



A Day in the Life of a Home Care Grants Officer

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It's Wednesday morning and as I'm pulling on my skirt, and jacket, I think about the grant application that is due today. This particular application is requesting funds to support "**Safe Harbor**"—a service of Abington Hospital's Home Care department. *Safe Harbor* is a free outpatient program for grieving children. Nonprofit charitable organizations, like Abington Hospital, rely on donations and grant awards to sustain and expand programs that benefit the community.

Although the grant application is due today, I find myself reflecting on the months of

including: foundation, corporation, state, and federal sources.

One of the most important things for me to remember in the grants process is, that "*it's all about the relationships.*" Once I have identified an appropriate RFP, I move to the **Planning** stage. To be successful with a grant award, I need to plan with the right team. The first part of the plan is the decision to pursue the grant, which can sometimes be as challenging as the writing process itself. The team should include program experts and a financial professional who can help build a budget and determine if the opportunity is

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careful preparation that went into the process before submitting the actual application. Once a financial need is identified, I find myself using familiar steps of the nursing process: assessment, planning, implementation, and evaluation (APIE), to accomplish a successful and thorough application. Step one—**Assessment**, keeps me busy searching for grant opportunities that fit the mission, goals, and objectives of the program to be funded. On a daily basis, my detective work takes me through many list serves, and Web sites. Grant opportunities are called "Request for Proposals" or (RFP). They typically come from four main areas

feasible. Because it is often said, "*Funders don't give to proposals, they give to people*" it is also important to find a natural partner. I think of the natural partner as an ambassador who can introduce the funder on a personal level to the program. The best natural partners can often be found at the organizations trustee level. Part of a typical day for me often includes educating the natural partner about the program to be funded. Hands on education works best. I toured the natural partner through Safe Harbor, and introduced them to the executive director, who passionately told the story of the good work being accomplished through this program.

Contrary to popular belief, the actual writing part of a grant is the easiest part of the process. I consider this the **Implementation** phase. As I guide each team member through the RFP, and their eyes widen with concern, I remind them that while the terms may be odd to them, they are already doing the work of what is requested in the application. I coach each team member on what is needed to develop the program history, goals, objectives, metrics, and evaluation plan. Although this sounds easy, it requires a strict timeline and commitment from already busy staff.

Today, months of preparation become a work of art. Although I am technically the one that gets to press "send" or lick the envelope that gets posted in the mail, it was dedicated teamwork that accomplished this goal. Once awarded the grant, my role shifts to helping the team with contracts, reports, budgeting, and the **Evaluation** of what was promised and what was delivered. A day in the life of a grants officer is rewarding and satisfying. Where else can you tell a story, and be rewarded with funds that help hundreds of patients? ■

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