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Editors' Note

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the 2018 edition of the *Journal of the Grant Professionals Association.* As the research publication of the GPA, the *Journal* provides a forum for scholarly examination of the profession, discussions of best practices, and presentation of case studies. The *Journal* is devoted to the improvement of the grants professional and our growing profession.

Like previous editions, this year's *Journal* mirrors the diversity of work in our profession, which provides a rich variety of experience from which to learn. The six articles in this edition reflect this diversity and opportunity for learning. We thank the authors for their time and dedication to preparing and writing scholarly manuscripts that bring new research and insights to our professional community.

As with recent editions, the 2018 *Journal* also includes two GPA *Strategy Papers* published in 2018. *Strategy Papers* stimulate discussion and innovative thinking about a single topic that furthers the knowledge, skills, and understanding of grant professionals. *Strategy Papers* are shorter than full-length *Journal* articles and offer practical solutions to current and emerging issues. Like *Journal* articles, *Strategy Papers* undergo a double-blind peer-review process.

For the 2019 *Journal* and *Strategy Papers,* we invite you to contribute your valuable experience to these publications, as either an author or as a peer reviewer. We seek articles that address new ideas in our field, contribute research-based information, provide a case study or best practices, or examine any of the GPCI competencies and skills. We seek peer reviewers to evaluate manuscripts submitted to these publications. Please contact us at journal@grantprofessionals.org if you are interested.

We would like to thank the authors, editorial board, and peer review managers for contributing extensive time and effort to this year's *Journal.* We also deeply appreciate the time and effort of the peer reviewers for both publications; while anonymous, they are critical to ensuring the strong professional caliber of GPA's publications.

We welcome your comments on this issue of the *Journal,* and we look forward to your suggestions and article ideas for future issues.

David Lindeman	Tim Hooper	Sean Kirby
Editor	*Associate Editor*	*Associate Editor*

About The *Journal of the Grant Professionals Association*

The *Journal of the Grant Professionals Association* is devoted to the improvement of the grants professional and the profession. The *Journal* provides a forum for scholarly examination of the profession, discussions of best practices, and presentation of case studies. Papers submitted to the *Journal* are peer-reviewed by top professionals from around the country.

Proposals for articles may be submitted at any time to the *Journal*'s Editorial Board via email to journal@grantprofessionals.org. Proposals must be no more than 300 words and follow the guidelines published on the GPA website (www.grantprofessionals.org/journal). Both proposals and full articles must be submitted as email attachments in Microsoft Word format. Each full article must contain a short biography of each author (100 words) and an abstract (150 words). References, punctuation, grammar usage, and paragraph formatting must follow the *APA Style Manual for Publication* (6th Edition). Submissions are peer-reviewed anonymously. Once selected for publication, editors will work with authors to address reviewer comments and other necessary revisions. The Editorial Board reserves the right to delay or withhold publication of any article submitted.

All submissions accepted for publication (except reprints of articles) will remain the copyrighted property of the GPA. Written permission must be obtained from GPA to reprint any published article. Please email journal@grantprofessionals.org with any questions. Submission requirements, annual cut-off dates, and other information are posted on the GPA website.

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GPA Mission

The Grant Professionals Association (GPA) is a nonprofit 501(c)(6) membership association. It 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, GPA:

- 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, and
- Promotes positive relationships between grant professionals and their stakeholders.

GPA does not discriminate in its provision of services due to race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, ethnic group identification, sex, age, sexual orientation, and/or condition of physical or mental disability in accordance with all requirements of Federal and State Laws.

Validated Competencies and Skills

Grant Professionals Certification Institute (GPCI)

Below are the GPCI professional competencies and skills covered in the *Journal*. For more detail on each competency, please visit the GPCI website (www.grantcredential.org).

GPCI Competency 01: Knowledge of how to research, identify, and match funding resources to meet specific needs

GPCI Competency 02: Knowledge of organizational development as it pertains to grant seeking

GPCI Competency 03: Knowledge of strategies for effective program and project design and development

GPCI Competency 04: Knowledge of how to craft, construct, and submit an effective grant application

GPCI Competency 05: Knowledge of post-award grant management practices sufficient to inform effective grant design and development

GPCI Competency 06: Knowledge of nationally recognized standards of ethical practice by grants professionals

GPCI Competency 07: Knowledge of practices and services that raise the level of professionalism of grant professionals

GPCI Competency 08: Knowledge of methods and strategies that cultivate and maintain relationships between fund-seeking and recipient organizations and funders

GPCI Competency 09: Ability to write a convincing case for funding

Table of Contents

Journal of the Grant Professionals Association
Volume 16, Number 1

GPA Strategy Papers, Volume 5

Measuring Up: A Review of Current Grant Professional Performance Metrics

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GPCI Competency 07: Knowledge of practices and services that raise the level of professionalism of grant professionals

Abstract

Grant professionals are accustomed to tracking outcomes, developing program evaluation plans, and identifying benchmarks for measuring a project's success. However, when it comes to measuring their own performance, there is a lack of agreement on how best to capture and evaluate the many varied activities for which grant professionals are responsible. While some common measures of performance do exist, a review of the literature suggests that even the most widely used measures fail to capture the total contributions of grant professionals to their employers. This article examines the topic of performance evaluation for grant professionals and identifies commonly used performance metrics. The article reviews responses from a nine-question anonymous survey deployed to all active members of the Grant Professionals Association, resulting in 214 responses from grant professionals across all sectors of employment. Survey results suggest that grant professionals are often responsible for a wide variety of work functions which are not captured by standard organizational performance tools. Results also suggest a need to incorporate qualitative metrics, such as relationship-building skills, experience, knowledge base, level of work, and proposal difficulty, into grant professional performance evaluation. The article further identifies recommendations from grant professionals regarding additional performance metrics to consider for the field.

Introduction

The number of organizations that qualify for grant funds has risen sharply over the last three decades. The United States is home to 87,142 trusts, foundations, government agencies, and other organizations with over $798 billion in assets (Foundation Center, 2014). These foundations awarded an estimated $66.9 billion in 2017, which is part of more than $410 billion in contributions made worldwide by individuals, bequests, foundations, and corporations (Giving USA, 2018). These awards are secured, in large part, by grant professionals—individuals who "work diligently, often behind the scenes, to seek grant opportunities, administer projects and implement important programs that benefit many aspects of society such as children, youth, elderly, the disadvantaged, the environment, the arts, education, libraries, hospitals, etc." (GPA, 2018). Their functions include building and stewarding relationships with sponsors; navigating complex industry and sponsor regulations; managing multi-million dollar project budgets; and forging collaborations that leverage public and private dollars to maximize program outcomes.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics does not collect data specific to the grant profession, and grant professionals are captured in multiple categories including writers and authors or social and community service managers (Torpey, 2014). Both categories are projected to grow faster than average ranging from 8% (writers and authors) to 16% (community service managers) projected growth by 2026 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2018a; 2018b). Yet, despite both employment projections and the significant volume of funding currently managed by grant professionals across the country, grantsmanship as a profession remains an emerging vocation. In fact, until 1998, not a single association was dedicated to the profession of grantsmanship nor were many formalized training organizations dedicated to the grant professional (GPA, n.d.). While this "newness" provides for some flexibility in defining the scope of the grant professional's responsibilities, it also contributes to a lack of industry standards and best practices in several areas critical to the optimal functioning of grant professionals—most notably in the area of performance evaluation. Given the importance of grant professionals to the vitality of the institutions and organizations they serve, evaluating their effectiveness is critical.

Study Background

Lack of Standardized Metrics for Grant Professionals to Evaluate Performance

Grant professionals have sought the establishment of performance metrics for the field almost since grantsmanship became recognized as a profession (Faruqi (2004); Poderis (2011); Tiernan (2012); Tilzey (2016)).

Yet, the literature suggests that despite these urgings, minimal progress has been made in developing or vetting a standardized set of metrics to assist grant professionals in measuring and reporting their performance (Calabrese & Mason, 2014). Underscoring this point, a search for peer-reviewed publications and scholarly articles addressing performance metrics for grant professionals turned up no relevant results. When the literature search expanded to include strategy papers, blog articles, industry reports, and message board postings, the results reinforced the need for standardized performance metrics for grant professionals. These articles offered general processes or theories for evaluation rather than specific performance metrics. A search for these metrics in similar professions such as fundraising and institutional advancement revealed an abundance of available tools to predict revenue and return on investment (ROI) for fundraising and planned giving. However, the grant professional's role is distinctly different from those of other fundraising and development professionals. While "[o]n the surface the 'numbers' may seem to address the same points…[and] the labels applied to the numbers may be the same…the underlying variables defining them are likely to make such comparisons invalid" (Poderis, 2011).

Challenges in Establishing Broad Evaluation Criteria for Grant Professionals

According to Scott Herr (2012), "there are two underlying issues that make establishing broad evaluation criteria for grant [professionals] challenging. The first is the absence of universally recognized and accepted industry standards. The second is the wide range in the scope of responsibilities" of grant professionals. Calabrese & Mason (2014) point to additional reasons for the absence of widely accepted performance metrics, citing the challenge of "convening the large number of stakeholders necessary to vet and approve [performance indicators]… a task [that] becomes exponentially more complicated when considering the inclusion of all segments of the grants industry." In an attempt to mitigate this challenge, the authors of this study chose to focus on grant professionals who are active members of the Grant Professionals Association (GPA), limiting the potential volume of stakeholder input to approximately 2,700 members who can provide a representative sample for the field.

A separate issue facing the industry with regard to establishing standardized performance metrics is the challenge of developing measurement tools that capture the more qualitative—and therefore less-defined—aspects of grantseeking, such as program development, organizational planning, and external image building (Faruqi, 2004). Traditional performance metrics overlook these functions for performance indicators that are easier to define or more quantitative in nature, such as the number of proposals written and awarded, amount of funds secured, and type of proposals submitted. "The complexity of this 'full landscape' as described by Faruqi (2004) presents challenges for grant professionals in assessing and articulating their performance for colleagues, managers and organizational leadership" (Calabrese & Mason, 2014).

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this descriptive study was to identify and evaluate the most commonly used metrics for grant professional performance evaluation across employment sectors. Additionally, the authors hoped to identify metrics not commonly used in the field that more accurately reflect the full range of grant professionals' contributions and performance.

The study examined the following research questions:

- **RQ1:** What metrics are grant professionals currently using to evaluate, track, and measure their performance?
  Objective 1: *Identify metrics grant professionals currently use to track and measure their performance.*

- **RQ2:** How closely do these metrics align with grant professionals' job descriptions and work functions?
  Objective 2: *Determine the extent to which these metrics align with grant professionals' job descriptions and work functions.*

- **RQ3:** What metrics do grant professionals think should be used to measure their performance?
  Objective 3: *Collect recommendations from grant professionals related to the prospective development of performance metrics for the field.*

Study Design and Methods

The authors conducted a prospective, observational, exploratory survey study deployed electronically to members of the national GPA. At the time of this study, the GPA had 2,714 members with representation from every US state, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, American Samoa, Australia, and Canada. The majority of GPA members (88.3%) are female and 46.7% are between 34–50 years of age. GPA members come from all sectors of the grants community, representing healthcare, education, government, the nonprofit sector, and private enterprise. They include grant developers, managers, funders, administrators, planners, and evaluators.

The electronic survey (Appendix 1) consisted of nine questions. Questions 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, and 9 collected quantitative data from respondents while Questions 4, 5, and 6 collected qualitative data through the use of optional short-answer text boxes. The anonymous, voluntary survey study occurred from March 1, 2018 to April 1, 2018 using SurveyMonkey as the data collection platform. The survey was promoted to GPA members through three social media platforms: the official GPA Facebook page (1,972 followers 'like' this Facebook page), official GPA LinkedIn page (8,644 members), and GPA GrantZone 'Open Forum' (2,658 members).

While these fora are intended to be used by GPA members only, they are not "closed" or "private" groups requiring membership verification (with the exception of the GPA GrantZone Open Forum). As a result, survey responses may include grant professionals who were not active GPA members, as well as grant professionals who are not current practitioners in the field. Completed surveys could only be submitted once per IP address, to prevent duplicate responses from the same respondent. IP addresses were masked to the authors. The survey yielded 214 total responses (n = 214), with an average response time of six minutes. Data was extracted to Excel and analyzed using descriptive statistics in SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences).

Study Results

Participant Characteristics

Survey participants reflected a wide cross-section of GPA Special Interest Groups (SIGs), with participants from every category represented. The largest concentration of grant professionals represented the human services sector (25.70%), followed by grant consultants (17.76%) and those working in higher education (17.76%). The largest group of participants

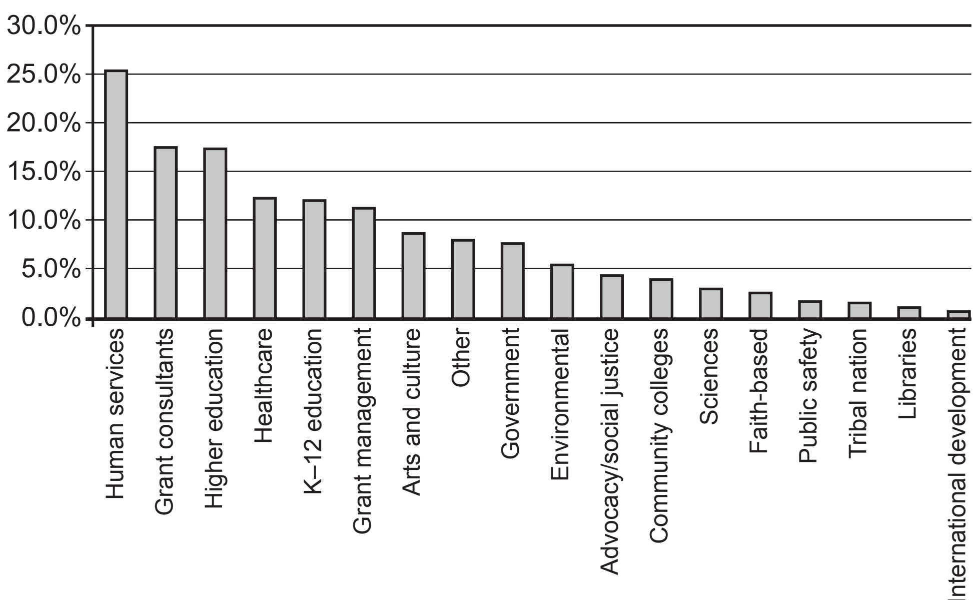

Figure 1. Participants by Employment Sector/SIG

(18.22%) was employed by institutions or organizations with up to 10 employees, followed by those with 1,000–5,000 employees (13.55%) and those with 200–300 employees (11.21%). This spread across both sector and institution size reflects the "recognition of grant professionals as an integral part of every organization's funding team" (GPA, 2017).

Currently Used Performance Metrics

Question 1 asked participants to select from a list of 19 items any performance metrics currently used to track or measure their performance. The 19 metrics were selected for the frequency with which they appeared in literature related to the topic of grant professional performance evaluation. Of 214 participants, 210 (98.13%) answered this question. The top five metrics most commonly used to measure grant professional performance were:

1. Dollar amount of funds awarded (90.14%)
2. Number of proposals submitted (84.04%)
3. Number of proposals funded (82.63%)
4. Dollar amount of proposals submitted (pending but not yet awarded/denied) (57.75%)
5. Rate of proposals funded vs. proposals submitted (win rate) (53.05%)

As expected, the most commonly used performance metrics are largely quantitative in nature with a primary focus on results and work volume. While these metrics offer a place to begin in the process of establishing industry standards for performance evaluation, flaws exist with evaluating grant professionals by these metrics alone. Poderis (2011) refers to these measures of performance as "absolutist" and cautions that such indicators can be potentially damaging to an institution's grantseeking operations. The premise for these metrics, he argues, is that they come from a "poorly informed view that success or failure can be measured simply by looking at the 'numbers'" and that "grant [professionals] need to be pushed to 'stretch' their goals and increase their efforts."

Further, Poderis (2011) asserts that credible industry benchmarks cannot be assumed to exist for the number of grant proposals written and submitted, ratio of grants awarded to those submitted, or total dollars of funds awarded, as these indicators vary from institution to institution. As a result, institutions that insist on using these types of metrics should take care to benchmark the grant professional's performance only against his or her past performance in these categories—not against other grant professionals' performance at the same or similar institutions.

In a similar vein, Floersch (2014) writes that although supervisors often judge grant professionals' ability and effectiveness based on the total amount of funds they bring into their institutions each year, "that approach is unrealistic and likely leads to high employee turnover… [the grant professional's] work is only one of many complex factors that determine whether a grant application results in a grant award."

Alignment with Grant Professionals' Job Descriptions and Work Functions

Questions 2 and 3 asked participants to use a five-point Likert Scale to indicate how closely the metrics they selected in Question 1 aligned with their job descriptions and work functions, with a score of '1' being *Not at all Aligned* and a score of '5' being *Very Closely Aligned.* 'Job Description' was defined as the formal, written account of a grant professional's responsibilities; 'Work Functions' were defined as all functions for which the grant professional is responsible but which may or may not be captured in the job description. Of 214 participants, 210 (98.13%) answered Q2 and 213 (99.53%) answered Q3. Of participants, 66.19% indicated that the metrics they selected in Q1 were closely (39.52%) or very closely (26.67%) aligned with their job description, while 68.54% indicated that these same metrics were also closely (35.68%) or very closely (32.86%) aligned with their work functions.

These responses were in contrast to narrative answers in survey questions 4, 5, and 6 in which grant professionals consistently argued that traditional performance metrics for their positions often do not reflect the larger scope of work functions for which they are responsible. A possible explanation for this discrepancy in results is that Q1 presented no qualitative metrics for selection, thus participant responses reflect the heavily quantitative nature of current grant professional performance evaluation.

Unmeasured Work Functions

Question 4 asked participants to provide a short description of any work functions not currently captured in their organization's performance metrics for their position. Of 214 participants, 177 (82.71%) responded to this survey question. Among these responses, 65 (36.72%) participants indicated that there were no work functions not currently captured in the performance metrics for their position. Twenty responses (11.30%) were removed from the data set for being unrelated to the question and one response (.056%) was removed for lack of clarity/inability to make inferences regarding the response. After data cleaning, 91 responses (n = 91) remained for data analysis. In these responses, participants identified the following top work functions not commonly represented in the performance metrics for their positions:

1. Grant Management and/or Grant Reporting (23.64%)

2. Institutional Planning: Program Design, Project Development, Strategic Planning (13.79%)
3. Relationship Building/Stewardship (17.24%)
4. Organization Capacity Building (Grants-specific) (12.80%)
5. Funder Research/Prospecting (7.38%)
6. Development/Fundraising (6.40%)
7. Marketing/Public Relations (5.91%)

Responses to this question suggest that the scope of work for grant professionals encompasses more than proposal writing alone. Grant professionals are often involved in institutional planning activities (supporting faculty and staff to design programs and assisting their institutions with strategic planning); grant management and post-award functions such as reporting; organizational capacity building (updating organizational documents, working in tandem with budget officers, educating faculty and program staff on grant seeking); and funder/prospect research. Roughly 6% also reported serving in support roles to development teams or fundraising offices and performing marketing or public relations activities—functions that do not traditionally fall within the role of the grant professional. Further, responses to this survey question indicate that grant professionals are taking on an increased responsibility for stewardship, playing a significant role in relationship building activities that are integral to securing and sustaining funding for their employers.

The responses to Question 4 point to a troubling trend: grant professionals are responsible—both formally and informally—for a much wider range of work functions than their evaluation includes, suggesting that a percentage of their core work functions goes unevaluated and potentially unnoticed.

Additional Performance Metrics

Question 5 asked participants to identify any metrics they felt should be added to their performance evaluations at their individual institutions. Of 214 participants, 168 (78.50%) responded. Among these, 53 (31.55%) indicated that there were no additional performance metrics they would like to see added to their performance evaluations. Fourteen responses (0.83%) were removed from the data set for being unrelated to the question, and 13 responses (0.77%) were removed for lack of clarity/inability to make inferences regarding the response. For example, "[T]he number of times I curse in a meeting would be a better indicator," and "I would like a meaningful performance evaluation, but that does not seem to be a priority at my institution" were removed because they did not directly answer the question. After data cleaning, 88 total responses remained for data analysis (n = 88).

