Dear Reader,

The wide variety of paper topics presented in the Journal mirrors the diversity of work that members of our profession perform, and this diversity provides a rich variety of experience from which to learn. Sometimes, however, a theme seems to “bubble up” from the submitted articles. The previous edition of the Journal contained several papers concerning teaching others about grant development. This issues contains several papers regarding the professional development of grant professionals—ways to think about it, methods to do it, and what success looks like when you’ve done it!

We invite you to contribute your valuable experience to the Journal in the form of an article. Our priorities are articles that address new ideas in our field, contribute research-based information, provide a case study or best practices, or examine any of the competencies and skills described in the Table of Validated Competencies and Skills (available at http://www.grantcredential.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/GPC-Competencies-Skills.pdf). You can also navigate to the table through the GPA website, or via www.grantcredential.org. (Click on “The Exam;” then “Competencies Tested;” then click a box at the bottom of the page called “Competencies & Skills.”)

We welcome your comments on this issue of the Journal, and we welcome suggestions you may have for future issues.

GPA Editorial Board

Amy Lamborg, Co-Chair  lambora@muohio.edu
Barbara Roberts, Co-Chair  brobertsgrantpro@gmail.com
Sharon Skinner, Board Liaison  Sharon.Skinner@MesaAZ.gov
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.
About This Publication

The *Journal* of the GPA 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. Research papers are peer-reviewed by top professionals from around the country.

Articles or proposals may be submitted at any time to the Editorial Board of the *Journal of the Grant Professionals Association* via email to journal@grantprofessionals.org. Submissions will be peer-reviewed anonymously, for comments, revisions and recommendations. The Board reserves the right to delay or withhold publication of any article submitted. Authors will be kept apprised.

All submissions accepted for publication (except reprints of articles) will remain the copyrighted property of the Grant Professionals Association. Written permission must be obtained from GPA to reprint any published article.

Articles should be submitted as email attachments in Microsoft Word format. Any graphics or tables must be compatible with Word or Microsoft software. Each 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* (5th Edition); articles not following this format will be returned to the author(s).

Articles must be relevant to the grants profession. If you have questions, please email journal@grantprofessionals.org. Submission deadlines are posted on the GPA website.
# Table of Contents

A Summary of the Study Guide Developed for the Grant Professionals Certification Examination  
Shelia McCann, MEd, SM, GPC,  
Jodi Pearl, MA, GPC and  
Amy Whitlock Jennings, MS, GPC .......................................................... 1

Adapting the University of Missouri’s Grant Writer Network Model of Collaboration to Community Settings  
Mary M. Licklider, PhD and  
Larry D. Nossaman, GPC ........................................................................ 13

Grant Professionals: Profession Retention and Length of Service Rates  
Danny W. Blitch, MPA, GPC .................................................................... 24

Education and Development for Grant Professionals and Social Entrepreneurs in the Nonprofit Sector  
Karen V. Harper-Dorton, PhD, MSW, MA .............................................. 35

Issues in Grants Education and Research: Creating Student-Centered Online Courses  
J. Bernard Bradley, PhD, GPC,  
John Rachal, EdD and Lin Harper, PhD .................................................. 48

Grant Professionals in Grant-Funded Positions: Challenges and Legacies  
E. Erwin Story, MBA, BBA and  
Patricia D. Cunningham, DNSc, APRN-FPMHNP, FNP ......................... 62

Key Skills and Behaviors of Successful Grant Professionals  
Jerry Dillehay and Sharon Skinner, MA, GPC ......................................... 72
A Summary of the Study Guide Developed for the Grant Professionals Certification Examination

Shelia McCann, MEd, SM, GPC
Beddows McCann Consulting LLC, Miramar, FL

Jodi Pearl, MA, GPC
Memorial Healthcare System, Hollywood, FL

Amy Whitlock Jennings, MS, GPC
Whitlock Writings, Plantation, FL

GPC Competencies Addressed: All

Abstract
The Grant Professionals Certification Examination is a credentialing program that measures an individual’s ability to provide quality grant-related services within an ethical framework. This article provides grant professionals with a thorough working knowledge of the Grant Professionals Certification Institute (GPCI) defined competencies and skills and summarizes the Study Guide and Bibliography: Support for the Grant Professionals Certification Examination, Second edition (aka “Study Guide”). The Study Guide is a review of the grantsmanship literature and represents the experiences of the authors who bring together extensive knowledge of various specialized fields. To date, the Study Guide has been used by more than 200 grant professionals to prepare for the Examination. Updated in 2010, the Study Guide continues to be a useful tool for professionals preparing to sit for the Examination and offers resources to those who lack experience in specific areas. All sales revenues (100%) generated by the Study Guide have been donated to the Grant Professionals Association or to the authors’ local chapter.
Introduction

The Grant Professionals Certification (GPC) program brings a nationally recognized credential to the grants field. Since there is no recognized academic degree in grant development, the GPC credential is an excellent way to determine a person’s skill level. Having a GPC also improves employability since it signifies a mastery of the competencies, skills, and practice of grantsmanship. It validates to the public that the individual has knowledge of the ethical, moral obligations and practices essential to instilling trust. Grant professionals expand their capabilities by acquiring experience and developing familiarity with the competencies and skills of grantsmanship.

The GPC examination is a generalist test designed for persons experienced in the broad field of grantsmanship. The exam is focused on nine competencies and related skills and consists of 150-160 multiple choice questions and a 90-minute written portion. A typical candidate should be able to sit for the exam without a great deal of preparation. For candidates who feel weak in a particular competency or skill, preparation can be helpful. The *Study Guide and Bibliography: Support for the Grant Professional Certification Examination*, Second edition (Heft *et al.*, 2011) (aka “Study Guide”) can be a useful tool that offers resources to those who lack experience, knowledge or skills in specific areas.

Organized by competency and each underlying skill, the Study Guide is a rich resource identifying extensive reference material, tips, and techniques for new entrants and experienced grant professionals alike. It focuses on information to enable individuals to master the specialized knowledge of the craft of grantsmanship. This article summarizes the 127-page Study Guide by competency and selected skills. It incorporates the GPCI Literature Review (2011) developed to support preparation for the examination. Reading this article and the Study Guide are not guarantees of a passing score on the GPC examination. This article is only an outline of the much more extensive and detailed Study Guide.

The order of presentation of the competencies is consistent with the publication of the Study Guide and differs from the set published by GPCI.

1.0 Knowledge of how to research, identify, and match funding resources to meet specific needs

The first competency covers a grant professional’s abilities in researching, identifying and matching funding sources. The fact that this competency represents 15% of the total score demonstrates that these skills are important. This competency broadly covers trends in public funding, private funding, the internet, and cultural or organizational influences.
Major trends in public funding and policy have been consistent over the past ten years: decreases in funding for social services accompanied with increases in accountability, evaluation, and reporting requirements. In the last five years, the application of new technologies is changing proposal development, submission, and reporting procedures. More funders require logic models and very specific outcomes for their investments. Increasing acknowledgement of grantsmanship as a profession has been signified by the emergence of the Grant Professionals Association (GPA).

Major trends in private funding indicate the increasing importance of private funders (independent, community, operating, and corporate). The Foundation Center reported that in 2008 giving from private foundations to health care was 23%, education 22%, human services 12%, and arts and culture 12% (Foundation Center, 2010). More than 60% of the larger foundations formed in the past 20 years (GPCI, 2006).

The influence of the Internet transformed methods of locating funding sources. Gateway websites (for example, Foundation Directory Online), access to funder-specific data (IRS Form 990-PF), and funder sites are now treasure troves of information on a scale never seen before. This transformation in techniques to learn about specific funders, including reading granting guidelines, accessing annual reports, and obtaining copies of tax filings, supports decision-making and development of funder relationships. The methods to maintain/track/update information on potential funders reflect increasing use of technology as well. Spreadsheet and database software and dedicated computer applications help to create and maintain calendar-based files and individualized tracking of funder communications. Broad application of technology conveys agility with data management and communications.

This competency addresses the effect of an organization’s culture, values, decision-making, and norms on the pursuit of funding. One must consider the board of directors, staff capabilities, alignment with organizational mission, and capacity for success in deciding whether to apply. Assessment of an organization should include the function of the program/project, unique characteristics, population served, any geographic parameters, and potential for collaborations. Such assessments also identify gaps in organizational skills and identification of potential resources to ensure successful implementation. This competency concludes by recognizing the importance of analyzing the Request for Proposal for funder intent.

2.0 Knowledge of organizational development as it pertains to grant seeking

This competency describes the role of the grant professional as an organizational developer and the capacity of the organization to
successfully apply for and manage funding from a variety of sources, and is weighted at 10% for the multiple-choice section. It identifies several basic elements of organizational readiness: current tax and legal status; availability of audited financial statements and current operating budgets, and documented policies and procedures. The structure of the organization should identify clear paths for decision-making, management, and supervision of program activities and funds. Skills include planning (funding and strategic), building partnerships, and knowing the funding source to create a winning proposal. Assessment strategies from Hall and Howlett (2003), Golden Brown and Brown (2001), and Polston (2004) provide a road map to ensure that an organization can develop fundable programs, receive awards, and successfully meet performance expectations.

This competency also features content reflecting group discussions about the impact of unethical practices, e.g. using funds for purposes other than those identified in the application, which can subject the organization to legal recourse by the funder.

### 3.0 Knowledge of strategies for effective program and project design and development

This competency reviews methods to solicit and incorporate meaningful, substantive input from stakeholders. This competency is weighted at 20% of the multiple-choice section. Stakeholders include recipients of program services, funders, community partners, and government agencies. The Study Guide references several articles from the *Journal of the GPA* (formerly known as the *Journal of the American Association of Grant Professionals*). These articles, written by grant professionals, are particularly informative, describing specific strategies and tactics to create teams, define roles and responsibilities, and establish timelines and budgets. These articles suggest that the grant professional can also be teacher and organizational guide. Educating grant applicants and stakeholders about financial and programmatic accountability may include training in federal regulations and requirements, budget development and management, and cost accounting.

This competency includes descriptions of the types and content of logic models. A logic model is a linear description of how a program will impact its beneficiaries. The Study Guide references the hallmark Kellogg Foundation (2004) work in establishing basic models (theory, outcomes, and activities); definitions and examples of outcome statements (change, target, and benchmark); and evaluation questions (formative and summative). Strategies for using project plan and management techniques include development of a work plan, identification of resources and activities, definition of outputs and outcomes, and description of long term impact or goals. As with any project plan, tactics
include performance evaluation. Increasingly, effective utilization of data may be the deciding factor in a successful application for funding and presentation of program results.

4.0 Knowledge of how to craft, construct and submit an effective grant application

Knowledge of how to craft, construct and submit an effective grant application addresses the core activity of grant professionals and has been weighted accordingly at 25%. In this section, the Study Guide mostly reviews Hall and Howlett (2003) and Miller (2009). It also references Michael Wells’ “Using the Budget to Tell Your Story” (from the 2004 Journal of the Grant Professionals Association), and his book, Grantwriting Beyond the Basics (2005).

The Study Guide begins with a review of interpreting grant application Request For Proposal (RFP) guidelines and provides steps for preparing a proposal. The next section has a list of items a typical RFP may contain such as the grant’s purpose, funding amount available, information on the funding agency, instructions on how to respond to the RFP, and budget forms. It breaks down the elements of an RFP, defining the type of details found in a statement of need, an abstract, and an evaluation section.

Review content includes descriptions of the fundamentals of standard federal and foundation grant applications. A typical federal grant application will require Standard Form 424 (SF-424) which is a cover sheet that collects general information about the applicant, the project, and the amount of funding required. Other federal forms include compliance statements concerning lobbying and drug-free workplace, and an abstract that is self-contained and ready for publication as a summary of the project. Common elements found in a typical foundation proposal may include customized budget forms and specific attachment requirements.

The authors identified strategies for submitting high-quality proposals on time, based on their experiences and on a review of the literature. For example, building relationships with funders before release of an RFP or with other local nonprofits to identify potential collaborators can be an excellent strategy. The Study Guide lists some pre-grant-release preparation steps such as looking at last year’s RFP, meeting with appropriate staff, and preparing a preliminary budget. There are also post-release ideas such as preparing a checklist, holding a strategy meeting, and gathering appendix items. The Study Guide outlines how these and other steps can contribute to the success of a proposal.

The Study Guide continues by describing methods for using data sources to support a proposal. There is a discussion about when to use local versus national statistics and suggestions for appropriate
data sources such as local government studies, local community-based research, and professional trade association data.

In addressing skills associated with logical presentation of grant narrative elements, the authors suggest careful consideration of each element of a proposal and its order of presentation. The Study Guide presents a sequential list of sections typically found in a proposal along with the type of information that should be provided within each section. The introduction should describe an agency’s qualifications and credibility; the problem or needs statement should document the needs to be met using hard data and relevant reports; and the sustainability section should present a plan for continuing the program beyond the grant period.

The Study Guide delves into different types of visual aids that might be used in a proposal and how to know when one type is more appropriate than another. For example, charts and graphs can work in a federal research proposal to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) but may not be suitable in a proposal to a local foundation.

The Study Guide also offers descriptions of effective practices for developing realistic, accurate, line-item budgets and discusses the difference between direct and indirect costs. It describes types of indirect cost rates and distinguishes between in-kind and cash matches.

Finally, the Study Guide provides a summary of evaluation methods, and explains why conducting an evaluation is critical. It describes evaluation models and offers guidance for selecting an appropriate evaluation model.

5.0 Knowledge of post-award grant management practices sufficient to inform effective grant design and development

This competency describes the grant professional’s role after a grant is awarded and comprises 8% of the multiple choice section. The Study Guide refers extensively to Thompson’s Single Audit Information Service (2010).

The Study Guide highlights the standard elements of regulatory compliance and defines the different terms associated with post-award grant management including the differences between a grant versus a contract and direct grantee versus sub-grantee. Effective post-award management techniques such as holding a post-award meeting to discuss roles and responsibilities, to review terms and conditions of a grant contract, and to note reporting deadlines, are outlined in this section of the Study Guide.

This section also reviews the transition process from application through post-award to implementation. Project requirements are discussed in detail as well as the importance of meeting all of the grant requirements. This section examines the various roles and
responsibilities of the grant professional. These include keeping abreast of changes in policies and/or procedures, and the need to remind program staff of grant requirements. In the case of a federal grant award, the grant professional plays a role in keeping the federal grantor agency, congressional delegations and the public aware of and informed about the grant project’s progress.

6.0 Knowledge of nationally recognized standards of ethical practice by grant developers

This competency focuses on ethical practices by grant professionals and comprises 10% of the multiple choice items. In this section, the Study Guide focuses on GPA’s Code of Ethics and Deacon’s 2004 article in the Journal of the American Association of Grant Professionals. The Study Guide includes the GPA Code of Ethics in its entirety.

The Study Guide presents various scenarios and applies ethical standards to understand how these situations may or may not be considered ethical. Examples include actions that violate the GPA Code of Ethics, such as accepting payment as a percentage of the award amount. There is also discussion on the reasons it is unethical for grant professionals to charge a commission on a grant award.

7.0 Knowledge of practices and services that raise the level of professionalism of grant developers

This competency is about the need for grant professionals to maintain their professionalism and knowledge level and makes up 4% of the multiple choice section. The most valuable resources for this section are the websites of GPCI and GPA. Articles from the Journal of the GPA (and earlier, the Journal of the American Association of Grant Professionals) were also helpful resources, in particular the Randall Givens article (2004) on social capital, which provided great detail on the value and strengths of social networks.

This section of the Study Guide provides the reader with a clear explanation of grant design and development. It discusses the benefits of obtaining the GPC, such as improved employability, a better understanding for grant professionals of the role they play within an organization, and independent credibility as a professional. The Study Guide also delves into the differences between certification and credentialing.

The Study Guide highlights the advantages of continuing education and joining professional organizations as keys to maintaining the skill sets needed in this profession. There is also a section on the history of the grant profession. The authors conclude with a discussion on strategies to build social capital and the importance of networking.
8.0 Knowledge of methods and strategies that cultivate and maintain relationships between fund-seeking and recipient organizations and funders

This competency examines ways grant professionals can network with potential funders and partners and comprises 8% of the multiple-choice questions. Burke and Tremore’s *The Everything Grant Writing Book* (2003) is helpful. A review of literature by Hall and Howlett (2003), Mansfield (2007), and Robinson (2004) may also be valuable.

