Larry Trachtman, and I have responded to one another’s articles about the appropriate role for the grants professional in program planning.

What about after the grant? For those of us without an official “grants administrator,” how involved should the “grantwriter” be with the program after the grant is awarded?

While the right answer is different for everyone, I make a case below for staying out of program “operations,” while carefully educating program and accounting personnel regarding their responsibilities, and checking in at appropriate intervals to ensure all is going smoothly.

Moving Chairs

I was shocked when a “grantwriter” from a hospital told me that part of her job was tracking down chairs for a training session because the project director just didn’t know how to do it. The thinking at her organization was, “You wrote the grant. It’s your responsibility to make sure that the program runs smoothly.”

This poor “grantwriter” has just become a program manager. To oversimplify, if she’s moving chairs, that’s time not devoted to bringing in her next grant. What do you suppose my boss evaluates me on each year? Proposals out the door and money in the door.

Your Interest in Program Management

Of course, grants professionals have a vested interest in how programs are run. Our proposal committed our organization to fulfilling certain promises. As grants professionals, we want to ensure that the organization lives up to those promises because we’re thinking ahead and considering stewardship, cultivation and the next proposal. When it’s time for the final report, we don’t want to find out that we actually did something different than what was promised. I hate writing that report!
We must find the “Golden Mean” between being a program control freak and being completely laissez-faire. And, you must become excellent friends with the accounting people.

The Post-Award Meeting

After a few hard lessons, I’ve instituted the post-award meeting. In my college setting, this includes the faculty member who is the project director, the dean over the project director, and the comptroller. In smaller non-profits, this looks more like the project director, the executive director (this may be the same person!) and the treasurer/accountant, if there is one.

Regardless of the size of your organization, even if there are only two of you, here is what is covered in the post-award meeting:

- **Program Review**—a review or executive summary of all of the program activities, outcomes and timelines promised in the proposal. In other words, “Here is what we promised to do, when we promised to do it and what we said we would accomplish.”

- **Grants Ethics**—essentially, this is the “we must do exactly what we promised” talk. Over the years, this talk has gotten firmer and firmer. I emphasize the contractual nature of the agreement between us and the funder. If the funder is a government agency, then there probably is an actual contract and woe unto you if you spend your funds on unallowable costs.

- **Accounting Guidelines**—an introduction/review of the organization’s purchasing, payroll and accounting practices. What records must we keep on expenditures? What is the procedure for getting approval to spend grant funds? Who is watching expenditures during the grant period?

- **The Final Report**—a discussion of what we will have to report about the use of the grant funds, when we have to report it, and a decision on whose responsibility it will be to produce this report.

This meeting is designed to accomplish several purposes, beyond the obvious ones. First, it establishes your interest and right to remain involved in ensuring that the program is operated as promised and that the funds are spent correctly.

However, it should also serve to initiate and commission the newly-minted project director. You are making it clear to everyone that the project director must now take on responsibility for making the proposal elements succeed. Often, this is a big reality check for a person who, up until this point, has been thinking only theoretically about a possible grant, and may have depended largely on you to flesh out the actual details.

You will especially want to make clear exactly what role you expect to play in producing and submitting the final report. Will you write it yourself? Is it the program director’s job to write it, but you’ll edit it? This may change from grant
to grant in the same organization, depending on the program, the project director and your work load. Whatever you decide, get the date on everyone’s calendar today, in the meeting, so there is no chance of forgetting it.

Hopefully, at your institution or organization, the Post-Award Meeting will result in a smooth hand-off to the program and accounting people, and you can then move on to the next grant. Or maybe not.