Among the remaining responses to Q5, six broader themes of performance measurement emerged, with the largest theme related to "soft skills" associated with relationship building. More than half (59.09%) of participants indicated that items such as mentoring and networking activities; rate of faculty, staff, and departmental participation in grantseeking; and funder stewardship were integral components of the grant professional's role missing from their current performance evaluations. Closely following relationship-building skills were suggestions of evaluation based on results of grantseeking activities (proposal results, 25.00%), as well as skills and knowledge base (23.86%). Many respondents also suggested that continuing education—activities grant professionals take advantage of to build their expertise in the field—be considered as a piece of the overall performance evaluation. Remaining themes, in descending order, included grant management (17.05%); pre-award (15.91%); and administrative functions (12.50%). Table 1 (on the next page) provides specific data related to types of functions associated with each theme.

Recommendations for Prospective Performance Metrics

Question 6 asked participants to identify any performance metrics, other than those listed in Question 1, they thought grant professionals should use in the field. Of 214 participants, 164 (76.6%) responded to this survey question. Among the responses, 58 (35.4%) indicated that they had no recommendations for additional metrics related to grant professional performance evaluation. Ten responses (0.61%) were removed from the data set for being unrelated to the question and five responses (0.03%) were removed for lack of clarity/inability to make inferences regarding the response. For example, comments such as the following were removed from analysis: "I have no idea how you quantify some of this stuff—writing ability, ability to herd cats (or staff), grace under pressure, RELENTLESS deadlines, etc." After data cleaning, 91 total responses remained for data analysis (n = 91).

Responses to Q6 were more defined than those in Q5. While themes similar to those identified in Q5 reappeared in the responses to Q6, participants identified a narrower group of recommendations for prospective performance-metric development in Q6. As in Q5, the most frequent responses reflected the need to evaluate and measure relationship building skills (53.85%), grant professional skill sets and knowledge (25.27%), and the results of grantseeking activities (19.78%). Specific functions associated with these themes appear in Table 1. However, one new theme emerged from the responses to Question 6: Level of Work/Involvement with Proposal Development (13.19% of responses). As one participant wrote,

Table 1: Additional Performance Recommendations by Theme and Associated Metrics

Theme	Frequency	Associated Performance Metrics
Relationship Building	59.09%	• # of proposals submitted to new funders • # of grants submitted/won as a result of collaboration activities • New cross-sector relationships formed • Mentoring activities • Networking activities • Stewardship activities • Time spent helping faculty/staff build relationships with prospective funders • Client/PI satisfaction rate/feedback • Rates of participation of faculty/staff/ departments in grant seeking • # of funders/grants retained from year to year • Educational training on grants and writing for students and faculty
Proposal Results	25.00%	• Indirect cost recovery • Win rate • Dollar amount of funds brought in • Grant conversion rate • Grant outcomes • # of grants developed system-wide • # proposals submitted • Dollar amount of funds awarded
Skills/ Knowledge Base	23.86%	• Contributions at meetings • New skills learned each year • Error rate (# of times supervisor needs to intervene to fix a mistake) • Improvement in efficiency re: data management, data collection, grant readiness • Professional development activities • Quality of work • Time management and coordination

Grant Management	17.05%	• Clean audit results: low risk, no findings • Systems developed to better track and report on grant projects • Project management • Program design activities • Timely reporting • # of clients managed • Grant coordination activities • Implementation and maintenance of efficient processes • % of grants successfully implemented
Pre-Award Functions	15.91%	• Prospect research - # of potential funders reviewed - # of grant opportunities identified for departmental consideration • Time allocated on research, calls, meetings, etc. • Contacts with project managers (# of contacts and meetings)
Administrative Functions	12.50%	• Non-grant program development • Participation in work/committees not explicitly grant-related • Development and implementation of policies/procedures

> "Simply counting the number of proposals does not tell the whole story of the level of work involved. Some proposals can be whipped out in a week or less, while others require months of planning and work. Another thought would be to consider the level of expertise of the project team. Some teams need a LOT of handholding, have no time to assist with proposals, have little idea of how to assemble a program, write [poor] reports, and are very slow to learn grant management...others excel at these tasks and can do them in their sleep."

Remaining themes, in descending order, included post-award functions and grant management activities, reflecting 8.79% (each) of the responses to the survey question.

Conclusion

When it comes to measuring grant professional performance, the metrics used skew heavily toward quantitative indicators which assign numeric values to productivity (e.g., win rate, productivity, work volume, dollars awarded). In this way, performance evaluation for grant professionals strongly mirrors evaluations for fundraising and development professionals, despite marked differences in roles and work functions. While quantitative measures provide a solid foundation for performance evaluation and, at least at face value, appear to be both objective and easily tracked, these metrics do not address the more qualitative—and therefore less definable—aspects of grantseeking, such as program development, organizational planning, and relationship building.

This study affirms that grant professionals are responsible for a wide range of functions that stretch far beyond proposal development. Grant professionals are not just 'writing about it'—they build critical relationships with funders and internal and external partners; help their organizations build capacity for grantseeking; participate in program design and other institutional planning activities; and manage grants long after an award is made. They are significant resources to their institutions; however, their performance evaluations do not always reflect this work. Thus, a large percentage of grant professionals' core work functions go unevaluated and potentially unnoticed. For many, performance evaluation and compensation are closely linked, with compensation being an outcome of performance. Without a comprehensive performance evaluation tool that can be used as a gauge of success, it may be difficult for both employees and consultants to make a case for wage increases or performance-based rewards, bringing this article full-circle to the purpose of this study.

From this study, two broader themes for grant professional performance evaluation emerged. Although numeric measures of performance are important to overall evaluation, successful grant professional performance is connected to more qualitative skill sets—relationship building skills ("who you know") and knowledge of the field ("what you know"), particularly in the areas of program and project design. While the grant professional's role varies based on factors such as employment sector and organizational size and culture, this study was able to identify specific performance metrics that were consistently identified across all employment sectors. These specific metrics will appear in a follow-up strategy paper which will share findings to inform the establishment of industry standards for grant professional performance evaluation.

Finally, while this study did not seek to compare differences in performance evaluation between grant professionals who are employed by organizations and those self-employed as consultants, a significant portion of responses to this survey came from grant consultants (17.76%).

During the data analysis portion of this study, the authors concluded that the results of the study may have been further strengthened by having grant consultants considered separately from grant employees in order to draw such comparisons. Future studies should also seek to obtain information related to the types of performance tools being used to measure consultant performance by examining, for example, whether grant consultants are evaluated using traditional employee performance evaluations or by other metrics grounded in ROI or client satisfaction.

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APPENDIX 1: Survey Tool

Title: Measuring Up: A Review of Current Grant Professional Performance Metrics

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You are invited to take part in a research study. This study is being led by researchers at Jefferson College of Health Sciences (Roanoke, VA) and Julie Boll Consulting (Quincy, IL). The goal of this project is to develop a set of metrics that all grant professionals, regardless of their field of practice, can use to comprehensively track and measure their performance.

Participating in this study is voluntary, and you may choose to not take part or withdraw at any time. If you decide to take part, simply click on the 'Exit' button at the top right hand of your internet browser to exit the survey. The survey should take about 10 minutes to complete.

Your responses to the survey are both anonymous and confidential. All data collected through this survey will be kept on a secure server, in password-protected folders. The completed questionnaires will not be shared with anyone outside of the research team.

There is minimal risk to you as a result of participating in this survey study; the principal risk is a potential waste of time. There is no cost to you for participating in this survey. There is no direct benefit if you take part in the study. However, your participation may benefit others by providing information that may help to develop best practices in performance measurement for grant professionals throughout the country.

If you would like to take part, please use the following link to complete our survey:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/XZ5LVGY

Please contact Amanda Ellinger Neese at (540) 985-8206 or Julie Boll (217) 242-4189 if you have any questions about the research. If you have questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact staff of the Carilion Clinic IRB at (540) 853-0728.

Q1. Which of the following metrics do you currently use or track to measure your professional performance? (Select all that apply) (Check Boxes)

- Number of proposals funded
- Number of proposals submitted
- Number of proposals submitted to NEW funders or competitions
- Dollar amount of funds awarded
- Dollar amount of proposals submitted (pending but not yet awarded/denied)
- Dollar amount of proposals under development (not yet submitted)
- Ratio of funds expended: funds awarded (Expenditure Rate)
- Number of proposals funded from new funders or competitions
- Ratio of proposals funded: proposals submitted (Win Rate)
- Percent rate of faculty/departmental participation in grant activities
- Number of faculty/staff meetings held to discuss new grant projects (excludes specific grant project meetings)
- Grant trainings held
- Number of recognition events held for staff participating in grant development or management
- Number of contacts with existing funders
- Number of site visits
- Number of stewardship activities (reports, calls, updates, etc.to sponsors/funders)
- Number of new potential funder identified and researched
- Number of active grants in portfolio
- Number or percent of grant proposals linked directly to an item (or sub-item) in your institution or client's strategic plan

Q2. In your opinion, how closely do the metrics you selected above align with your job description? (Likert Scale Ranking)

1: Not at all aligned with my job description

2: Minimally aligned with my job description

3: Somewhat aligned with my job description

4: Closely aligned with my job description

5: Very closely aligned with my job description

Q3. In your opinion, how closely do the metrics you selected above align with your work functions? (Likert Scale Ranking)

1: Not at all aligned with my work functions

2: Minimally aligned with my work functions

3: Somewhat aligned with my work functions

4: Closely aligned with my work functions

5: Very closely aligned with my work functions

Q4. Please provide a short description of any work functions that are not currently captured in your institution/organization's performance metrics for your position. (Short Answer)

Q5. What performance metrics would you like to see added to your performance evaluation? (Short Answer)

Q6. Other than those metrics listed in Question 1, what metrics (if any) do you think grant professionals should use to assist in measuring professional performance? (Short Essay/Short Answer Box)

Q7. In what sector do you currently work? (Sectors are divided according to GPA's list of Special Interest Groups) (Check Boxes)

- Advocacy/Social Justice
- Arts & Culture
- Community Colleges
- Environmental
- Faith-Based
- Grant Consultants

- Government
- Grant Management
- Healthcare
- Higher Education
- Human Services
- International Development
- K-12 Education
- Libraries
- Public Safety
- Sciences
- Tribal Nation

Q8. How large is the institution or organization for which you currently work? (Check Boxes)

- 1 – 10 employees
- 10 – 25 employees
- 25 – 50 employees
- 50 – 100 employees
- 100 – 200 employees
- 200 – 300 employees
- 300 – 500 employees
- 500 – 1,000 employees
- 1,000 – 5,000 employees
- 5,000 – 10,000 employees
- > 10,000 employees

Q9. Does the institution or organization where you currently work employ a Development Officer or a Development Office? (Check Boxes)

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Using Data to Advance the Quality and Capacity of Nonprofit Grant Programs

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GPCI Competency 02: Knowledge of organizational development as it pertains to grant seeking

Abstract

Nonprofit organizations can evaluate the quality and capacity of their grants programs to advance their missions by extensively reviewing past grant applications for quality, quantity, and comprehensiveness. They can also study data on number of submissions and awards. This article details the approach of a two-person team to evaluate the effectiveness of one nonprofit's corporate and foundation grant program through a formal grants assessment, conducted as a pilot. With no previous affiliation with the nonprofit organization, the team reviewed three years of data to assess the nonprofit's return on investment (ROI). This article shares the process, data, and insights gained from this grants-performance audit. The Grants Department Assessment report is now assisting the organization to make better-informed decisions about which funding opportunities to pursue, how to write competitive requests, and how to reach annual funding goals. This case study is useful for grant professionals and nonprofits considering a grant assessment.

Introduction

The current economy, including ongoing uncertainty of federal funding and increased competition for corporate and foundation funding, prompts nonprofits to seek solutions to maintain or increase grants revenue. Nonprofit budgets are often limited for staff expansion, and many do not have an established process for comprehensive evaluation of their grantseeking activities. It is common for success to be rated by the "number of proposals funded as compared with the number submitted" (Bauer, 2001). An assessment of a nonprofit's grant program can reveal data that empower leadership to make informed decisions about grant strategy. It can also help nonprofits adjust their processes and set realistic goals for grants revenue as part of their overall operating budget.

Data have been transforming decision-making for for-profit companies, but many nonprofits have not moved in this direction yet. "Most nonprofit organizations are still at the beginning of the beginning when it comes to the use of data to accelerate their decision-making and growth" (MacLaughlin, 2016, p.8). At the beginning of this project, the assessment team discovered a distinct lack of resources on the subject. The team researched and modified sample Development Assessment processes and discovered one dated resource from 2001, used as a case study. David Bauer's *How to Evaluate and Improve Your Grants Efforts* (2001) was invaluable as a resource, letting the team know they were on the right track as they built a pilot assessment.

Additional online resources included the Benefactor Group's "Development Assessment & Plan," which helped to build the outline of the grants performance audit including the phases of discovery, with in-person staff interviews, and data analysis (Benefactor Group, 2012). GKollaborative's "Guide to Nonprofit Assessments" provided a data-centric approach aligned with the team's vision for this audit, offering a framework for the overall goals (GKollaborative, 2017). Both resources helped shape an initial outline for the assessment.

The team defined the final process in four distinct phases designed to evaluate the organization's current grant strategy, using actual data about grant submissions and written examples of awarded and declined grant applications:

1. Output and proposal quality through discovery
2. Preliminary analysis
3. In-person staff interviews
4. A final, in-depth analysis of all information collected.

The final report included an assessment of operations and procedures, including growth, staffing, capacity, policies, communication, and proposal quality, as well as prospect research and recordkeeping. With an overall focus on data to support meaningful change, the team researched best practices and impact from local nonprofits to develop benchmarks. The team also analyzed organization-specific information such as submission history, award history, and sample grant proposals to evaluate quality. Grant professionals use data every day in grant proposals to quantify need and show impact. The team used the same approach to evaluate quality and capacity for this grants program.

Organization Background

The evaluated nonprofit is a thriving statewide organization that meets the needs of its clients, with the majority of its revenue coming from federal grant contracts and a small percentage from contributed revenue. One full-time grant professional works with a team of development and program staff located around the state. A full-time evaluator develops evaluation plans for all programs and proposals and synthesizes evaluation results. A "grants committee" has a standing meeting every two weeks to discuss funding opportunities and current proposals. The development team uses Raiser's Edge from Blackbaud to track and monitor all contributed revenue. While the grants program does a good job of underwriting ongoing programs, the nonprofit is struggling to fund programs fully, and leadership was concerned about their fundraising effectiveness through corporate and foundation grants revenue. The number of grants submitted has increased over a three-year period, with a slight increase in the number of awards but a decline in grants revenue.

Process

When approached by the nonprofit to perform a grants audit, the author did not have previous experience and struggled to find resources for guidance. As a consultant, the author often conducts an abbreviated grants audit with prospective clients to gain an understanding of their grants program, capacity, and goals. Recognizing this, the author reached out to a colleague, and the team worked together to create a pilot assessment, building a preliminary outline of the process modeled after development assessments. The team broke down its duties based on conversations around background, experience, and preference. The author's background and experience were well suited to data analysis, working with the nonprofit to collate and analyze their data. The partner was able to provide critical analysis of grant samples to highlight quality and clarity of responses.

During the *Discovery* phase, the assessment team worked with the nonprofit's staff to learn about the organization. An eight-page workbook presented to the nonprofit outlined information that the team wanted to know and review, including background (such as mission, key staff descriptions, and duties and responsibilities for the grant writer), processes for award management and stewardship, methods for prospecting and research, and recordkeeping. The workbook combined direct questions with space for answers and requests for specific attachments, such as a current grants revenue plan, current operating budget, strategic plan, and an organizational chart. The nonprofit was also asked to identify similar local nonprofits for benchmarking.

As part of the *Discovery* phase, staff shared three fiscal years of data including grants submitted and declined, amounts, and samples of awarded and declined grants. Due to inadequate reporting and tracking processes, staff struggled to pull the data requested by the assessment team. Staff manually pulled the data from multiple sources but were unable to provide all the requested information. As an example, data on requested amounts and the specific programs being funded were often unavailable, forcing the assessment team to evaluate incomplete data. It revealed critical gaps in the organization's usage of Raiser's Edge, and the assessment team realized that board and staff had not previously had access to much of the data assembled. The team based its final audit report on the data available at the time.

As part of the *Analysis* phase, the assessment team reviewed and analyzed the data extrapolated during the *Discovery* phase, with results used to develop the questions for the staff interviews. Over several weeks, the team reviewed all the data and developed the questions. The team conducted six in-person staff interviews with leadership and program staff over a two-day period, with each interview lasting about an hour. Interviews were conducted with the Executive Director, Chief Financial Officer, Director of Development, Grants Manager, Vice President of Programs, and Outcomes Coordinator (evaluator).

The assessment team wrote specific questions for each staff person based on position and role in grantseeking. For example, the Executive Director was asked what prompted the grants program audit, what are the current successes and challenges for the institution, and what is the vision for the grants program. The VP of Programs was asked about the position's role in the grants process, how it works with the grant position, and the timeline and process for writing grant applications. The questions were purposely broad, allowing staff the freedom to extrapolate information and share freely, while assisting the team to visualize and develop knowledge about each department.

The interviews provided additional context to the information received in the *Discovery* phase and helped the team gain a deeper understanding of the existing grants process. One team member was responsible for taking notes during the interviews, while the other was responsible for recording the conversations (with staff permission) so critical information would not be missed. All data were synthesized and reviewed over several weeks, with follow-ups with staff for additional questions revealed during analysis, culminating in the *Grants Department Assessment* to the agency.

Grants Department Assessment

The assessment team submitted a 28-page report to the nonprofit which summarized all findings, including data summaries and recommendations in each area. Data highlights from that report include the following.

Grants Program Growth

The organization was submitting a slightly increased number of grants each year (3.5% increase in FY 2015–2016 and 4.5% increase in FY 2016–2017). However, the percentage of funded applications remained about the same (at 57% in FY 2014-2015, 59% in FY 2015-2016, and 56% in FY 2016-2017).

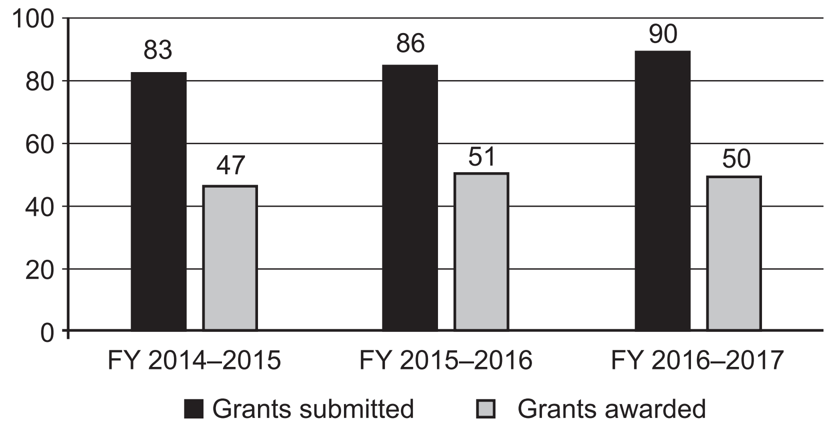

Figure 1: Grants program growth FY 2014–FY 2017

Grants Program Revenue

The most recent fiscal year data revealed an increased percentage in the amount of revenue as a percentage of asking amounts, up almost 10% from 62.95% in FY 2015–2016 to 71.86% in FY 2016–2017.

