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Journal of the
American Association of Grant Professionals

Dear Reader,

This issue of the *Journal* contains papers on general topics regarding the improvement of the grant professional and the profession. The wide variety of paper topics mirrors the diversity of work that members of our profession perform, and this diversity provides a rich variety of experience from which to learn.

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, and examine any of the competencies and skills described in the *Table of Validated Competencies and Skills* (available at www.grantcredential.org. (Click on "The Examination;" then "Competencies and Skills Tested;" then "Download Document for More Detail.")

We invite your comments on this issue of the *Journal* and we welcome suggestions you may have for us to consider for future themed issues.

AAGP Editorial Board

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The American Association of Grant Professionals (AAGP), a nonprofit 501(c)(6) membership association, builds and supports an international community of grant professionals committed to serving the greater public good by practicing the highest ethical and professional standards. To achieve this mission, AAGP:

- Serves as a leading authority and resource for the practice of grantsmanship in all sectors of the field.

- Advances the field by promoting professional growth and development.

- Enhances the public image and recognition of the profession within the greater philanthropic, public, and private funding communities.

- Promotes positive relationships between grant professionals and their stakeholders.

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About This Publication

The *Journal* of the AAGP 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 American Association of Grant Professionals* 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.

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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 AAGP website.

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Grant Professionals as Social Entrepreneurs

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Abstract

The grants profession has changed tremendously over the past ten years since the American Association of Grant Professionals was formed. And although grant professionals address a variety of social issues resulting in millions of dollars of grant funding, the profession still appears to lack the visibility and credibility of other fundraising professionals. This paper challenges the profession to look beyond its traditional definition and see its role as an integral and ever-expanding one in the fundraising field. A comparable discussion of how grant professionals can be seen as social entrepreneurs is noted along with some similar commonalities.

Introduction

Hunger, poverty, adoption, substance abuse, lack of health care, living with a chronic disease, contaminated water, prisons, people re-entering society after being incarcerated, single mothers, public schools not meeting the No Child Left Behind guidelines, homeless, affordable housing, child abuse, domestic violence — the list goes on and on regarding society's social problems. In 2006, the Foundation Center reported that 1,263 foundations awarded 140,484 grants $10,000 and above, totaling $19.1 billion. These grants were awarded to organizations focused on arts, community improvement, educational institutions, environmental agencies, human service agencies, mental health agencies, museums, public/general health organizations, social service agencies, youth development organizations and others.

The importance of the work of grant professionals in developing proposals that address these issues is obvious. Yet, the grants profession still does not appear to receive the same recognition as other professionals in the fundraising field. This is evident by the number of workshops offered at the national conferences of the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP) and the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education (CASE). During their 2008 conferences, more than 3,000 persons were projected to attend AFP's International

Conference in San Diego, yet only three of 74 workshop sessions related to grant professionals. The CASE Annual Conference for Corporate and Foundation Relations offered only one session targeted for grant professionals, with a projected attendance of nearly 500. This lack of workshop offerings targeted to grant professionals should cause some alarm for the 1,700 members of the American Association of Grant Professionals (AAGP) and other non-AAGP member grant professionals.

Reviewing the Role of Grant Professionals

Armed with the Foundation Center grant-making statistics noted above, grant professionals should utilize such information to take a more proactive stance in being recognized as an integral part of the fundraising field. It is with this perspective that grant professionals should view their roles in building organizational capacity and their intent to address and alleviate social problems.

There have been numerous important changes in the grant profession over the ten years since AAGP was established. The growth of computers and the internet has changed everything about the way grant opportunities are searched and sought. The number of private foundations has exploded, there are an increased number of publications, nonprofit management has become its own field of study, and the profession now has a credentialing examination to ensure grant professionals are certified.

Now while the field is expanding and changing, the time is right to expand understanding of the role of the grant professional. One way to do this is to draw parallels with other professions and areas of study, so that grant professionals can view their profession from another perspective. For example, one profession useful for drawing parallels is the emerging field of social entrepreneurship. Looking closely and drawing comparisons between the social entrepreneur and the grant professional leads to some interesting comparisons between the two professions.

Grant Professionals as Social Entrepreneurs

There are many definitions of social entrepreneurship. Dr. Arthur C. Brooks, Louis A. Bantle Professor of Business and Government, Syracuse University, in a presentation to the 2008 Conference of the United States Association for Small Business and Entrepreneurship (USASBE) defined social entrepreneurship as a "process of creating value by bringing together a unique package of resources to exploit an opportunity, in pursuit of high social returns" (Brooks, 2008a). Social entrepreneurship is also a growing global movement encompassing a commitment to solving social problems through innovative actions resulting in social change.

Social entrepreneurship should sound familiar to grant professionals although the terminology may be new. Grant professionals, like social entrepreneurs, act as change agents, are dedicated to a mission, and are innovative in their approaches to social change.