This section of the Study Guide focuses on the beneficial relationships between grant seekers and grant makers as well as the importance of cultivation. Healthy relationships can make the difference between receiving, continuing to receive and not receiving funding. Familiarity with the characteristics of collaborations and the role each agency’s mission plays in establishing mutually beneficial affiliations are outlined.

9.0 Ability to write a convincing case for funding

The writing exercise represents 20% of the total GPC Examination score and test-takers must pass both the writing portion and the multiple choice portion to become credentialed. For the writing section, test-takers use a GPC-provided computer, pencil, paper and calculator and have 90 minutes to complete this portion of the exam. Final scores depend upon: the ability to follow instructions, the use of Standard English, appropriately organized ideas, the use of information provided, clearly conveyed ideas, and the ability to make a persuasive argument. The Study Guide offers some helpful hints. For example, do not use jargon, use action verbs to employ active voice, and keep the writing style enthusiastic. Use a goal statement and objectives that are SMART – that is, project objectives should be Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timely.

Tips for multiple choice examinations

The authors provide several strategies for addressing multiple choice questions, based on their own experiences. One strategy suggested is if the answer does not appear to be there, skip the question and come back to it at the end. Sometimes, the answer will come to mind later or may even be part of another question. If the answer cannot be determined, then take a guess. There is no penalty for a wrong answer. Here are some tips on multiple choice guessing techniques:

- Responses that use absolutes or negatives (i.e., all, definitely, only, never) are usually wrong.
- Responses that use conditional words (somewhat, sometimes, usually) are more likely to be correct.
• Funny responses are usually wrong.
• “All of the above” is often the correct response and “None of the above” is usually an incorrect response.
• Look for grammatical clues and verbal associations between the question and the responses.
• The longest response is usually the correct one.
• If all else fails, select “B” or “C” because oftentimes test developers tend to hide the answer and like it surrounded by distracters.
• Response “A” is least likely to be correct.

Conclusion

Obtaining a grant professional credential is a significant validation of general knowledge and advanced experience of grantsmanship. It conveys that the holder has validated knowledge of the skills and competencies and demonstrated experience in multiple facets of grantsmanship. Candidates who meet eligibility requirements should be able to sit for the GPC examination with little-to-no preparation. But for those who have become specialized in a particular aspect of grantsmanship and want to enhance knowledge in other areas, the Study Guide is an excellent studying companion. The Study Guide is also a good resource for those just entering the field of grantsmanship and for those looking to increase their overall skill level.

References


A Summary of the Study Guide Developed for the
Grant Professionals Certification Examination

American Association of Grant Professionals, 3(2), 23-26.

professionals use to make their proposals work. Portland, OR: Portland
State University Continuing Education Press.

Kansas City, KS: Grant Professionals Certification Institute.

Biographical Information

Shelia McCann, MEd, SM, GPC holds a Master of
Education in Counseling (Tufts University), a Master
of Science in Management (MIT-Sloan School of
Management), and is a Certified Grant Professional
(Grant Professional Certification Institute). Shelia’s
experience includes 30 years in the private sector,
and 15 years in government agencies and nonprofit
organizations. Her focus has been co-creating positive
work environments that acknowledge contribution and
encourage creativity. As the Deputy Assistant Secretary,
Administration in the US Department of Treasury, she
managed the seven core business operations for the Main
Treasury Building. She managed $24 billion annual loan
operations for Fannie Mae. Other experience includes
technology Implementations, and customer relations
in manufacturing, publishing, and financial services.
Since 2001, Shelia has been working in social services,
including residential services for abused women and
children, community advocacy, program development,
and grant writing and management. She has more than
10 years’ experience serving on nonprofit community
organization and university boards of directors. Shelia is
a managing partner with Beddows McCann Consulting
LLC and Grant and Program Manager for Health
Choice Network of Florida, Inc. Shelia was the 2010
winner of the Pauline G. Annarino Award from the Grant
Professional Certification Institute for exemplary service
and outstanding ability.

Jodi Pearl, MA, GPC is currently the Grants Coordinator
for the fifth-largest healthcare system in the nation. She
is an experienced professional with proven ability to
win and manage federal, state, and local grant funds,
implement complex program concepts, and build effective collaborations and partnerships across organizations. Jodi got her start in grantwriting at a science museum in 1998 and from there went on to hold a full-time grant-development position at a city government. In this role, she wrote proposals to fund all kinds of projects from sewer systems, to parks, to transportation planning projects. In 2006, Jodi was elected to the Board of the Grant Professionals Association (GPA) and completed her term in 2011. She received her Grant Professional Certification (GPC) credential in 2008 and was elected President of the Grant Professionals Certification Institute (GPCI) in 2010. Jodi grew up in Canada and moved to Florida to earn her Master’s Degree in Anthropology at Florida Atlantic University.

**Amy Whitlock Jennings, MS, GPC** has more than 20 years of grant development experience, spanning a variety of different community organizations. She has developed local, county, state, and federal proposals and secured funding for a variety of projects to assist underserved populations with access to education and healthcare. Amy has successfully secured more than $75 million in grant funding and authored three successful Robert Wood Johnson Foundation grants. Before starting Whitlock Writings, LLC she worked as a grant professional for the sixth and seventh largest public healthcare systems in the United States. Prior to healthcare, she worked in public and charter school systems. Amy is a member of the Grant Professionals Association and the Broward County Chapter of GPA. In 2008, Amy was one of the first people in the nation to become Grant Professional Certified through GPCI. Since then, Amy has presented a study session for the Grant Professional Certification examination at the GPA national conference annually. She is also a co-author of the *Study Guide and Bibliography: Support for the Grant Professional Certification Institute Examination*, first and second editions. Amy received her undergraduate degree from Indiana University and her Masters in Business Management from Indiana Wesleyan University.
Adapting the University of Missouri’s Grant Writer Network Model of Collaboration to Community Settings

Mary M. Licklider, PhD
University of Missouri Office of Grant Writing and Publications, Columbia, MO

Larry D. Nossaman, GPC
Senior Grant Writing Consultant, University of Missouri College of Education, Columbia, MO

GPCI Competency 2: Knowledge of organizational development as it pertains to grant seeking

GPCI Competency 7: Knowledge of practices and services that raise the level of professionalism of grant professionals

GPCI Competency 8: Knowledge of methods and strategies that cultivate and maintain relationships between fund-seeking and recipient organizations and funders

Abstract

Funding agencies increasingly demand interdisciplinary and collaborative solutions to large and complex issues facing communities and academic researchers. Society has come to realize that most problems and needs cannot be impacted by a single person or even a single organization working alone. There are many challenges to collaboration, but the process can result in stronger proposals for funding and additional benefits to the collaborators, funding agencies and stakeholders. The Grant Writer Network at the University of Missouri (MU) successfully refined the community of practice model of collaboration to the academic setting. The authors of this article believe this model can be adapted by GPA...
members and local proposal development colleagues to tackle large, complex community issues such as poverty, hunger and school drop-out rates. This article describes the challenges and benefits of collaboration, the unique characteristics of the MU model, current organizational paradigms, how to use proposal writers to support organizational goals, and how to generate synergies through grant professional networking.

Introduction

In “Grant Writing in the Age of Collaboration,” Susanne Carter saw evidence of “an increasing trend and preference for interdisciplinary projects from both federal agencies and private foundations” and observed that the increasing levels of complexity meant that “no one person has the capacity to accumulate all the knowledge in any given field” (Carter, 2004).

Eight years later, the trend Carter observed toward interdisciplinary and collaborative projects has accelerated and extends across the disciplines. The Directorate for Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences of the National Science Foundation declared in 2011 that “future research will be interdisciplinary, data-intensive, and collaborative” (National Science Foundation, p. 5). The new National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences at the National Institutes of Health “fosters the training of clinicians and researchers in an environment of innovation and collaboration, encouraging the next generation of leaders in translational sciences” (Department of Health and Human Services, p. 5). The US Department of Energy “brought significant new resources and innovative new approaches to the Department’s research and development mission (including)...breaking down stovepipes between our existing basic and applied science teams” (2012). The board of the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation “encourages cooperation between and among programs internally and externally to leverage resources, build working relationships and achieve ‘lasting impact’ which is a major priority” (Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, 2004, p.10).

In Grant Seeking in Higher Education, Mary Licklider summarizes this trend by noting that the easy questions have pretty much been answered: “It's the hard stuff that's left—the issues that fall between the disciplines or even outside the traditional disciplines altogether” (Licklider et al., 2012). So how can grant consultants ride the interdisciplinary wave to make their organizations more successful in raising funds for research and community projects? Does this even apply to grant professionals working outside of academia?
Collaboration and the MU Grant Writer Network Model

The University of Missouri (MU) began to build a campus Grant Writer Network in 1998. This Network has since grown from two positions to 17. The authors believe the collaborative model that made the MU Grant Writer Network so successful can be adapted to form “communities of practice” (Poole, 2006) among GPA members and their local colleagues. Former Network member Melissa Poole described key characteristics of communities of practice to include shared interests and purposes, shared values, a shared history, a group identity, regular opportunities for socialization, and established norms of behavior that include participation and commitment by each member, shared responsibility and rewards, respected boundaries, and trust.

The community of practice now known as the MU Grant Writer Network is based on three features described by Poole (2006): the members have a common domain or realm of shared interest, comprise a community of individuals who regularly interact, and have a shared practice they seek to develop. At MU, Network members share their interest in grant proposal preparation and in promoting the research, creative activity, instruction, and public service agendas of the MU faculty members with whom they work. Members meet weekly to communicate and to share ideas and knowledge, and they hold an annual retreat to think ahead and set priorities. They interact almost daily via an email distribution list.

MU Grant Writer Network members work within schools, colleges, and research centers across campus and centrally in the Office of Grant Writing and Publications. Network members have widely-varying academic and employment backgrounds and areas of specialization. These specializations and niche strengths comprise a Skills Inventory that is posted along with many other shared resources on the group’s password-protected website. To develop their shared practice, one or two staff meetings occur each month for professional development activities. The Network structure allows MU faculty members to catch opportunities for broader interdisciplinary projects and to avoid redundancies.

The Challenges of Collaboration Among Grant Professionals

The synergies achieved through the collaborative relationships among the grant professionals of the MU Network may seem specific to a campus setting in which the Network members all work for the same institution. The benefits of collaboration among grant professionals may be less obvious for grant professionals who work alone either as a freelance consultant or as an employee of a much smaller organization. Challenges to grant-professional collaboration certainly exist in academia just as they do for community organizations. Academic examples cited by Sherri
Sachdev (Licklider et al., 2012, pp. 48-53) will likely be familiar to readers working in community contexts:

- The group dynamics or balance of power can be tricky to negotiate to make sure everyone participates and everyone benefits from the partnership and still provide sufficient leadership to facilitate conversations and to merge personalities and work styles.
- Logistical issues, such as sharing resources or data, require commitments from all involved to maintain quality.
- Money and management issues are more complex in collaborations.
- Removal of team members who do not meet the expectations of the group is always problematic.
- Communication—an integral component of the collaborative process—becomes more complex as groups become more diverse.
- People from different fields think differently, and it can require a significant time investment to understand the perspectives of each member, clarify vocabulary, develop mutual trust, agree on common goals, and recognize the potential of the team as a whole.
- It may be difficult for individual members to set aside their egos, to be transparent and open, to be willing to listen and compromise, and to allow participation from everyone on an equal footing.
- A successful collaboration may become too successful, resulting in an overwhelming conglomeration of activities that is too big to administer effectively.

**The Benefits of Collaboration Among Grant Professionals**

Why bother to collaborate when the perceived rewards for the work will have to be shared with other members of the team? Carter (2004) summarizes the primary benefit of a smoothly-functioning collaborative team by quoting the adage, “the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. I believe a proposal is stronger when it reflects thoughtful and collective planning. Creativity, perspectives, and passions can expand and grow under the guidance of several collaborators’ expertise.” Sachdev (Licklider et al., 2012, pp. 43-44) provides more detail on the benefits of collaborating:

- The idea of “collective wisdom” brings together experts with diverse abilities, interests and questions to provide a wider range of potential solutions to complex problems.
• Stakeholders receive the benefits of collaboration. Sachdev cites examples of patients with improved outcomes due to the collaboration of doctors and other health professionals, and of students obtaining a competitive employment edge by participating in a research-related team environment as part of their training.

• Collaborators themselves benefit from opportunities for networking, allowing more people to know who they are and what they bring to the table, and opening up additional avenues to partner and ideas to explore.

• Collaborative teams may have access to the resources of other members, such as their expertise, equipment, funds and prestige.

• Collaborative efforts enhance productivity. Sachdev cites studies that suggest collaborative journal papers tend to be more significant, and that it is increasingly difficult for a sole author to produce highly-cited research. In the grants world, this could result in higher-quality proposals that enhance the chances for success.

So the bottom line is that collaboration may appear to be a certain amount of trouble, but the trouble is well worth it for situations in which the project is large and the goals are complex. Most people would certainly consider issues like poverty, hunger, and drop-out rates to be large and complex, and this brings us back to social services and education, fields in which many GPA members are engaged. The evidence is that more and more funders agree that partnerships are beneficial as they insist upon collaborative efforts in their funding opportunity notices.

Building a Grants Culture

In Grant Seeking in Higher Education, Licklider offers advice to campus leaders for building an institutional grants culture (2012, pp. 280-281). Defining "culture" as the beliefs and customs of specific groups of people makes it easy to see that the world of grants has its own culture. Each organization has internal beliefs and customs about who writes proposals, submits, negotiates and manages grants—and sometimes even whether or not grants are worth the effort. External sponsors have their own regulations, deliverables, and even unwritten expectations. Whereas the importance of a mature grants culture may be more obvious to leaders in higher education, it might be equally pertinent to community settings. The second part of this article looks at current organizational paradigms, hiring grant professionals to support organizational goals, and generating synergies through grant professionals' networking.
Shifting Paradigms

Academic research is moving away from the individual scientist or scholar who works alone in a siloed discipline. Research questions now tend to demand both broad and deep expertise, which implies teams of experts addressing issues from multiple perspectives at once. There appears to be a similar shift in the community-based work that many grant professionals support. Society has come to realize that most community problems and needs cannot be impacted by a single person or even a single organization working alone. At the same time, it can be very difficult for personnel at a small, understaffed community agency to look up from the day-to-day work enough to see opportunities for collaboration, let alone find time to initiate and manage collaborative work.

Faculty members in higher education are in a similar situation. Numbers of tenure-track faculty have seen dramatic decreases in recent years, and individuals who hold those positions now find themselves pulled in many directions. As with community agencies' personnel, they may recognize the value of collaboration but struggle to change the way they operate. In any transition, there seems to be an element of letting go of one trapeze and building the other in mid-air, hoping not to hit the ground before it is ready to grab. This is probably an apt metaphor for individuals in community agencies as well as those in faculty positions who see the need to leverage their efforts through collaboration but struggle to find a starting point. This is where leadership comes into play.

Both on campuses and in communities, leaders have an obligation to align rewards with organizational goals, to make the best use of personnel time, and to support the development of an effective, efficient grants culture. Personnel should be rewarded, for example, for achievements that advance organizational goals. If the goal is, for example, to engage at-risk kids in positive after-school activities, a shared effort between the local schools and several service organizations should “count” more than a smaller project that solely involves one agency’s patrons. If grant work is goal-driven and informed, a scarcity of grant resources becomes less a zero-sum competition within the community and more an exercise in setting priorities across the community.