**Progress Meetings**

After a few more hard lessons, our university has decided that the Post-Award Meeting is not adequate, especially for multi-year grants. We are now instituting quarterly grants progress meetings. These meetings include the comptroller, the project director and me. We sit down with budget reports and discuss any possible red flags. Here is what those red flags could be warning you about:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spending Red Flags</th>
<th>Possible Problem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Over-spending in an account line | · Improper classification of an expense within the grant budget (e.g. a supply classified as equipment)  
· Improper/excessive expenditure  
· Accounting error (e.g. something charged to the grant that should not be)  
· “Mentally” re-allocating between individual budget lines, or the “bottom line” concept: as long as the “bottom line” balances, it doesn’t matter what happens in individual account lines |
| Under-spending in an account line | · Improper classification of expenses  
· Not performing a program activity promised in the proposal  
· Accidentally not charging the grant for authorized expenditures  
· The “bottom line” misconception |

**Under-spending Grant Funds**

“What!” you say, “I can’t imagine anyone not spending their grant funds.” Oh yes, it happens all the time. One of the most common reasons to under-spend grant money is that the grant writer and the grant “implementer” have fundamentally different understandings about the nature of the project. Maybe the project director is hired after the grant was awarded and had no role in
designing the program activities. He or she may not fully understand what you promised in the proposal or may not buy in.

You don’t want to discover near the end of your project that the university never implemented the student summer research fellowship that was a major aspect of your proposal. The day I discovered that was the very day we added the quarterly progress meetings.

**Why You?**

So, why should you, the grants professional, be sticking your nose into all of these operational and accounting issues? Because you are the person at your organization who understands best how your program aligns with the funder’s requirements. Because you want the final report to be submitted, on time. Because no one else will take it as seriously as you do. (Rejoice if this is not true for you, and never change jobs!)

I dream of the day when all of our processes are running smoothly, all faculty and administrators understand how to remain in compliance with funding agency requirements, and I can just sit back and stay out of post-award administration. But until then, I’ll be scheduling progress meetings.

And maybe begging the business office to hire a grant administrator.

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The need for evaluation of grant projects has increased over the years, as funders and nonprofits have become more sophisticated and more focused on results. Before the 1960s, it was possible to get funded by saying, “There are young people living on the streets of Boston who really need help. We care about them and want to help them.” This wasn’t specific enough for funders to know if their grants were having an impact, so they started to ask, “How many?”

Grantseekers began to say, “There are 2,000 homeless youth living on the streets of Boston, and we will provide 500 of them with emergency food and 100 with emergency shelter in the next year.” Gradually funders realized that this approach wasn’t making lasting changes, so they began asking “So what?” and looking for results.

Today, successful grantseekers tell them, “There are 2,000 homeless youth living on the streets of Boston, and we will provide 500 of them with emergency food and 100 with emergency shelter in the next year. While they participate in our programs, staff outreach workers will interview them to determine needs and will refer them to counseling, alternative schools, and job training programs. As a result of this program, at least 50 will be reunited with their families or move to transitional housing, and 200 will be in school, job training programs, or employed.”

How will you know if your grant project succeeded? The answer can be very different for a local community group funded by a local foundation than for a social service program applying for a large federal grant. In the local case, it can be enough to look at whether you met the program goals for numbers served; with a large federal grant, it may involve control groups and a statistician. This article tells how to know which approach is appropriate, how to do an informal in-house evaluation, when in the grant process to involve a professional evaluator, and how to make sure you have outcomes that can be evaluated.

Evaluation serves two purposes, for both your organization and your funder. First, it monitors the success of your project. Second, it provides information for improving both this project and your overall program. The Kellogg Foundation’s Evaluation Handbook says:
Effective evaluation is not an “event” that occurs at the end of a project, but is an ongoing process which helps decision makers better understand the project; how it is impacting participants, partner agencies and the community; and how it is being influenced/impacted by both internal and external factors.

As a grantwriter, you will often be involved in the early planning of a project—which may mean there hasn’t been any planning at all. Because the work of the project won’t happen unless the grant is funded, and that could be months away, it may be difficult to get program staff to focus on the eventual evaluation. At the project planning stage, you don’t have to force them to design evaluation criteria. You just need to decide how complex an evaluation to describe in your proposal and whether further detail is needed to develop it.

Remember, when you’re writing a large grant proposal, you’re developing somebody’s job for the next few years. You don’t want to waste their time and your organization’s resources by creating unnecessary work. It is important that you align your project goals and objectives with your evaluation questions, so that the evaluation becomes a part of your project and not a separate set of tasks.