Silverthorne (2008), in an interview with Harvard professor Jane Wei-Skillern, notes that the social sector is big business. The United States has 1.5 million nonprofits and other social ventures with combined revenues of $700 billon, while controlling assets valued at $2 trillion. This is a "seemingly substantial arsenal to tackle problems in crucial areas such as education, poverty, and health care" (Silverthorne, 2008). Brooks (2008a) also notes that the United States is a Nonprofit Nation because, in addition to the 1.5 million nonprofits, there are approximately 9 million grassroots organizations. This equals 30 nonprofit links per citizen and lots of potential charitable giving.

Giving USA 2008 reports that charitable giving in 2007 reached an all-time high at $306.39 billion with $54.12 billion or 17.7 percent of these contributions provided by foundations, corporations and corporate giving programs. Excluding charitable giving to foundations and for religion, there are social sector organizations in the fields of the environment and animals; international affairs; arts, culture, and humanities; public-society benefit; health; human services; and education that received $152.61 billion or 49.8 percent of all charitable giving to support their missions. Grant professionals play a pivotal role in this sector and will continue to add value to nonprofits by attaining funding to make change in people's lives a reality.

Social entrepreneurs are compassionate individuals committed to social change that will positively impact the quality of life for their targeted population through an innovative venture. This process is similar to the responsibilities of grant professionals who seek out opportunities through research, cultivating the donor/funding source, and coordinating the proposal development process. They work individually or with other team members to plan projects, manage grant funds (accountability), and determine the impact on the target populations (outcome) through innovative approaches resulting in change.

The Skoll Foundation offers a definition of social entrepreneurship based on the perspective of Bill Drayton, CEO, chair and founder of Ashoka, who says, "Social entrepreneurs are not content just to give a fish or teach how to fish. They will not rest until they have revolutionized the fishing industry." Grant professionals strive for impact resulting in meaningful social change by ensuring their organizations obtain the necessary resources required to make positive social change a reality.

Social entrepreneurs work not only in nonprofits but also in citizen groups, the private sector, and the government sector, as do grant professionals. Some defining characteristics of social entrepreneurs are noted in the table below, which are mirrored by those of grant professionals.

Characteristics	Social Entrepreneurs	Grant Professionals
Mission Driven	●	●
Innovative	●	●
Change Agents	●	●
Visionary	●	●
Problem Solvers	●	●
Outcome Focused	●	●
Commitment to a Social Cause	●	●
Concern for Others Less Fortunate	●	●

Brooks (2008b) notes that community awareness and social concern are psychological attributes of social entrepreneurs. These are attributes that grant professionals also possess, and are essential for carrying out their responsibilities in identifying, securing and being held accountable for the grant funding bestowed on organizations within the social sector.

The Impact of Social Entrepreneurs

The impact of social entrepreneurship is felt at all levels of society, in both big and small ways. An example of perhaps the biggest impact is that of Muhammad Yunus, a Bangladeshi economics professor and 2006 Nobel Peace Prize winner. In 1976, Yunus conceived a new kind of bank focusing on micro-loans. These loans resulted in transforming a small rural village in Bangladesh, lifting residents out of poverty by helping women entrepreneurs who were basket makers to become self-sufficient. Seven years later in 1983, the project became the Grameen Bank. By 2005, the project grew to 1,500 branches in nearly 50,000 villages, encompassing 70 percent of the country and maintaining a 99 percent loan repayment rate. Today, loans are also made for housing, education, and other basic needs (Brooks, 2008b).

Webber (2008) noted that Yunus's newest social entrepreneurial project is to enlist companies whose mission is to change the world. Webber states, "Social businesses will offer solutions that work in addressing societal problems and, at the same time, create solutions that are self-sustaining." Yunus plans to lift 100 million people out of poverty. Although there probably are not many grant professionals who strive for this level of impact, grant professionals create many self-sustaining solutions for societal problems throughout their careers, and thus leave a real legacy.

The Urban Institute reported that wages and salaries totaled $489.4 billion compared to $318.9 billion in 1998. It was also noted that in 2005, 12.9 million people worked for nonprofits, up from 11.1 million in 1998. From these statistics, it is obvious that grant professionals can also be viewed, if they choose, as a part of a growing number of social-sector organizations changing the world for the betterment of mankind.

Conclusion

The intent of this article was to challenge grant professionals to look beyond a traditional definition and see their role as an ever-expanding one comparable to the growing trend of social entrepreneurship. This movement empowered social entrepreneurs who play a pivotal role in addressing and solving some of the world's most pressing social problems. This social entrepreneur perspective is just one mechanism that the grants profession can use in its quest for increased visibility and a higher level of credibility as an integral profession within today's competitive field of fundraising.