There is an adage that says institutions of higher education are not really single institutions but rather loose affiliations of competing fiefdoms. Concerns about turf are not exclusive to higher education, however. The same adage may apply to the relationships among at least some of the community agencies in any given area. Collaboration involves letting go of some turf, but it compensates by allowing each participant to contribute its best strengths: each participant may end up staking out a relatively smaller piece of turf, but that stake is much stronger because it is grounded in unique expertise, experience, and/or resources. All this is true whether for a biomedical researcher or a local arts organization.
Collaborative work involves additional time to coordinate the roles of the individuals and organizations involved. The grants world can seem complex and foreign to those who are unfamiliar with its language and assumptions. Whether a grant proposal will support biomedical researchers or community artists, one way to allow these personnel to focus on what they know best is to hire an expert in grants to help them with proposal development. For the most part, the characteristics sought in academic proposal writers and those working in other environments are exactly the same. When the MU Network wants to hire grant professionals, the Network looks for strong writers, obviously. Beyond that, strong applicants should have administrative and leadership experience, teaching experience, and mature people skills. Leadership experience is important because it is not always apparent at the outset who will eventually lead a given project. It is often useful for the grant specialist to provide temporary leadership for the group until the logical leader emerges. The grant professional does not have “turf” in the sense that everyone knows that the proposal will not be submitted with the writer as the project director, and this makes it easier to take over leadership from the grant specialist than to take it from another faculty member or community agency.

The Network looks for teaching experience because effective teaching involves thinking in detail about where the students are, where they need to be, and what will be entailed in getting them from one point to the other. These task analysis skills transfer well to work with proposal teams. The subtext here is that most little kids do not say they want to be grant developers when they grow up. It is still an emerging profession, and identifying transferable skill sets is important for finding people who accumulate them.

Along those lines, strong applicants must have very mature people skills. The grant specialist must engage with the project at a level that allows the passion of the project personnel to come through in the proposal. The writer must think critically about how to make the logic of the proposal unassailable and the value of the project compelling. At the same time, grant specialists must quietly accept decisions to go another direction than they recommend. It takes a mature professional to straddle the paradox of commitment/detachment. Similarly, the work styles of any given group will vary tremendously, and the grant specialist must have the skills and flexibility to recognize and facilitate a wide range of styles.

The one area in which the skills of community grant writers vary from those in academia is research experience. In higher education, the Network seeks grant professionals who have done research themselves, though not necessarily in the same fields as the faculty members they will support. Understanding research processes at a very concrete,
experiential level helps the academic grant developer interact with faculty clients as a peer. It is equally possible that some sort of community-based experience may likewise be important for grant specialists working in community service agencies.

The Hiring Process

The MU hiring process comprises two stages. First, a search committee from the campus Grant Writer Network reviews applications, interviews selected candidates, collects impromptu writing samples, and contacts references. This stage of the process results in a memo recommending two to five finalist candidates to the hiring division. The committee sends all the application materials with this memo to the hiring division and then steps aside as the division conducts the next stage of the process. This process has been an important element in a turnover rate of less than 10 percent among campus grant specialists, despite the fact that grant development is deadline-driven and has the potential for high rates of burnout. The Network members know the skills, demeanor, and habits of mind a grant specialist needs, and the divisional personnel know their own culture. By combining forces, MU significantly raises the odds of finding grant professionals who will be both competent and comfortable in their positions.

At first glance, this hiring process may seem unworkable for small community agencies. They may not have the money to hire a permanent grant specialist, let alone a network of them. That does not necessarily make the model irrelevant. What if, for example, the local school district or the local United Way were to hire a grant professional and allow smaller organizations in the community to buy portions of the time of that person as needed? What if this centralized position were available to screen applications when another organization decided to invest in a permanent position? What if one of the larger organizations in the community collected information about grant consultants and made that available to smaller organizations, in essence conducting the screening function? These are a number of ways to apply the MU model productively in a community setting.

Generating Synergies

The authors believe that the synergies Network members have been able to tap in the MU campus environment have the potential to translate to community settings as well. By virtue of this network, grant professionals at MU have been able to cultivate both broader and deeper knowledge and skills that benefit them as individuals, their home divisions, and the campus as a whole. The Network meets as a group every week and uses this time to communicate about events and initiatives across campus, to balance workloads among members, and to develop the professional ex-
Adapting the University of Missouri’s Grant Writer Network
Model of Collaboration to Community Settings

pertise of the group. The schedule developed for staff meetings each year includes information about the priorities of campus-level administrators, detailed updates on the research activities and priorities of the individual campus divisions, time to examine and balance workloads among Network members, and professional development activities.

The director participates in meetings of the senior staff of the MU Research Division, meetings of the research deans from across campus, and other campus-level groups. She shares this information with the other grant specialists, positioning them to better connect faculty members with campus priorities and with one another. Each month, one or two of the grant professionals also provides an update on research activities in the division or center in which s/he is housed. This further positions Network members to make potential collaborative connections for their faculty clients. While community grant developers may not have enough commonality to meet weekly, there is value in learning about what the rest of the community is doing on a current and fairly detailed basis through regularly scheduled meetings. Even in organizations without grant development support, there is usually an individual who typically ends up with the grant development responsibilities. A relatively small investment of time on a bi-weekly or monthly basis could go a long way toward easing a transition into more collaborative community efforts.

Our MU Grant Writer Network spends one staff meeting each month going over upcoming deadlines and proposal commitments. Because the faculty members in a given division may tend to target the same funders, it is not unusual for one grant specialist to experience a convergence of deadlines while another has a relatively slow period. This allows everyone to pitch in to help one another through the “crunch” times. Staffing in many small community agencies may be at levels that mean there are never any slow times. This is where a “central” grant professional hired by one of the larger entities in the community, such as the United Way or the school district, might provide extra hands. Similarly, a central repository of pre-screened freelance grant consultants might also be tapped. If staff could be freed to exchange proposal assistance with other agencies, though, think of the shared investment in and knowledge of the missions of each agency this type of cooperative activity could generate.

MU Network members spend a third staff meeting each month developing professional expertise. Experts from around campus speak on various topics. Network members tour campus facilities and programs and share individual expertise. Working alone, it would take many years to develop this level of individual knowledge, which is much broader as a result of the divisional updates and professional development activities of the Network. At the same time, individuals can afford to develop specialized knowledge of particular funders and programs, because they can always fall back on the rest of the group for more general information. This model of information sharing and professional development might
translate easily to community agency contexts and local GPA chapters. Whether an individual is working as a grant professional or doing grant work as an “other duty,” the community as a whole—as well as individual agencies—could benefit from sharing grantsmanship skills and information and even from touring the facilities of each agency.

Conclusion

The information offered in *Grant Seeking in Higher Education* for building an institutional grants culture translates easily to the community contexts in which many GPA members work. In fact, these strategies are perhaps even more important for the comparatively more isolated positions in community agencies. Institutions of higher education tend to have much more infrastructure in place to support grant work, whereas personnel at small community organizations are much more likely to have to figure things out on their own. Joining forces with others in the community to develop a community-wide grants culture seems to be a necessity that, on balance, will “raise all boats” rather than creating a net cost for individual personnel, their agencies, and their communities.

References


National Science Foundation, Directorate for Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences. (2011). *Rebuilding the mosaic: Fostering research*
Adapting the University of Missouri’s Grant Writer Network
Model of Collaboration to Community Settings


**Biographical Information**

**Mary Licklider, PhD,** Director of the Office of Grant Writing and Publications at the University of Missouri (MU), provides leadership to the MU Grant Writer Network, coordinates and teaches grantsmanship courses and seminars for the Network, collaborates with faculty members on proposal preparation, and administratively oversees federal priorities and limited submission processes for the university. She has worked in education for 30 years in roles involving teaching, writing, research, publication, and leadership at both the K–12 and postsecondary levels. Mary holds a BA in English from Webster University, as well as an MEd in curriculum and instruction and a PhD from MU in education, focusing on organizational change.

**Larry Nossaman, GPC,** senior grant writing consultant for the MU College of Education, helps faculty and staff research funding opportunities, interpret funding guidelines, develop timelines, collaborate with other researchers, draft and edit proposal components, and submit internal and external funding applications. Larry holds a BA in journalism. He has been a reporter and editor for two small-town daily newspapers, and has been self-employed as an Internet web designer. He was employed by MU as a senior information specialist and grant administrator on two federal grants before becoming a grant writing consultant at MU. He is a member of the Heart of America GPA chapter.
Grant Professionals: Profession Retention and Length of Service Rates

Danny W. Blitch, MPA, GPC
City of Roswell, Roswell, GA

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

Abstract

The grant profession was recognized as a separate and distinct profession in the 1990s. Thus, the 20-year profession is relatively new. As such it continues to grow rapidly and, in some areas, erratically. The issues of job retention, stability and length of service rates in the grant profession have not been addressed in the literature. However, studies of job tenure and employee turnover have been conducted in other related fields, and can be used for comparison purposes. The grant profession enjoys more stability than similar professions and job classifications such as, fundraising and nonprofit executive directors.

This article reviews and analyzes the responses to five online “Salary and Demographic Surveys” 2007-2011 from members of the Grant Professionals Association (formerly the American Association of Grant Professionals).

Introduction

In the 1990s grant development emerged as a separate profession from fundraising. Fundraising was recognized in the 1960s as a distinct profession and grant development was a sub-unit. The distinction of grant development as its own profession grew out of the creation of a separate national job-alike group. A professional association (then called the American Association of Grant Professionals) offered education and professional development opportunities specific to grant professionals and developed a Code of Ethics (Janssen & Pearl, 2009). The professional association, now known as the Grant Professionals Association (GPA),
was formed in 1998. GPA’s current membership and influence extends internationally (GPA, 2012).

The professionalization of grant development continued with the creation of the Grant Professionals Certification Institute (GPCI) in 2004. GPCI is accredited by the National Commission of Certifying Agencies and has conferred the GPC™ credential to more than 300 professionals (GPCI, 2012). Furthering the grant profession, the GPA established the Grant Professionals Foundation (GPF) in 2006. The GPF is an affiliate agency with 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status. The GPF supports the professional development and education of grant professionals and the credentialing of grant professionals; and it promotes excellence in the field by providing grant professionals greater access to funding and research (GPF, 2012).

The grant profession is relatively new and growing rapidly. The GPA has local chapters in 44 locations. Some states have several chapters (four chapters, for example, in Ohio), some states (such as Georgia) have one chapter statewide and other states like Maine, New Mexico and Oklahoma have no chapters as of the date of this article (GPA, 2012). The GPC credential has grown quickly and somewhat erratically, with strong concentrations in California and Florida, but no certified grant professionals in several states (i.e., Delaware, Hawaii, Maine, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New Mexico, South Dakota, Vermont and Wyoming) (GPCI, 2012).

The issues of job retention, stability and length of service rates in the grant profession are not addressed in the literature. With five years of “Salary and Demographic Surveys” results available, there is a basis for a longitudinal study of the grant profession. This article reviews and analyzes survey results. Furthermore, this research compares other fundraising professions similar to the grant profession.

The US Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) defines the job turnover rate as the number of times a position is vacated and rehired in one year (BLS, 2012). This rate does not take into account voluntary versus non-voluntary vacancies. The Profession Retention Rate (how long a grant professional is employed in the grants field) is more expressive and therefore the subject of this research. The stability of the profession is very important to assess, and for the purposes of this study, the grant profession is a high-demand field. The Length of Service Rate (how long a grant professional remains with a current employer) is also very expressive and, therefore, a significant marker for this research.

Grant development is critical to the success of many nonprofit organizations and government agencies. Organizations of all types must continually diversify revenue streams at their disposal and capitalize when they can. Many of these organizations now rely upon grant professionals. When grant professionals leave organizations, the impact of their departures may last for years.
Job Turnover Rate Defined

The BLS defines how to calculate the turnover rate for business entities responding to its monthly Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey or JOLTS. The JOLTS program produces data on job openings, hires, and separations. Data from a sample of approximately 16,000 U.S. business establishments are collected by the BLS through the Atlanta JOLTS Data Collection Center. JOLTS covers all non-agricultural industries in the public and private sectors for the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

The JOLTS definition of “turnover rate” is

the number of total separations during the month divided by the number of employees who worked during or received pay for the pay period that includes the 12th of the month (monthly turnover); the number of total separations for the year divided by average monthly employment for the year (annual turnover).

(BLS, 2012)

Comparison: Fundraising Profession

The Revolving Door: A Study on the Voluntary Turnover (Intent to Stay) of Fundraisers in the Nonprofit Sector examined how long fundraisers stay at their current positions and their primary reasons for leaving (AFP, 2007). The research by Aleah Horstman, PhD, Director of Major and Planned Gifts for Planned Parenthood of the Rocky Mountains in Denver, found the average length of service for the participants was 3.6 years. Females averaged 3.5 years, while males averaged 4.2 years. This is lower than the average length of service for wage and salary workers across all job sectors in the United States from 1983-2010. The median (mid-point) tenure for all wage and salary workers age 25 or older was slightly higher in 2010, at 5.2 years, compared with 5.0 years in 1983 (Copeland, 2010).

In exploring turnover in the field, Duronio and Temple (1997) found the average length of service for female fundraisers was 3.3 years and 4.4 for male respondents. They concluded

…the turnover rate problem is overstated…our research data suggest that turnover in [fundraising] is related to the rapid growth of the field, the resulting opportunities for advancement for [fundraisers], and the strong competition for experienced [fundraisers]. The implication is that as growth of the field slows, the field itself will become more stable (Duronio & Temple, 1997).
The Chronicle of Philanthropy featured an article called “The Revolving Door Dilemma” (Schwinn & Sommerfield, 2002) which indicates that “for all the talk of high turnover among [fundraisers], the issue has received little recent attention from researchers, charity associations, or foundations.” The authors reported that charity executives, board members, and other fundraisers are frustrated by the problems caused by high turnover among fundraisers. “This is a problem that, at least anecdotally, appears to be going strong or getting worse, despite a weak national economy that has prompted people in other professions to curtail their job hunting” (Schwinn & Sommerfield, 2002).

A 2002 study done by the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) found that fundraisers have the lowest average length of service of the five divisions in higher-education institutional advancement (development, advancement management, advancement services, alumni relations, and communications/marketing). In fact, even though fundraisers were the second-highest paid group of the five, they spent at least one year less in their positions and institutions than did employees in the other four disciplines.

CASE found that, on average, fundraisers stayed in their current positions three years and at their current institutions six years (Lajoie & Pollack, 2002).

Comparison: Nonprofit Employees and Executive Directors

Comparisons to other fundraising professions similar to the grant profession must include analysis of nonprofit employees and executive directors. Another study concluded that among all the sectors (nonprofit, for profit, and government), the average employee stays in a job 3.4 years (Drizin, 2002). For nonprofit executive directors it is 3-5 years (Peters & Wolfred, 2001).

Regardless of the labor market (as hypothesized by Duronio and Temple), people leave jobs for different reasons. In order to decrease the nonprofit sector turnover rate among fundraisers, practitioners need to understand the related determinants. The determinants suggested by interviews in Duronio and Temple’s 1997 study include a desire for personal achievement over dedication to an organization, and a lack of support from their board and president (Duronio & Temple, 1997).

AAGP/GPA Salary and Demographic Survey Results

The following tables show the results of five online “Salary and Demographic Surveys” (Surveys) conducted in 2007-2011. The Surveys each ask more than 49 questions annually and over these five years have sampled more than 1,770 respondents.
2007-2011 Salary and Demographic Survey Results

One question in particular is helpful to address some aspects of this research – “How long have you been working in the grants field?”. However, the Survey design does not filter out how long the respondents stayed at their last jobs or, for that matter, at their last five jobs in the grant field. Nor does the Survey ask if the grant professional is satisfied or happy with the work. These questions and others could be the subjects of future research in this area. Table 1 shows the Survey results starting with year 2007 and continuing through 2011. The results are presented numerically by year and percentages within the year.

Table 1. Profession Retention Rate 2007-2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 1</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-15</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-20</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-25</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 25</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>422</td>
<td>101%</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>581</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: AAGP/GPA Salary and Demographic Survey Results (2007, 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011) Note: The percentage totals for 2007 and 2010 are quoted correctly. These small discrepancies do not change the results of the survey.

Profession Retention Rate: Grant Profession

The 2007-2011 Survey results indicate over the 5-year period the majority of grant professionals worked in the grants field for 5-10 years. Averaging all five years of Survey results, the typical profession retention rate for grant professionals is 7.5 years. It is interesting to note that this
timeframe has not changed much over the survey study period. This may be accounted for statistically through an unknown attrition rate, including retirement, and membership changes within the AAPG/GPA. However, sampling errors may also account for this result. The participant sample size for each year of the Survey, on average 354, is sufficient to be statistically relevant. Combining data from 2007-2011 should account for discrepancies found in the Survey results percentage data.