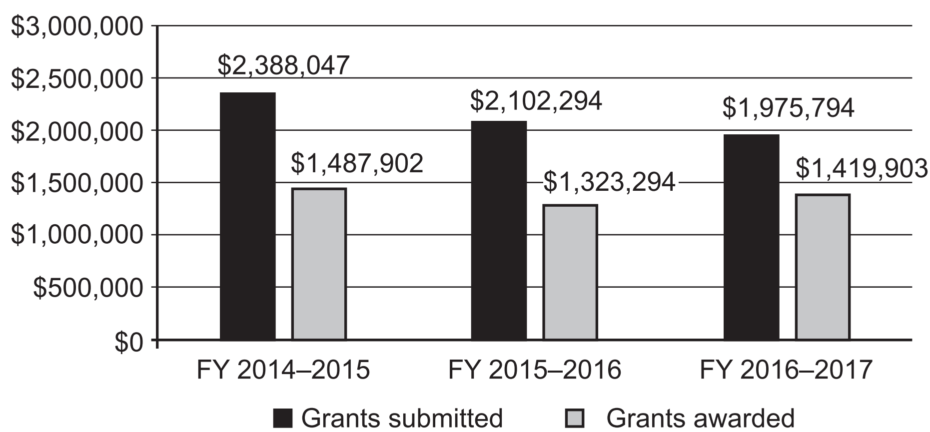

Figure 2: Grants program revenue FY 2014–FY 2017

Grants Program Activity

An institutional goal to submit proposals to five new grant prospects each quarter was met or exceeded but new grant opportunities were not being assessed for the greatest match/award potential. The resulting number of new grant awards, as well as the amount of new revenue, was negligible given the organization's investment of time in research and writing. The amount of new revenue as a percentage of amount requested from new grant prospects in FY 2015–2016 was just over 24% and dropped significantly to just over 12% in FY 2016–2017. The assessment team brought these results to the leadership team. Because these data were not previously available, the board and leadership were unaware of the ROI of this goal. Knowing the ROI allows leadership to make an educated decision about how the nonprofit should move forward with prospect research and decisions about submissions.

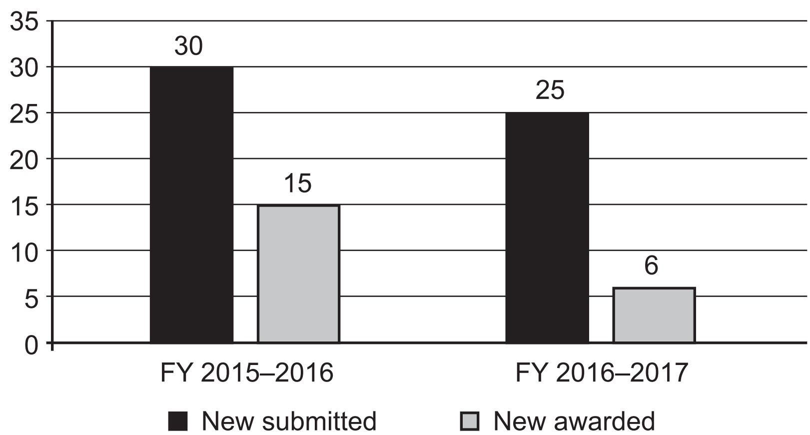

Figure 3: Detail of new prospects and awards

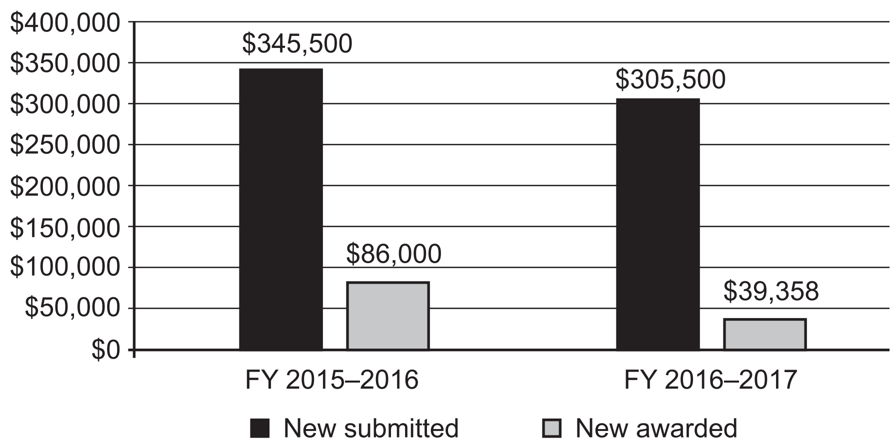

Figure 4: Detail of new revenue

Grants Program Detail

Data from the last three years showed a steady increase in the number of declined grants, negating the extra work invested each year on new prospects. Detailed analysis of data from all three fiscal years showed these trends:

- Eight funded grants from FY 2014-2015 were not resubmitted in FY 2015–2016.
- Five funded grants from FY 2015-2016 were not resubmitted in FY 2016–2017.
- Eight competitive proposals were declined each year over all three fiscal years reviewed, prompting the assessment team to recommend taking a closer look at funding opportunities to determine the true potential of a possible future award.
- Additional submissions each year resulted in an increase of declined requests.

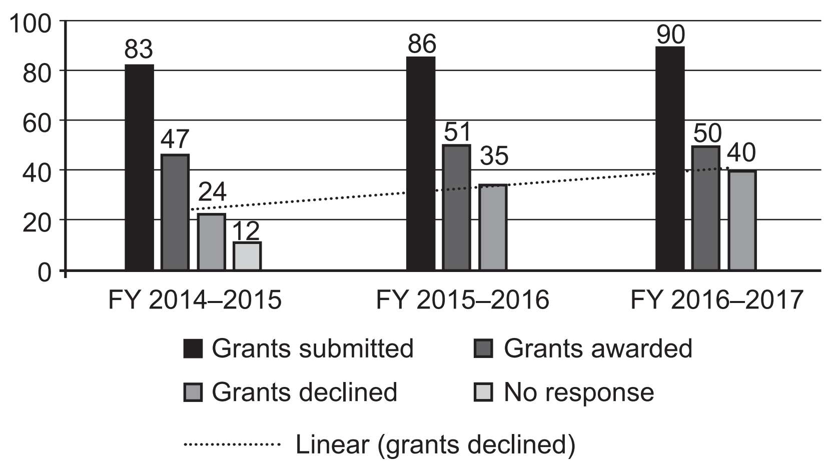

Figure 5: Grants program detail FY 2014–FY 2017

Based on experience, the assessment team recognized that funding opportunities may not be submitted in a future year due to a variety of reasons, including multi-year funding, changes in grantseeker or grantmaker programs or focus areas, or discouragement from the funder in a reapplication. The purpose of the report was to bring the trends to the surface for discussion and reflection with the nonprofit staff. When presented with the above data, leadership did not know why certain grants were not being resubmitted in future years and were unaware of the trend.

The assessment team's analysis of data also revealed:

- The grant writer was relying on program staff to take a larger role in content writing for grant requests.
- The Grants Committee was not meeting on a regular basis.
- Prospect research was not aligned with the agency's strategic plan and was not being reviewed by the Grants Committee, resulting in a jumble of submissions to meet the goal to submit proposals to five new prospects each quarter.
- The organization's proposals often contained grammatical errors, responses that did not address the questions asked, and industry-specific jargon that was not explained or clarified. The proposals often lacked budget justifications.
- Staff were not following up with funders on declined grant requests, which could provide valuable information for a future request.
- All grants were tracked in the "Actions" module in Raiser's Edge, versus the "Prospect" module, which contributed to the confusion about the number of grants submitted and awarded, as well as amounts requested and awarded.
- Grants revenue data presented to the team for FY 2014–2015 did not align with the organization's IRS Form 990 data for the same year. The 990-reported total contributed revenue was lower than the grants revenue reported to the team, revealing the existence of an error on at least one of the reports.

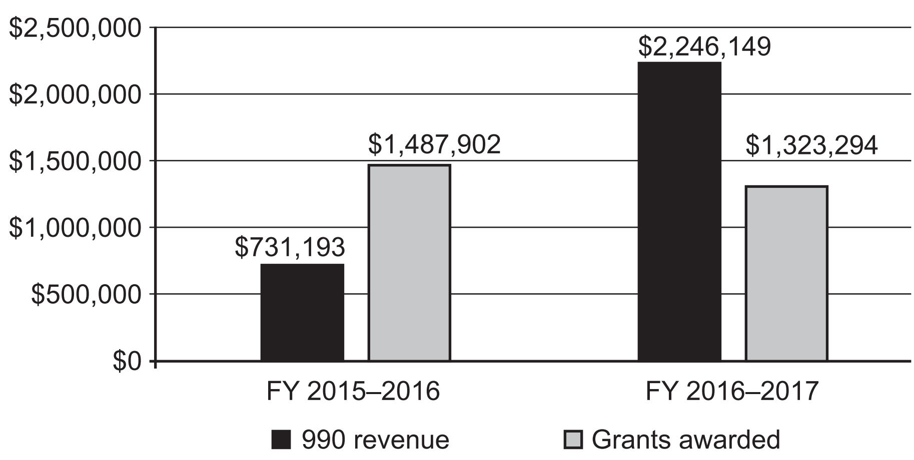

Figure 6: Comparison of grants revenue and 990 data

The nonprofit exhibited successes in the grant program as well. The assessment team noted that:

- Proposals consistently used current statistics, compelling descriptions of clients and target populations, and effective use of outcome data.
- Grant management and stewardship were strong, with all current grant partners receiving both interim and final reports.
- Strong team communication extended to remote development staff working around the state.

Nonprofit Strategic Changes

Using the grants assessment report and discussion from a post-assessment meeting, the nonprofit began to make strategic changes to their grants program. In the first few months the nonprofit:

1. Hired an independent grant professional to improve quality of grant applications and help support federal grant requests and larger initiatives.
2. Began work to implement new processes for Raiser's Edge, including using the "Prospect" module to track submissions and have access to cleaner data.
3. Scaled back the number of proposals submitted each year by vetting prospects more thoroughly and eliminating the goal to submit proposals to five new grant prospects each quarter.
4. Committed to improving internal research and stewardship to avoid resubmitting proposals which had been declined.
5. Committed to reconvening the Grants Committee on a more regular basis, focusing on larger opportunities of $15,000 or more.
6. Worked internally with its accounting department to research the anomalies between grants revenue and previous 990 data.

At 10 months after completion of the audit:

1. The independent grant professional is still working with the nonprofit, getting ready to wrap up their first fiscal year together.
2. The Grants Committee is meeting more regularly and working closely with the independent grant professional to vet all new prospects.
3. New processes for Raiser's Edge are making it easier to track grant submissions and their status and to pull reports for board and leadership.

4. New processes have helped to increase staff communication around grants.

5. Submitted grant proposals have increased in quality, with more thorough responses.

Conclusion

The grants performance audit was successful as a pilot assessment for the team and as a detailed study for the nonprofit. For future audits, the team will increase the requested grant history from three years to five, providing a larger data sample to evaluate. An audit can be conducted for grants offices of any size but will be most beneficial for mature nonprofits with a history of grant submissions to analyze. For the nonprofit in this study, the audit revealed critical gaps in record-keeping and lack of oversight for prospect research and quality of submissions. This understanding of the organization's grant seeking program gave leadership the knowledge to make informed decisions to increase grants revenue and their ROI. Commitment from leadership is critical to success, from gathering and analyzing data to implementing change in the months following the audit. Leadership that seeks to make informed decisions for improved quality and/or capacity to result in increased grant revenue can benefit from a grants audit.

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Biographical Information

Mara Gerst, GPC, has been involved with the nonprofit sector as a grant professional, fundraising professional, adjunct professor, and volunteer for more than 20 years. Her professional experience includes grant development, fundraising, grants assessments,

sponsorships and recognition, donor stewardship, and budget development. She founded Gerst Grants & Nonprofit Consulting in 2015 and partners with clients providing services in arts and culture, education, human services, and disadvantaged youth. Previously she served as the Institutional Giving and Grants Manager at Phoenix Art Museum for more than five years, where she was responsible for raising seven-figure funding annually to support museum operations. During her tenure she developed a new stewardship process to improve donor communication and build stronger relationships. As a grants panelist, she has reviewed grants for the JM Kaplan Fund, Phoenix Office of Arts and Culture, and Arizona Commission on the Arts. She is the immediate past president of the Arizona Founding Chapter of GPA, a former member of the GPA Chapter Advisory Committee, and a former Chair for the GPA Arts & Culture Special Interest Group (SIG). She can be reached at mara@gerstgrants.com.

Increasing Capacity for Grant Professionals to Impact Economic and Community Development

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Tara Gohr
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GPCI Competency 07: Knowledge of practices and services that raise the level of professionalism of grant professionals

Abstract

Grants have the potential to affect entire communities by increasing access to services and fueling economic and community development. The role of the grant professional is important as a multi-faceted, challenging, and complex career for individuals who possess the right skill set. To support continuous improvement in communities nationwide, grant professionals have an imperative to use their profession to maximize the impact grants can have in their locales. This imperative is particularly important in the ten "philanthropic divide" states, which have the fewest private foundation assets, indicating a scarcity of resources. In those states, grants can be used as an economic development driver.

This article provides a case study of the establishment and first two years of The Grants Collective in New Mexico, a philanthropic divide state. By nurturing local talent and coordinating collaborative grantseeking to boost social and economic vitality, the Collective's goal is to develop a pool of talented grant professionals who can secure funding from outside of the state. The article examines two of its programs: 1) an intensive, place-based professional development fellowship, and 2) an in-person and online network of grant professionals who collectively build capacity and knowledge. Findings come after a 24-month pilot period. Best practices, lessons learned, and observations from this initiative can inform place-based work that builds grant seeking capacity and skills in other areas of the country, especially as it relates to local economic development.

Introduction

Role of the Grant Professional in Areas of Scarce Resources

Within the nonprofit sector, the grant professional's role is complex, requiring the successful individual to acquire and refine a diverse skill set. This includes skilled proposal writing, project management, facilitation, research, data analysis, budgeting, and more. Most grant opportunities are competitive and require the grant professional to read, understand, and respond to complex directions, craft compelling case statements, formulate complete and accurate budgets, and prepare various attachments. Once awarded, grant management requires significant monitoring and project coordination.

Nowhere is the grant professional's role as important as in states and regions that are under-resourced. In these regions, grants are often the mainstay of many nonprofit programs. They fund nonprofit jobs, providing net income and economic benefit to the local community. However, most foundations make grants in their own "backyard." In 2014, 64% of giving in the Philanthropy Southwest Region[1] went to the foundation's home state. This affects nonprofit service delivery in less wealthy areas, as fewer resources are available from individual donors and local foundations. Often a corporate base is lacking, resulting in minimal community reinvestment dollars and corporate foundation giving.

Approximately 10 years ago, the Big Sky Institute, a research and dissemination organization in Montana, coined the term "philanthropic divide." The term refers to the disparity between the 10 states with the most foundation assets and the 10 states with the fewest foundation assets. In 2012, this gap was $45.9 billion (Foundation Center) and has been widening, up from $36.1 billion in 2005 and $25.8 billion in 1998 (McCoy, 2015). This disparity is an important indicator of financial health and giving capacity, as foundations typically rely on endowed and invested funds to fuel philanthropy.

The philanthropic divide is not just a function of population. Total grantmaking by in-state foundations is $191.80 per capita nationally, but only $50.99 per capita in the bottom 10 states. (American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, 2014; Foundation Center, 2014) (Table 1).

Often in these same areas, the need for socioeconomic development across the board is reflected by low-wage jobs, high unemployment, poor education systems, and high crime rates. These difficulties are particularly problematic in rural areas, which have been widely documented to have fewer foundation investments than in other areas of the country. According to a 2015 U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Economic Research Service study, "the value of U.S. foundation grants to benefit rural areas was 6–7 percent of total domestic grants" in 2010.

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1 *The Philanthropy Southwest region includes the following states: Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas.*

Table 1: Philanthropic divide states using Foundation Center data (2014)

Top 10 States (most assets)	Bottom 10 States (fewest assets)
1. NY: $148,539,417,366	41. ID: $1,806,077,980
2. CA: $130,741,504,299	42. WY: $1,668,881,798
3. WA: $58,130,325,613	43. NM: $1,626,764,894
4. TX: $48,395,774,759	44. MT: $1,530,418,516
5. IL: $38,885,306,660	45. MS: $1,412,884,970
6. PA: $35,502,378,489	46. WV: $1,392,181,770
7. MI: $31,274,252,500	47. SD: $1,063,557,170
8. FL: $25,861,800,841	48. AK: $998,913,213
9. NJ: $24,189,913,960	49. VT: $821,194,807
10. OH: $23,945,241,971	50. ND: $405,249,499

Even when adjusting for population level, the average value of grants per capita in rural areas is just $88, less than half that of metro areas (Pender, 2015). The same study (2015) also found that "counties with organizations that have high fundraising capacity, such as universities, appear to receive more foundation funds per capita. This hypothesis is supported by a positive correlation between the college-educated share of a county's adult population and the value of grants received per capita, found for both non-metro and metro counties." Highly skilled grant professionals can bring additional funds into lower-resourced communities to help them benefit from philanthropic giving, government grants, and contracts.

Nonprofit Impact on Economic Development

Nonprofit organizations provide services that benefit society as a whole, addressing socioeconomic challenges and boosting the quality of life through education, social services, arts, economic development, healthcare, and other initiatives. These organizations rely on a variety of funding models, but most depend in some part on grants. Government sources also provide contracts and cooperative agreements that make up a share of many nonprofits' income. According to the Urban Institute (2015), government grants and contracts together made up nearly one-third of nonprofit revenues in 2013. Private charitable giving, including foundation and corporate grants and individual giving, made up another 13.3%.

In addition to the important work nonprofits provide, the sector is an economic driver. It employs approximately 10% of the U.S. population (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014) and accounts for 5.4% of the U.S. gross domestic product (McKeever & Gaddy, 2016). Well-resourced nonprofits start, maintain, expand, and sustain programs. The associated work employs artists, educators, bookkeepers, social workers, administrative specialists, counselors, and nurses, to name a few. This speaks to the importance of the nonprofit sector as an economic engine and to the importance of nonprofit fundraising positions to community economic growth. In fact, the U.S. nonprofit sector would rank as the 16th largest economy among the 200 nations tracked by the World Bank (2017).

Case Study: The Grants Collective

Background

New Mexico has been a philanthropic divide state since at least 2005 when the Big Sky Institute first conducted the research. The state has the unfortunate distinction of being at the “bottom of the lists” in many quality-of-life factors (Reichbach, 2017) such as child wellbeing, access to healthcare, and economic mobility. This community need inspired the authors of this article to establish and operate a successful grant development business which currently employs 11 people and has secured more than $100 million in grants. Since the company’s founding in 2003, its development team has made a significant difference in attracting investment to the community: proposals have helped nonprofits obtain grants that created new jobs and supported economic development. For example:

- A $4 million grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and a $1 million grant from the U.S. Department of Justice led to the employment of approximately 350 ex-offenders reintegrating into the community.
- A $3 million grant from the U.S. Department of Labor is training 300 people in high-growth and high-tech industries.
- A $1 million grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention created 10 jobs and launched a collective impact project that sub-grants funds to smaller nonprofits that would not have been competitive for the grant on their own.
- $3.5 million in private foundation and government grants created a charter school network that employs 15 individuals locally, supports a paid cohort of four to eight fellows annually, and increases employment in Native American communities through the school network.
- A $1 million foundation grant created a collective impact project focused on increasing entrepreneurship, helping reduce unemployment in Albuquerque to 4.5% (from 6.6% in 2015), and increasing median weekly wages.

These grants represent large-scale moves toward increased prosperity in New Mexico via workforce training, economic development, education, and long-term community health initiatives. This impact represents the work of one high-performing team of grant professionals pursuing large grant opportunities on behalf of nonprofit organizations that often have not pursued complex grants before. The organization consistently receives requests for internships, job shadowing, guest speaking, and technical assistance. The Grant Plant has been able to fulfill some requests, such as providing grantwriting trainings, hosting two interns, and holding individualized skill-building trainings for nonprofit staff. However, the company's standard business model of charging an hourly fee-for-service constrains its ability to fulfill all requests and the structure limits overhead for staff time to mentor interns or develop training programs.