What kind of evaluation you need to do, and who you will involve, depends on your project and your organization. In the proposal planning stage, you need to ask these questions:

- **Why are we doing this evaluation?** To better understand our program? To judge its success or improve it? To satisfy funder requirements? To produce data for our agency to use for public relations or in seeking future funding?
- **Who is the audience for the evaluation?** Funders? Our board? Management? Program staff? The public or the press? Government officials?

**Types of Evaluations**

I’ve identified four distinct types of grant evaluations, which are defined by who needs to be involved: Staff only, Board of Directors, Inside evaluation team, and Outside evaluator.

**Staff Only.** Short-term projects can often be evaluated adequately by the staff. The obvious case is a one-time purchase. For example, you apply for funding to buy a van to take kids on outings. The evaluation questions are, “Did you buy the van?” and “Are you using it to take kids on outings?” You could provide the funder with a list of outings and copies of the bill of sale and the vehicle title. You could spice it up with a picture of the van with happy children at the local science museum, maybe with the funder’s name
printed discretely on the van under your logo. This evaluation can be performed by the program or development staff. It doesn’t create any extra work, since it fits within existing program activities.

**Board of Directors.** For straightforward projects that have significant impact for the organization, I like to use the board of directors for evaluation. Your board’s job is to oversee the work of your organization, so the regular program reports at board meetings should allow them to evaluate the project and implement improvements. If you’re mailing out brochures and your audience is growing, the board can measure and evaluate the results.

Often I will break board evaluation into two steps: (1) Did we do what we said we would? Were the objectives accomplished—on time and within budget? (2) Did the project accomplish its purpose? Did we reach the goal, fulfill the need? Having the evaluation done by the board rather than staff adds some credibility. It also ties the grant project to other board work such as policy and program decisions. This type of evaluation is good for local foundations that like to fund direct program activities and may already be familiar with your organization.

**Inside Evaluation Team.** For more complex projects, you may want to form your own evaluation team of stakeholders in both the project and your organization. Say you’re a nonprofit public health agency that’s opening a new health clinic to serve a different population than you have previously served. This is too big an undertaking to leave to routine staff reports to your board. You might put together a team from the clinic: the clinic manager, a doctor, a nurse, a receptionist, and records management staff. But don’t stop there. You should also have at least one patient, someone from a major referral agency, and maybe someone from the local public health commission. Finally, how about a board member and your finance manager? If anyone in your agency has evaluation experience, invite them, too. The idea is to represent all of the significant groups affected by your project. This team will meet regularly to assess progress, use these assessments to modify the project, and provide the final evaluation at the end of the grant period.

In this case, you need to give more serious consideration to the evaluation design you’ll include in your grant proposal. You might decide on a theory-based outcomes evaluation and use a logic model to outline your project and outcomes. If you’re seeking government funding, the funder is likely to have its own evaluation criteria that you’ll need to incorporate. This is the stage where you have to decide what data you need to collect to perform an effective evaluation.

**Outside Evaluator.** For many complex projects, you’ll want or need to hire an outside evaluator. Some federal grants require you to allot 10 or 15 percent of your budget for evaluation, and you won’t have adequate expertise in-house. Sometimes to prove the effectiveness of a program, you’ll need
someone with specialized skills to oversee control groups, perform statistical analysis, and so forth. You may want to use an independent, credentialed outsider because your program is controversial, highly visible, rapidly changing, or because you need to establish (or restore) credibility to your program or organization.

If you plan to use an outside evaluator, choose them early. If at all possible, involve them in planning your grant proposal. You want to make sure that your program design is structured so that the evaluation can be statistically valid. Sometimes a professional evaluator will write the evaluation section of your proposal on the understanding that you’ll hire them if the grant is funded. If you can’t involve the evaluator at the planning stage, get them on board as soon as possible after you’re funded.

Evaluators can often be found at local universities and colleges (or hospitals, for health care grants). You can find professional evaluation firms, as well as individuals, in most cities. Ask other organizations in your community who they have used and liked working with. Check with the American Evaluation Association <http://www.eval.org> for members in your area.

**Evaluations in Research Grants**

A different type of evaluation occurs in research grants than in grants designed to implement programs. With research grants, a scientific question is being explored, and the design of the research program incorporates the evaluation. The researchers’ documentation of their activities and results is written up in the final report. Most research grants are highly technical and require knowledge of the science involved as well as of research methods. In my experience the researchers themselves, or grantwriters attached to their institutions, develop most research proposals.