As shown in Table 2 below, over the 5-year period of the Survey the results indicate 28% (or 497) of respondents (1,770) have been working in the grants field 5-10 years. This result indicates a relatively consistent 5-10 year profession retention rate and a standard distribution consistent with a bell-shaped curve.

### Table 2. Profession Retention Rate 2007-2011: Participants Combined

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question: How long have you been working in the grants field?</th>
<th># of Participants 2007-2011</th>
<th>% of Participants 2007-2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 1 year</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3 years</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5 years</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-10 years</td>
<td>497</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-15 years</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 – 20 years</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 – 25 years</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 25 years</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,770</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sources:** AAGP/GPA Salary and Demographic Survey Results (2007, 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011)

**Length of Service Rate: Grant Professionals**

The Survey, starting in 2009, examined grant professionals’ length of service when it asked each correspondent, “How long have you been employed by your current organization?”. The Survey does not ask if
the grant professional is satisfied or happy with the organization, if the respondent has been employed in the same capacity while with the organization, nor if the grant professional is considering leaving the organization. These questions and others could be the subjects of future research.

As shown in Table 3 below, the 2009-2011 Survey results indicate the greatest number of respondents reported 3-5 years of employment at their current organization.

As shown in Table 3 below, the 2009-2011 Survey results indicate the greatest number of respondents reported 3-5 years of employment at their current organization.

**Table 3. Length of Service Rate 2009-2011**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question: How long have you been employed by your current organization?</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years</strong></td>
<td># of Responses</td>
<td>%</td>
<td># of Responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 1</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-14**</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 15</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>511</strong></td>
<td><strong>99%</strong></td>
<td><strong>330</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sources:** GPA Salary and Demographic Survey Results (2009, 2010 and 2011) **Note:** The survey indicators were modified in subsequent years further refining the “more than 15 years” category into another specific indicator.

The 2009-2011 Survey results indicate over the most recent 3-year period the majority of grant professionals remained employed by their current employer. Averaging all three years of Survey results, the length of service rate for a typical grant professional is 4.5 years.

As shown in Table 4, over the 3-year period of the Survey the results indicate 28% (or 300) of 1,062 respondents remain employed by their current organization 3-5 years. This result indicates a relatively consistent 3-5 year length of service rate and a standard distribution consistent with a bell-shaped curve.
Table 4. Length of Service Rate 2009-2011: Participants Combined

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question: How long have you been employed by your current employer?</th>
<th># of Participants 2009-2011</th>
<th>% of Participants 2009-2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;1 year</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 years</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5 years</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-14 years*</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 15 years</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,062</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: AAGP/GPA Salary and Demographic Survey Results (2009, 2010 and 2011)

**Note:** The response category “11-14 years” was not used in the 2009 survey. The researcher averaged the results for this category in 2010 and 2011 and used the resulting 20 participants as the result for 2009. The same 20 participants were subtracted from the “more than 15 years” category for sake of consistency across all years presented.

Conclusion

The impact of part-time grant developers and “between jobs” consultants are difficult to evaluate. The grant professional employment landscape for 2012 and beyond is shaped by the worldwide economic recession. Employers are opting for part-time positions to reduce direct salary costs as well as lowering other personnel costs such as healthcare benefits and on-the-job training. A trend away from full-time employees and toward part-time project-based positions will be seen in future.

In total, the “Salary and Demographic Survey” asks more than 49 questions of approximately 1,770 participants. The Profession Retention Rate question was asked each year from 2006 to 2011. The Length of Service Rate question was first asked in the 2009 survey. The researcher combined the 2009-2011 and extrapolated a missing indicator from the 2009 results. The combined results are more likely to be generalized to the population of grant professionals as a whole.

As with most research based on longitudinal survey data, the shortcomings of the results negatively impact the results of any future analysis. Therefore, others may choose to address the suggested additional questions in future research in this area.

Profession Retention Rate—Grant Profession: The 2007-2011 “Salary and Demographic Survey” results indicate over the five year period the...
majority of grant professionals worked in the grants field for 5-10 years. Averaging all five years of survey results, the typical profession retention rate for grant professionals is 7.5 years.

**Length of Service Rate—Grant Professionals:** The 2009-2011 “Salary and Demographic Survey” results indicate over the most recent three-year period the majority of grant professionals stayed with their current employers. Averaging all three years of survey results, the length of service rate for a typical grant professional is 4.5 years.

**Comparison Professionals:** Nonprofit executive directors stay at their current job approximately 3-5 years (Peters & Wolfred, 2001). The Council for Advancement and Support of Education found, on average, fundraisers stayed in their current positions three years and at their current institutions six years (Lajoie & Pollack, 2002). The median (mid-point) tenure for all wage and salary workers age 25 or older was slightly higher in 2010, at 5.2 years, compared with 5.0 years in 1983 (Copeland, 2010).

It would appear the grant profession enjoys stable employees, with longer than average tenures with one employer when compared to similar professions. However, a recent Employee Benefit Research Institute report shows “the trend for male workers is down, from 5.9 years in 1983 to 5.2 years in 2008, but has increased for female workers. Women stayed an average of 4.2 years in the same job in 1983, compared to 4.9 years in 2008. Private sector workers stayed level, at 3.9 years. Public sector employees experienced an increase, from 6.0 years in 1983 to 7.0 years in 2008” (Copeland, 2010).

The research and analysis indicate it is likely the stability of the profession is indicative of the people in the profession, or more to the point, characteristics of the people who responded to the surveys. The Survey data is gathered from GPA members who are typically female, white/non-Hispanic, between 51-60 years old, hold a graduate or professional degree and are employed in the public sector full-time.

**References**


**Biographical Information**

**Danny W. Blitch, MPA, GPC** is the Grants Manager for the City of Roswell, GA. Over the last 12 years he has been responsible for the City's grant program, which has been awarded more than $65M in federal, state, and local government grants and private donations. Danny is a grant professional with more than 18 years of experience. Besides municipal government, his professional experience includes a regional development center, a county board of education, a state university's development office, and as a grant consultant. Danny joined the board of the Grant Professionals Foundation in 2007 and served as the Board Chairman from 2008-2011. He is an original GPC, receiving the credential in 2008. He received his MPA in 1994. Contact Danny at dblitch@roswellgov.com or 770.594.6276.
Education and Development for Grant Professionals and Social Entrepreneurs in the Nonprofit Sector

Karen V. Harper-Dorton, PhD, MSW, MA
West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV

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

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

Abstract

Economic recessions, changing demographics, unemployment, and increased demands for social services are just some of the societal changes of the recent decade. Lower investment and fundraising returns along with delayed or reduced grant opportunities are common experiences among agencies in the nonprofit sector. Community and social services are particularly at risk as the nonprofit sector seeks to sustain operations and restore streams of grant funding. Alongside current needs for funding in the nonprofit sector, there are corresponding needs for a well prepared workforce. Fundraising and grant development are critical to sustaining services and sometimes to sustaining the actual nonprofit entity. Grant professionals are increasingly in demand in the huge nonprofit arena. Successful and robust grant seeking and proposal development require understanding the organizational service mission, relevant social and economic factors, and community constituencies. Current grant and fundraising literature discusses the continuum of processes of proposal writing, grant development, project management, and outcome evaluation. Building upon this continuum, this article calls for grant professionals to move beyond traditional roles and to pursue opportunities for economic sustainability and leadership as future social entrepreneurs.
Introduction

Growth and opportunities abound in the nonprofit sector. Education and training for leadership and management are not keeping pace with demands for trained professionals in this important service sector. Nonprofit agencies already feel the widening workforce gap as educated and/or experienced managers are scarce; yet, this scarcity is being poorly addressed even as baby-boomers retire. There is a huge need for greater attention and research in financial management and leadership for the nonprofit sector (Falk, 2011). Some colleges and universities offer workshops and limited curricular offerings concerning nonprofit leadership, proposal development, and financial management. Such courses are few and are often elective or continuing education courses. In higher education many programs in social work and public administration offer graduate and/or post-graduate certificate programs in nonprofit management or leadership, either for credit or non-credit. Nevertheless, higher education is currently behind the demand curve in preparing managers, fundraisers, and grant professionals for the growing nonprofit workforce (Garvey, 2010). Despite the growing need for grant professionals, there is limited scholarly literature for educational preparation of grant professionals or social entrepreneurs.

Block grants, state contracts, and charitable donations are familiar sources of funding that become more competitive during economic downturns for nonprofit organizations. As a result there are more demands for nonprofit agencies to compete for limited awards to meet critical service needs, especially in areas of social services, health care, and education. Rice (2010) discusses the important role that grant professionals have as they interface with nonprofit agencies and potential grantors. Innovation, capacity building, organizational change, and new and different outcomes are a few of the possibilities that are ripe for skilled and effective grant professionals whose roles are somewhat similar to those of social entrepreneurs (Dees, 2001; Turner, 2008).

This article builds upon the literature of grantseeking and proposal development in an effort to increase understanding of the importance of social entrepreneurship for the years ahead in the nonprofit sector. New services, increased demands, and stronger business practices are essential for nonprofit organizations. Nonprofits are mission-driven and bound by different regulations than private sector corporations. Some differences for nonprofits include exemption of assets such as real estate, money, and other property for tax purposes. Essentially public property, these assets serve organizational mission and neither personal profits nor purposes. Those who aspire to be social entrepreneurs need to understand both nonprofit and for-profit sectors as both sectors serve communities and sometimes compete for the same funding. It is not uncommon for a for-profit institution such as a university or hospital to have a foundation, a nonprofit entity accepting donations and serving the
public good. Nonprofits create wealth and resources just as for-profits do; however, such wealth and resources support valuable services and programs for vulnerable populations.

**Background: Nonprofit Sector and Social Welfare**

The rich history of the nonprofit sector has roots in ancient philanthropy as landowners and wealthy families gave to the poor. A few remarkable milestones have deep meaning for nonprofits and social services. The charitable movement became more formalized with the Elizabethan Poor Laws of 1601 that required churches to give to the poor (Hammack, 2001). Centuries later, small and dependent upon contributions, the voluntary or nonprofit sector was slow in recovering from the Great Depression of 1929. The Social Security Act of 1935 defined programs of assistance for elderly, disabled, widowed, and dependent children thus establishing federal programs in the public sector.

Moving forward to urban riots, civil rights, and increasing poverty of the 1960s, government’s role in social welfare expanded and, interestingly, promoted the nonprofit sector. Allocations of millions of dollars flowed through federal agencies for competitive grant proposals for many social services and infrastructure purposes. As a result, federally-funded programs supported delivery of services by local governments, private organizations, and nonprofit sector agencies across areas of education, health, welfare, social services, and community infrastructures (Salamon, 1999). One response to the 2008 recession, The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009, P.L. 111-5, is a capacity-building grant program for state and local governments and nonprofit organizations. As the 2012 presidential election approaches, ARRA continues to be a rich source of discussion and debate among politicians, academicians, and media spokespersons.

Histories of social-welfare and social-service organizations offer rich reminders of the impact of good and bad economic times. Legislation of the 1960s addressed social welfare reform and provided for public, private, and nonprofit partnerships, perhaps more than any other single period in the history of the United States. Consider the stale economy, budget shortfalls, and extensive rural poverty that preceded President Lyndon B. Johnson’s Great Society of the 1960s. At a time of great civil unrest, this legislation called for eliminating poverty and racial injustices. Federally-funded programs for assistance in rural development in the 1960s and 1970s included funding state and local governments for transportation and sanitation projects and targeted economic development in rural areas such as Appalachia (Appalachian Regional Commission, 2012; Harper-Dorton, 2011). This period produced programs for a range of social reforms and proved to be a heyday for grantseeking and proposal development as new and abundant federal funding became available.
Although on a much smaller scale, current responses to the 2008 economic downturn are similar to those in the era of the 1960s. Social and economic contexts surrounding periods of recessions influence actions taken and results returned. Periods of economic and social reconstruction generally follow economic recessions and include infusions of money and changes in social policies. Having experienced pressures for financial sustainability, nonprofit administrators and grant professionals no doubt look forward to better economic times.

Social movements and political agendas call for societal retooling and generally bring new funding and program opportunities for politically savvy managers and grant professionals. New skills, education, and training become more significant. Public media and online outlets widely advertise continuing education and tuition supported training seminars addressing grantseeking and proposal development (Lawrence, 2010).

It is imperative that social workers and other professionals in social service sectors understand that grants and contracts are not “manna from heaven.” Grants and contracts are inextricably linked to political, economic, and societal development. Successful grant development and management require an understanding of public and private dollars as well as the state of affairs in recent economic and political sectors that have potential, or lack thereof, for supporting funding (Grobman, 2011; Aarons & Maxwell, 2010).

**Nonprofit Organizations: Giving and Receiving for Social Good**

Nonprofit organizations have grown from fewer than 400,000 in 1970 to about 1.6 million in 2011. The nonprofit sector is the collective name used to describe institutions and organizations in American society that are neither government nor business. Publications and professional literature sometimes call this broad sector the social sector, not-for-profit sector, the independent sector, the philanthropic sector, the voluntary sector, or the third sector. Instrumental in social movements, philanthropy, charity, social welfare, and volunteer efforts, the broad collection of nonprofit organizations is not well understood (Lohmann & Lohmann, 2008; Lohmann, 2007).

Of approximately 1.6 million nonprofit organizations, about six percent represent private foundations, about 60 percent are public charities, and the rest include a range of organizations such as chambers of commerce, fraternal organizations and civic leagues (Urban Institute, 2011). Major subcategories of nonprofit organizations include charities, foundations, social welfare organizations, and professional or trade associations. Both grantmaking and grant receiving occur throughout this collection of foundations, charitable organizations, and philanthropic auspices. As grantors, large nonprofit agencies are important sources of funding across service sectors such as:
1. human services  
2. arts, culture, humanities  
3. education  
4. health  
5. public/societal benefit  
6. environment/animals  
7. other (Board Source, 2012).

As grant recipients, many of these types of organizations are dependent upon charitable support, volunteerism, contracts, awards, and grant awards. Heavily dependent on investment returns and donations, the nonprofit sector finds economic downturns to be particularly difficult. As resource pools in the nonprofit sector decrease in value, fundraising becomes more difficult, investment returns decrease, and fees for services become harder to collect.

Nonprofit organizations are different from government and business organizations in several important ways. Nonprofits provide human and community services, contribute to the public good, and are mission-driven rather than profit-driven. Nonprofits have unique ability to respond to social issues and community concerns and do not require public consent to do so (Salamon, 1999). Operating for charitable purposes, nonprofits are eligible for tax exempt status, 501 (c)(3), a special public charity status (Urban Institute, 2011; Burke, 2001). Nonprofit agencies utilize volunteers, have a volunteer board of community members, and are accountable to the public, not corporate stockholders (Grobman, 2011). Nonprofits may charge fees, and file tax returns with evidence of how profits or excess funds will be used to support agency mission for collective good, not bonuses nor profit-sharing.

The Internal Revenue Service tax code offers a detailed discussion of nonprofit organizations as there are several types of nonprofit organizations, eligibility requirements, and code numbers. The most common code designation, 501(c)(3), applies to public charities and private foundations. An important requirement is that 501(c)(3) status requires public reporting of financial activity by filing an IRS Form 990, depending on level of income and assets of the organization. IRS Form 990 is to be filed annually and is a public document. Rules and regulations for nonprofit tax information, including eligibility and filing requirements, are available at http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/i990.pdf (Department of the Treasury, 2011). One more point of interest concerning public access to Form 990 is that Guidestar USA, Inc. specializes in cataloging and maintaining nonprofit tax reports for public access. Such reports include all investments, receipts, revenues, assets, and expenditures. Guidestar access is free and available for reviewing, printing, and comparing organizations at http://www.guidestar.org.

Nonprofit organizations are particularly at risk in economic downturns as volunteer time, charitable giving, state contracts for
services such as privatized foster and adoptive care, and other streams of funding for services shrink. Often accompanied by unemployment and/or underemployment, economic downturns produce consumer demands for goods and services that agencies may or may not be able to meet. As resources shrink, nonprofits struggle to meet increasing demands for food, shelter, clothing, child care, transportation, and health care for those they serve. Although increasingly scarce and competitive, grant funding becomes even more important in times of recessions that produce budget shortfalls, lower investment returns to endowments, fewer foundation assets, and shrinking federal/state dollars.

