

**SUFFOLK UNIVERSITY - CAPE COD  
PROFESSIONALS IN DEVELOPMENT  
APRIL 17, 2009**

**GRANTWRITING UPDATE**

**© Michael T. Lavin, PhD  
Professor of Public Management & Director  
Suffolk University/Cape Cod MPA Program**

**I. SOME THINGS THAT HAVE NOT CHANGED LATELY**

**• GRANTMAKERS:**

- “Dictate” the Application Process: Sections, timing, limitations, etc..
- Want the same information about every Grant Project (executive summary, need statement, goal & objectives, action plan, timeline, budget, key players, evaluation and sustainability plans); and every Grantseeking organization (history, track record, capacity, fiscal health)
- Exercise nearly total discretion when deciding who gets a Grant award
- Are Gatekeepers and Risk-Adverse Managers
- Want to award Project Grants to “Partners” they know and trust
- Non-government Grantmakers allow 20% or less of a Project Grant award for overhead (indirect costs) (Government Grantmakers are usually more generous)
- Fund Projects that further their Mission, Worldview, and Priorities
- Information about Grantmakers (Mission, Worldview and Priorities) is widely available in specialized library collections (CCCC, Public Libraries, AGM)
- Internet information about Grantmakers is accessible (Guidestar, Goodsearch, Charitynavigator, etc...) but still limited
- Want public recognition for their philanthropy or charity

- **GRANTSEEKERS:**

- Use a Master Grant Proposal to edit for multiple submissions
- Must research Most-Likely-To-Fund Grantmakers that share their organization's Mission, Worldview and Priorities
- Must follow Grantmaker's Application Process (Application Requirements, Final Rules) "chapter and verse"
- Avoid "Chasing Grants"
- Establish partnerships with Grantmakers via "Schmoozing" (Staff & Boards of Directors)
- Grant Applications must demonstrate that your organization's Mission, Worldview, and Priorities mesh with Most-Likely-To-Fund Grantmakers
- Applications must demonstrate the Grantseeker's will, expertise, and capacity to "solve" the "need" and produce measurable social benefits for a specific target population at a specific point in time
- Must always protect their credibility
- Always say "Thank you" whether you are funded or not

## **II. SOME THINGS THAT CHANGED LATELY OR ARE CHANGING RIGHT NOW**

- **GRANTMAKERS:**

- Want to be Social Entrepreneurs but this role conflicts with traditional Gatekeeping and Risk-Adverse Management
- Social Entrepreneur/Grantmakers want to "invest" in and "advocate" on behalf of organizations and projects with socially valuable solutions
- Gatekeeper/Grantmakers still review Grant Applications for compliance with specific Application requirements and rules
- Risk-Adverse Manager/Grantmakers are currently focusing on legal and financial accountability and transparency:
  - checking previous grants awards to verify Grantseeker's reputation and competence

- checking “financials” to determine solvency, revenue sources and uses, assets and liabilities, and auditor’s conclusions (notes and letter)
  - reviewing 990’s, nonprofit status, litigation record, possible conflicts of interest (self dealing) by Directors or Trustees
  - reviewing Grant Proposal Evaluation and Sustainability Strategies or Plans for assurances of future accountability and transparency
- In 2009 economy:
  - Non-Government Grantmakers have smaller pools of money to award (reflects recession)
  - Government Grantmakers are expected to have large pools of Federal Stimulus money to award to Grant Projects in areas of high national public policy priorities (healthcare, education, public safety, homeland security, etc..)
  - Government and Non-Government Grantmakers view collaboration to fund and implement Grant Projects as highly desirable
- About 70% scan Proposal Budgets first for errors, fit, and interest before deciding if they will continue reading the Applications (arbitrary Gatekeeping)
- About 30% scan Proposal Executive Summaries first for fit and interest before deciding if they will continue reading the Application (arbitrary Gatekeeping)
- Developing “cyber” trends:
  - electronic and digital information and access increasing but still limited (webpages, websites, search engines)
  - submitting email Letters of Intent using electronic forms increasing as required first step in Application Process