**Budgeting for Evaluation**

You probably don’t have to budget funds for staff and board evaluations. In fact, the kinds of projects for which these evaluations are adequate are often funded by local foundations that want all of their money to go toward projects or direct services and only want to hear that the project goals were accomplished. For inside evaluation teams, you might want to include evaluation funds in your budget to cover for such things as staff for data collection, entry, and analysis; computers and software; interviews or focus groups; and supplies and printing. You definitely want to budget funds for both inside evaluation teams and outside evaluators.
Ongoing Evaluation

Some agencies have ongoing evaluation programs that can provide the framework and information for planning your grant evaluation. The following examples show three different ways organizations can provide these tools for your grant.

Organizational Commitment. A national organization I work with, the National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA), evaluates all aspects of all its programs, including services, products, and events. This helps them guarantee quality services in support of their mission and assures their diverse constituencies and funders that their programs are effective and produce results. Although unusual in nonprofits, this commitment has helped NICWA build and maintain a national reputation as a leader in its field.

Quality Assurance (QA). In health care, mental health, substance abuse treatment, and related fields, QA staff or committees are often required for licensing or accreditation. They review program practices to make sure services meet required standards. QA may be included in a grant as part of contract compliance. If your agency has a QA program, the information it is already gathering will be invaluable for developing your program evaluation—in fact, it may be all you need.

Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI). Developed by Japanese industry, CQI was based on the work of W. Edward Deming in the 1940s. Instead of collecting information centrally and periodically implementing major program changes, CQI involves the line staff and managers in constantly identifying problems and opportunities and implementing them at the operational level, without having to go to top management. Many nonprofits have started using CQI, and if your organization has a CQI program, it can be the basis of your evaluation section. Sometimes quality assurance programs incorporate CQI.
Grants in a Nutshell

Grants and Steps in Developing a Grant Proposal

By David Gerabagi, PhD and Gary L. Frye E.D.

David Gerabagi, Ph.D. is Director of Planning and Resource Development at Birdville Independent School District. He is responsible for the ongoing comprehensive development program of the school. Dr. Gerabagi has over 15 years of experience. He has been involved in administering educational and job training programs and served as Executive Director of Grant Development at Leander and Round Rock Independent School Districts. He is a graduate of the University of Texas at Austin and holds a Master’s and Doctorate degrees in education.

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

Types of Grants

There are more than 70,000 grant makers in the United States. The main sources of grant funds are the federal government, state agencies, corporate entities and foundations, and private and community foundations.

The federal government provides millions of dollars through competitive and formula grants. Often, state agencies receive federal funds for a particular project. These funds are then reallocated and distributed through a competitive application process.

Corporations often establish foundations to provide grants in the communities they serve. In addition, community foundations and private (often family-established) foundations sponsor grants for particular geographical areas or to focus on a particular issue (literacy, health). Competitive grant funding is also available through corporate and private foundations.

Finding Grant Announcements and Funders

By making it a practice to stay informed about federal programs and corporate and private foundations, you are much more likely to find a funder with similar interests or a grant program that fits your project focus. You will be aware of what funding is available and what changes are occurring in response to federal and state legislation. It is a good idea to regularly access the Web sites of government agencies and other funders that target either education or a particular subject (health, nutrition, finance, literacy, etc.). Additionally, newsletters on
education grant programs, professional journals, and other directories often include grant announcements.

Various electronic alerts exist that include information and announcements about grants, funders, and grant writing. When you subscribe to these alerts you will receive regular e-mails about new grant announcements or proposal writing:

www.ed.gov/about/welcome.jsp (multiple e-alerts)
www.fdncenter.org/pnd/rfp/ (Foundation Center sends out weekly updates)
www.grantsalert.com/education.cfm (announcements for public education)