Involved in global philanthropy and funding for nonprofit organizations, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation provides an excellent account of recent efforts to refine and refocus its grantmaking policies. Two major themes of the Foundation for the coming decade are encouraging philanthropy and supporting citizen participation. Mott’s philanthropic endeavors evolve around the concept of “civil society” which they describe as broader than the nonprofit or third sector. Civil society provides for dialogue and debate encompassing government, business, and the nonprofit or voluntary sector (Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, June 21, 2011). This perspective is not an unexpected view given today’s global economy. Broad, encompassing dialogue and debate may become the platform for grant professionals and social entrepreneurs as they work across societal sectors in support of a fair, effective, humane, and healthy global society.

Sustainability in Economic Downturns

Successful financial sustainability requires strategic planning and assessment of resource and service capacities, not unlike the introspection and refocusing efforts of the Mott Foundation. When threatened by economic downturns, service organizations have to evaluate challenges and consider alternative actions in anticipation of greater demand for charitable services. Significant for grantors and grantees alike, economic recessions impact all levels of organizational functions including funding priorities and grant resources (Lawrence, 2010). At the very least, sustainability in the nonprofit sector requires planning for resource generation from multiple streams of funding, diversification of revenue generation, grant awards, volunteers, and pledges from fundraising campaigns consistent with strategic vision and goals (Golensky, 2011).

Organizations have to address financial challenges no matter how threatening economic downturns may be. Strategies beyond grantseeking are particularly important when foundation and government support for grantmaking is low. Responding to economic shortfalls in the midst of a struggling economy is difficult at best, particularly for nonprofit
social-service agencies where belt-tightening and anticipation of better times have worked in the past. Some agencies find efficiencies and greater effectiveness by updating and refocusing agency purpose and services. Other accounts of competing for scarce funding include discussions of cutting services, partnering, merging, developing planned giving campaigns, grantseeking, and diversifying funding streams for revenue and service sustainability (Aarons, 2010; Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, 2011; Institute for Philanthropy for Credit Suisse, 2009).

Economic sustainability requires seeking product innovations, setting clear priorities and utilizing new technologies for organizational liquidity in today’s global society. For nonprofit sector agencies, sustaining services and resources require action beyond just diversifying funding or seeking additional grants and donations. Agency directors and staff need to establish professional networks and develop working relationships with corporations and government entities in order to participate in discussions and decision-making concerning policy and funding development. The literature notes the importance of being informed about funding opportunities as well as changes in communication and service delivery mechanisms. For example, taking advantage of contemporary technologies in daily operations provides agencies opportunities for innovative fundraising including online advertising and online giving (Besel, Williams, & Klak, 2011).

Social Entrepreneurship in the Nonprofit Sector

The term “entrepreneur” comes from the for-profit business sector and is associated with widely successful organizational growth such as the well-known Wal-Mart or Apple companies. In the for-profit business sector three characteristics define the entrepreneur: the context in which business and operations occur; the personal characteristics that allow innovation, focus, and determination; and, the expected and successful outcomes (Martin & Osberg, 2007).

Moving to the social or nonprofit sector, the definition of “social entrepreneurship” continues to emerge. The transition of entrepreneurship to social entrepreneurship has similarities of the importance of context and personal characteristics that allow for creativity, or new solutions and outcomes. According to Martin & Osberg (2007) “…the social entrepreneur aims for value in the form of large-scale, transformational benefit that accrues either to a significant segment of society or to society at large” (pp.34-35). Martin & Osberg go further and define social entrepreneurship as starting with an “unjust equilibrium” that calls for action and solutions in order to become “stable” for a broader population or identified constituency. If in the nonprofit sector, the sector defines the context in which the social entrepreneur does not seek profit as such. Different from for-
profit organizations, the nonprofit sector mission defines outcome as associated with social value added, a social good.

Being a relatively recent term, “social entrepreneur” is confusing for one who associates “entrepreneur” only with for-profit ventures and fails to apply the context of “social.” Dees (2001) proposes that social entrepreneurship connotes taking actions that are innovative and create public good. Recognizing the importance of business ventures for social purposes, Dees places social entrepreneurs in the social sector and takes issue with assumptions that social entrepreneurship simply connotes sustaining funding. Instead social entrepreneurship connotes social change, innovation, vision, and social value added. In the nonprofit sector, a sector with tax-exempt status, social entrepreneurs have major roles of creating and sustaining social value consistent with agency mission. It is noted that the spirit and meaning of social entrepreneurship are those of community concern and social well-being. Support and actions resulting in community and/or social well-being can occur in any setting, not just nonprofit entities.

Definitions of “social entrepreneurship” continue to be constructed. Entrepreneurs in the for-profit sector, social entrepreneurs, and grant professionals are identifiers that carry meanings with blurred boundaries. Philanthropy and donations occur in businesses; for example, nothing stops an automobile dealer from giving away a car. Social entrepreneurs are individuals who add lasting value, particularly in larger systems including addressing social problems at corporate, national, even global levels (Turner, 2008). Grant professionals are critically important in the nonprofit sector where federal, local, and foundation grants are important sources of funding. Grant professionals provide consultation, plan programs, construct budgets, submit proposals for important programs, and contribute to growth and lasting value.

Turner (2008) notes the need for greater recognition of grant professionals and identifies innovation for strong social returns and positive social change as activities common to grant professionals and social entrepreneurs. Improving quality of life, managing projects, evaluating outcomes are additional activities familiar to social entrepreneurs as well as grant professionals (Turner, 2008). It is evident that grant professionals who take on greater roles in the fundraising field expand their scope of practice and professional image. Serving as agents for innovation and social change, grant professionals and social entrepreneurs perform various roles that have considerable similarity.

Educating for Greater Expertise

The gap in education and expertise for grantseeking, proposal development, project management, and outcome evaluation in the nonprofit sector is real. Professional development for staff who are
new to fundraising and grantseeking must go beyond the usual search- and-write processes of bringing dollars into budgets. Grant trainings accompanied by isolated steps and practices provide little regard for assessing organizational readiness to implement, execute, or evaluate a successful award. It is imperative that grant professionals and those aspiring to greater social entrepreneurship immerse themselves in the context of the service of the organization or field in which they work. For example, in addition to understanding population demographics and funding opportunities, proposals for services to aging populations need to reflect breadth and depth of practices in the field as well as agency and staff capacity to deliver proposed services. The demands are no different for a proposal submitted to prevent child abuse; again expertise in working with children in protective services is critical.

Not many undergraduate students or young professionals set out to be either grant professionals or social entrepreneurs. From a variety of undergraduate majors, some recent graduates enter the nonprofit sector in areas such as child and/or elder care, community agencies serving homeless individuals, food pantries, and other social services settings. Students with undergraduate majors in social work, public administration, business, and general studies have writing and math skills, social and historical perspectives, and some understanding of a variety of social and economic concerns. Some may have completed a service internship in a community agency and learned about organizations, service delivery, and consumers of agency services. However, undergraduate education does not prepare graduates with adequate grantseeking or proposal-development skills. Employees fresh from undergraduate programs are younger and generally unfamiliar with organizational operations. However, it is critical not to discount the value that every young graduate brings to a nonprofit setting. Young, energetic, and enthusiastic, recent graduates have knowledge of efficiencies to be gained through using new technologies. Many recent graduates have skills that are uniquely ahead of some more experienced employees. Familiar with social media, many young graduates seize opportunities for greater consumer involvement, advertising, on-line fundraising, and rich exchange of news and activities.

The educational and development challenge to build a strong entrepreneurial workforce is bigger than a single entity. Collaborative efforts among nonprofit organizations, community settings, and higher education provide rich resources for preparing future grant professionals. Education, training, and continuing education span undergraduate, graduate, and post-graduate consumers. Graduate programs in social work and public administration lead higher education in preparing graduates for administration and leadership roles in the nonprofit sector. In 2010, just over 200 graduate social work programs (MSW programs) offered either direct practice or administration tracks; 24 had dual degrees with public administration; and 95 offered
concentrations in administration, planning, or community organization (Council on Social Work Education, 2010). Courses addressing the nonprofit sector are typically: nonprofit management, program management, human resources systems, financial management, supervision, program management, and agency-based internships. Courses in fundraising, foundation management, and grantwriting are generally elective courses.

Graduate education provides a strong foundation for administration, leadership, and fundraising in the nonprofit sector. Universities and private agencies throughout the nation offer and advertise courses in fundraising, supervision, and grantwriting. Many certificate programs in nonprofit management are online and require between fifteen to eighteen credits. These graduate certificate programs generally provide content in understanding the nonprofit sector, human resources management, and financial planning and management. Certificate programs generally provide a list of elective courses that students may choose from. One of these electives is typically called “grantwriting” and is sometimes associated with a brief internship. Academic courses in grantseeking and proposal development are not central requirements for many programs. Demands for more courses on grant development and management are increasing for both continuing education and graduate credit. Recent budgetary shortfalls throughout the nonprofit sector continue to spur development and fundraising interests.

Conclusion

This article brings attention to challenges the nonprofit social sector presents for grant professionals and social entrepreneurs, essential players for economic sustainability for generations to come. The past 40 years have brought enormous growth to the nonprofit sector, now more than 1.6 million organizations including charities, foundations, social welfare organizations, and professional or trade associations. Called the third sector, the social sector, the voluntary sector and more, the nonprofit sector protects social value and provides social services for families, organizations, and communities throughout the nation.

There is much to be learned about nonprofits and social entrepreneurs. Mission-driven for social good and serving to ameliorate unfortunate social conditions and human suffering, the nonprofit sector is at the cusp of public well-being. Without much understanding of the importance of the sector’s historical development or context, grant professionals are ill-equipped to meaningfully lead economic sustainability as social entrepreneurs. Situated in the midst of philanthropy and government funding streams, the nonprofit sector is a rich environment for research, for young professionals, and offers strong potential for social entrepreneurs who want to make a difference.
Grant development and project management skills can be taught, but there is so much more that is necessary for grant professionals to move beyond traditional roles associated with grant development and management. Opportunities abound for grant professionals and social entrepreneurs in the nonprofit sector. The sector is rich in history and philanthropy and short on economic resources for the time being but begs for greater understanding and holds enormous opportunity.

References


**Biographical Information**

Karen Harper-Dorton, PhD, MSW, MA has served on social-work faculties in Saginaw, Michigan; as Associate Professor and Director of the MSW Program, The Ohio State University; and in capacities as Professor, Dean of the former school and Chair of the Division of Social Work, West Virginia University. She currently serves as chair of the Burgess Center for WV Families and Communities and is Principal Investigator of a large IV-E project that provides training for public agency social workers and supports BSW and MSW students in child and family concentrations. With more than 65 refereed articles, four books, and with close to $30 million of funded projects, her research and publications include rural poverty, nonprofit sector, child welfare, and practice articles informed by existential and cognitive behavioral perspectives.
Issues in Grants Education and Research: Creating Student-Centered Online Courses

J. Bernard Bradley, PhD, GPC
American Council on Grant Writing, Henderson, NV

John Rachal, EdD
The University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, MS

Lin Harper, PhD
The University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, MS

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

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

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

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

Abstract

In today’s increasingly competitive funding environment, many development staff members and executives of non-profit and governmental organizations must continually enhance their grantseeking skills. Online non-formal courses offer busy staffers the convenience of time and place in acquiring needed grant development skills without breaking the bank. The sheer number of such courses is increasing, especially those utilizing low- or no-cost webinar technologies (Johncock, 2011). Grant educators and researchers alike herald the benefits of integrating problem-based learning opportunities within both formal and non-formal courses on grant development. Factors that establish the effectiveness of
such methods include: traditional paper-and-pencil tests, course evaluations, proposal writing exercises, and the number of proposals written and then funded. Online grant development courses that utilize the educational strategies of andragogy, the most widely known theory of how adults learn, result in happier learners according to one recent experimental study. An analysis of existing research on virtual grants education affords educators with new and emerging strategies for creating more welcoming and meaningful educational transactions. Practical recommendations serve to enhance both the effectiveness of online grant development courses for adults and directions of future research in this growing field.

Introduction

Though a large number of case studies exist that describe formal grant education workshops and courses for adults, relatively few of them focus on non-formal courses, especially those offered virtually (Bradley, 2011). Falk (2011) suggests that many of the data claims in case studies focusing on grant development courses targeting college students “warrant more formal research” (p. 80). The authors identified just one quasi-experimental or experimental research study measuring statistically-significant differences in the outcomes of non-formal grant writing courses featuring student-centered (andragogical) versus teacher-centered (pedagogical) curricula. The following analysis, therefore, serves to categorize the identified research studies by type of research design and curricula. Lastly, strategies follow to assist grant educators and researchers in creating more student-centered online and in-person learning environments that positively impact the pursuit of lifelong learning.

Theoretical Foundations: Andragogy and Online Professional Development for Adults

A common view of andragogy is as a set of assumptions about working with adults. Malcolm Knowles popularized the term during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Today, andragogy remains as an influential principle in the broad field of adult education (Merriam, 1991; Merriam & Brockett, 1997; Cercone, 2008). Educators widely use Knowles’ assumptions for designing and implementing student-centered professional development or continuing education programs for adult learners. Even so, few if any direct links between andragogy and curriculum development presently exist in the professional literature on grants education. This paper
presents a comparison of the assumptions of andragogy to traditional pedagogical or teacher-centered education, and serves to alert grant educators and researchers of possible differences in how adults learn as compared to children. Its relevance to online learning follows.

Andragogy and Pedagogy Defined

Knowles (1980) defines andragogy as “the art and science of helping adults learn” (p. 43). The essence of Knowles’ andragogy concept is to place more control of the learning in the hands of the learner. According to Knowles, the assumptions of andragogy suggest that, as individuals mature,

1. Their self-concept moves from one of being a dependent personality toward being a self-directed human being;
2. they accumulate a growing reservoir of experience that becomes an increasingly rich resource for learning;
3. their readiness to learn becomes oriented increasingly to the developmental tasks of their social roles; and
4. their time perspective changes from one of postponed application of knowledge to immediacy of application, and accordingly, their orientation toward learning shifts from one of subject-centeredness to one of performance-centeredness (pp. 44-45).

In contrast, Knowles (1980) describes pedagogy or teacher-centered education as “The art and science of teaching children” (p. 40). According to Knowles, the assumptions of pedagogy suggest that

1. The role of the learner is, by definition, a dependent one;
2. the experience learners bring to the learning situation is of little worth. It may be used as a starting point, but the experience from which learners will gain the most is that of the teacher, the textbook writer, the audiovisual and producer, and other experts;
3. people are ready to learn whatever society (especially the school) says they ought to learn, provided the pressures on them (like fear of failure) are great enough. Therefore, learning should be organized into a fairly standardized curriculum, with a uniform step-by-step progression for all learners; and
4. learners see education as a process of acquiring subject-matter content, most of which they understand will be useful only at a later time in life. People are subject-centered in their orientation to learning (pp. 43-44).
According to Merriam and Brockett (1997), modern “distance education reflects many of the technological advances that allow instruction to take place between geographically separated teachers and adult students” (p. 10). Because of these advances, instructors in today’s distance education classrooms frequently replicate the communication transactions that are commonplace within traditional classrooms. Likewise, online course platforms and technologies like webinars represent ideal venues in which to implement the assumptions of andragogy (Isenberg, 2007; Bradley, 2011; Johncock, 2011).

Cercone (2008) presents both an overview for implementing key adult learning theories within online instructional programs and strategies for creating an appropriate environment based on learner needs. “The future of adult online learning research may be based on the theories discussed in this article, even though most of the theories were developed almost 20 years ago and in traditional classroom environments” (p. 151), he concludes. Cercone further describes andragogy as “the most comprehensive” theory of adult learning (p. 150).

Blondy (2007) offers ideas similar to Cercone for implementing the assumptions of andragogy in both formal and non-formal online learning environments. Both authors, however, caution against using an overly purist definition of the assumptions when designing online programs for adults. Instead, Cercone writes, “not every recommendation can be followed, but they form the basis of the author’s proposal to develop online training for adults” (p. 142). For example, Cercone realizes that some adults are more self-directed than others. Consequently, some of them require assistance to become more self-directed.