Discussions over several years led the company to imagine, "what if?" What if the methods, skills, and information necessary to find and secure large-scale, competitive grants could be multiplied across a much larger number of nonprofit organizations? What if a larger local pool of grant professionals could be developed? What if new efficiencies and connections within the nonprofit community could change the prevailing mindset from one of competition for limited resources to a perspective of abundance?

The company came to the recognition that the solution is larger than what one client-focused small business with a limited budget could deliver. The Grant Plant spent two years in consultation with other local capacity builders, current and potential clients, funders, and other nonprofit sector leaders. This process illuminated barriers to nonprofit readiness to seek and secure large grants (see Table 2 on the next page).

Establishment of The Grants Collective

Exploring these barriers to effective grantseeking led to the creation of a nonprofit education and training arm of the company dedicated to capacity-building around grant seeking. This organization, The Grants Collective (so named for its focus on "many grants within one cooperative model"), enables New Mexico nonprofits to make measurable progress in bringing more resources into the state. It received its 501(c)(3) status in March 2016. This status was important to local funders who wanted to fund the work or subsidize other nonprofits' participation directly. The mission of The Grants Collective is to build grantseeking capacity of New Mexico nonprofit organizations so that they are better resourced to achieve their charitable and social missions.

The Grants Collective worked with a core group of stakeholders and grant professionals to build out two programs that launched in late 2016 and early 2017. Both are designed to address the barriers identified in Table 2 through a place-based approach to building grantseeking

Table 2. Barriers to Nonprofit Readiness to Secure Large Grants

Barrier	Examples
Organizational readiness and understanding of the grant seeking process	• Lack of several years of financial statements • Lack of financial management track record and/or other revenue streams • Lack of strong leadership • Are non-compliant or missing registrations with related systems (Grants.gov, System for Award Management (SAM.gov), Dun & Bradstreet)
Decision making processes	• Lengthy email forwards, delaying decisions to apply for grants • Lost valuable time in preparing proposals • Delays in meeting partnership requirements and building relationships
Project management	• Intimidation in preparing multiple complex attachments • Ineffective interaction with collaborators/ partners, financial staff, evaluators, researchers, and others
Time	• Insufficient resource allocation; not enough staff time or money available to submit a competitive application
Complex package preparation	• Lack of understanding of how to read and understand a federal grant opportunity • Anxiety with multiple guidance documents • Lack of understanding of federal regulations

capacity. The target audience is mid- and large-sized nonprofits versus small or nascent nonprofits that are more likely to secure funding with individual donors and local foundations. Its two primary programs include the Talent Academy for Grant Professionals and the Cooperative Network of Nonprofits.

The Talent Academy for Grant Professionals

The Talent Academy is an intensive fellowship in which participants learn all elements of the grantseeking process. The program targets individuals who have grant proposal writing as a component of their jobs. It incorporates project-based learning so that individuals actively work on grants and related projects for their organizations. The Talent Academy holds an annual open application and fellow selection process. Fellows attend weekly four-hour professional development sessions and have the option to bring their grant projects to “open lab” days at The Grants Collective. They use this time for consultation, receive edits and advice, and have a quiet working space dedicated to grant development.

Talent Academy curriculum explores planning for year-round grant seeking; improving grant readiness; identifying well-aligned funders; understanding the funder perspective; developing proposals and projects, including federal grant preparation; honing writing and editing skills; creating polished attachments that support a grant application; developing cooperative projects; and managing and evaluating grants.

Fellows are part of small cohorts. They experience working within a rigorous grantseeking environment to advance projects for their own organizations. Fellows bring a wealth of experience and unique perspectives, making for rich peer learning, discussion, and opportunity for cross-sector connections. To take part, individuals or organizations pay a $3,500 tuition, which includes the Talent Academy and access to the Cooperative Network of Nonprofits. This fee is lower in comparison to what organizations might pay if they were to contract with a grant proposal-writing firm. And, when comparing the return on investment with grants awarded, the cost of tuition is slight. Considering that expertise comes embedded within a participating organization, many nonprofits have selected to use Talent Academy.

Cooperative Network of Nonprofits

Nonprofit organizations interested in accessing New Mexico-specific grant-related resources and building a network around grantseeking participate in the Cooperative Network. Through a membership structure, the network connects local grant professionals so they may work in atmospheres of cooperation versus isolation and competition. It includes face-to-face and web-based resources for grant professionals to pursue well-aligned opportunities, to improve capability and capacity for securing large grants, and to develop collaborations and partnerships that grow their networks.

The online platform includes a grant opportunities calendar with open (no deadline) and forecasted funding opportunities, special-interest groups and discussion fora, social media functions (for example, tagging and posting to other members’ walls), private group messaging, ability to post and share resources, community-led blog entries, and curated tools and templates. In-person events include topical training sessions, networking and happy hours, reading circles, guest presenters, and individual consulting sessions. Individuals and organizations can become members via a monthly fee of $50, or pay $500 for an annual membership for up to two people from their organization.

Together, these two programs deliver capacity building and training to build a strong cadre of grant professionals who can successfully pursue and secure large out-of-state grants.

Best Practices and Lessons Learned

The Grants Collective launched with input from well-respected nonprofit leaders and as an outgrowth of an established, respected small business, providing the social capital needed to establish credibility and influence. Over the 24 months since The Grants Collective launched its programming, it has gained momentum locally through increased engagement in both the Talent Academy and Cooperative Network. Local funders have supported the project by participating as guest speakers, conducting funders' panels and listening to pitch sessions for the Talent Academy, and underwriting participation for their grantees. Likewise, nonprofit experts contribute to content in terms of providing best practices and case studies of what works at their organizations. The result is a cooperative community that builds one another up and works together to make their grant applications more competitive. The approach is systemic and unique in that it:

- Builds long-term capacity by embedding grant-related expertise within organizations and the nonprofit sector as a whole in New Mexico.
- Uses a place-based approach and builds on participating organizations' strengths and resources.
- Increases the programmatic impact that nonprofits are able to make and contributes to economic growth and revitalization.

In the Talent Academy, both the project-based learning and cohort-style education draw on the evidence-based best practices of other educational models. For example, project-based learning—a teaching tool that applies to a situation rather than being theoretical—is used in the Talent Academy as often as possible. This means fellows apply what they learn in real time at their organizations. Project-based learning helps students: 1) retain content longer and have a deeper understanding of what they learn, 2) become better at problem-solving, 3) develop improved critical thinking, 4) improve the ability to work collaboratively to resolve conflicts, and 5) exhibit more engagement and self-reliance (Buck Institute for Education, 2013).

Similarly, cohort-style education is a learning community that progresses through an education program together, rather than individually. The Talent Academy uses this approach so that participants develop a trusted network. Evidence shows that in cohort-style education, 1) learning is student-centered, because the environment is a shared experience, 2) participating in small group discussions builds strong bonds, and 3) professional relationships lead to career development and professional advancement (Georgia State University, 2011).

These approaches appear to be working. Two cohorts of the Talent Academy graduated (October 2016–March 2017 and October 2017–March 2018). The first cohort had six individuals; the second had 11. Evaluation findings include that 100% are "very satisfied" with the program and that participants appreciate the time commitment, although it is high. The first cohort of six participants raised $1.9 million for their organizations in the 12 months after completing the program, representing a success rate of 65%. More than $1.4 million (75%) of that came from out-of-state foundations and federal funding. The second cohort, representing 11 organizations, has successfully secured $4.25 million for their organizations within three months of finishing the program with a success rate of 80%, with more than $4 million of that (94%) coming from out-of-state sources. The third cohort, representing 12 organizations, runs from August to December 2018.

In the Cooperative Network, the online platform is a unique advancement in grantseeking. The Network was recognized as an Innovate New Mexico honoree in 2017 for its new approach to coordinating partnerships and leveraging funding. It is an efficient way to connect like-minded groups, acting as both a social and research platform specifically to support grant professionals. Its membership grows monthly, gaining approximately 80 members in its first year. Notably, the Cooperative Network launched several months before the launch of the Grant Professionals Association's (GPA's) GrantZone. These two online communities have some similarities, such as special-interest groups and ability to post documents and resources, and both are working to fill a profession-wide gap in access to shared knowledge.

The Grants Collective is also a community-builder that facilitates relationships among nonprofit organizations, funders, and community partners. Its office is open as a warm, welcoming space for program participants to interact with other grant professionals and, for some, as a distraction-free zone where they can concentrate. Both of its programs involve funders in an effort to address the imbalanced power dynamic: funders lead brown bag lunches and workshops, are guest speakers, are members of the Cooperative Network, and participate in sessions for the Talent Academy. Building community is a way of gaining a deeper understanding of gaps and assets, so that as the programs develop, they best meet the needs of the community.

The Grants Collective is learning along the way. The problem as originally envisioned—a lack of access to grant seeking technical expertise—is actually an issue fraught with systemic barriers and structural inequities. Some of this relates to New Mexico's being a philanthropic divide state, which ultimately validates the struggle that nonprofits face. But other systemic barriers and structural inequities became evident, such as disinvestment in mid-tier professionals (organizations typically investing more in executive-level or front-line professionals), rural versus urban resources, racial equity and income inequality, and funder/grantee dynamics. These barriers represent not subject-area "issues" such as healthcare, arts and culture, or education. Rather, they represent systemic problems that, with improved grantseeking technical expertise, local nonprofits can begin to overcome by building confidence and capacity within their organizations to solicit funds from out-of-state. If the Collective is successful, the chronic operational and personal stress seen among nonprofit professionals should decline.

As it matures, the Collective is considering additional evaluation tools to gain a more robust understanding of how grantseeking capacity work affects new and existing grant professionals. For example, what grantseeking would Talent Academy fellows have done without the training? How much of that grantseeking would have been successful? Qualitatively, surveys and interviews document outcomes that fellows would not have otherwise achieved: for example, one participant pursued her first federal grant, and that application was successful. She indicated she would not have had the confidence to move forward with the grant proposal without the training. Determining how to evaluate grantseeking capacity for individuals prior to their training with The Grants Collective is important to analyzing the impact of the model.

Observations for Grant Professionals

Grant professionals across the country are important in local economic development as they help obtain funding for nonprofit initiatives, which boost quality of life and sustain or create economic activity. An opportunity exists for these professionals to focus their practice on place-based work that builds grantseeking capacity and skills within their communities. Grant professionals in high-need areas (e.g., rural areas, frontier communities, other philanthropic divide states) may have a more vested interest in acting on the economic development possibilities of their work. They can build community, bridging nonprofit organizations and funders to address the gaps and assets in their communities more effectively.

Grant professionals interested in making an economic-impact case may consider working with their cities or other local governments to fund high impact grant seeking work. An initial investment by the City of Albuquerque's Economic Development Action Account (EDAct) launched the Talent Academy. The Grants Collective presented the message that theTalent Academy is an economic development initiative. Building nonprofit sustainability that resulted in new dollars' coming into the city, job creation, and job retention was a message that resonated with the City of Albuquerque's Economic Development Department and is a strategy that grant professionals in other locales can potentially apply.

Grant professionals may also consider developing expertise in this area and analyzing the status of local philanthropy in their communities, informing local government, funders, and stakeholders as to the status of financial resources for nonprofit work. Grant professionals are adept at using statistics in combination with stories and qualitative knowledge of a community to build a case. This skill-set translates to community asset mapping and gap analysis to determine case-building approaches to seeking funding locally, regionally, or nationally. The impact of this analysis might shed light on various issue areas, funding trends, or investment areas. How does each local picture align with larger philanthropic trends nationally, and how can the work of a grant professional fit into that picture?

Grant professionals working in philanthropic divide states may consider what can be done to boost local outcomes. Engaging stakeholders around these issues, whether they are funders, nonprofits, or others, is in the purview of the grant professionals' role as an expert in philanthropy. The average person does not hold significant knowledge about philanthropy or even the important work nonprofits do in the community. The grant professional can work with the broader community to help build a culture of pursuing grants that supports nonprofit organizations. Local politicians want funding to come into their communities. Businesses want to operate in communities that are vibrant, safe, and made up of well-educated individuals. Grant funding accomplishes these goals. Grant professionals may consider collaborating with their local city, county, or state governments to fund their project-based grantseeking collaborations, consulting work, or training initiatives, with the end result to bring more jobs and dollars into under-resourced areas.

Finally, to support continuous improvement and skill-building in grantseeking in communities nationwide, grant professionals have a responsibility to educate the next generation of professionals. A place-based strategy may help to build local community access to funding and resources with the appropriate mentoring, training, or other education provided by the grant professional.

Conclusion

A robust grantseeking environment leads to economic development through creating and maintaining jobs, making communities more attractive places to live, and providing important social, educational, and other services. The strategies used by The Grants Collective provide a novel approach for drawing national funding resources to the state of New Mexico. Capacity building of nonprofit organizations and grant professionals, particularly around the economic impact of grantseeking, has the potential for replication in other states and regions. In areas that suffer from a disproportionate lack of funding resources, it can be transformational. By collaborating, sharing resources, and increasing grantseeking capacity through professional development, skilled grant professionals may draw significant dollars to the nonprofit causes for which they work.

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Biographical Information

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Tara Gohr graduated with honors from New Mexico State University with a bachelor's degree in Theatre Arts, with an emphasis in Stage Management, which she credits as excellent entrepreneurial training for the show "must go on" as well as the behind-the-scenes work of being a grant professional. She also holds a graduate certificate in Nonprofit Management from Regis University. Tara has been recognized as a Woman of Influence (2017), one of Forty Under 40 local leaders (2014), and a Top Performing CEO (2011). She is a graduate of Leadership Albuquerque (2009). Contact: tara@thegrantplantnm.com.

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Nonprofit Organization Accountability: Compliance with Governments, Foundations, and Corporate Funder Requirements

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GPCI Competency 03: Knowledge of strategies for effective program and project design and development

GPCI Competency 05: Knowledge of post-award grant management practices sufficient to inform effective grant design and development

Abstract

Increased growth within the nonprofit sector in the past decades is one reason behind the competition among nonprofit organizations to obtain external funds. This challenge is an opportunity for governments, foundations, and corporate funders to reevaluate the accountability requirements of their grantees. Most nonprofits collect diverse information that does not necessarily address funders' needs. As a result, often nonprofits are not prepared to respond to funders' requests within the required timeframe or, in the worst-case scenario, are not able to generate the required information at all. In this article, a literature review uncovers several studies on the accountability processes that nonprofits should perform and identifies a lack of information on funders' accountability requirements to which nonprofits must respond. This exploratory study identifies, compares, and evaluates the accountability models that the government agencies (local, state, and federal), foundations, and corporate funders require from grantee organizations. To determine each group's accountability model, the investigator selected a random sample of 10 organizations from each of these funder groups and researched available information. Results confirmed that the government sector has the highest accountability requirements in reporting, followed by foundations and corporations.

Introduction

Nonprofits confront diverse accountability challenges. Common challenges include not having “a formalized assessment and reporting protocol in place” and deciding “what to measure, how to measure, how often to measure, and how to analyze the data,” even in larger, well-recognized regional and national nonprofits (Jones & Mucha, 2014, p. 13–14). Nonprofit human service organizations face increasing demands from funding agencies not only to provide services but also to “be efficient and compliant with specific contractual obligations” (Kim, 2005, p. 147).

Accountability consists of voluntary and mandatory dimensions. The voluntary dimension is information that the organization freely shares using a variety of dissemination mechanisms, such as its webpage, social media, informative e-mails, newsletters, and annual reports (Medina Rey, 2009). The mandatory dimension incorporates the contractual accountability requirements funders establish for nonprofits to receive funds. Elements of the mandatory dimension may or may not include components of the voluntary dimension. Compliance with funder accountability requirements is vital for nonprofits’ revenue but may be challenging if the information is not part of their current data collection plans.

Medina Rey (2009) suggests the establishment of a control system to address these and many other accountability challenges, as well as to harmonize the diversity of its voluntary and mandatory dimensions. The system, as proposed by Medina Rey, should address the following thematic areas in accountability: a) the organization’s identity; b) organizational structure; c) strategic planning; d) operation and management, including procedures and controls; e) financing, including use of funds; and f) results from the organization’s services. Costa, Ramus & Andreaus (2011) point out that the system, in addition to complying with funders’ mandatory accountability reporting, should demonstrate the social value produced by the organizations.

To minimize the challenges and improve their compliance processes, nonprofits need to be aware of major accountability requirements of the main funder sectors. This exploratory study identifies, compares, and evaluates government (local, state, and federal), foundation, and corporate accountability requirements. The study also examines the thematic areas required by funders and identifies similarities and differences across funder sectors. This study will help nonprofits assess if they are prepared to respond to funders’ requirements and submit grant applications to those with requirements that they can reasonably meet.

This paper consists of four sections. The first section presents the accountability framework of nonprofits and funders, followed by the methodology of the study. The third section presents the findings of the study and the conclusion provides final thoughts and recommendations on nonprofits' accountability and approaches to grant applications.

Accountability Framework

Nonprofits must address the needs of multiple stakeholders, each with their own accountability dimensions, thus creating complex data collection and monitoring requirements for these organizations. The board of directors, executive directors, supervisors, and employees are some of the stakeholders in an internal accountability dimension. This dimension presents a complicated, multi-level accountability because it needs to respond to upward, lateral, and downward stakeholders (Williams & Taylor, 2014). The external accountability dimension addresses the interests of stakeholders such as existing and potential donors, community members, external auditors, and interest groups. This external dimension dominates internal planning and direction while also increasing the accountability pressure by requiring excessive documentation and reports (Greiling & Stötzer, 2016). Nonprofits "are struggling to balance the increasing demand for accountability against multiple and often conflicting requirements" (Kim, 2005, p. 2). Nevertheless, nonprofits are aware of the importance and social responsibility of becoming accountable (Corral-Lage & Peña-Miguel, 2014; Greiling & Stötzer, 2016).

Although funders have a variety of accountability parameters, Moreno, Herrador Alcaide, and Segovia San Juan (2016) propose nonprofits should have external and internal control mechanisms to ensure the transparency of their operations. The authors suggest that control mechanisms, like annual reports or external audits, "will lead to better and greater transparency related to its management and operation" (p. 65). These mechanisms also enable nonprofits to communicate regularly their achievements and challenges to stakeholders, thus helping drive trust. That said, nonprofits and funders have different purposes for their accountability objectives, as nonprofits must share results and funders then evaluate them. For these reasons, the following section explores both nonprofits' and funders' visions for accountability.

Nonprofits' Vision for Accountability

Achieving their social and service-oriented missions has a higher priority for nonprofits than developing accountability systems that respond to stakeholders. However, the increasing accountability demands from stakeholders, including donors, have urged organizations to rethink priorities and develop diverse strategies to address both their mission and reporting systems. Self-assessments and internal controls are some of the tactics developed by organizations that accredit and recognize nonprofits that fulfill specific standards. The purpose of the self-assessments and internal controls is to improve nonprofit transparency and to drive accountability. Maryland Nonprofits and the Spanish Development Nongovernmental Organizations Coordinator (SDNGOC) are examples of nonprofits that developed self-assessments and compliance tools.

Maryland Nonprofits is a nonprofit organization in the state of Maryland that established the Standards of Excellence Institute in 1998 to "promote the highest standards of ethics, effectiveness, and accountability in the nonprofit sector" (Standards for Excellence, n.d.-a, para. 1). These standards are associated with tangible benefits, a direct public support increase, and a positive overall impact for nonprofits (Chun Feng, Gordon Neely & Slatten, 2016). Although the accreditation entails an application fee, annual licensing, and renewal every three years, the costs are moderate and staggered according to an organization's budget. Standards of Excellence Institute also provides a free self-assessment mechanism that measures six governance and management areas and 27 topics to support "building capacity, accountability, and sustainability" (Standards of Excellence Institute, 2014, para. 1). This mechanism is an alternative for organizations not interested in pursuing the accreditation but in improving their accountability mechanisms. As of July 2018, 225 nonprofits in the United States are accredited or recognized by Maryland Nonprofits (Standards for Excellence, n.d.-b).