Grant Resources Web Sites
These are a few of the most helpful Web sites on grants.
The Foundation Center—A wonderful resource about private foundations, the Center provides grant announcements, how-to guides, data about funders, and typical recipients. http://www.fdncenter.org
The Grantsmanship Center—In addition to information about corporate and private foundations, this Center also provides summaries of The Federal Register's weekly announcements. http://www.tgci.com
School Grants—Focused on funding for public schools; this site includes proposal writing tips and sample proposals. http://www.schoolgrants.org
The two main resources for researching all federal programs are the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance and the Federal Register. Each federal agency also maintains a Web site on its grant programs.
   Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance http://www.cfda.gov
   U.S. Department of Education http://www.ed.gov/GrantApps/
   National Science Foundation http://www.nsf.gov/home/grants/

STEPS in Developing a grant proposal

Begin with a special project needed to address or solve a problem and that needs funding to be implemented or sustained.

The process usually begins with a need or an idea for a project that cannot be undertaken without securing funds. After discussing the idea first with your supervisor and then with your colleagues, focus on the results you seek from the program. Discuss these ideas with your colleagues and supervisor. Obtaining their input and ideas can help transform a great idea into an effective program. Teamwork and team support will be crucial to the proposal’s and the program’s success.
Research and find a grant announcement or a Request for Proposal (RFP) that targets programs like the one you have in mind.

In this case, the first step should be a thorough reading of the guidelines and information about the agency/program. Next, it may help to create an outline of the basic information from the guidelines (synopsis) and to note any questions regarding the program restrictions and purpose. If you still have questions after reading the guidelines, do not hesitate to contact the funding agency’s staff.

The Application or Proposal

Corporate and private foundations require the submission of a proposal. Federal and state grants and subgrants through the State Department of Education, require the submission of an application. These are two words used to describe the same thing.

The Purpose of the Application/Proposal

Through your application/proposal, you must convince those who control the grant funds that:

- The activities you propose are within the scope of the program objectives established by the funding agency
- These activities will address an immediate problem or may eventually aid in resolving a social problem that the funder also wishes to resolve
- You and your agency are well acquainted with the discipline/field/issue and are qualified to staff, implement, and manage the described project
- The anticipated results sufficiently justify the expenditure of the proposed time and money
- The requested funds are adequate to achieve the objectives and implement the program successfully.

A proposal should be carefully and precisely developed and free of mathematical, grammatical, and typographical errors. Preparing the proposal well in advance of a deadline attests to the proposer’s ability to plan carefully. By managing your time well, sufficient time will remain for colleagues to review the proposal to discover any gaps, eliminate errors, and ensure a comprehensive proposal.

Most government grants have a strict page limit and very precise guidelines for content, format, and structure which must be followed exactly. Federal grants usually have absolute deadlines. Usually a postmark deadline is required, but recently many federal grants allow or sometimes require the applicant to submit the proposal electronically (on-line).

Suggested Steps in Preparing a Proposal or Application

The following steps are designed to help you understand the process of preparing the proposal. The process can be tailored to suit individual abilities and customs. Note: If your school, district, or division has established procedures, please follow them carefully.
1. Carefully read the Grant Announcement, grant guidelines, or the RFP.
2. Create a checklist of everything that must be included in your application. Review the eligibility and selection criteria, funding amount, the program purpose, and description of program carefully for items to include in the narrative.
3. Determine the approximate page limits for each section of your proposal. Make sure you put the recommended page lengths on the work plan and checklist.
4. Develop your review process and line up readers (team members, colleagues, or the Grants Office if you have one). You will need an initial reviewer to check for content ONLY, and other readers to help with editing, revising, and finishing the document. All members of the review team should be committed to creating a clear, effective document.
5. Notify each key project staff member that you will need electronic versions of his/her vitae/resumé (maximum of three pages) in addition to a paragraph (3-5 sentences) summarizing his/her particular credentials to work on this specific project. All vitae/resumes and descriptive paragraphs should be in the same format, so an electronic rather than hard-copy version will simplify standardizing the formats and inserting the final version into the proposal.
6. Ask each partner or supporting organization for a letter of support. Explain that you will draft the letter and send it via e-mail for their review and production.
7. Forward each section (as soon as a solid draft is written) and the guidelines (if necessary) to the first reviewer. This reviewer should check the section’s content to ensure that it satisfies all the grant guidelines. STOP working on a section while it is being reviewed. If you must, make notes on either the hard or electronic copy so that you remember to make particular changes.
8. Revise each section as soon as the first reader returns it. Revise first for content and then for structure, organization, and flow. Does the section fulfill the directions? The selection criteria? Take a fresh look at the draft and rethink your subject. Each section should have an introduction (of sorts) that provides a thesis for the whole section. Within the main discussion, add, move, and delete elements to improve the order of discussion and logical flow. Examine each paragraph for coherence (all sentences are focused on the same topic and work together to make one point) and development. Look at the sentences within the paragraphs to note whether they relate to the topic sentence and if they are placed in an effective order. All sentences within the paragraphs and all paragraphs should be connected with appropriate and effective transitions.
9. Prepare the cover letter by the authorizing agent (superintendent, principal) to send with proposal.
10. **Edit** the draft for clarity, effectiveness, and variety. Grammar, mechanics, punctuation, and spelling are also important to consider at this stage. Look at individual sentences within the narrative. Are sentences varied in length, type, and style? Define any uncommon and/or technical vocabulary. Each sentence should be **clear and free of grammatical errors**.