Similarly, Blondy (2007) recognizes Knowles’ assumptions as “an ideal starting point” from which to prescribe practice. Likewise, Blondy argues for balance when implementing andragogy in a virtual environment, positing “the type of course being taught and individual student needs can help create a learner-centered approach to online education” (p. 116). Rachal (2002) strongly argued for “certain standards” in research designs involving andragogy in general while also “recognizing that mathematics-like precision is a holy grail quest” (p. 219).

Review of the Literature

Descriptive Research on Online Grants Education

Based on Johncock’s (2011) own experience in grants education, he uses an anthropological inquiry approach in detailing “nearly two decades of seminars, 14 years of online courses, ten years of a 10-credit college certification program, a mentoring program and student successes
totaling more than $1.2 billion in grant funding in two-and-a-half years” (p. 99). In a general sense, anthropological inquiry is a form of qualitative research through which meaning is created from language and action. Frequently, the anthropological researcher observes people and/or participates in activities within their unique social environment(s) to derive meaning. Though he clearly defines a number of common issues faced by grant educators, the learning styles of adults are not fully addressed as related to the andragogical teaching-learning transaction and, more importantly, curriculum development.

Johncock (2011) does, however, emphasize the need for performance-based assessment of learning rather than paper-pencil tests. Such assessment practices tend to make learning more relevant to adult learners. For example, paid internships, mentoring, peer reviews and evaluations of grant proposals by experts all meet with Rachal's (2002) expectations for performance-based assessments. “Andragogy eschews paper-pencil testing, yet that is the most common and presumably easiest form of determining whether the learner has mastered content,” he stresses (p. 217).

As a provider of both formal and non-formal online grant education courses and webinars for adults, Johncock (2011) cautions that online webinars and meetings frequently result in teacher-centered or pedagogical educational transactions. As such, instructors typically read to participants while they view PowerPoint presentations. “This presents a unique opportunity for grant educators to receive training in and deliver more participatory and engaging webinars that are not boring. The participatory aspect alone can set them apart from the competition,” he emphasized (p. 102). Likewise, the same need for student-centered participatory activities exists within online non-formal distance education courses on grantseeking (Bradley, 2011).

**Experimental Research on Non-formal Online Grants Education**

Few quasi-experimental or experimental research studies exist relative to grants education. One recent study, titled *A Comparison of Course Completion, Satisfaction, Achievement, and Performance among Nonprofit Professionals who Complete Andragogical or Pedagogical Online Learning Modules on Grant Writing*, utilizes mixed methods including both qualitative and experimental research design methodologies (Bradley, 2011). This unique study employs a true experimental design via an online delivery system. Shavelson (1996) describes such experimental studies as “ideal models for the design of behavioral research in that they rule out virtually all threats to internal validity through the use of control groups and random assignment” (p. 25). Internal validity helps insure a study’s research protocols and methods can reasonably be expected to measure or evaluate its accompanying research problems.
The study compares the outcomes among staff members of nonprofit social service agencies who participated in or completed an andragogically-facilitated or a pedagogically-conducted online learning module on foundation grantwriting. Fifty-two volunteer staff members of nonprofit agencies in a southeastern state who expressed interest in participating were randomly assigned to one of two asynchronous online learning modules. Simonson (2008) defines asynchronous communication as “interaction between people that is separated by minutes, hours or even days. E-mail or posting to a LISTSERVE are examples. The opposite is real-time interaction such as phone, online chat or video conferencing” (p. 37). Data result directly from the 33 participants, including 16 in the andragogical learning module and 17 in the pedagogical learning module serving as the control group. Among 33 participants, 28 were also completers, including 14 assigned to the andragogical learning module and 14 in the pedagogical module. Completers include those participants who submitted a pre-assessment, post-assessment and performance assessment.

This is the first empirical study of its kind to address each of Knowles' assumptions of andragogy in a non-formal online learning environment. Rachal's (2002) criteria for addressing those assumptions include: voluntary participation, adult status (over 23 years of age), collaboratively-determined objectives, performance-based assessment of achievement, measuring satisfaction, appropriate adult learning environment, and technical issues such as random assignment of subjects.

Table 1 on the next page (Bradley, 2011) provides a design elements chart for andragogical and pedagogical online learning modules on grant development as implemented in Bradley’s study.

Effectiveness of the two online courses assesses participants' program completion rates, satisfaction (course evaluation instrument), achievement growth (level of evaluative skill) and grant development performance scores within each learning group. Specifically, achievement measures participants' ability to evaluate a pre-selected grant proposal both prior to and following completion of an andragogical or pedagogical learning module. Having the ability to detect key problems, errors, or missing required information within a grant proposal allows the grant professional to also write better proposals. The change or growth in participants' achievement elucidates the differences between the pre- and post-test achievement scores. In contrast, the performance measure serves to evaluate participants' abilities to write grant proposals. Post-module completion, learners submit mock grant proposals to two experts who score them on a 100-point scale for consistency with the program's guidelines. Two open-ended response items, or questions, within the course evaluation instrument add narrative depth to the empirical results via triangulation. Triangulation is a statistical term that signifies instances in which at least three methods are used to validate the results and related implications of a particular research study.
Table 1. Design elements for andragogical and pedagogical online learning modules on grant writing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Andragogical Module</th>
<th>Pedagogical Module</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learning Climate</strong></td>
<td>Collaborative via e-mails and informal phone discussions with facilitator to communicate empathy and interest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Planning</strong></td>
<td>Mutual planning with facilitator of individualized objectives, resources and evidence of learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Diagnosis of Needs</strong></td>
<td>Mutual diagnosis of needs with facilitator.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Formulation of Objectives</strong></td>
<td>Negotiation of learning contract with facilitator based on mutually identified needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Design</strong></td>
<td>Problem units. (also see “Activities”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activities</strong></td>
<td>Experiential; Online bulletin board discussions based on readings and learner experiences to promote inquiry and sharing of best practices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evaluation</strong></td>
<td>Collaborative through submission of mutually agreed-upon evidence via learning contract, review of achievement and performance assessments by experts to ensure comparability of results. To lessen anxiety, suggestions for improvement are given to participants rather than scores.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Among both participants and completers, one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVAs) revealed no statistically significant differences as a function of learning group between each of three dependent variables: satisfaction (course evaluation ratings), achievement growth (level of evaluative skill), and proposal writing performance scores. ANOVA is a statistical calculation that determines whether there is a statistically significant difference between two or more independent populations when it comes to their average scores as measured for a dependent variable (Moore & McCabe, 2006). Similarly, a chi square test of independence revealed that program completion rates did not differ significantly as a function of learning group. As such, the primary implication is that andragogical learning methods as facilitated in Bradley’s study were just as effective as pedagogical methods in online non-formal grant development modules. Significantly, nearly all of the participants and completers in both online learning modules enjoyed high levels of learner satisfaction, course completion rates, achievement growth, and performance.

Qualitative results among participants indicate that 15 of 16 (93.8%) in the andragogical module, but only 11 of 15 (73.3%) in the pedagogical module, stated affirmatively their enjoyment of learning from the experience of others while participating in a non-formal online learning opportunities.

Samples comments from participants in the andragogical learning module appear below:

- “I do enjoy learning from the experiences of others. It is easier to discuss the topics, opposed to a lecture or webinar.”
- “Yes, I enjoy learning from others that are working towards the same goals. Having fellow adult learners with a different perspective and others who have different experiences can help me look at the subject with a broader focus than just what I bring to the table. Even those who have no experience writing grants have had some good comments and questions that force the rest of us to think about the process.”

In addition, 13 of 14 participants (92.9%) in the andragogical module and 14 of 16 (87.5%) in the pedagogical module stated they are more likely to pursue future educational opportunities relative to grantseeking.

Samples comments from participants in the andragogical module appear below:

- “Yes, participation in this course did encourage me to pursue additional non-formal non-credit continuing education opportunities in the future.”
- “Yes! After completing the course, I feel that I could actually take a few courses a year. I think it will improve my skills as an Executive Director and fund developer.”
These qualitative results, combined with more favorable aggregated mean course evaluation ratings among andragogical participants, support the finding of higher overall learner satisfaction among participants in the andragogical module. Adults with such high levels of learner satisfaction frequently pursue related learning opportunities in the future as truly lifelong learners.

Nine Recommendations for Grant Educators

Grant educators may use the assumptions of andragogy in designing meaningful online student-centered educational programs for adult learners by:

1. Determining adult learners’ experiences, if any, with both online learning and grant development prior to enrollment;

2. Offering learners a pre-training tutorial program in online learning as well as individualized assistance throughout the term of the training program, as necessary;

3. Offering alternative grant-related learning activities, based on learner input, that meet with the varying learning styles and experiences of adult learners;

4. Providing individualized assistance to learners in developing learning contracts to maximize utility and self-direction based on their own expressed gaps in grant development knowledge or needs;

5. Implementing performance testing rather than paper-and-pencil tests to increase both relevance and immediacy of application;

6. Utilizing interactive webinars for synchronous or real-time discussions of Requests for Proposals (RFPs), reviews of written proposals, and general knowledge-sharing based on learner experiences.

7. Delivering online courses using an online learning platform, such as Moodle, for asynchronous training and chat rooms. A number of colleges, nonprofit organizations and for-profit businesses use Moodle, which is a free downloadable program.

8. Recognizing the rich life experiences of adults and providing them with individualized assistance when necessary to help build on those experiences. Doing so positively impacts learner satisfaction and program completion rates for grant development courses.

9. Allowing learners to choose from either an andragogically-facilitated (student-centered) or a pedagogically-conducted (teacher-centered)
online grant writing course based on their unique learning styles or time limitations.

**Need for Further Research**

The findings on andragogy vs. pedagogy presented here are only a start. The findings call for additional studies on the effectiveness of andragogical methods in non-formal grant education programs, both in-person and online. As Rachal (2002) posited, non-formal settings may be most conducive to implementing a more purist definition of andragogy. Even so, he cautioned that programs must ultimately be designed at levels that best meet the needs of participants. Consequently, Blondy (2007) and Cercone (2008) also cautioned against using an overly purist definition of andragogy in both practice and research settings. For example, certain adults are less self-directed than others. Consequently, they frequently need extra guidance from the course facilitator in becoming more self-directed.

Additional recommendations for grants education researchers include:

1. Future studies on non-formal grants education should utilize more consistent operational definitions and comply as much as is feasible with Rachal's (2002) seven criteria.

2. Researchers should consider using higher-level statistical procedures, where appropriate, in interpreting findings and synthesizing data into conclusions. However, qualitative and case studies are useful as well, especially when results across similar studies or courses are evaluated to compare results through a meta-analysis.

3. Researchers and evaluators should use performance testing rather than paper-and-pencil tests. Performance testing is more suited to reflecting the results of andragogical learning and may sometimes be easier to implement in non-formal non-credit adult education programs than in for-credit classes (Rachal, 2002).

4. Researchers should consider using both quantitative and qualitative mixed-method techniques to support results via triangulation. For example, investigators could include interviews as well as open-ended course evaluation questions and utilize the resulting analysis to triangulate the quantitative results. More specifically, the thoughts, perceptions, and lived experiences of the grant-development students could be used in addition to ANOVA results to see how the findings from the two analyses complement or refute one another in a larger setting. In other words, do the quantitative and qualitative research methods yield the same or differing findings independently?
5. Researchers and grant education practitioners should assess course completion, satisfaction (i.e., course evaluation), achievement, and performance in all formal and non-formal grant writing courses. Doing so improves comparability of results between various classes or studies.

6. More qualitative, quantitative, and descriptive research on the effects of andragogy in online, non-formal adult education, professional development, or continuing education settings is needed. Current literature only begins to bridge the gap in literature of this field, especially within online grants education programs.

**Conclusion**

Many grants-education practitioners and grant professionals alike learned their craft through self-directed or non-formal training opportunities. Most of the available literature on grants education, however, consists of descriptive essays. The intent of this article is to encourage grant educators and researchers who work in formal and non-formal educational settings, both online and in-person, to design meaningful student-centered learning opportunities for adults. Toward that end, grant educators would benefit from availing themselves of adult learning theories such as andragogy when designing and facilitating trainings and courses for adults.

Through a more holistic understanding of the characteristics of adults as learners, grant educators may better position their students for lifelong learning opportunities. Teaching-learning strategies should be based on the best available research and experience.

**References**


**Biographical Information**

**J. Bernard Bradley, PhD, GPC,** is principal/founder of the American Council on Grant Writing, a national consulting firm based in Nevada. He earned his bachelor’s and master’s degrees in Business Administration and Continuing Education from The University of West Alabama, and a PhD in Adult Education from The University of Southern Mississippi (USM). While at USM, he served as a graduate research assistant and training specialist.
Bradley was also the primary writer for a Continuum of Care grant that led to a national Best of the Best Practices Award in Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity from HUD. He also completed an Interdisciplinary Leadership Development Program in Public Policy Formulation and Implementation through USM and Jackson State University. Bradley earned the Grant Professional Certified (GPC) designation in 2009, and presently serves as a board member for the Nevada Grant Professionals Association. His career has spanned more than 17 years of successful experience in grant administration, writing, program development, and educational administration at colleges nationwide. While employed by the Grants Resource Center within a public higher-education association in Washington, DC, he provided technical assistance to more than 30 universities in the Midwest and interviewed dozens of program officers for the online publication, GrantWeek. He also served as a proposal reviewer for nine federal grant programs. Dr. Bradley may be reached at grantshelppeople@aol.com.

John Rachal, EdD, is Professor Emeritus of Adult Education at The University of Southern Mississippi. He was raised in Raleigh, NC and received his bachelor’s from East Carolina with majors in English and Philosophy, his master’s from NC State in English, and his doctorate from NC State in Adult and Community College Education. He came to USM in 1980. He has special interests in literacy and especially historical and philosophical aspects of adult education. He has approximately 70 publications and traveled to India on a Fulbright-Hayes grant in 1989. He won the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education’s Imogene Okes Award for Outstanding Research in Adult Education in 1999 and again in 2004. The first award was for “‘We’ll never turn back’: Adult education and the struggle for citizenship in Mississippi’s Freedom Summer,” originally published in American Educational Research Journal; and the second was for “A Symposium,” a fictional dialogue of historical figures from Heraclitus to Nietzsche discussing the acquisition of knowledge, published in Adult Education Quarterly. He finds teaching rewarding, graduating more than 60 doctoral students. Rachal fully retired in May, 2012, but will continue his work as editorial board member of three journals. Dr. Rachal may be contacted at John.Rachal@usm.edu.
Lin Harper, PhD, is an Assistant Clinical Professor of Interdisciplinary Studies at The University of Southern Mississippi, where she also serves as Interim Assistant Dean for Research and Instruction in the College of Arts and Letters. Harper has a long history of writing, procuring and administering grants, including a 5-year Department of Education Title III-A grant to incorporate technology into teaching and learning; she has also served as peer reviewer for federal grants. Her current responsibilities include mentoring and teaching faculty and graduate students within the College of Arts and Letters those skills. She has previously served as Director of Distance Learning and held other positions within the university associated with the incorporation of technology into the teaching-learning interaction. She holds a master’s degree in Counseling Psychology and a PhD in Adult Education, both from Southern Miss. She has worked with and served on volunteer boards for a number of nonprofit agencies within the community of Hattiesburg, MS. An area of great interest currently is the potential use of social media in the teaching-learning transaction and for maintaining contact with graduates after graduation. Dr. Harper may be contacted at Lin.Harper@USM.edu.
Grant Professionals in Grant-Funded Positions: Challenges and Legacies

E. Erwin Story, MBA, BBA
University of Tennessee Health Science Center College of Nursing, Memphis, TN

Patricia D. Cunningham, DNSc, APRN-FPMHNP, FNP
University of Tennessee Health Science Center College of Nursing, Memphis, TN

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

Abstract

This article describes the role and contributions of a grant professional, the challenges to effective implementation of that role, strategies for managing challenges and barriers, the importance of effective communication and opportunities to inform organizations of a grant professional’s potential. All grant professionals leave a legacy. Whether this legacy is beneficial or detrimental to the organization and to the grant professional depends upon how the grant professional approaches the position within the context of the organization.