- On-line Applications using electronic forms very limited but starting, most Grantmakers still require a hard copy of Application and Appendix be sent too
  - Expect 100% participation by Boards of Directors in making contributions to organizational fundraising
- **GRANTSEEKERS:**
  - Grant Applications should appeal to Grantmakers as Social Entrepreneurs by “offering” a low-risk opportunity to “invest” in your organization and your Project to achieve a socially valuable solution
  - Must be prepared to submit a detailed Application or respond to questions in a timely manner if Grantmakers react favorably to an email Letter of Intent (Grantmakers consider this response as a negotiation)
  - In 2009 and post-2009 economy:
    - prepare to negotiate Project Budgets and Goals and Objectives (Grantmakers expect a quick turn-around to their offers and inquiries, Grantseekers must be prepared)
    - Immediately start to research Federal (State pass-through) Stimulus money for priorities, programs and opportunities related to your organization’s Mission, Worldview, and Priorities
    - Look for opportunities to collaborate with appropriate organizations to fund or implement Grant Projects
  - Cultivate, educate, and update Grantmaker staff and decision-makers with appointments or presentations, trend is to formalize schmoozing

### **III. SOME GRANTWRITING TIPS**

- Do not assume that a Grantmaker knows anything about your organization or project
- Fulfill all Grantmaker Application rules and requirements (deadlines, number of copies, delivery mode, narrative sections, appended documents, etc..)
- Submit proposals early (before deadline) if possible, may get a more “friendly” read than a last minute submission

- Write for the reader
  - Research and “tell” an interesting “story” that will make the reader care (Need Statement)
  - Document (backup) your “story” with hard data, professional or scholarly research, and successful models
  - Limit the use of emotional appeals
  - Edit the Grant Application so that it reads with a single “voice”
  - Keep the reader interested by varying your writing style and techniques, include bullet points, tables, charts, figures, etc..
  - Use direct language, avoid acronyms, abbreviations, adjectives
  - Define unusual terminology using common language (technical, medical, research terms, etc..)
  - Use active or future tense verbs
  - Give the reader Hope that your project (solution) will add social value for a specific population, in a specific place, at a specific time
- Keep the document design simple and easy to handle (Grant Application and Appendix)
  - Simple binding, one staple in upper left corner
  - Include cover sheet, title page and separate tables of contents
  - Number pages
  - Comply with Grantmaker’s page limits; section-by-section and complete document
  - Use standard margins, short indented paragraphs, 1.5 or double space, 11 or 12 point font (no script fonts ever), black ink, white paper, no clip art, colored ink only in graphics
  - Appendix contains forms and documents required by the Grantmaker (Letter of Determination, audited financials, 990, annual report, etc.), and documents you cited or paraphrased in the Application narrative that you think the Grantmaker might want to review (resumes, strategic plans, testimonials, awards, etc)

- Do not include videos, pictures, plans, maps, etc. as appendices, put them on your website and direct Grantmaker to go there to view them
- Document data and research sources with standard footnotes and bibliography (demonstrates your professional expertise)
- Have copying and binding (stapling) done professionally if you lack in-house capacity to do a professional quality job
- Do not “pad” or “lowball” your Project Budget
- The Goals and Objectives statement should help a Grantmaker “visualize” success
- Highlight roles played by volunteers in general and in relation to your Grant Project (volunteers show community commitment and cost saving)
- Have cover letter or cover sheet signed by someone at or near the top of your organizational structure (CAO, CEO, CFO, Chair of Board, etc..)
- For tips on how to prepare effective Evaluation Strategy go to WKKF.org (Kellogg Foundation) and click on evaluation tool kit
- Limit the use of negative sell (too much “failure to act” consequences or threats can turn the reader off)

#### **IV. IN SUMMARY**

- Always leave the Grantmaker with Hope and Optimism about your ability to succeed, i.e., your ability to add social value
- Always say “Thank you” regardless of the decision
- Continue the “Schmoooooze” into a long-term relationship built on mutual respect and accomplishment
- If funded, immediately
  - Say “Thank you” and publically acknowledge the Grant and the Grantmaker
  - Start keeping records
  - Get the Project started
- **And, always protect your reputation and credibility as a Grantseeker!!!!**

**NOTE:** Most of the material for this presentation was taken from my own teaching notes and writing. Additional information was also taken from the following:

- Mim Carlson & Tori Neal-McElrath, *Winning Grants: Step by Step, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.* Jossey-Bass (San Francisco, 2008)
- Cheryl A. Clarke, *Storytelling for Grantseekers: A Guide to Creative Nonprofit Funding.* Jossey-Bass (San Francisco, 2001)
- Jane C. Geever, *Guide to Proposal Writing, 5<sup>th</sup> ed.* Foundation Center (New York, 2007)
- Cheryl Carter New & James Aaron Quick, *Grantseeker's Toolkit: A Comprehensive Guide to Finding Funding.* John Wiley (New York, 1998)
- Foundation Center, *Proposal Writing Seminar.* Foundation Center (New York, 2009)