11. **Review vitae/summaries and letters of support** for specificity, consistency, and accuracy. Prepare and complete forms.

12. **Compile the entire grant application:** cover letter, forms, narrative, budget, letters of support, etc. Organize the application in the same order as specified in the guidelines. Check the entire package for completeness and consistency.

13. **Prepare the table of contents.**

14. **Proofread** the final revision for layout, spelling, punctuation, and mechanics. Check (recalculate) all budget figures. Refer to the guidelines for font, font size, margins, and page numbers. Check to ensure these elements as well as paragraph indentations, titles/headings, spacing, and table numbering are consistent and correct in your proposal.

15. **Make appropriate number of copies.**

16. **Mail/send/deliver.**

**Drafting the Narrative**

Most grant guidelines (RFPs) require a specific order for materials and information. For the purposes of discussion, we have created a general pattern with explanations.

**Abstract**

Also referred to as the summary, executive summary, or program summary, the abstract is a concise (often one page or 100–300 words) statement summarizing the key elements of the project. Many funding decision-makers may read only the reviewer’s comments, the abstract, and the budget, so this section is particularly important.

In the abstract, identify the problem and/or need as well as your target population. Briefly offer an overview of the program, including the overall purpose. What are the goals and objectives, and the key operations involved in the program? The abstract must specify the amount requested and briefly outline what the funds will be used to accomplish.

**Table of Contents**

The table of contents outlines the entire proposal. It needs to be clear, correct, complete, and consistent. All proposals longer than five pages should have a table of contents.

A table of contents makes it easy for reviewers to find particular application components. Readers will often review the table of contents to determine that all
the necessary parts of the application are in place. Compose the table of contents after completing the proposal, including the abstract. In this way, you will not have to keep updating the table of contents and risk an error or incorrect references.

**Needs Statement**

The needs statement, also sometimes called the “problem statement, or the “significance,” presents the case for your project. It explains the problem or issue the program will address. Ultimately, this section should answer why you need the program. This section should be clear, factual, and compelling. You must convince the funder how and why the support could make a difference. To make your case, use current statistics and data from the U.S. Census Bureau, published reports, Kids Count 2003, local data and studies by reputable organizations.

**Project Description**

This is the application’s main body, the part in which you convince potential funders of your ability to use their support to meet a need and create a program or project that will be viable. It establishes the core elements of the project. Each funder wants the elements in a certain order, so please refer to the guidelines. The project description is usually comprised of the following elements:

— Goals and Objectives
— Activities, Strategies, Methods
— Management
— Sustainability
— Evaluation.

The project description explains the main purposes of the program, what actions you will take to achieve these purposes, how you intend to administer the project, and how you will measure whether the program worked. In addition, this part of the application should include your plan to sustain the project beyond the term of the grant and grant funds and how you plan to share project successes with others.

*Goals and Objectives*

This section describes what you will achieve with the program. Initially, you need to identify the mission of the agency and offer a broad statement about the program’s purpose. Then, clearly identify (and number) the goals and objectives.