SDNGOC, a nonprofit organization in Spain, created a compliance tool in 2012 that allows organizations to conduct a self-assessment and to establish action plans to improve transparency and good governance. One of SDNGOC's four evaluation areas for transparency is accountability. To comply with accountability standards as established by SDNGOC, nonprofits need to publish the following documents on their websites: a) strategic plan, b) audit reports, c) annual report, d) social memories of the programs and projects for the last three years, e) list of funders and use of the awarded funds, and f) financial investment policy. This compliance tool is intended to be a guide for organizations' "continuous improvement and to obtain assessments of weaknesses and strengths" (SDNGOC, 2015, p. 10). Organizations can conduct a self-assessment with this tool and can submit it to the SDNGOC for an external audit to obtain a Transparency and Good Governance seal. The SDNGOC 2017 annual report (2018) shows that 94.74% of the nonprofit partners had the Transparency and Good Governance seal.

Self-assessment and compliance tools such as these from Maryland Nonprofits and SDNGOC help nonprofits establish better accountability systems and procedures. However, these systems should take into consideration the requirements from stakeholders, especially funders.

Funders' Accountability Vision

The similarities and differences in accountability among government, foundations, and corporations are difficult to identify due to the lack of studies analyzing this issue. Studies on the accountability of nonprofits to the government or to general donors dominate the research as opposed to studies on foundations and corporations. Some coverage of accountability of nonprofits to foundations and corporations is cited in the form of audit reports, financial statements, and annual reports, which can also apply to other types of donors. With all of these efforts, “a more in-depth inspection of government accountability requirements” is still needed to understand how “funders control and steer their grantees” (Chikoto, 2015, p. 60). This in-depth inspection can be extended not only to the government but also to other types of donors.

Government sector funds awarded to nonprofits are scrutinized by many stakeholders because they involve public dollars, which could explain why more studies exist on nonprofit accountability to the government than to foundations and corporations. Another reason could be the dependency of nonprofits on public funds that is especially prevalent in many countries. For example, the Greiling and Stötzer (2016) study that included 13 Austrian nonprofits found that they have to comply with government accountability requirements, irrespective of organization size, because of their dependency on public funds.

In 2014, Puerto Rico had 11,570 nonprofit organizations, an 81.4% increase compared to 6,378 in 2007 (Estudios Técnicos, 2015). The principal sources of income for nonprofits in Puerto Rico are public funds (state, municipal, and federal), resulting in government dependence. Nonprofits in Puerto Rico must meet basic accountability parameters established by the government. However, contrary to Austrian nonprofits, the perception in Puerto Rico is that the government will not prioritize the scrutiny of funds management. For example, when legislative funds are granted to nonprofits by the Puerto Rico legislative assembly, grantees must submit to the legislature semiannual and annual expense reports and provide copies to the Office of Management and Budget and the government agency in charge of distributing the funds. However, in most cases, reports are not delivered and no monitoring of submissions takes place. Despite this irregularity, nonprofits keep receiving funds, which indicates that reporting is not being used to determine ongoing support.

The research problem and the purpose of this study are relevant because of the differences and complexities between the vision and reality for nonprofits, grant application writers, and donors. The next section presents the methodology of and findings on accountability requirements for government, foundation, and corporate funders.

Methodology

The study established a random sample goal of 30 organizations, with equal distribution between government, foundation, and corporate funders, to identify, evaluate, and compare accountability models.

Government entities included agencies as well as foundations created by governments which operate with public funds. Foundations included private, community, and family foundations. Foundations related to a private company were classified as corporations as opposed to foundations. For sample selection purposes, the study prioritized funders with information available on their webpages and with grants in more than one country. The study analyzed webpages between November 2017 and March 2018.

Although accountability information was difficult to find on most nonprofit webpages, the study reached the sample goal of 30 entities, including nonprofits in countries such as Chile, Spain, New Zealand, and the United States, including in Puerto Rico. Table 1 includes the sample entities and webpages, revealing the variety of areas where accountability information is available for applicants. These areas include the grant application page, formal guidelines, forms, corporate responsibilities, regulations, and frequently asked questions.

Table 1: Sample Entities

Governments	Foundations	Corporations
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention https://www.cdc.gov/grants/welcome-packet/reporting-audit-requirements/index.html	Amplify Change Foundation https://amplifychange.org/grant-model/faq/	Baxter https://www.baxter.com/corporate-responsibility/international-foundation/giving/community-grants-application.page
EPA https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/learn-grants/grant-reporting.html	Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation http://www.gatesfoundation.org/How-We-Work/General-Information/Grantseeker-FAQ	Fidelity Foundation http://www.fidelityfoundation.org/applying-and-reporting/post-grant-reporting/
Gobierno España http://www.aecid.es/ES/la-aecid/nuestros-socios/ongd/subvenciones-a-ongd	Community Broadcasting Foundation https://sloan.org/grants/grantees	IEEE Foundation https://www.ieeefoundation.org/ieee-units/grants/reporting
Inter-American Foundation https://archive.iaf.gov/es/nuestro-trabajo/procedimientos-para-evaluaci-n.html	Meyer Foundation http://www.meyerfoundation.org/grants/current-grantees	Maximus Foundation https://www.maximus.com/foundation/FAQ

continued on next page

Table 1 (continued)

Legislative Funds for Community Impact http://impactocomunitariopr.org/assets/files/REGLAMENTO%20ley%2020.pdf	Robert Wood Johnson Foundation https://www.rwjf.org/en/how-we-work/grants-explorer/grantee-resources/reporting-and-accounting-information/national-program-reporting.html	Merck https://www.msdresponsibility.com/our-giving/priorities-performance/
National Institutes of Health https://grants.nih.gov/grants/rppr/index.htm	Seattle International Foundation http://www.seattlefoundation.org/nonprofits/Current-Grant-Opportunities	Monsanto Fund https://www.monsantofund.org/grant-programs/#grant-programs-1
National Institute of Justice https://www.nij.gov/about/Pages/welcome.aspx#mission	The Andrew Mellon Foundation https://mellon.org/media/filer_public/52/39/5239b250-043a-4105-8062-4142bd3db7b8/grant_reporting_guidelines_pdf_110116.pdf	Charles Stewart Mott Foundation https://www.mott.org/work/grantseekers/
National Science Foundation https://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/rppr/	The Trusts Community Foundation http://www.ttcfltd.org.nz/how-to-apply/accountability	Patagonia http://www.patagonia.com/funding-guidelines-faqs.html
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization https://en.unesco.org/creativity/sites/creativity/files/annotated_guide.pdf	Trillian Trust https://www.trillian.co.nz/files/Accountability%20Report%20-%20Trillian%2001.pdf	Walmart http://www.walmartpr.com/corporativo/fundacion#
Valparaíso Chile http://fondosconcursables.gorev.cl/documentosRendicion.php	W.M. Keck Foundation http://www.wmkeck.org/grant-programs/reporting-requirements-21471	WEL Energy Trust http://www.welenergytrust.co.nz/grants/community-grants/

After further research and analysis, accountability requirements identified in the webpages of the sample organizations were organized into two thematic areas (categories): reporting and content of the reports. Reporting includes five indicators: progress report, final report, financial report, evidence of expenses, and penalty clause if organizations do not comply with submitting reports. Report content has ten indicators classified in three areas:

- *Impact,* which includes a) outputs and outcomes,(b) benefits to community and history of impact, and c) lessons learned;
- *Achievements,* comprising a) dissemination of results in the community of interest, b) collaborators in the project, c) products derived from the grant, and d) major accomplishments such as institutional, professional development, and technology accomplishments; and
- *Challenges,* which include a) unanticipated challenges to achieve goals and strategies to assess them, b) significant changes in the grant objective, and c) plans to accomplish goals and objectives in the remaining grant period.

After developing a list of accountability requirements, the study tabulated data to classify the findings and conducted analysis to identify similarities and differences among funders.

Findings

In the reporting category, the most frequent requirements among all funders are the progress report (90%), financial report (90%), and final report (83%). The least common requirement is evidence of expenses (13%). However, Table 2 illustrates the differences among funders.

Table 2: Reporting Requirements by Funder

Reports	Government		Foundations		Corporations		Consolidated	
	Frequency							
	Yes	%	Yes	%	Yes	%	Yes	%
Progress report	10	100	9	90	8	80	27	90
Final report	9	90	9	90	7	70	25	83
Financial report	9	90	10	100	7	70	27	90
Evidence of expenses	1	10	2	20	1	10	4	13
Penalty clause	10	100	5	50	2	20	17	57

Note: N=10 (Government, foundation, and corporation sample entities); N=30 (Consolidated)

All 10 government entities require progress reports and include a penalty clause for not complying with the reporting requisites (return of funds or denial of future fund requests). All 10 foundations require financial reports. On the other hand, no common reporting requirement exists among corporations, but the most frequent common requirement is the progress report (80%). According to these findings, the funding sector with the highest average reporting requirements is government (78%), followed by foundations (70%) and corporations (50%).

Similar to the reporting category, the content of the mandatory reports shows differences among funders. As presented in Table 3, the most frequently required content items are outputs and outcomes (87%), benefits to community and impact history (77%), and unanticipated challenges to achieve goals and the strategies to assess them (70%). Dissemination of results in the community of interest (20%) and major accomplishments (20%) are the least frequent topics of information required in the reports.

Funders prioritize impact (62%), challenges (53%), and achievements (30%) in report content. These results show that funders want to know the impact of nonprofit services and nonprofit capacity to manage unanticipated challenges. Impact of services is nonprofits' ultimate goal, as impact demonstrates their performance compared to objectives and demonstrates their effectiveness in delivering services. By providing information in this category, nonprofits gain opportunities to strengthen relationships with current funders and to attract new ones. On the other hand, unanticipated challenges are constant risks in the project implementation phase. Funders' interest in how nonprofits manage these challenges is not surprising. They commit their funds to an organization expecting results based on a workplan and objectives, but they are also aware that unexpected challenges will occur. The strategies that nonprofits implement to contend with unanticipated challenges reflect their level of resilience and leadership capacity to address these challenges assertively. This resilience and leadership capacity may be key areas among many that donors consider in making decisions on continuing funding to nonprofits.

The government sector leads with challenges (80%) and achievements (60%) as part of the reporting content requirements, but foundations lead the impact category (77%). None of the funders achieves 100% frequency for any indicators. The closest is 90% by government in three of 10 categories (30%) and by foundations in two of 10 (20%) categories. As in the reporting category, corporations have the fewest content accountability requirements, coming close with 80% in outputs and outcomes. According to these findings, the funder with the highest average of information content in the reports is the government (62%), followed by foundations (47%), and corporations (31%). This order is consistent with the reporting category, but the percentages are lower for each funder.

Table 3: Content Requirements by Funder

Content	Government		Foundations		Corporations		Consolidated	
	Frequency							
Achievements	**Yes**	**%**	**Yes**	**%**	**Yes**	**%**	**Yes**	**%**
Dissemination of results in the community of interest	9	90	1	10	2	20	6	20
Collaborators in the project	3	30	3	30	0	0	8	27
Products	5	50	4	40	1	10	12	40
Major accomplishments	7	70	1	10	0	0	6	20
Impact	**Yes**	**%**	**Yes**	**%**	**Yes**	**%**	**Yes**	**%**
Outputs and outcomes	9	90	9	90	8	80	26	87
Benefits to community/impact history	5	50	9	90	6	60	23	77
Lessons learned	3	30	5	50	2	20	10	33
Challenges	**Yes**	**%**	**Yes**	**%**	**Yes**	**%**	**Yes**	**%**
Unanticipated challenges to achieve goals and strategies to assess them	9	90	6	60	6	60	21	70
Significant change in the investigation objective	6	60	5	50	3	30	14	47
Plans to accomplish goals and objectives in the remaining grant period	6	60	4	40	3	30	13	43

Note: N=10 (Government, foundation, and corporation sample entities); N=30 (Consolidated)

Funders' public use of these nonprofit accountability reports is limited. According to information found on the funders' websites, just five of the 30 funders (17%) publish the reports on their websites: four government entities and one corporation. Surprisingly, no foundations published the nonprofits' accountability reports.

Government, foundation, and corporate funders are similar in requiring the progress report, final report, financial report, and evidence of expenses. However, a wide difference exists in the penalty clause indicator: 100% of the government sample include a penalty clause compared to 50% of foundations and only 20% of corporations. One possible reason for this difference is that government funders have to protect the public funds and ensure their adequate use.

In summary, more differences than similarities exist in the content of the report requirements. The only indicator with similar results is outputs and outcomes in the impact classification (government 90%, foundations 90%, and corporations 80%). The government leads the requirements for dissemination of results in the community of interest (90%), major accomplishments (70%), and unanticipated challenges to achieve goals and strategies to assess them (90%). Foundations require benefits to community and impact history (90%). Corporations do not lead any category. In fact, corporations obtained zero in two indicators: collaborators in the project and major accomplishments.

Recommendations

Despite the similarities and differences in government, foundation, and corporate accountability requirements, nonprofit organizations can plan to comply with funder requirements during the project design phase of proposal preparation. In that phase, nonprofits can designate an individual to develop a strategic collection of information that will provide strong accountability to the funder. Furthermore, this information can help to perpetuate relationships with funders and ensure sustainability of such relationships. This individual can also lead an internal analysis before applying for a grant. The results of the analysis can allow nonprofits to assess if they are prepared to respond to funder requirements and make decisions to submit grant applications to those with attainable requirements.

Another recommendation to facilitate compliance with accountability requirements is to integrate them into logic models. Because logic models are usually integral to the proposal writing process, they are already in development and do not create extra work for applicants. In fact, other indicators not necessarily required by funders but which obtained high percentages in this study could be integrated in the logic model (i.e., benefit to community and impact history). Other accountability requirements, such as collaborators in the project and lessons learned, that obtained low percentages in this study, provide useful information for further organizational consideration and may also be appropriately included in logic models.

Conclusion

The objective of this exploratory study was to identify, compare, and evaluate government, foundation, and corporate accountability requirements. It was also intended to determine the thematic areas that funders require of nonprofits and identify their similarities and differences. The results of this study reveal that funders require two thematic areas (categories) of accountability: reporting and content of the reports. Within these categories, reporting has five indicators and content of the reports has 10 indicators classified by impact, achievements, and challenges. Based on the selected sample of 30 organizations (10 per funding sector), the government sector has the highest accountability requirements in both thematic areas (reporting and content of the reports), followed by foundations and corporations. These results provide useful data for grant professionals to integrate into their proposal planning processes to ensure that appropriate collection of information required for accountability reports is planned.

Although results of this study only reflect the reality of a particular sample and show variances among the three funding groups, the results do show some common tendencies in accountability requirements. To obtain more conclusive findings, a future study with a larger sample size is recommended. One limitation in obtaining accountability data from funders was the incomplete information available on their websites. To address this challenge, the methodology could be changed to conduct an online survey for e-mail distribution to sample funders. The two accountability areas and the ten indicators revealed in this exploratory study could lead the design of the instrument. Conducting the survey would also require constructing a sample list of funders, which can start with the 30 funders analyzed in this study. Further research strategies could be explored to select the best methodological approach that would provide nonprofits with more conclusive information on standard funder accountability requirements.

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Mapping the Federal Discretionary Grant Review Process: What a Grant Seeker Can Expect After Submission

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GPCI Competency 04: Knowledge of how to craft, construct, and submit an effective grant application

GPCI Competency 09: Ability to write a convincing case for funding

Abstract

This article researches and investigates the peer review process that takes place in discretionary federal grants. It seeks to provide a research-based understanding of specific grant review phases through review of current literature and a series of interviews with specialists in federal peer review. The article explores committee and panel processes, what qualifies as scored criteria, how criteria responses are evaluated, the numerical scoring process, and the panel review process. A high-level focus is to remove the "guessing game" from the review process, to provide grant professionals with greater clarity in writing and leading to more successful applications. In responding to any request for proposal (RFP), grant professionals must understand review processes in a step-by-step fashion. From committee design and leadership to what takes place in review panel meetings, this article details success-determining factors within an RFP which an applicant might otherwise overlook. This article is useful for both new and seasoned grant professionals to understand a research-based approach to developing federal grant applications.

Introduction

Following an organization's submission of a grant proposal to a U.S. federal agency, many unanswered questions regarding the review process may arise. Panel review processes are part of most federal discretionary grant evaluations, because they result in identifying those that will receive funding from those less likely to receive funding. The topic is relevant to grant professionals at all career stages, as the process for review and need for grant reviewers changes frequently. Technology is a large contributing factor to how peer-review methods have changed over the years and continue to change today. These factors make investigation into the process a relevant research focus for grant professionals to perform routinely to monitor new developments.

While many grant professionals may have experience in private or foundation grants, U.S. federal grants processes, from application to review, have elements of compliance, critique, and granularity that differ greatly from private grants. Grant professionals may have questions about the steps involved in the review, the officials and industry peers who will review their grants, the scoring processes, required criteria, special considerations, and other questions related to specific circumstances of their applications. Inside knowledge of these processes is not always easily accessible, which creates opportunities for confusion.

Federal grant applicants may experience tangible roadblocks as they begin to develop grant applications. Application requirements and submission steps vary greatly from year to year, even in a grantmaking program operating for many years. This variability creates a type of filter in which qualified applicants may be unable to navigate the system and the application requirements. Ultimately some of them may abandon their applications. Overall, clarity has eroded in some of the processes required for an application in federal systems. Rather than feeling like working on a funding proposal, working on a federal grant application can feel like solving a giant riddle.

These issues can be paralyzing and might prevent excellent organizations with potential for positively impacting their service populations from receiving funding. At their core, these issues are not about the application process: they all relate to what happens after application submission. A firm understanding of the federal review process ultimately helps with the development of clear and concise proposals.

Whether seasoned or new, all grant professionals who seek to improve their practice can benefit from studying processes that impact proposal decision-making. In today's connected age, grant professionals are increasingly coming together in fora, through professional associations, in online communities, and on social media to learn from one another about "behind the scene" processes. Such processes include grant application review, board/committee development and selection, legislative appropriation of funds, and other processes defined before release of a funding announcement. Today's increasingly collaborative world allows for greater positive impact on the causes that nonprofit organizations serve: by studying about the behind the scenes processes, more deserving organizations remove barriers to funding and successfully complete the grant review process. The research presented in this article contributes to that discussion, bringing facts and findings about federal reviews to light.

The Federal Grant Review Experience

To understand the federal grant review process, grant seekers can greatly benefit from the professional development opportunity to serve on a federal review panel, an opportunity that cannot be replicated by a course or conference. According to Charles Kaplan, Associate Dean of Research at the University of Southern California (USC) School of Social Work, "You can send proposals in, but you can't get them funded unless you are very aware of the dynamics of the review process" (Lindberg, 2014).

Serving as a peer reviewer is also an opportunity to network. Because reviewers serve in areas where they have professional background, they will meet others in their fields who can serve as mentors, have similar career interests and further introduce and connect with others within their industries.

Naturally, serving as a peer reviewer helps with creating more successful proposals. According to Eric Rice, Assistant Professor at the USC School of Social Work, "knowing what one of these things should look like and how it should read and having someone who has sat on those review committees is invaluable. It's an inside bit of knowledge you wouldn't otherwise have" (Lindberg, 2014). To pursue reviewing opportunities, one can identify a grant program of interest and contact that grant's program officer. All Federal Opportunity Announcements (FOA) provide contact information for a federal grant's program officers. Additionally, the general agency line provides information about the program officer who manages a specific grant.

Digital Transformation of Grant Review Panels

The digital transformation of all methods of collaborative work is reflected in recent changes in grant review processes. One significant change is the increased use of electronic systems to enable virtual grant reviews, resulting in attractive costs savings for federal agencies as well as changes in agencies' ability to recruit and retain reviewers.

Up to the mid-to-late 2000s, most federal agencies used an in-person method for peer review panels, which usually met near federal agency headquarters in the Washington, DC, area. Panelists traveled to Washington for one week or more, reviewing grants in a series of in-person panel meetings. Many panel review sessions took place at the same time of year, often in the final quarter before the federal fiscal year's September 30 end. Because review panels often occurred back-to-back to allow panelists to review multiple grant programs, panelists had to spend several weeks at a time sequestered in a hotel conference room, removed from their normal lives. A long trip away from family into the midsummer heat of DC, shut into conference rooms reviewing thousands of pages of applications is not an appealing journey for many. As such, grant reviewer vacancies were more prevalent during this time.