Introduction

In 2007, the American Association of Grant Professionals (now the Grant Professionals Association, or GPA) defined a Grant Professional as “an expert practitioner in the ethical procurement and oversight of funds and in-kind resources that serve the greater public good” (AAGP, 2007). These “expert practitioners” through their quality of work and abilities have the potential to leave a legacy that will influence an organization long after funding ends.

Grant professionals are individuals whose salaries are supported by grant funds. They typically work for one organization and may manage
a grant-funded project for a number of month or years, until funding for the position ends. Often, they play a key role in developing the grant proposal and in stewardship throughout the grant project.

A grant-funded position is temporary. Sometimes a request for proposals predetermines a grant project’s lifespan, without opportunity for renewal. Whether the grant pays 100 percent or only a portion of that salary, the organization may not be able to retain this now-valued employee due to budget constraints; or the organization may choose not to retain the employee due to lack of understanding of the individual’s role and capabilities. The organization loses a grant expert who is often a skilled change agent and a valuable contributor to the organization.

The grant professional’s contributions, through efficient work processes such as data management and periodic reports, have a “ripple effect,” helping the entire unit work more effectively. Great effort is needed to successfully launch and accomplish grant project goals.

If an organization has multiple funded projects simultaneously, grant professionals may have the option of working on several projects at once or transferring to a new project as funding streams change. Working on multiple funded projects concurrently provides an environment in which the grant professional can see the outcomes of multiple funded projects over a longer period of time.

The Grant Professional’s Role

“Grant Professionals, like social entrepreneurs, act as change agents, are dedicated to a mission, and are innovative to their approaches to social change,” (Turner, 2008).

Grant professionals collectively have a broad set of executive and technical skills, and follow a Code of Ethics and Standards of Professional Practice (GPA, 2012). Grant professionals corral the vision and skill sets of all key players in a grant proposal and translate those into several measurable objectives related to the funder’s mission and goals of the grant project director/principal investigator.

Other key players involved in a project may include the project director, project co-director, project evaluator, CEO, CFO, department directors, board of directors, and consultants. Implementing a project without the commitment of key players results in failure (Ingledue, 2009). A grant professional’s intimate familiarity with the roles of other key players in the project enables effective documentation of successes and challenges for reporting purposes. Familiarity also enables documentation of the essential work processes, and archival and organization of materials, so teams can replicate or review processes with or without every team member present. Not only are these latter tasks building a legacy for all involved in the project, but they also contribute to the team’s understanding of grantsmanship in general.
Sridhar (2009) described the extensive knowledge grant professionals possess, especially the value they bring to universities, referring to them as ambassadors to funded faculty about the grant world. A grant professional is a vital resource to university grant teams who obtain funding for research projects, programs for students, scholarships for students, fellowships for faculty, or special projects. In universities, faculty members who direct projects frequently do research and also have teaching responsibilities, committee meetings, conferences, and curriculum planning. A grant professional can save faculty members time by navigating through complex organizational and funder requirements such as budget requirements, cost-sharing, overhead calculations, electronic submission systems, and reporting/compliance structures (Sridhar, 2009). The success of a university’s mission depends upon collaboration between faculty members and grant professionals (Sridhar, 2009), and the same is true for grant professionals and key players in other grant-funded environments.

After spending a number of months or years on a grant project, grant professionals have the capacity to identify gaps in the research or barriers to achieving a grant objective(s). Some grant professionals keep abreast of scholarly publications and/or presentations related to the funded project. Such knowledge is a crucial piece for grant compliance/reporting and also for renewal funding. With this knowledge, along with the grant development skills, they capture the vision of the grant team in order to write grant proposals for additional funding. If additional funding is not available, the grant professional must then look for another project or possibly even a new job. Although the grant professional may have previously written a sustainability plan for the project, an organization may expect that the plan be implemented before the grant project ends.

**Grant Professionals in a Grant-Funded Position: Challenges**

Lack of grantsmanship knowledge in an organization is one obstacle grant professionals commonly face (Ingledue, 2009). In larger institutions, there may be an Office of Grants Management. These professionals understand and interpret award conditions, institutional policies, and local, state and federal regulations. This support may not be present in smaller organizations. This kind of regulatory knowledge is outside of the project directors’/principal investigators’ scope of expertise, so meeting these regulatory expectations falls to the grant professional. Some grant professionals may be able to introduce processes to manage projects (including archiving materials) that other team members might be familiar with but unable to fully execute. For example, if a project director is a health care professional, and the grant professional has a background in business, most likely the two will have only general knowledge about each other’s skills.
Another challenge may be job titles assigned to grant professionals. Depending on the type and size of an organization, certain policies and procedures may govern job titles. For example, the grant professional’s title may not even contain the word “grant.” Such job titles include coordinator, project specialist, project administrator, research associate, or senior administrative assistant. The title may influence how the position is perceived: as an administrative assistant versus an expert in grantsmanship. In large organizations, a grant professional could very well feel like “just a number.” Even in smaller organizations, grant professionals’ position titles may not accurately reflect their abilities or valuable skills. Turner (2008) discusses how grant professionals sometimes do not receive the same recognition as others. Frequently, grant professionals are experts on a particular grant project: they manage budgets or other people, direct operations, and find funding that contributes to organizational health. Their strategic roles in the project should be acknowledged.

Project directors/principal investigators have unique skill sets and professional perspectives. A project director/principal investigator may be a specialist in a specific field. Grant professionals work in various types of grants management roles: developing proposals, preparing budgets, administering projects, and writing reports to funders. While both project directors/principle investigators and grant professionals may possess math, reading, and communications skills, often they have two completely different skill sets—both unique and essential to the project’s success. Grant professionals must have effective communication skills to bridge and combine the skill sets.

They Do Not Know What They Do Not Know

If a lack of awareness of the comprehensive role and expertise of grant professionals is present, it is important to educate key players and administrators about the roles, the functions, and the value grant professionals brings to an organization and team. Some work-life behaviors provide clear indications that some organizational members or the project director may not understand the grant professional’s role and how to benefit from this specialist’s services. Listed below is an example situation followed by scenarios, behaviors, and possible solutions:

**Example Situation:** A novice project director receives a grant award and hires a grant professional to manage the grant. The project director is a content expert, not a process expert. The project director did not establish the structure and processes to achieve the grant’s outcomes and moving an idea forward. The following sample scenarios unfold:

**Scenario 1:** The project director asks the grant professional to put labels on a stack of files, to alphabetize books, or to manage a database that
the project director created based on knowledge from Business 101. The project director does not solicit input from the grant professional.

Behavior: The project director does not know what the grant professional is capable of doing; all the project director wants is help.

Solution: The grant professional initiates innovative ideas with the project director. The grant professional’s effectiveness and value are enhanced when willing to learn from and become familiar with the project director’s area of expertise.

Scenario 2: Established staff members hope the grant professional might contribute to the overall workload of the organization by participating in rotating assignments for answering phones, greeting customers, and purchasing supplies.

Behavior: The grant professional becomes part of an existing staff of an organization. Other staff members sometimes expect that the grant professional to participate in occasional institutional workload typically shared by organizational staff. As a way of belonging to a larger group, the grant professional sometimes accommodates this request, not realizing this may become a permanent expectation.

Solution: Establishing appropriate boundaries for non-grant work helps to preserve relationships and to protect time for grant functions. The role of the grant professional in relation to the larger organization needs to be clear in case the project director is not present on a day-to-day basis. One need not interpret the grant professional’s role rigidly at all times; staff members do help one another when an unexpected need arises. However, a repeated pattern of non-grant work expectations in an organizational unit can harm professional relationships. The grant professional’s role to manage grant processes must be clarified.

Scenario 3: The project director delegates tasks to the grant professional but does not perceive him or her as crucial team member.

Behavior: A grant professional is the monitor and overseer of the project and knows when and what tasks need to be completed in order to achieve project objectives. The grant project may be just one of many duties other members of the grant team must fulfill and they may overlook significant grant deadlines. Part of a grant professional’s role is to educate and empower grant team members to contribute essential information and to perform administrative tasks required for maintaining funding, such as providing crucial information for reporting requirements or staying engaged with benchmark events.

Solution: To establish healthy two-way communication, the grant team must learn that a grant professional delegates and is not only
a person to whom work is delegated. The project would be less efficient, even to the point of non-compliance, without enabling the grant professional to delegate work. Appropriately acknowledging the contributions of grant professionals is vital. For example, organizations miss recognition opportunities often by not including grant professionals in funding announcements or by not inviting them to a function that celebrates a grant award.

**Scenario 4:** The project director does not appropriately acknowledge the grant professional’s contributions (as a content expert) in development and dissemination of publications, presentations and/or posters; or the project director expects the grant professional to help with publications not associated with the grant project.

*Behavior:* Funding agencies may require the grant team to produce publications, presentations and/or posters. Grant projects are a way of developing one's personal and research contributions, and there is usually more work on a project than one person can accomplish alone. The grant professional sometimes collaborates on different aspects of grant work, and some of these contributions are unique to the grant professional, such as creating one-of-a-kind web interfaces for participant engagement. Grant professionals may also work as co-authors with project directors or other members of the grant team.

*Solution:* The project director, the grant professional, and other members of the grant team review accepted standards for inclusion as authors on presentations, publications and posters, such as the *Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts* (ICMJE, 2009).

**Scenario 5:** The project director and established members of the organization do not listen to the grant professional’s ideas for grant work process improvements.

*Behavior:* Grant professionals identify inefficient processes that create duplicate work and correct problems. They possess innovative ideas, role-specific expertise and technical skills to implement required functions and tasks critical to a project’s success. After becoming familiar with the organization's business system, a grant professional develops an infrastructure to manage the project's tasks that support the key player's roles and also develop well-organized processes.

*Solution:* The project director solicits input from the grant professional on a regular basis.

**Scenario 6:** During the grant funding period, the project director promises that the organization will retain the grant professional when grant funding ends.

*Behavior:* The project director desperately wants to retain this employee and is providing false hope. Eventually, grant professionals...
in grant-funded positions may feel confused, distracted, and apprehensive about their employment and financial future.

_Solution:_ The eventual termination of the grant and dismantling of the grant team should be a formal process. At the time of hiring, the project director defines the funding timeframe as well as the consequences to the grant professional when the funding ends, providing no promises.

These are just a few of the many behaviors that signal to grant professionals that others do not know how to benefit from their services and some solutions that might be useful. Behaviors can change. Grant professionals are responsible for teaching these issues of grantsmanship to individuals in an organization, especially to those with no prior grants experience (Ingledue, 2009).

**Leaving a Legacy**

Whether or not a grant professional consciously intends to leave a legacy, it will happen. Merriam Webster (2012) defines “legacy” as “something transmitted by or received from an ancestor or predecessor or from the past.” A grant professional’s legacy emerges daily through actions, decisions, accomplishments, relationships, priorities, abilities, and quality of work. Grant professionals have the opportunity to leave behind two very important positive legacies.

First, effectively prepared and maintained documentation leaves a legacy of efficient protocols for management processes that contributes to the grant team’s future endeavors. A grant professional initiates and documents processes for grant management throughout a funding period while establishing replicable processes. Many funded grants contain a sustainability plan so that the grant project activities will continue after funding ends. Frequently, those who facilitate grant management and reporting processes—but who are not grant professionals—defer documentation of processes implemented to sustain the project until funding is about to end. One realizes the legacy exists, for example, if a project director/principal investigator is able to successfully continue grant activities after funding ends, and the grant professional is no longer working on the project. The grant processes initiated by the grant expert, along with the appropriately maintained and archived documentation, are influential factors necessary to help the project operate effectively and smoothly.

Second, assisting an organization to understand the benefits of a grant professional leaves a legacy. If the grant professional advocates effectively for the position, the role, and the abilities a grant expert offers, and the organization understands these well, it positively affects the future of grant development and management in the organization.
One knows a positive legacy exists when the next grant professional is quickly hired and able to focus solely on the grant project, meeting key objectives.

Leaving a positive legacy benefits both the grant professional and the organization by promoting lasting relationships with stakeholders in the project and within the organization. The legacy a grant professional leaves impacts a project director’s/principal investigator’s future ability to develop and manage grant awards productively.

**Conclusion**

The expertise of grant professionals optimally benefits an organization when communication and training occur, when formal plans for transition at the end of the grant project exist, when the organization defines and implements appropriate roles and responsibilities for team members, and when successful communication between all key players occurs.

No matter how long a grant-funded position lasts, grant professionals have the opportunity to make a difference and leave a positive legacy with the organization, the project’s stakeholders, and the community. Changing how grant professionals think about leaving a legacy leads to positive contributions to the grant profession and organizational partners.

**References**


**Biographical Information**

E. Erwin Story, MBA, BBA currently serves as a Grant Coordinator at The University of Tennessee Health Science Center (UTHSC) College of Nursing, having served this organization for the past six years as either a Grant Coordinator or Grant Consultant. She has more than nine years’ experience in grants management in both the public and nonprofit sectors. Since 2008, Ms. Story authored or co-authored several grants, helping to secure more than $10 million in funding. Developing grant proposals for submission to the US Department of Health and Human Services Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) and post-award management for HRSA-funded projects is her passion. In 2010, Dr. Patricia Cunningham and Ms. Story co-authored a grant that received national recognition, as HRSA used it as an exemplar. Along with her Master of Business Administration (MBA), Ms. Story also holds a Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) in Management/Computer Information Systems. Contact Ms. Story at estory1@uthsc.edu.

Patricia D. Cunningham, DNSc, APRN-FPMHNP, FNP currently serves as Associate Professor and Option Coordinator for the Psychiatric/Mental Health Doctor of Nursing Practice program at UTHSC College of Nursing. Employed as a College of Nursing faculty member for 20 years, she additionally served as the Project Director for three funded HRSA grants. Dr. Cunningham is certified through the American Nurses Credentialing Center as an Adult Psychiatric/Mental Health Clinical Nurse Specialist, a Psychiatric Family Nurse Practitioner, and a Family Nurse Practitioner. She was the recipient of the Excellence in Teaching Award,
the Psychiatric Nursing Award from the Tennessee Nurses Association, and the Faculty Alumni Award from UTHSC College of Nursing. In 2011, Dr. Cunningham received the Award for Excellence in Practice from the American Psychiatric Nurses Association. Contact Dr. Cunningham at pcunning@uthsc.edu.
Key Skills and Behaviors of Successful Grant Professionals

Jerry Dillehay
Grants Consultant and Contractor, Mesa, AZ

Sharon Skinner, MA, GPC
City of Mesa, Mesa, AZ

Abstract

Grant professionals come to the vocation via diverse pathways: e.g., the director in need of additional funding to continue providing services, the office administrator asked to “just write a quick proposal,” the firefighter on temporary admin assignment tasked with submitting a Homeland Security grant. These individuals often become so integrated into the grantseeking/proposal writing process they become their organizations’ grant proposal writers.

However, the successful grant professional is much more than a grant writer. “Grant writer” is not only inaccurate – it is insufficient. A grant writer does far more than write proposals for funding (Smith & Tremore, 2008, p. xi). What then, is the next step in the process of turning this work into a career, and what key steps can be taken on this path to successful professional grant proposal writing and fund development?

This article explores some of the paths taken by those individuals who have become professional consultants, grant development officers, and local government grant administrators. It identifies successful steps these individuals took in turning assignments or immediate needs to develop and write grant proposals into a successful and fulfilling career. It identifies the tools and support mechanisms that encourage the “career pathing” process and shows the value of supporting the professional development of grant professionals.
Introduction

A great deal of literature exists regarding how to write successful grant proposals. In fact, entire books cover the subject. Additionally, many courses and conferences offer professional development in the area of proposal writing.

College students now have the option of taking courses on grant writing (Sisk, 2011), yet none focuses specifically on becoming a professional grant proposal writer, nor do they offer grant professional degree programs. However, “despite all the college courses on fundraising, most people going into the business still learn on the job” (Barbato & Furlich, 2000, p. 33). Therefore, proposal writers tend to be left to their own devices when seeking the best path to a successful career.