Goals—Goals are general statements specifying desired outcomes of the project. Ultimately, why did you develop this program? To do what? To serve whom? The goals should address the needs identified earlier.
Objectives—Objectives are also referred to as “outcomes,” “performance measures.” An objective is a statement that explains one way that you will know (be able to prove) that you have achieved the goal. Each goal should have at least one objective. The objectives should be measurable, tangible (clearly states anticipated result), specific (who will do what and in what period of time), and also measurable.

Activities, Strategies, Methods
This section begins with a statement explaining what specific actions you will take to achieve the stated objectives and goals. If you have space, you should explain why you chose these particular activities/actions. How do you know that these strategies are the most effective (rationale)? Will work with this population? Research will help you answer these questions. The activities should clearly connect to the objectives and the goals.

Management
This section outlines your plan to manage (administer) the program. What is the overall chain of command? Who will manage the project? How can you show that this person is qualified to manage the program? If you will need to hire a project director, include a detailed job description for the position. While resumes and vitae must be appended, you may include a summary of credentials in paragraph form in this section. What is each staff member’s responsibility? An organizational chart may be the fastest and best way to clarify the management and chain of command for the project. Include partners and advisory boards in this chart.

Sustainability
In this section, you must explain what you are doing or will do to ensure that the project continues beyond the grant funding or term. Funders want to know that the programs they support will be sustained after the grant period is over. For example, if a one-year project has reform of teacher recruitment standards as its goal, the granting agency wants the project to be sustained beyond that funded year in order for the goal to be achieved. In determining awards, funders will consider the likelihood that the project can be sustained beyond their contribution and their grant period. You will need to discuss the agency’s commitment to the project as demonstrated by staffing, publicity, space, materials, and other resources.

Evaluation
How will you prove if and how well the project worked? How you evaluate the program (and your administration of it) has become one of the most important parts of a federal application. The plan that you devise should assess
the project’s objectives and final outcomes. What data will you collect from the various activities that can help determine the project’s success? You should use a variety of instruments. Journals and surveys cannot serve as the sole means to evaluate your program. These two elements yield no concrete, reliable data about the program’s effect. Will you collect baseline data? Will you administer mid-project evaluations and amend the program (and management) based on this data? What end-of-project data will you analyze? How will you report findings and results to the funder?

If you plan to use an outside evaluator (even for a part of the project), identify the evaluator or provide a job description. If you have already selected an evaluator, document this person’s credential to serve in this capacity.

**Timeline**

A timeline is a chart that shows target dates to implement and evaluate key program elements (methods/activities and evaluation measures). The timeline indicates how and when you will implement the program. Sometimes, you can also include the related objectives. Often, the grant guidelines specify the exact information to be included on the timeline.

**Budget**

The budget reflects in financial terms the actual costs of achieving the objectives stated in your grant application. The total amount requested is often determined by the needs of the project and the limitations set by the granting agency. In addition to the financial needs of the project, the budget should represent other sources of revenue, such as other grants and in-kind, local, match, and partner contributions.

The Project Budget usually has two components: the budget spreadsheet and the budget narrative.

- **Budget Forms**—In many cases, the funder provides budget forms for you to complete. If not, you may create a spreadsheet as an itemized chart of project expenditures. Multiple sources of revenue (multiple grants) may also be listed on the budget spreadsheet (if requested).
- **Budget Narrative**—This section is a written explanation of the expenditures outlined on the spreadsheet. Explain why the expenditures are important and show how you arrived at the figures (formulas for calculation). Structure the narrative so that it follows the same order as the spreadsheet. Explain each category of expenses clearly and concisely. The narrative also explains any unusual expenses that may be questioned by the reviewers.

The budget will reflect direct and indirect (or facilities and administrative) costs for federal and state applications ONLY.
Direct Costs

Expenses incurred by grant projects fall within some or all of the following categories: Personnel (Salaries, wages); Fringe Benefits; Travel; Equipment (Purchase and rental); Supplies; Contractual (Subcontracts, consultants) Communications (Telephone, postage, photocopying); Publications (Brochures, reports, reprints); Training Stipends (Scholarships); Other Costs (those costs not included in other categories).