By late 2010 and 2011, most federal agencies digitized their grant review processes and took them completely remote. Many agencies employed electronic systems such as Application Review Management (ARM) to digitize the process. Even panels which still met in person used electronic systems, streamlining and shortening the on-site process. Reviews that previously took a week or more shortened to four to five days. The commitment level from reviewers changed drastically: reviewers no longer needed to travel and be excused from work for a week or more to participate in a panel.

As these technologies changed the federal grant review world, the demand for reviewers responded accordingly. Agencies no longer scramble to find reviewers. For example, as of August 15, 2018, job search board indeed.com lists just 19 contract grant review roles available. Further, most federal agencies do not publicly list the numbers of review vacancies and instead use private contracting firms to recruit reviewers and manage the logistics of their peer review processes (Indeed.com, 2018).

Megan Klein Blondin, Executive Director of the Youth Collaborative in Pittsburgh, has nearly two decades of experience with grant-based programs. As a seasoned grant reviewer and panel committee chair, she is a witness to changes introduced by technology to the federal grant making process. While more reviewers are available in this digital age, she observes that agencies may now have to work harder to close the wide differences in experience levels on their review panels. With the influx of more virtual reviews, Blondin states "…the biggest issue I see is quality of reviewers. Some agencies do a better job than others at hiring reviewers with solid experience. This is important because there is less opportunity to establish a common baseline for reviews across panels when they are virtual" (personal communication, August 15, 2018).

While the introduction of digital tools to grant review panels made the need for federal reviewers less urgent, the experience level needed for virtual-panel reviews increased. The remote nature of the grant reviewer's role now demands a higher level of experience understanding federal criteria and an increased ability to collaborate.

General Phases of a Discretionary Grant Review

Receipt via Grants.gov

After a federal grant proposal is submitted, the ensuing process varies at each agency. On Grants.gov, the government details the general process of an applicant's electronic proposal from a technical perspective (Grants.gov, 2018). Most agencies provide applicants further detail on interfacing with Grants.gov and the meaning of automatic messages that applicants may receive. However, beyond this initial information, applicants often do not find it simple to understand the exact process for a specific agency among the dozens that award funding.

The National Endowment for Humanities (NEH) has taken steps to provide applicants this much-needed clarity in its explanatory document, *What to Expect after You Submit* (NEH, 2018). The NEH provides an explanation of the five auto-generated emails each applicant will receive from Grants.gov, clarifying which component of the application process each message covers from NEH's perspective. For instance, in its explanation of the third and fourth emails, it breaks down the parts of the process in which NEH will obtain and take possession of a grant application from Grants.gov. The messages sent by Grants.gov do not indicate that NEH actually has received the application, so the agency's additional explanation is important for an applicant. The Grants.gov messages simply indicate that an agency has received the application, but mentions no specific agency. As many grant applicants can attest, this general notification does not provide sufficient assurance that the proposal is confirmed as submitted.

Applicants must also follow the process of tracking an application after submission to understand any actions or issues with the application. As explained in NEH's additional guidance materials, applicants are given a Grants.gov tracking number and also an agency tracking number (NEH, 2018).

Given the complexity, consultants with experience in federal grants often are called to consult specifically on the submission process of the grant proposal. Yet, with proper research, the submission process is the smallest concern in the federal grant process.

Application Assignment and Review

A federal agency initially screens submitted applications to identify the request for proposals (RFP) or Federal Opportunity Announcement (FOA) to which the applicant is responding. Following this, the application is referred to the appropriate division within the agency.

For example, NIH provides detail regarding the assignment, or "referral" of applications to their appropriate groups: "All grant applications submitted to the NIH go to the Division of Receipt and

Referral (DRR) within the Center for Scientific Review (CSR). After receiving the application DRR:

- Checks the application for completeness
- Determines area of research and determines which specific NIH Institute or Center to assign it to for possible funding
- Assigns an application identification number
- Assigns application to a specific study section, also known as a Scientific Review Group (SRG) or review committee that has the expertise to evaluate the scientific and technical merit of the application.
  - CSR coordinates the reviews for most R01s, fellowships, and small business applications, as well as some PAs, PARs, & RFA's
  - Institutes and Centers coordinate the review for applications that have Institute-specific features such as program project grants, training grants, career development awards, and responses to Requests for Applications."(NIH, 2018)

This NIH assignment process is specific to science-related proposals, with certain proposals going to a specific NIH Institute and others going to one of the NIH Centers, depending on the subject matter. However, the process is similar in non-science-oriented organizations. For example, the US Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) details its process:

> "Every application receives a thorough review by a panel of independent reviewers. We choose reviewers based on their knowledge, education, experience and any criteria included in FOA to which the applicants must respond.
>
> - Each reviewer reads between six and eight applications and scores each according to the evaluation criteria published in the NOFO.
> - The review panel meets and develops consensus statements identifying the strengths and weaknesses of each application.
> - We provide you this information in a summary statement whether or not you receive an award.
> - HRSA decides which applications receive funding" (HRSA, 2018).

General Review Panel Processes

After a federal agency receives an application, it goes through initial review and is funneled into the correct group for processing. It will eventually be placed with a panel or committee. In a discretionary grant review process, panels or committees are composed of approximately three to five panel members, plus a panel leader, often called a panel chair.

While the focus of this article is on non-research-based proposals, differences between the types of peer review processes are worth noting. In scientific or research proposals, such as proposals to the National Science Foundation (NSF), the panel review process is almost entirely different, with a few similarities to non-scientific proposals. When scientific research and human subjects are factors, multiple elements of scientific merit and compliance must be considered. In these instances, panel reviews consist of various experts in the respective fields representing the proposal's focus areas. Multiple panels may convene with multiple rounds of reviews and compilation of review notes and scores. In these instances, review processes have more layers, as the outcomes, methods, and specific aims of the proposed work must be measured in consideration of Institutional Review Board compliance (protecting rights and welfare of human research subjects), privacy-related compliance, and ethical considerations required in scientific studies.

Evaluation of Applicant's Response

The job of the panel is to read each proposal thoroughly and compare it to the criteria available in the FOA. A review panel or committee member usually has from three to 15 proposals to cover during the review session. Grant review panel sessions can range from one day to a week and a half. The number of proposals that a given panel will review depends on the length and content required in the grant application, as well as upon the level of complexity of the RFP or FOA. Grant professionals must understand that a panelist typically has a large amount of reading to process in a short timeframe. Therefore, proposal developers must craft their proposals in a way that speaks to reviewers during an intense time of reading and evaluating many applications.

After panelists complete their reading, much of their job as a peer reviewer has just started. The panelist is required to write comments on the strengths and weaknesses of every criterion in the applicant's proposal as they relate to the FOA. These comments are specifically related to each criterion and state clearly whether the applicant did or did not address each one.

The comments of the panelists are based on their findings in the proposal. Comments indicate what was or was not present in the applicant's words, charts, graphs, and budgets. The panels strictly compare proposals to the federal criteria. At no time are federal review panelists' comments based on their professional or personal opinion. The applicant either provided or did not provide the information. No examples outside of those in the FOA or in the applicant's proposal are used to illustrate a point in a panelist's comments.

Scoring

Depending on the agency, points are given or deducted based on what is present in an applicant's proposal. The process is highly complex because some sections of the proposal hold more weight than others. For example, if the biographical sketch of one of the project directors is incomplete, that will likely be less negatively viewed than if a project's evaluation plan and evaluation methods are missing or unclear.

Scoring processes differ greatly as well. Certain agencies require panelists to score each proposal from 100 points downward. For example, a proposal that failed to address three criteria might have a score of roughly 90 to 97, depending on the weight and relevance of each criterion missed. If one of those criteria is critical to the functionality of the funding being awarded, the score could go much lower.

Other federal agencies score their proposals from zero upwards. In this scoring method, lower-scoring proposals meet more of the criteria. In these instances, points are added to a proposal's score when a criterion is missing.

The ranges of points attached to any one criterion are tough to predict, because they depend on the content of the RFP or FOA and the weight of importance of each criterion. In all review processes, each panelist develops his or her independent set of scores for a proposal's criteria before meeting with the other panel members and comparing scores and comments.

Panelist Comments

Compiled comments can be 10 to 15 pages long, per application, per panelist. To understand fully the required work, imagine a panelist has seven proposals to review in seven days. This is a relatively low number of proposals to process in one week, according to Robert Zubia, review panelist and panel chair for the Administration on Children, Youth, and Families (personal communication, August 16, 2018). Normally, one might see 10 to 13 proposals in one week. Proposal length ranges from 50 to 200 pages.

On average, with seven proposals, a panelist will have to read about 700 letter-size (8.5 x 11 inches) pages in about three days—shorter than the full week of panel review, because reading is just a fraction of the full job required. After a panelist completes the reading, he or she then writes relevant comments. Each comment report commonly consists of 10 to 15 pages of comments for an average proposal. For the following example, a 12-page comment report will be used.

In this example, in a conservative week one panelist could read about 700 pages of intensely scored and highly fact-oriented material in three days while also analyzing seven line-item budgets in the same three days. Each panelist writes roughly 84 pages of critically-reviewed comments in about two days. In panel meetings, each panelist makes a case for funding amounts of hundreds of thousands of dollars to many millions of dollars within about 10 hours of combined panel meetings. This entire process, involving review of multiple applications, usually occurs in less than one week.

While this may sound overwhelming, it is manageable for experienced panels. Corey Lucas, a panelist from Los Angeles, served on federal review panels over the course of two decades, reviewing more than 400 proposals. Lucas states that the workload is reasonable but requires field experts proficient in the proposals' subject matter and deeply familiar with the content of the FOA (personal communication, August 16, 2018).

To this end, given the quantity of content a panelist must process in a review session, clear correlation to the required criteria is a critical success factor. Applicants must make the case for their proposals' meeting the federal requirements seamless and easily accessible for panelists. This will remove barriers to reviewers' understanding of and ability to connect with a compelling case, which they can then defend in panel committee meetings.

Making the Case

Following proposal reading and writing of comment reports, all panelists and the panel chair usually meet in a series of panel committee meetings. In these meetings, panelists make the case for how they individually chose to interpret and score each of their assigned proposals. Panelists consider factors such as examples where the applicant did or did not meet the required criteria, the critical level of that criteria, if missing criteria are found anywhere in the proposal, and attributes that are specific to that program. For example, if program information is hidden at the bottom of a graph, it is the panelists' job to find that information. If the information required is present anywhere in the proposal, many agencies require panelists to list that item as a strength of the proposal and give full credit for it, even if located in an unexpected or hard-to-find place in the proposal. In cases where this is the review procedure, such as at the DHHS and the USDA, panelists must search an entire proposal word for word, before negatively marking a proposal for missing content.

To that end, applicants should strive to make their case easy for panelists to understand, process, and resell to their fellow panel members. The case needs to be clear and concise enough for a stranger with no experience with the applicant organization to defend in panel review meetings.

Dr. Judy Riffle, owner of Santa Cruz Grants and Consulting, recalls reviewing a federal grant application which elicited a strong desire to make a case for an organization she had never met but felt compelled to defend to her panel. Riffle states, "The need, project design, and budget were so compelling that I was ready to defend it to the end during our panel discussion. Luckily, we all gave it a perfect score—no weaknesses noted" (Riffle, 2017).

Panel Chair or Panel/Committee Lead

In most cases, each review panel will have a panel leader or panel chair. This person is usually a seasoned review panelist who is familiar with the funding agency's processes and is deeply familiar with the given grant program. As the panel compares the FOA criteria to the applicant's responses, the panel leader moderates the panelists' discussion and helps them accurately interpret the FOA criteria, if needed. In cases where issues arise or where special consideration is needed, the panel leader will write issue reports on specific proposals or call in federal staff to move the panel through a roadblock in their discussion. The panel leader does not develop her or his own comments on each proposal. Rather, the panel leader will moderate discussion and compile the panelists' comments on the applications into a unified panel report on each application.

Scored Criterion

For any given FOA, panels usually have questions regarding requirements presented in the opportunity versus suggestions for information. Applicants may wonder if they are going to be scored on a given set of criteria, or if the information requested in the application is preferred but not necessarily mandated. With federal funding, applicants can expect a more direct interpretation of the FOA as containing only information that is required, unless noted otherwise. To clarify, the panel chair may contact the federal agency's program officer(s) or other federal staff assigned to the grant program to inquire about the weight of a criterion in question. Most often the program officer will note that the criterion is in fact required.

FOAs are based on legislative bills that have passed, making the funding available to grant applicants for purposes specific to that legislation. Keeping that in mind, the FOA contains all the legislative requirements of the program. Usually, any provisions present in the FOA are mandated.

Broadly speaking, a good rule for applicants is as follows: unless a question or criterion is marked as optional, it is absolutely required. Applicants should plan for applications to be scored on all criteria present in a FOA. Further, if the FOA provides examples of program or research elements to be described in the proposal, these are not suggestions applicable only if these elements exist. Unless marked as optional, they are most likely required in the proposal. To that end, if applicant organizations find they cannot describe plans or activities required by the FOA, because they are not present in their work, the organization may wish to step back and reassess the fit of the grant. Or, the organization may opt to make changes to the proposal's approach that adopt and include elements of the criteria.

Post-Panel Review

As a panel completes each proposal review, the panelists arrive at a shared scoring platform and a complete set of panel comments. According to Lucas, the panel leader or panel chair guides the panel to consensus, compiles their average proposal scores, and creates a complete document of panelists' comments that reflect the strengths and weaknesses of each proposal (personal communication, August 16, 2018).

Timeline

A high-level sequence of an average discretionary grant review is as follows:

1. Grant submitted through Grants.gov or via mail. If via Grants.gov, an electronic tracking number is given.
2. Application arrives at the federal agency and is acknowledged as being received by it. An agency tracking number is assigned.
3. Application is referred or assigned to a specific group, department or division within the agency.
4. Application is assigned to a review panel or committee.
5. Review panels are assigned proposals to review, given a timeframe for review completion, and assigned a panel leader or panel chair.
6. Review commences and panelists read assigned proposals.
7. Panelists independently write comment reports and assign scores to each proposal.
8. Panel meetings take place, moderated by the panel leader. Each panelist makes cases for existing criteria versus missing criteria. The panel arrives at consensus on the content of the proposal, the extent to which it meets the required criteria, and scores.
9. The panel leader compiles scores and comments and submits them to the agency staff, who review and ask for any clarifications.

10. Once clarifications are provided on all application review compilation reports (terminology for the compilation of reviewer's comments differs at various federal agencies), staff close the panel review process for each specific application and accept the scores from the panel as final.

11. Federal staff consider numerous other factors regarding funding eligibility, scores, budget, fiscal implications, sustainability, and viability of the applicant's proposed work.

12. Federal agency makes funding decisions, considering the panel review results, as well as other information considered by federal review staff outside the peer review panel process.

In federal discretionary grant review processes, the grant decision-making process is normally predicted to be finished within 120 days of grant application submission. However, this timeframe is frequently extended by the agency to allow time to complete processes.

Conclusion

In summary, grant professionals must develop an understanding of the panel review process to write proposals that speak directly to each panelist and allow the panelist to relate an applicant's story directly to the criteria listed in the FOA. The narrative, budget, and any attachments must create a holistic picture that panelists can use to represent the strengths of the proposal to their fellow panel members.

Grant professionals may find it difficult to align a strong desire to create a proposal that tells a fantastic story with a practical approach that ensures reviewers receive a clear picture of the organization's goals and activities. Given the desire to create a heartfelt picture of the organization's history, project plans, deep expertise, and background, many applicants tend to present information in the format that sounds the best to them. Although in many cases, panelists are required to search a proposal thoroughly for an applicant's presented information and give credit for information anywhere in the proposal, venturing outside of the FOA's format can cause the meaning of the content being presented to be distorted or lost. Freestyling on format may put the applicant's messages at risk of not being understood clearly by the panel and resulting in the application being marked as missing responses to the mandated FOA criteria.

Telling the story of the applicant's history, project, and research plans in a manner that flows directly with the FOA's format and sequence will allow both the story of the organization to be represented and the panelist to locate the required information in an organized manner. This permits the panel to award appropriate points to the proposal, as the panel members can see the information presented by the applicant as directly correlated to the required criteria, as opposed to being presented anecdotally. A deep dive into the overarching steps in the federal discretionary grant review process is useful for all grant development professionals, whether they are tackling their first government grant application or are seasoned in securing federal awards.

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Resilient Funding in Times of Disaster: Examining Community Grant Funding in Eras of Crisis

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GPCI Competency 02: Knowledge of organizational development as it pertains to grant seeking

GPCI Competency 08: Knowledge of methods and strategies that cultivate and maintain relationships between fund-seeking and recipient organizations and funders

Abstract

In 2017, three major hurricanes landed in Texas, Florida, and Puerto Rico and their outlying areas, leaving behind destruction that reverberates to this day. While national and international organizations responded in sweeping ways, community foundations and local nonprofits in these regions made little-known but significantly impactful contributions. These contributions helped to cultivate best practices and methods in grant funding and development.

This article examines responses related to grantmaking and grantseeking by community stakeholders in these three regions. Observations of processes at community foundations and grantmaking organizations in Houston, Central and South Florida, and San Juan show that corporate, government, and national organizations are visible frontline responders. However, local residents, their foundations, and funding are more directly tuned to the specific needs and decisions associated with long-term relief. This article reviews what can be learned from community grant makers and their processes that can help facilitate responses to community-oriented disasters. It examines insights from local foundation responses in the immediate, short, and long term. The article presents several planning strategies for grant professionals and local stakeholders. In particular, it describes long-term strategic partnerships on both local and national levels that raise visibility and improve opportunities for continuous grant funding that aid distribution at the local level. These strategies can provide focus to future grant proposals to ensure improved competence, preparedness, and funding delivery within disaster philanthropy.

Introduction

In August 2017, torrential rains blanketed Houston, Texas, as Hurricane Harvey made landfall. The following month, Hurricane Irma and her powerful winds ravaged both coasts in Florida. Hurricane Maria was the catastrophic conclusion, devastating Puerto Rico mere weeks later. As expected, in the aftermath of these major storms, national organizations increased their relief contributions, with some expanding their scopes of outreach to provide the necessary aid for all those affected by the storms. However, since Maria, not only have the well-known, highly visible organizations like the Red Cross or United Way taken on the task of resetting and restarting lives and businesses, private donors and community nonprofits have as well. The larger agencies have the financial resources, reputation, worldwide reach, and leadership to place themselves strategically at the forefront of any major disaster—far more than any local-level funder.

Natural disasters are reaching and surpassing hundreds of billions of dollars. Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria caused billions of dollars in damage to Texas, Florida, and Puerto Rico comparable to the costs from Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans in 2005. Larger agencies have handled the bulk of the immediate recovery work, but often local charities focus on remaining community needs once the “immediate crisis” time has passed.

In general, prospective donors are likely to feel more comfortable with contributing to organizations that manage donations cleanly and transparently. Therefore, proper planning and foresight by state and local funders who understand that they are the conduit for long-term needs and recovery are essential and must be an option in order to combat donor fatigue from repeated disasters. Furthermore, prospective donors can go to websites like Charity Navigator, which compiles a “top ten” list of best charities to fund for disasters. Using criteria such as “financial performance, transparency, and accountability,” Charity Navigator also recommends both national groups with local chapters and local organizations that contribute directly to resolving long-term needs.

Fundraising during previous disasters has shown to be more fruitful when there is a synergy between national organizations and local nonprofits. For grantmakers, this synergy enables the design of a response appropriate to situations within their own communities. These systems can shift rapidly in response to volatile situations and propel solutions identified by local partners (Hartz, 2017b). Furthermore, Hartz (2017a) argues that "investing in locals' capacity is now considered one of the best ways to bolster a community's resilience against future disasters."