Books on proposal writing include descriptions of basic skills (Smith & Tremore, 2008, p. 242). However, very little of the available literature describes the key skills required to be a successful grant professional. One online source identifies these skills in broad strokes. Sorrell (2010) identifies three essential skills for successful proposal development: researching, persuasive writing and organizational skills. Another online information resource (eHow.com) even suggests that breaking into this field is as simple as getting basic writing experience, volunteering with nonprofit or other charitable organizations, taking a grant proposal writing class, and then applying to companies that need proposal writers. Additionally, the Grant Professionals Certification Institute (GPCI) lists the competencies that are tested as part of the Grant Professionals Certification process (GPCI, 2012). These are all good methods for beginning. However, they do not identify the key skills and behaviors that move an individual from being a proposal writer to becoming a successful grants professional.

This article seeks to fill the gap by describing those key skills and behaviors and providing real-life examples of successful grants professional career development. Interviews with grants professionals considered to be at the “top of their game” provide examples of the skills that make for success in the grants profession.

Defining Success

For purposes of this research, the authors did not presuppose a definition of “success,” but rather relied upon an original pool of interviewees to self-define how they viewed becoming successful. From those discussions several recurring themes, centered on the particular circumstances of the interviewee, emerged. All responded that they felt successful when their chosen profession elevated them into a financial status where they felt satisfied with the compensation and defined it as “a decent wage” when compared to their peers.
Other factors mentioned in defining personal success were less obvious. Some touted the flexibility of the profession allowing many options for where and how one wishes to work, i.e. home, contract, retainer, employee, no geographical boundaries, etc. Another involved less the physical factors and more a feeling of success in helping others. A few pointed to the ego boost of adrenaline gained from grant awards as a measure of success. In sum, each interviewee’s definition of success was personal and the authors chose to include these viewpoints without question.

The Interview Process

Perhaps the best way to identify the key skills required for becoming a successful grant professional is to learn from those individuals who paved the way and have reached a pinnacle of grants success. This article provides interview results from some of the most successful professionals in the grants industry.

The interviewees selected for this process were chosen based on their number of years in the field and on the commonality of being at the peak of success in their personal careers and earning a “decent wage,” as defined by each individual. Additionally, the group includes diversity based on Special Interest Group (SIG) within the Grant Professionals Association (GPA) and geography. Each is a GPA member, and all but one are Grant Professional Certified (GPC). The following provides brief biographical information on each interviewee.

The Interviewees

Pat Bohse is the President of Bohse & Associates, a management consulting firm based in New Jersey. She is a nationally recognized speaker, a member of the National Speakers Association, and a past president and founding member of the New Jersey chapter of that organization. Ms. Bohse is a member of GPA and NY/NJ Grantwriters Network. She is also an adjunct professor at Fairleigh Dickinson University in Teaneck, NJ. She has been a GPA member for five years, currently chairs the GPA Human Resources Committee, and is active in the New Jersey Chapter of GPA.

Amanda Day, GPC is the grants administrator for the City of Alpharetta, GA. Amanda previously served as the grants administrator for the City of Morrow, GA. She joined GPA in 2005 and is active in the local GPA chapter. Ms. Day currently serves on the Grant Professionals Certification Institute (GPCI) Board of Directors.

Jay Janssen, GPC has worked in the healthcare field since 1996, both as a senior administrator for a community hospital and as a consultant to hospitals throughout the Carolinas. Using an extensive background
in healthcare finance and operations as a consultant for over ten years, Mr. Janssen develops grant proposals for hospitals and public health departments in North and South Carolina. He is a former GPA Board member, having served as the GPA President’s appointee to the Executive Committee in 2011. He currently serves on the Grant Professionals Foundation board (GPF). He has been an active member of GPA since 2003 and received GPC designation as part of the 2008 inaugural class.

Susan Jordan, GPC is currently Senior Development Manager for the Portland Public Schools Office of Development. She was one of the first individuals to earn her GPC, has been a member of GPA since 2003, and is a chapter member of the Oregon/SW Washington Chapter. Ms. Jordan currently chairs the GPA K-12 Education Special Interest Group (SIG).

Jodi Pearl, GPC received her Grant Professional Certification in 2008 after more than ten years as a grant professional. During her career, Ms. Pearl has written applications for a wide variety of organizations and currently researches, writes, and administers grant proposals for Memorial Healthcare System, the fifth largest healthcare system in the country. Ms. Pearl is a former board member of both GPA and GPCI. She is a GPA Legacy Member #60, having been a member of the organization since its inception.

Alan Tiano, GPC is President of the Tiano Consulting Group, Inc. He has eight years of experience in nonprofit program development, fundraising, proposal writing, and operations. Tiano Consulting Group has been serving the nonprofit community since June 2003 and now includes additional staff writers and a research assistant. Mr. Tiano has been a long-time activist for people living with AIDS, women’s rights, gay rights, and the lives of immigrants and refugees in Broward County, Florida. He is an active member of GPA and has a license from the State of Florida as a Professional Fundraising Consultant.

Michael Wells, GPC, CFRE owns the grant development firm Grants Northwest, and has been consulting since 1987, helping dozens of nonprofit organizations raise more than $50 million. Mr. Wells has a masters degree in humanities and teaches grantwriting at Portland State University. He is editor of the Charity Channel Grants and Foundation Review, a past board member of GPA and the Grant Professionals Certification Institute (GPCI), and author of the Grantwriting Beyond the Basics series: Proven Strategies Professionals Use to Make Their Proposals Work, Understanding Nonprofit Finances, and Successful Program Evaluation.

**Entering the Grants Profession**

The interviewers initially asked each of these successful professionals to describe when and how they entered the grants field. Most of the interviewees began their careers in the mid- to late 1990s, but a few
were real pioneers from earlier. Because all the interviewees began their careers in the grants industry before it had been established as a profession (landmarked by the development of a formal certification process and the establishment of the GPC in 2004), the answers to this question varied and are quite interesting. Most involved working in related fields such as funds development in the nonprofit arena, nonprofit management, or administration. Some simply received a “special assignment” to help develop a grant proposal and then discovered they were good at it.

Just out of college with a degree in Psychology, Amanda Day took a temporary job as an Administrative Assistant to the City Manager in Morrow, GA, a small suburb of Atlanta with an estimated population of 5,000 at the time. Ms. Day intended to return to college but was soon detailed to help a police officer who was writing grant applications for the town. He left the police department after six months, and Ms. Day became the full-time grants person, working for three years there.

Michael Wells went into fundraising in the early 1980s upon realizing that nonprofits spent all of their time worrying about money. Mr. Wells was station manager at a local public radio station in dire need of funding. As with most small nonprofit organizations, the director wore many hats, which required Mr. Wells to become a fundraiser and led to him developing capital campaigns for several nonprofits. This later led to development director jobs that required some grant-proposal writing. Then in 1988 Mr. Wells decided to become a fundraising consultant and over a few years moved toward focusing entirely on grants, doing proposal writing full-time since about 1998.

Jodi Pearl started out with a master’s degree in anthropology from Florida Atlantic University in 1996, landing at the Science Museum in Fort Lauderdale, managing the gift shop. She then became a management assistant in the Science Department where the manager had little experience in technical writing. When tobacco-settlement funding became available for grants through the State of Florida, Ms. Pearl was assigned to work on a proposal for an anti-tobacco education exhibit. The application request was for $7,500 but won an award of $9,500. Following a staffing restructuring, Ms. Pearl moved into a full-time grant development position in 1997, gaining not only a new boss, but a grants mentor, as well.

**Attaining a Full-time Grants Career**

Each of the interviewees followed a different path to proposal writing as can be seen by these examples. However, one of the key skills that made them successful was the ability to write well. What motivated them to move fully into the grants arena was the initial success in securing grant funding they experienced early in their careers.
When interviewees were asked how long it took to develop grant proposal writing into a full-time career with a “decent” wage, they provided a range of answers. Some used newfound skills to increase their value as employees and managed either to create a grant professional position with a credible wage or to move on to other employment or consultancy where their skills were better rewarded. In terms of time, most reported six months to ten years before feeling established in a lifelong grants career.

Susan Jordan, who works in education, shared the point in time when she felt she earned a decent wage. “When I moved to Arizona I was searching for a teaching position when I noticed a grantwriting one paid twice as much! I got it and in two years leveraged $9 million in new funding for the school district.”

Pat Bohse at first worked for other people part-time for a paycheck and for ten years did consulting on the side. However, Ms. Bohse used those 10 years to diversify and network within the nonprofit sector in social services so that, upon launching an incorporated business, the phone never stopped ringing. Now Ms. Bohse has a 26-year history and a successful consulting business with five associates she brings in as needed for special projects including proposal development.

It was a quicker process for Alan Tiano, who in 1987 went from working as an AIDS patient therapist to writing a successful proposal for much-needed funding to hire other therapists. Mr. Tiano then generated and managed the additional grant funding for a nonprofit in Fort Lauderdale.

Turning Point Decision

The next question asked about the turning point in each individual's career that launched him or her into grant development work full-time. This seemed to be a very critical question and caused most interviewees to ponder at what point along the way it became clear they would stay in the grants field. Most involved a success - a large grant award, a new job, a challenging project, or the realization that there was a market eager to pay for these skills. Some found a legitimate business opportunity and launched from there.

Fundraising consultant Michael Wells switched to full-time proposal writing because, as he stated, “I found I liked working on projects more than doing the same annual fundraising campaign.”

Help Along the Way

When asked if there had been a mentor or some workshop/training of great help to them along the way, curiously not many of the respondents singled out any specific mentor. This is probably because most
began their careers early in the development of a network of grants professionals. Some were lucky enough to have taken training programs like those offered by the Grantsmanship Center or classes in proposal writing. Some had supervisors or co-workers who gave encouragement, but most reported being solo artists, forging their own way, answering their own questions, and keeping themselves motivated.

There was unanimity in the value received from attending GPA (formerly AAGP) national conferences. For many, it was a revelation to discover other individuals like themselves organized under an umbrella like GPA. That buoyed many of them and supported them. All continue to be members of GPA.

Professional Development

The next question asked was “How have you utilized your GPA membership to further your career?” As expected, responses here had to do with building credibility, networking, and finding work. Some reported hiring other professionals to do referral work and subcontract on projects while attending conferences and through networking. Most stated that the opportunities provided through GPA membership have been crucial to their careers and ultimate success. “I think the GPA Board and the GPC credential, along with teaching at Portland State and writing books, have all built my credibility as a senior grantwriter in Portland,” said Michael Wells.

“GPA has helped enormously in my growth as a professional by serving on various committees and boards,” said Ms. Pearl. “My involvement was recognized by and garnered attention from my local nonprofits. I started the Chapter in Miami with help of (then) AAGP. This work caught the attention of the Memorial Health Care System and they offered me a great job, with a good salary and great benefits.”

Mr. Tiano candidly stated that he has used GPA to network, and make more money through meeting new people and accessing work opportunities. “The conference paid off in multiples as I got contract work there, and GPC helps validate me on all my emails and business card.”

Tips For Success

The final question asked was “What two or three pieces of advice would you share with those just entering the profession that will help them become successful?”

The interviewees and the literature review identified eight actions as key to becoming a successful grant professional.
Key Skills and Behaviors of Successful Grant Professionals

- **Experience**
  - Get experience before you hang out a shingle. (Wells)
  - Volunteer to write for local nonprofits. (Bohse)
  - Become a reviewer with the type of grants you will write. Learn ins and outs of grantmakers; they always tell you what they want in the RFP. Then you can write as if you are the reviewer. (Jordan)
  - Teach and write articles. The best way to learn is to teach. (Wells)

- **Professional Development**
  - Focus on professional development, use opportunities to grow, never stop learning. (Pearl)
  - Attend workshops, trainings, and conferences, especially those offered by funders. (Day)

- **Teambuilding/Collaboration**
  - Grantwriting does not occur in a vacuum. (Bohse)
  - Develop your network - not just online, but face-to-face. Get out there. They are not your competitors, they are your colleagues. (Tiano)
  - Grant-proposal writing is not a solitary activity and requires an individual to interact with a wide range of people (Thompson, p.10).
  - The secret to writing successful grant proposals these days is being connected – not to insiders at funding agencies but to people in your own organization and to resources on the Web (Wilburs).

- **Understand and work to your own strengths**
  - Find out what you like to do and how you like to work. If you enjoy the work, you will be better at it. (Wells)

- **Build on the basics**
  - Read, write, follow directions. Learn to do these things well and you will be successful. (Day)

- **Be an active member of your profession**
  - Join a membership organization. (Pearl)
  - Be active at the local/chapter level. (Day)
  - Volunteer to do committee work. (Janssen)

- **Track success in quantifiable terms**
  - Maintain up-to-date factual records of your work and accomplishments. (Jordan)

- **Persistence**
  - Programs take time to implement. (Tiano)
  - It takes time to be successful. (Tiano)
- You do not graduate from college with the necessary skills to be successful in this business. (Tiano)
- This is not a route to go if you just want to get rich. You must get pleasure from the faces of the people you have helped with the grant product. This is the instant gratification of the grant writer. (Janssen)

Unexpected Results

At the outset, it was anticipated that active membership in a professional grant-focused organization such as GPA, proposal-writing generalization, and an emphasis on professional development would be keys to career success for grant professionals. All of the interviewees seemed to agree that networking and participation in a professional membership organization are among the most valuable of behaviors. Having a supportive network of colleagues with whom one can meet and discuss the challenges and successes of one's profession is an important supportive mechanism.

However, while the respondents agreed on the majority of the key skills and behaviors required to be successful in the grants field, there was one interesting area of primary disagreement. Some stated that the best way to be successful was to specialize, while others touted the importance of diversification and generalization. Based on the respondents' professional areas of focus, specialization is required in some fields, such as health care, more than others, due to the technical nature of the writing. These “proposals will be read by peers in these highly specialized professions” (Smith & Tremore, 2008, p. 247). Unless one is an expert, an individual may not possess the skills needed to write proposals for science, medicine, or technology.

Additionally, persistence and flexibility became relevant common traits among interviewees. Each described a point in time when they had hit a block or were faced with unexpected challenges that required them to find new solutions or create entirely new roles within their organizations in order to move to the next level in their careers.

Limitations of the Research

While an effort was made to provide a representative sampling of successful grant professionals, the sampling size for this project was rather small and a larger pool of respondents could provide more informative results. Additionally, it might be of interest to separate consultants from those professionals working as organizational employees in order to identify what relation, if any, these differing roles play in the skills needed to achieve personal success in a grants career.
Additionally, strengthening the research in this area would require an in-depth analysis of the actions identified in the table and each one's direct impact on the career development process. This would be a scope of work beyond these authors’ current capabilities.

**Conclusion**

While the routes into the grant profession are as diverse as the number of grant professionals, there are key skills and behaviors that support an individual’s ultimate success. These include gaining experience, maintaining ongoing professional development, developing strong teambuilding and collaboration skills, building on the basics, being persistent, tracking success, and being an active member in a professional organization.

These skills and behaviors may be developed through a variety of means, including self-learning, formal training, networking, mentorship and good old-fashioned learning by doing, but developing them is a must if one wishes to climb to the top in the grants profession.

**References**


Biographical Information

**Jerry Dillehay** was educated as a forester with a BS degree from the University of Tennessee in 1967. Following a two-year assignment as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Chile, he returned to the University of Florida for graduate work in natural resource planning. He worked for 25 years with the Tennessee Department of Conservation and Arizona State Parks planning and administering state and federal environmental grant programs. He joined the City of Mesa, AZ as their first Grants Coordinator in 1995. Following a 16-year career there, Jerry retired last year and began contracting part-time to assist the City in their role with the Indian Gaming Grants in Arizona. Joining GPA in 1997, Jerry has served two terms on the GPA Board of Directors and as vice president. He was instrumental in the original push to establish the Grants Professional Certification Institute and hosted a GPA National Conference in Scottsdale, AZ in 2005. Jerry.Dillehay@mesaaz.gov

**Sharon Skinner** is currently the grants coordinator for the City of Mesa, AZ. An experienced nonprofit development and grants consultant with more than 13 years of experience, she has served as a grant reviewer at the federal, state, city, and foundation levels. She holds a BA in English from Ottawa University and an MA from Prescott College, and was one of the first grant professionals in the United States to become Grant Professional Certified (GPC). In addition to having worked for one of the largest community development corporations in the nation, she has experience in strategic planning, business mapping, marketing, copywriting, program development, and project management. Sharon is currently fulfilling her second term on the GPA National Board of Directors and serves as the Board Secretary. Sharon.Skinner@Mesaaaz.gov