Indirect Costs

Indirect costs are those costs for general support of a project that cannot be readily and specifically attributed to a particular project. They include general administration including such functions as accounting, personnel, payroll and administrative offices.

Forms and Assurances

Various federal requirements are imposed on applicants and grantees as a condition of receiving grant funds. Application packages contain forms that an applicant is required to sign, promising to abide by various federal laws, regulations, and executive orders that apply to grant recipients. Certifications relate to issues such as maintaining a drug-free workplace. Assurances relate to issues such as complying with nondiscrimination laws.

Conclusion

Effective grant writing takes teamwork, time, and practice. At times, the process may seem overwhelming; however, the effort is worth it in the long run. When you are able to secure grant funding to turn a well-grounded idea into a working program, you will see that all the planning, research, drafting, and editing was a worthwhile investment.

While only 5–10 percent of grants are funded, you can vastly improve your chances of being funded by working as a member of a team, writing more grants, resubmitting your rejected applications, and strengthening your own writing and research skills.

There is no exact formula that works every time. Be creative, enthusiastic, and serious.
Book Review
By Iris Coffin

Grantwriting Beyond the Basics Book 1: Proven Strategies Professionals Use to Make Their Proposals Work
By Michael K. Wells, CFRE
Portland State University Extended Studies
Continuing Education Press, 2005
www.cep.pdx.edu
USA $19.95 Canada $23.95

Larissa Golden Brown and Martin John Brown state in the Foreward to Grantwriting Beyond the Basics, “The book is a great reservoir of information on professionalism and strategy for intermediate and advanced grant seekers. . . . Michael Wells shares his wealth of knowledge freely, communicating essential principles all grant seekers should be applying, but too often even seasoned professionals neglect.” This is book one in a series of books written for the intermediate or advanced grant professional and is a great addition to a very sparse library of books for this level of grantwriter.

The book recognizes and discusses grantwriting as an emerging and separate field of professionalism and study. Chapter 1 covers such topics as opportunists on the scene, competition for grants, funders receiving increasingly better proposals, the impact of the Internet, and foundation growth. The author’s years of experience lend authority to this discussion and his insights are right on target.

Chapter 3 discusses developing a strategic approach to the grantwriting process including the need to be consistent throughout the application. Sounds obvious but as I read that chapter, I realized that, even with 10 years experience, I need to improve in that area and the necessary information is provided to accomplish that approach.

In chapter 4 the author discusses creating a history document for your organization. Again this sounds obvious but I now realize mine is not thorough enough and not well enough organized even though my organization is only nine years old. I plan to begin a timeline form as outlined in this chapter this week. It would have helped considerably over the last few months and saved an enormous amount of time.

One of the most difficult concepts for most writers is to show need for your organization without whining or saying “we need a van because we don’t have one.” This book suggests resources to establish a picture of need and the best focus to use to get your point across. This is a vital area for any grant or letter of inquiry.
Logic models have never seemed very . . . well . . . logical to me. However, this book not only gives a number of graphic examples but also provides enough explanation to make them make sense. It is visual thinking that provides results and that is what most funders are seeking when they support your application. One graphic can show how your organization will work within the community and also provide the basics for your evaluation.

Chapter 8 shows how to use your budget to tell your story as well as to show project financials. I had always considered the budget one of those pesky attachments you have to spend time preparing that robbed me of writing time. One of the things I had never thought of was using the budget to help tell our story. This book shows how to maintain consistency (discussed in chapter 2) using your budget items and the budget narrative. This will come in handy especially when narrative page numbers are limited.

The final chapters include information on best use of attachments, grant tracking techniques, grants in a capital campaign, and several pages of grantwriting resources. The author has also included a complete case study of a successful grant strategy and provided a well thought out index.

Overall this is an excellent resource for any grant professional but an especially welcome addition to my sparse library of books for the more advanced writer. I am looking forward to the next book due out in the Spring of 2006, Finances for Grantwriters.
To subscribe to the *Journal of the AAGP*, copy and fill out this subscription form and send with a check or purchase order to the address below. For more information about the American Association of Grant Professionals, visit the AAGP website at www.grantprofessionals.org.

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For complete submission guidelines, please contact the Chair of the Editorial Board.