Going further, local nonprofits have morphed into the role of primary grantmaker, becoming a partner or a "part two" solution to complex disasters in an area. Working in concert with the larger national and international nonprofits allows local nonprofits the opportunity to funnel a wider range of donors into a funding pipeline that they may not have otherwise. As stated by the Council of Foundations (2017), foundations play a critical role in the recovery and relief process in all stages: immediate, short, and long terms.

Using Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria as a current backdrop for challenges and opportunities in the context of disaster recovery grantmaking, this article studies the responses of federal agencies, national organizations, and local communities. It articulates a set of strategic interventions that can direct nonprofits toward optimal grantmaking in this age of frequent disaster relief and recovery.

Response to Disaster

Having three major hurricanes make landfall on at least three U.S. states, territories, and surrounding areas within a period of two months stretched the bounds of national disaster grantmaking. Donors dealt with giving fatigue, competing messaging, and the next disaster seemingly needed more resources and help than the last one. Plus, while there were similarities in the response after each hurricane, each also had different effects on its community. Harvey had massive flooding, Irma caused storm surges, and Maria brought extremely high winds. Generally, when disasters occur, similar patterns of aid, assistance, and philanthropic support follow in the aftermath. Table 1 shows the aftermath cycle of a disaster as partially based on information provided by the Council on Foundations (2017).

The table illustrates that along the path to rebuilding in a post-disaster environment, efforts start with national philanthropy organizations generating capacity through public advertising. This leverages resources and capital from political connections. These efforts then wind down as the recovery stages continue.

Table 1. Aftermath Cycle of a Standard Disaster

Activity/ Timeline	Action Items	Media/ Communications	Stakeholders
Relief (Immediate)	Stakeholders gather to provide missing, or low-volume items and events by the initial aftermath of a disaster (food, shelter, water, medical care, and clothing).	National media will cover. Speed of news growth can depend on size and effect of disaster. Press coverage will peak (exceptions on how impactful the disaster is as measured by survivor count/death toll).	Macro and micro level stakeholders including foundations, government agencies, nonprofit service organizations, and volunteers.
Recovery (Short Term)	Critical recovery work begins. Investments provide continued health and social services, including provision of safe drinking water, temporary or transitional shelter, sanitation facilities, and other services for survivors and their dependents.	Mass attention begins to wane, especially national attention. Local media (which may include media outlets across state) will continue stories.	National philanthropic agencies and foundations start to taper off, but they are still active. Micro level stakeholders will begin to work on recovery efforts and understand the needs of the community first-hand.
Rebuilding (Long Term)	Rebuild physical infrastructure and rehabilitate the affected environment.	National media coverage recedes. Local coverage may continue but will be relegated to less prominent times in the news cycle unless related breaking news occurs.	Funders play a key role by making strategic investments that can address chronic social and environmental challenges in the impacted community, particularly at the micro level.

Responses from Federal and National Funding Sources at Short-, Mid-, and Long-Term Stages

Hurricane Harvey

Prior to Harvey, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) had supplies and resources positioned throughout Texas. After Harvey, 41 counties in Texas declared national emergencies and received over $5 billion worth of Community Development Block Grants for long-term recovery (Center for Disaster Philanthropy, 2018; Simmons Foundation, 2018). These grants covered all aspects of disaster relief and went into effect in March 2018. An additional $1 billion in hazard mitigation was dedicated to affected coastal communities. FEMA grant funds covered 75% of community disaster recovery initiatives, while local governments provided a 25% cost share. Despite these investments, over $1 million in unmet needs still must be covered by community support after all federal dollars are exhausted.

Hurricane Irma

Hurricane Irma caused between $42 billion and $65 billion in estimated damages throughout Florida, the Caribbean, and parts of the southeast United States, with the majority of damage occurring in Florida. FEMA declared 48 Florida counties eligible for federal assistance out of 67 counties. Florida received over $615.9 million in the hardest-hit areas (Shanklin, 2017) but these funds were likely to be used quickly depending on the number and urgency of the requests by communities.

To meet unmet or under-met community needs in central Florida, local organizations continue to foster partnerships and relationships to serve more people more quickly. Orlando and its surrounding counties have seen the power in local partnerships when they faced the Pulse Nightclub shooting in 2016. While this was a different type of disaster from Hurricane Irma, partnerships and emergency management response were used as lessons for public health and safety situations, including weather-related ones. Smaller community and grassroots organizations who possess similar missions came together to provide foundation and grant aid in the relief and recovery of vulnerable, underserved, and unserved communities such as those in poverty, homeless persons, immigrants, and the elderly, among others. Additional personnel were on hand prior to Irma's landing in Florida, with an even larger-than-Harvey federal personnel response in place mere days after the September 10 landfall. Florida was part of a national $90 billion disaster aid package to help the recovery efforts, including $2.7 billion for schools affected by the storm and $2.3 billion to aid Florida farmers who lost much of their crops during Irma (Rohrer, 2018).

Hurricane Maria

Hurricane Maria left 70% of Puerto Rico without power, some of which still has not been restored. The hurricane displaced hundreds of thousands of residents and many have not yet returned to their homes due to ongoing infrastructural and environmental recovery efforts. The National Hurricane Center (2018) states that Maria is the costliest hurricane on record to hit Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands and the third costliest of all time at an estimated $95 billion (Hurricanes Harvey and Irma are in the top five at second and fifth places, respectively). Contrary to the response given in Florida and Texas for Irma and Harvey, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands saw fewer federal resources and personnel in the aftermath of Maria. With outcries from local communities and public officials about the pace of federal aid months later, some agencies have somewhat shifted their grant response to Puerto Rico. In February 2018, federal funding supplied $4.8 billion to pay for Puerto Rico's Medicaid program to assist in problems and "holes" within the health system (Rohrer, 2018). In April 2018, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) supplied the largest single grant of disaster relief in HUD history to the tune of $18.4 billion to Puerto Rico. Part of an additional $10 billion went to the U.S. Virgin Islands to repair homes and businesses (Jackson, 2018).

Responses from Community Funding Sources at Short-, Mid-, and Long-Term Stages

Federal agencies and national organizations commit to heavy assistance to local communities in the immediate aftermath to various disasters. Efforts by local community agencies also begin at the immediate stage, where they begin to partner with national philanthropic organizations, particularly local branches of organizations such as the Red Cross and United Way. The following is a synopsis of community-level funding responses at the immediate-, mid-, and long-term stages:

Hurricane Harvey

Locally, several community and private foundations have been instrumental in grantmaking for the Houston area and other Texas counties. Several area companies also have pledged tens of millions of dollars and in-kind efforts during the immediate, mid-term, and long-term aftermath.

Community foundations, such as the Greater Houston Community Foundation (GHCF), and other locally managed funds have incredible national and international presence. GHCF put in place a governance model and structure that enable connectivity to local nonprofits specializing in specific challenges within their communities, including housing, education, legal services, clean drinking water, furnishings and appliances, and electrical grid work. Additionally, Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner established the Hurricane Harvey Relief Fund, administered by the GHCF. By investing in the GHCF and Hurricane Harvey Relief Fund, or through individual funding mechanisms, local businesses were able to use their connections and resources to provide short- to long-term aid.

Another example is Houston Texans defensive lineman J.J. Watt, who started an online crowdsourcing fundraising campaign through YouCaring.com. Thanks to his advocacy, in just under a month the campaign amassed over $37 million from public and private donors to distribute to hundreds of local nonprofits for a variety of unmet needs, before closing on September 15, 2017.

Other local efforts included grants from Sprouts Farmers Market, whose Sprouts Health Communities Foundation donated $50,000 to the American Red Cross in addition to direct donations of water and non-perishables to Texas-area hunger relief efforts (Pulsinelli, 2017). The United Way of Greater Houston established a Flood Relief Fund geared toward immediate needs of basic essentials and long-term efforts such as minor home repairs and case management.

Local media outlets used their platforms to make a mainstream appeal to highlight accountability standards and tracking of grant and other donated funds. The *Texas Tribune* reported how dollars are being used for recovery and relief. The *Houston Business Journal* reported on local businesses and national branches of businesses that have provided grants and in-kind support. Project Oversight, a non-partisan group that monitors disaster-related spending for national, state, and local organizations, is tracking spending on all three hurricanes and government oversight thereof.

Volunteers help drive these partnerships and broaden the capacity and engagement of other stakeholders. In a major disaster like Harvey, the volunteer leaders should be coordinated for continued engagement. In Texas, Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) is the primary nonprofit that responds to unmet needs. It produces the mechanisms for proper collaboration with government agencies and larger foundations to ensure coordination and very few overlaps.

Hurricane Irma

Hurricane Irma's impact on Florida fostered a tremendous outpouring of funding for response efforts. Grant dollars and cash were extraordinarily important during the initial rescue and relief periods. But community foundations and corporate foundations also put their distinctive skills, knowledge, and resources to work during the immediate, mid-term, and long-term recovery efforts.

With Irma so widespread throughout Florida, many counties and metropolitan areas were directly affected. As a result, several community foundations served as the impetus of community funding to respond to distinct needs depending on the area and impact. These included the Community Foundation of Naples, Community Foundation of Central Florida, Community Foundation of Miami, and Community Foundation of Tampa.

In Naples, the Bank of America Foundation awarded $100,000 to four nonprofits to use at their discretion, including two local United Way agencies, a local food bank, and Meals for Hope. These nonprofits are using the grant dollars to increase their capacity for more resources throughout the county. They are also strengthening relations with partner agencies to make food cheaper and more accessible for individuals and families whose wages are non-existent or stagnant post-Irma.

Local nonprofits are also the drivers of state and local funding from FEMA, in an effort to partner widely and to disseminate grant dollars from national organizations and government agencies to those "on the ground." FEMA's Public Assistance program reimbursed millions of dollars statewide and to local counties who applied for assistance throughout Florida. Some of these projects included emergency response activities, repairing or replacing damaged infrastructure and dwellings, and debris removal. Other assistance helped victims of intense flooding and wind damage.

Long-term recovery efforts throughout Florida brought about the creation of networks that continue to address unmet needs within the state. In nonprofits, staff and volunteers take inventory of the state of the community looking at infrastructure, housing, education, food, water, and electricity. Wish lists, long-range planning strategies, and marketing in the continued aftermath of the storm are all ways nonprofits network with other partners to maintain investments after the storm.

Hurricane Maria

The Miami Community Foundation, Community Foundation of Puerto Rico, and other locally managed funds with incredible national and international presence, such as the Maria Fund, directed recovery efforts like the post-event relief efforts for Puerto Rico. However, corporate donations were far more limited than those for Harvey and Irma. With national corporate and federal government funding lower than the preceding storms, local funders and nonprofits have been more important than ever for the citizens of Puerto Rico.

Local grantees include the Community Foundation of Puerto Rico, Casa Pueblo, Fidelicomiso de la Tierra del Caño Martin Peña, and Foundation for a Better Puerto Rico. These grantees requested funding for retrofitting community centers, installation of solar-powered electrical systems, jump-starting agricultural production in the rural areas of Puerto Rico, water harvesting, business recovery, and entrepreneurship.

In an effort to rebuild Puerto Rico, the Center for Puerto Rican Studies, or "Centro," put together a policy manual and guidance alongside a clearinghouse which provides information on recovery efforts (Center for Puerto Rican Studies, 2018). Although the pace of recovery efforts has been criticized as being slower than expected, national media attention still remains, focused on the pace, cost, and needs of the affected communities. National attention keeps Hurricane Maria in the forefront; however, it remains to be seen if that will translate to an abundance of grant funding by other organizations (Centro, 2018; Levenson, 2017). Local partners and officials get the word out through social media and other media outlets to funnel resources back to Puerto Rico.

Strategies for Grantmaking in Disastrous Times

Investing in locally-driven funding organizations and in best-management practices can make both incremental and sweeping progress in the disaster recovery process. Any progress made can eventually become the rule as opposed to the exception in the event of another sweeping storm. The depth and breadth of storms and other disasters are unfortunately likely to get larger, more powerful, and more dangerous. Gone are the days of storms like Hugo, Andrew, Charley, and Allyson. Now superstorms are present with powerful winds, storm surges, and widespread power outages that last for weeks and not mere hours. To utilize philanthropy properly and to protect communities in future disasters and mitigate risks, grant professionals and community stakeholders must embrace strategies and approaches that get to the undercurrent of the effort—locally driven grantmaking and grant management.

It is important to underscore that every storm and disaster presents itself differently and, in turn, the response efforts will require different coordination strategies among nonprofits, local governments, and other community stakeholders. However, several strategic recommendations have emerged from sources such as the Center of Disaster Philanthropy, Charity Navigator, local newspapers in the major affected cities, community foundations in Texas, Florida, and Puerto Rico, and from disaster scholars.

1) Increase effective modes of all forms of collaboration

As long-term recovery becomes increasingly critical, establishment of recovery implementation team by grantmakers can help local organizations to collaborate with national nonprofits and funding agencies. The team's activities might include: long-term planning; crafting specifics in which to vet partners; developing missions; and amassing the proper resources needed to meet immediate, short-term, and long-term needs (Webster, 2017). Additionally, local grant professionals, community planning departments, local government officials, and other prospective partners should be aware of the intricate issues raised after most disasters. Project leadership helps with proper risk management planning and execution of plans. This is critical for any organization to translate its strategy into practice. Such plans might include housing, infrastructure, water, electricity, health, economic and workforce development, food deserts, and unemployment and lost wages due to businesses destroyed or inoperable for an undetermined amount of time.

Smith (2014) stresses that the timing of assistance relative to disaster recovery varies depending on everyone involved, as organized and strategic pre-disaster planning and collaborative problem solving are lacking tremendously. Smith remarks that “the resources delivered by most actors (disproportionately in the post-disaster timeframe) remain uncoordinated, duplicative, and in many cases counterproductive.” When the roles and responsibilities are poorly defined, dissemination of resources in both the short and long term can be impeded if resource managers assume responsibility for all relief tasks (funding, policy development, and technical assistance).

Nonprofits and local government organizations contribute to the implementation of post-disaster recovery and rebuilding efforts, particularly in the long term. These efforts may come in the form of housing policies or homeowner’s assistance. Local agencies will often offer assistance through grant awards for repair, rebuilding, or retrofitting. However, these types of assistance must be coordinated. What if this money is granted without the provisions from the federal government on new housing codes (often made in response to hurricanes, wildfires, or related weather disasters)? What if the rebuild took place in areas that are now designated as flood zones? What if rebuilding resources are used to rapidly rebuild without coordination from federal agents and the appropriate, most up-to-date information?

Take, for instance, two sets of organizations (e.g., nonprofits and local governments), both of whom implement post-disaster housing-related policies. Following disasters, local governments should examine and possibly strengthen building codes and standards before nonprofit organizations help homeowners repair or reconstruct damaged housing. Otherwise, homes may be built back to standards that were in place at the time of the event, rather than in accordance with the best available information. As Smith (2014), Burke and Beatley (1997), and Burke and Campanella (2006) posit, failing to account for these measures in recovery perpetuates social vulnerability or community disarray. These studies go on to stress that lack of coordination horizontally (e.g., between local governments and nonprofits) and vertically (between federal, state, and local government actors) is a significant problem in disaster funding and assistance.

As more issues arise, individuals who need services increase, as do the number of applications submitted for funding. Furthermore, when a long-term recovery plan for funders exists, leadership is key. Local leadership accounts for messaging which is often more difficult, because these leaders often compete with the visuals and the storylines crafted by major media outlets (or even by the community itself via social media). Local leadership must gather the team that is supportive of their core mission without overlapping and duplicating services in their scope. For example, a nonprofit which manages funds for the environment can be very helpful in vetting partners and proposals from those who wish to provide clean water capacity. However, if this environment-focused nonprofit were to provide unrelated infrastructure support, it may adversely affect the use of contributed funds, because there are already other organizations in the marketplace specializing in these areas. Advocates for volunteers note that there may be a need for paid staff persons and leadership who can continue to manage grants, maintain partnerships within and outside the community, offer salient ideas with branding, leverage federal and state dollars, and navigate partnerships with corporate foundations.

2) Perform more robust data analysis

Robust data analysis is highly impactful to risk mitigation, philanthropic efforts, partnerships, communication, and other variables. Also, it is critical to assess storm impact as evidenced by populations affected, environmental impact (i.e., storm surge, flooding, etc.), and issue areas impacted. Finally, tracking of grant dollars is a critical piece, including how much money is received, the proper allocations, and disbursement plan(s). Having more robust data collection enables accurate tracking, production of aggregate demographic data, and accurate investment of collection and observation techniques. LaBrosse (2007)'s early principle on project management and disaster recovery states the importance of data and information: documentation of collective experiences even in the form of journaling can be shared with the team, industry partners, and other critical players. She proceeds to share that experience is a powerful teacher, and what is learned can hold answers about prevention and long-term responses.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) (2016) stated that the major obstacle in disaster research is funding, because data needs are time-sensitive. SAMSHA, along with Richardson et al. (2012), finds that data and research for disasters are important to the health and wellness of citizens. These data help agencies such as the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and National Science Foundation (NSF) assess impacts through rapid response grants. Nongovernmental and academic agencies will continue to study the impact of grants, including on the local and state level, for long-term disaster support (Richardson, 2012; Giarratano et al., 2014). Richardson et al. (2012) state that disaster research, including the analytics therein, is a multi-faceted field that requires creative approaches. Creativity in data analysis helps to develop practical studies of interest especially as they are useful for identifying funding or connecting diverse sources of funding research for disasters.

3) Invest in Capacity Building and Planning Pre-Event

Stakeholders must address how local and state (and even federal) governments can invest time and money into capacity building. Capacity building, according to Richardson et al. (2012), in this form is defined as the proper planning of and investment in systematic strategies dedicated to increasing organizational ability to address a problem. In this case, the problem is disasters that need policies and local and state investments to address any issue in a meaningful way *before* the event occurs. Smith (2011) suggests that incremental policy and planning should be conducted in concert with investment dollars in capacity building projects that measure the quality of pre-event policy plans. In other words, stakeholders should continually observe their capacity building strategy to see if it they are successful and use the outcomes and measurements to broaden post-disaster funding access especially for local and state nonprofits and organizations.

Conclusion

Grant professionals hold a critical place in this new era of disaster recovery and philanthropy. While national funding sources contribute to the wide picture of recovery needs, local funders and grant administrators have the opportunity to be the local go-to recovery and relief solution. Current federal initiatives to improve governance funding strategies have been the gold standard; yet, with respect to long-term recovery and rebuilding efforts, local and state nonprofits must be effectively linked to these processes and have their plans and strategies realized through clear and actionable policies. Currently, the abundance of funders leads to donor fatigue, competition in marketing, mistrust of resources, and slower distribution in some cases. Varied funding sources from both longstanding and emerging non-governmental organizations carry out good work without many resources funneling in. Efforts within local foundations and funding agencies can allow for quick and targeted responses, which are imperative when citizens are without some of the most basic needs. Such efforts include data analysis, collaboration, and capacity building and planning. While messaging, resources, and direction from well-known national organizations and federal agencies are critical, when the cameras pack up and the tweets stop trending, the local funding organizations remain to carry out the long-term work.

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Executive Orders Under the Trump Administration: Emerging Trends and Recommendations for Grant Professionals

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Abstract

In the first year of his administration, President Donald Trump signed more Executive Orders (EOs) than any president in 50 years, representing major funding, political, and environmental policy changes in the United States. EOs are often proxies for larger changes and therefore can assist grant professionals in preparing for and navigating future changes. This Strategy Paper reviews EOs from January 20, 2017 to January 20, 2018 to identify several emerging trends and offers recommendations for grant professionals to adapt to these trends and changes.

Introduction

Following the 2016 presidential election, grant professionals began asking what effects the change in administration may have on their fields. This paper analyzes EOs, as a proxy for larger changes, affecting grant professionals. Overall, EOs in the first year of the Trump administration are relatively prolific (58 EOs) compared to the same time period under the Obama administration (37 EOs), but consistent with the previous Republican administration under George W. Bush (56 EOs) (Federal Register, 2018). Thus, EOs can be used as a guide for grant professionals during this period of administrative transition and larger changes in the United States.

Limitations

This Strategy Paper assumes EOs are good proxies to demonstrate the effects of larger shifts in the perception of the public sector's role and those perceptions' effects on grant professionals. The paper's scope does not include analyses of presidential EOs in previous administrations, bipartisan and partisan activities, nor detailed trend analyses across previous presidential administrations.

Methodology

EOs are a good and unique proxy for understanding emerging trends and shifts in policy compared to other information sources, because EOs are issued from the Office of the President and require publication in the Federal Register (Federal Register Executive Order FAQ, 2018). This analysis focuses on EOs issued by President Trump between January 20, 2017 and January 20, 2018. This paper used qualitative data analysis methods to review EOs for keywords and themes to identify emerging trends.

Keywords and Emerging Trends

EOs include many topics potentially affecting grant professionals. A frequency analysis of EOs' keywords found these topics the most commonly discussed: national security; economy; deregulation; foreign policy; immigration; budget reductions; jobs/employment; federal, tribal, and state responsibilities; and natural resources. A keyword word cloud (see Figure 1) provides a visual representation of all keywords with font size representing keyword frequency.

Figure 1: Keyword Word Cloud

Based on the keywords noted and a theme analysis of the EOs, three overarching trends emerge in EOs:

1. Reduction in federal roles and increase in local (tribal, state, county, and city) roles.
2. Potential increased resources in specific priority areas.
3. Decreased or no attention to other areas, such as public health and environmental protection.

Reduction in Federal Roles and Increase in Local Roles

This trend encompasses two categories: global and domestic roles. While they are intertwined, it is important to delineate these trends for grant professionals.

Global Roles

EOs under the new administration state that U.S. international interests have not been protected nor violators prosecuted (e.g., in trade, national security, and national resource security). Immigration, as it relates to national security, is a dominating topic. For example, EO Nos. 13767, 13768, 13769, 13776, 13780, 13788, 13802, 13815, and 13818 all reference immigration as a topic (Federal Register, 2018). Decreasing international cooperation via trade deficits, anti-dumping and countervailing duties, and trade agreements are priorities in these EOs. However, they also increase international cooperation for investigation of transnational criminal organizations and for prevention of international trafficking. These two exceptions for international cooperation may imply an opportunity for grant professionals working in these areas.

Domestic Roles

With few exceptions, EOs clearly indicate a decrease in federal agencies' domestic mandate and an increase in local agencies' responsibilities. EOs describe federal agencies as regulating local agencies to the detriment of local communities. Therefore, EOs seek to remedy over-regulation and excessive federal funding by reducing the role of federal agencies and increasing the role of local agencies, especially with regard to local economies, workforce development and growth, business, and natural resources. However, the EOs' increased focus on local responsibilities and federal deregulation does not equate to increased local funding. For example, EO No. 13809 (2018) provides for the deregulation or restoration of local law enforcement access to equipment from federal excess equipment transfers, asset forfeitures, and federal grants. In contrast, the proposed budget allocates fewer financial resources to local agencies (Myers, 2017). For grant professionals, focusing at local levels may yield better results as federal financial support becomes scarcer. Understanding the nuanced impact of reduced federal regulations, guidance, and funding will be paramount for grant professionals.

Potential Increased Resources in Specific Areas

EOs increase resources for a few key policy areas—access to and use of natural resources, higher education at historically black colleges and universities, immigration regulation, infrastructure, national security, and prosecutions of transnational criminal organizations. Of note, expanding resources for higher education in EO No. 13779 (2017) contrasts with EO No. 13801 (2017) which aims to defund higher education support programs and lessen the regulatory burden of apprenticeships and work programs. Furthermore, EOs seek to increase resources for national and international cooperation on enforcing federal law with respect to transnational criminal organizations to prevent international trafficking (primarily drug and human) and public safety. EOs also reference national security in combination with topics such as immigration, trade deficits, information technology, cybersecurity, supply chains, equipment access, sanctions, national emergencies, and personal property, in EO Nos. 13767, 13786, 13794, 13800, 13806, 13809, 13810, 13814, 13815, 13817 (Federal Register, 2018).

Increasing resources, however, does not always translate to increases in funding. Grant professionals working within these areas of increasing resources should carefully consider how and which resources they can best leverage. For example, EO No. 13779 (2017) establishes a special initiative to advance opportunities for historically black colleges and universities through an interagency work group and board of advisors. However, this EO supports efforts largely focused on capacity building and coordinating access to preexisting resources for historically black colleges and universities, rather than providing new financial resources to these institutions.

Decreased or No Attention in Other Areas

There are several other noteworthy changes in EO trends from preceding administrations. EOs do not include references to public health (with the exception of opioid drug addiction) nor to environmental protection. EOs imply competing, finite resources between economic growth and national security versus public health and environmental concerns; EO No. 13778 (2017) is an example. These noteworthy changes are important for grant professionals who may work in these areas.

Recommendations

Based on this analysis of the first year of EOs under the new administration, this Strategy Paper offers two main recommendations:

Expand Advocacy Efforts

Grant professionals should forgo assumptions that historically funded programs (such as entitlement and discretionary programs) will continue receiving the same levels of funding. EOs indicate that most programs' public-sector funding sources will be reduced, with the few exceptions noted above—but local resources may increase. Advocacy has traditionally centered on political efforts, but grant professionals must think more broadly. Grant professionals need to become advocates or influencers within public agencies (at both federal and local levels), civil society, and the private sector in order to secure resources. To this end, grant professionals should embrace an expanding definition of advocacy and their role in this broader definition of advocacy.

Grant professionals should also carefully consider the motivations of their target audiences for this advocacy, in order to influence effectively for program funding in a highly competitive environment. Grant professionals need to bring in the whole package with these advocacy efforts—a clear and relatable need personalized for target audiences, robust monitoring and evaluation (or other proof of program effectiveness), and a means to make the initiative or program stand out among competitors. Grant professionals should leverage data to become proactive advocates for high-priority and demonstrably impactful programs.

Become Even More Agile

Grant professionals must be even more agile in response to external factors and trends, such as those exemplified within these EOs. Grant professionals' agility includes working with leadership to pivot resources, varying tactics, and exploring new approaches as external factors change with potentially increasing frequency. Change is coming regardless of the subject or geographic service area. The best strategy to becoming more agile is to plan strategically. Strategic planning is not the traditional single plan, but fully developed contingency plans to mitigate risks and environmental factors outside one's control. The Government Accountability Office reports that "The government is on an unsustainable path….To change the long-term fiscal path, policymakers will need to consider policy changes to the entire range of federal activities and spending…and revenue" (Government Accountability Office, 2017). Similarly, grants professionals must also prepare for change.

Conclusion

Amid the trends indicated by EOs in the first year of the new presidential administration, grant professionals have opportunities in this changing political and fiscal environment to identify and pursue potential grant funding. Specifically, by being aware of declining federal roles and expanding local roles, tracking areas of higher and lower priority for the administration, expanding advocacy efforts, and becoming even more agile in grantseeking strategies, grant professionals can find ways to adapt and thrive in this changing world.

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Interdisciplinary Approaches to Grantseeking and Resource Development

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Abstract

Grantseeking and other types of resource development often run on parallel tracks. Through a series of original case studies, this strategy paper offers replicable examples of interdisciplinary collaborations that can amplify the grant professional's efforts, leverage complementary strengths, and potentially generate more funds.

Introduction

Grant professionals are usually not the only people in a nonprofit organization tasked with securing philanthropic resources. Other development professionals include those with subspecialties in major gifts, annual funds, special events, and planned giving, fields collectively known as "traditional fundraising" or simply "fundraising." In addition to those who focus on resource-generating activities, development personnel may also include individuals working in volunteer management and public relations.

Grant professionals and these other development professionals would seem to share common interests, but in many environments they work in isolation. The reasons for this divide may have partly to do with how incoming funds are used. Grantseeking tends to focus on finding resources for projects and programs, while individual and corporate giving is more inclined toward funds for general operations. The two sides of development also attract professionals with different skill sets and communication styles. Development leaders may wonder, however, if they could achieve more by working across disciplinary lines.

Literature abounds on intra-agency collaborations among grant professionals, consultants, program staff, evaluators, boards, and financial officers in the development of proposals and programs; see Carter (2004), Renninger, Bastuscheck and Brandolini (2007), Ingledue (2009), Leonard and Stombaugh (2014), and Scala (2015), among others. Less studied are the relationships between grant professionals and other development specialists. Huenink (2015), Jideonwo (2013), and

McEnery (2004) delineate the rationale behind integrating grantseeking and fundraising functions to create a unified approach to donors. This strategy paper builds on these concepts and showcases examples of fundraising collaborations drawn from interviews conducted in 2016 and 2017. The paper also provides an outline of conditions necessary for successful collaborations as well as strategies to overcome potential pitfalls. Grant professionals may use this information to assess whether collaborative approaches are feasible for their organizations and then adapt project ideas accordingly.

Profile of Organizations Studied

The research for this strategy paper encompassed interviews with nine different organizations in the Chicago area: a historical museum, a children's museum, a hospital foundation, a public library district, a disability services organization, a scholarship organization, a women's shelter, a work readiness agency, and a private high school. Their annual fundraising goals ranged from $600,000 to $30 million, and competitive grants comprised 12% to 68% of the philanthropic dollars raised. The number of development staff ranged from two to 30 full-time positions.

General Considerations

The case studies demonstrated that the following practices and values are important to make an organization ready to undertake successful collaborations between grant professionals and other development professionals.

- Communication: the most collaborative teams in the study held regularly scheduled meetings and enjoyed ample opportunities for ad hoc dialog.
- Space: the most common office setup was cubicles or semi-shared spaces for staff. Interview subjects said that this configuration provided enough space for private contemplation while also enabling spontaneous interactions. Completely private offices and open work spaces were regarded less favorably.
- Learning: executives at the most collaborative organizations developed a culture of professional growth, often involving group memberships in professional organizations such as GPA or the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP).
- Expectations: collaboration cannot succeed if it is merely an "add-on" to the work that staff are already expected to do. Effective leaders set clear expectations that make interdisciplinary work part of the employee's annual goal plan.

Examples of Collaboration

Individual Giving

The concept of the donor engagement cycle—the movement from prospect identification to cultivation, solicitation, and stewardship—provides common ground between grant professionals and other fundraisers. Grant professionals and giving officers can work together on the identification and cultivation phases. At the Chicago-area historical museum in this study, the grant manager worked with the major gifts officer to research prospects and write concept papers. She drew on her grasp of program measurement to brief the major gifts officer on service statistics prior to donor meetings. The grant manager also repurposed proposal narratives into a shorter, livelier version for the museum's annual appeal letter. In order to carve out time for this collaborative work, the grant manager cultivated help from trained interns, mostly college students who were aspiring writers or marketers.

In another example, the public library district and its 501(c)(3) supporting foundation came together for a renovation project. The library's grants manager wrote a case statement for naming rights to newly renovated study spaces, while the foundation's development manager identified major gift prospects and closed the deal.

Institutional Giving

Development professionals can also collaborate when evaluating institutional prospects such as foundations, corporations, and government agencies. For example, the children's museum employed a giving manager who oversaw a portfolio of individual donors, as well as a grant manager responsible for foundation and government funding. With corporate prospects, the pair would determine funder interest and divide work accordingly: the giving manager wrote exhibit sponsorship proposals and stewarded recognition efforts, while the grant manager wrote proposals for the museum's educational programs. Their ongoing dialog ensured that each person's professional strengths were deployed in the way most likely to achieve a successful outcome for their organization's annual fundraising goal of about $2.5 million.

Interdisciplinary dialogs of this nature can arise in larger venues as well. One of the organizations studied is a $30 million per year charitable foundation that supports a multi-billion-dollar hospital system. The foundation's grants director regularly talks with major gifts officers at 12 hospitals. When an industry group contacted a doctor about a funding opportunity for cancer treatment, the doctor told his local gift officer, who sent word to the grants director. The grants office put together the proposal and won a substantial award. On another occasion, the foundation's corporate relations officer told the grants director that a vendor was interested in supporting programs. The grants team identified a need, wrote a proposal for a mobile dental program, and received a multi-year grant.

Volunteer Engagement

Development involves the cultivation of donors. Volunteers are donors who give the currency of time rather than money. For this reason the management of volunteers often falls to an agency's development team and offers another opportunity for grant professionals and traditional fundraising professionals to collaborate.

Effective volunteer engagement requires support from top administration and a thoughtful alignment of organizational needs with volunteer interests (Ellis, 2010; Taproot Foundation, 2012). Robust volunteer involvement can even enhance an organization's grant competitiveness, as it demonstrates program sustainability and community buy-in. Volunteer hours can sometimes be counted as matching funds for a grant. While it is common to see volunteers on boards or in program support roles, grant professionals can also integrate them into grantseeking and grant stewardship activities.

When seeking pro bono partners, nonprofits should prioritize the employees of companies that have giving programs tied to volunteer engagement. At the organizations in this case study, grant-related volunteer projects ran the gamut from one-day, hands-on opportunities requiring a general skill set to long-term engagements that made use of volunteers' special expertise. Some examples include the following:

- At the disability services agency, the grants director invited a financial services company to give matching funds for a foundation grant to build a children's playground. The company also provided volunteers to assemble the equipment. The playground ribbon-cutting garnered positive media coverage, and the company continued to support the charity with monetary gifts and employee time. The company's ongoing volunteer engagement was thus a form of grant stewardship.

- A transportation company reached out to the nonprofit that provides scholarships for low-income students, proposing an employee service day at one of their partner schools. Some participants later volunteered to tutor students. The company grew its commitment and became a financial patron of the school. The scholarship organization's grant professional stewarded this evolving relationship by writing reports on the impact of the company's commitment.

- The volunteer manager at the women's shelter worked with the community engagement officer at an insurance company to place volunteer groups at its housing facilities and resale shop. The company also sent pro bono human resources staff to help the shelter write its volunteer manual. The shelter's grant proposal writer cited this volunteer participation in successful proposals to the company's charitable giving program.

- The children's museum receives grant funds from a technology business that also gives its engineers release time to mentor children in science education programs. To avoid straining the museum's capacity, participation is capped at 20 volunteers at one time.

Public Relations

In some nonprofits, communications are also part of development. Grant professionals in the case studies worked with public relations (PR) staff in a number of ways.

- At several charities, grant professionals had a hand in drafting the annual report, which repurposed stories and statistics from that year's grant proposals. In turn, the grant professionals took inspiration from stories that others wrote for the annual report and used them in grant narratives.
- Some organizations announced grant awards via press releases and social media. Publicity can serve as a form of grant stewardship (as well as enhance job security for the grant professional).
- At the public library, the grants manager collaborated with the PR department to write "library of the year" awards that usually did not include a financial prize but did have a payout in prestige, which in turn positioned the library to win grants.
- On a similar note, the grant professional at the women's shelter wrote nominations for "volunteer of the year" awards to recognize corporate volunteers who had also helped secure grants, and she even trained a volunteer to write award applications on behalf of others.

Program Services

The most fully realized cross-disciplinary relationships between grant professionals and other resource development professionals took place in environments where front-line program services were similarly integrated.

- The employment services nonprofit engaged with an entertainment company in multiple ways: the company made grants to the organization from its corporate foundation, hired graduates of the program as paid employees, sponsored a fundraising gala, and sent skilled volunteers to hold mock job interviews with program participants.

- The private high school serves low-income, college-bound youth and covers costs with tuition, scholarships, fundraising, and a corporate work-study program that is a hub for multifaceted relationships with funders. For example, a major bank gave grant funds, placed a director on the school's board, hired students for work-study and graduates for full-time jobs, and sent its employees to volunteer as college and career mentors. The school's director of corporate and foundation relations scheduled volunteer projects for bank employees as part of his grant stewardship plan. Volunteer management was part of this grant professional's written job description and performance expectations.

These rich, evolving relationships represent the fullest possibilities of what grant professionals, other fundraisers, and executive leadership can accomplish when they work together to get the most impact out of a funder.

Challenges to Collaboration: Problems and Solutions

The study also identified several common barriers to collaborative fundraising as well as potential solutions that resource development professionals may employ.

Time Management

Volunteers do not represent "free" labor. Salaried staff are sometimes dismayed when they realize that managing volunteers requires an investment of time that they think will impede the rest of their work. With thoughtful planning, however, organizations can make this investment pay dividends. The historical museum in this study runs a summer internship program in partnership with an umbrella coalition that gives the college students modest stipends. These part-time interns work not only with curators but also with the museum's grant manager and marketing director. During the rest of the year, the museum's human resources department recruits unpaid student interns through online postings.

Organizations that sponsor academic and clinical internships are well suited to place interns in resource development as well. Many front-line nonprofit service providers have to write their own grant proposals, and interning with a seasoned grant professional could be a learning experience for the student as well as a boon to the organization's development program. For instance, the women's shelter in this study assigned psychology and social work interns to spend a few hours a week helping the agency's grant professional research funding prospects and local demographics. Unpaid staff—when properly recruited, trained, and supervised—can add value to a grants program and give paid staff the time to undertake bold, innovative projects.

Information Exchange

In order to work collaboratively and avoid the tendency to hoard information, development professionals need a common data platform. References such as A Consumer's Guide to Low-Cost Donor Management Systems (Andrei, 2017) can help organizations choose appropriate technological solutions. Regardless of the product chosen, staff and volunteers must use the system consistently and correctly, and management must hold them accountable for data transparency.

Performance Objectives

The most significant barrier to collaborative fundraising may be the fear that dedicating time to a shared project will prevent a grant professional from getting his or her "own job" done. This concern must be addressed in each development team member's work expectations. For example, a grant professional's annual performance measurements might require him or her to produce 30 grant proposals and win $300,000 in grants, as well as write two major gift proposals that lead to gifts of $50,000. Some organizations motivate collaboration by awarding bonuses for the attainment of collective fundraising goals; for example, all members of the development team at the historical museum received a bonus after they successfully closed a capital campaign. Individual incentives can co-exist with group incentives: a development professional might qualify for a salary increase based on individual performance but will only receive a bonus if the team goals are met.

Contrary to widespread belief, performance incentives are allowed under the GPA Code of Ethics, Article 18: "Members may accept performance-based compensation, such as bonuses, provided such bonuses are in accordance with prevailing practices within the members' own organizations and are not based on a percentage of grant monies." (AFP's Code of Ethics has a similar provision.) Though incentives are still uncommon in the development field, a body of evidence suggests that they may improve employee retention, increase dollars raised to a greater degree than performance metrics alone, and—if they are based on overall organizational performance—promote cohesion and collaboration (Marts & Lundy, 2016; Campbell & Co., 2015).

The case studies of the nine Chicago nonprofits, though limited in scope, were consistent with these research findings. It is perhaps significant that the two organizations with the most highly developed bonus programs—the employment services organization and the scholarship agency—were founded by businessmen-philanthropists. Under these nonprofit "profit sharing" plans, it is possible for one department to underperform relative to others and still receive a bonus. In confidential interviews, employees of the two charities stated that their dedication to mission was strong enough that the prospect of disparate rewards had no negative effect on morale.

Leadership

Strong leadership is important to sustain this collective vision. Even in organizations with disinterested leadership, however, collaboration-minded professionals can still exert their influence by modeling ethical behavior, communicating openly, and educating colleagues about their field of expertise (Stombaugh, 2017). Grant professionals may consider giving presentations at staff meetings about the grants cycle, outcomes measurement, prospect research, and other topics that may seem mysterious to non-specialists. These efforts can not only improve the status of the grants professional but also plant seeds of interest for future collaborations.

Conclusion

Grant professionals who would like to explore interdisciplinary collaborations should first assess their organizations' readiness for collaboration. They may then cultivate tools and systems that foster creative dialog, using examples like those cited here as inspiration for projects that fit their missions. This cross-disciplinary mindset is relevant to grant professionals who now work (or one day may work) in diversified fundraising shops; who provide strategic consulting to organizations that could benefit from a multi-pronged development strategy; or who aspire to become directors of development or other executive leaders and thus need a broad view of organizational advancement.

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