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Getting Your Organization Grant-Ready

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Abstract

Executives and board members of organizations that have not had established grant departments often erroneously view grant development as an activity limited to proposal writing. A competent grant professional's role is to assess the organization's grant-readiness and actively get involved in organizational development activities that pertain to grant seeking. The Grant Professionals Certification Institute identifies "Knowledge of organizational development as it pertains to grant seeking" as a validated measurable competency and skill for a grant professional. This paper discusses two essential components of this competency as identified by the Grant Professionals Certification Institute. The first is assessing the organization's capacity for grant seeking and readiness to obtain funding for implementation of specific projects, and the second is identifying methods for assisting organizations to implement practices that advance grant-readiness.

Introduction

In times of shrinking budgets and unstable markets, grants become increasingly important and central to non-profits. As organizations struggle to survive and turn every stone to look for funding, expectations of the grant professionals are much higher. Proposal writers, managers and consultants are hired by many organizations to use their "magic wand" to generate dollars and fill budgetary gaps. In times of financial uncertainty, increased competition, and increasingly savvy funders, it becomes more critical than ever for the grant professional to help the organization assess its grant-readiness before churning out proposals to every request for proposal available.

This paper explores two central ideas of getting an organization grant-ready. First, it identifies criteria that a grant professional can use to assess an organization's capacity and readiness for grant seeking and grant implementation. Second, it explores strategies a professional can use in assisting organizations to perform mission-focused planning and implementation of practices that advance organizational grant-readiness.

Assessing Organizational Capacity for Grant Development

Grant seeking is often confused, even by non-profit executives, as the limited activity of writing a proposal to get funds for the organization or for a specific project. While proposal submission is a crucial step in the process of grant seeking, the grant professional's role is to educate the board and executives about the "3 Rs of grant development," the 1) Relationships (contacts and opportunities), 2) Research (geography and fit with funder) and 3) wRiting of the proposal (writing skills). It behooves the grant professional to assess the organization's capacity to seek, implement and manage grants as well as communicate a thoughtful assessment to the organization's executives before initiating the proposal development process.

Grant seeking, implementation and management is a *targeted* process that involves planning, researching, cultivating relationships, fundraising principles and monitoring. To facilitate this process, the authors have developed a "Checklist For Success" (opposite) that can be an important tool in assessing the grant-readiness of an organization. Most of the items on the checklist are requested as attachments or proposal components by many funders in order to meet the guidelines and/or application requirements. When an organization does not have some of the items listed, this can become an organizational "to-do list" in order to build capacity and address needed infrastructure issues.

Assessing Grant-Readiness for Specific Projects

While assessment of organizational capacity utilizing the checklist opposite is helpful for reviewing the organization's preparedness to seek grant funding, grant-readiness may vary from funder to funder and project to project. For instance, an organization with the basic infrastructure described above may be ready to pursue small community foundation grants, but it may not be prepared to make a timely submission or have the capability to implement and/or manage large federal or state grants. In assessing the organization's readiness to obtain funding and implement specific projects, several additional factors should be considered:

Checklist for Success: Locate the following documents and keep multiple copies available to ensure grant-readiness!
1. 501 (c) (3) determination letter from the IRS
2. Annual Report
3. Brochures
4. EIN/tax ID #
5. DUNS #/National Information Management System (NIMS) registration
6. Evaluation/outcomes/performance measures
7. Future funding statement for continuation funding/sustainability (including list of pending proposals and/or awarded grants)
8. Organization's history including year established, number/qualifications of staff, programs, awards, accreditations/certifications, licensures, accomplishments
9. Calendar of Events
10. List of board of directors/ trustees, titles and affiliations, contact info
11. List of officers and contact information
12. List of management and contact information
13. Map of target area
14. Minutes of board meetings and resolutions for past year
15. Most recent audit
16. Most recent financial statement and 990 form and state filings
17. Newsletters
18. Current strategic/business plan
19. Organizational structure flow-chart/table of organization
20. Current project and organization budgets and budget narratives
21. Recent newsletter articles, newspaper clippings, evaluations or reviews
22. Resumes and/or job descriptions of current and/or proposed staff
23. Sample letters of support/commitment & fax cover for letters of support
24. Target population demographics and needs (research- or evidence-based)
25. Mission and/or vision statement
26. Certificate of incorporation
27. Bylaws
28. Logic Models for programs
29. Registration on www.GRANTS.GOV for all federal grants

- *Organizational Priority:* Alignment of the project to the organization's mission and strategic plan should be the foundation of any proposal development process. A dollar-driven project that does not further the organization's mission or deflects from the mission is not worth pursuing, because such a project can not be successful and sustainable, even if funded (Martin, 2000). During difficult financial times when budgets are shrinking and organizations are grappling for survival, it can be easy for frenzied board members to lose sight of organizational priorities. They might be enticed by grant revenues to encourage proposal submissions for projects that may not be in alignment with the mission and vision of the organization (i.e., "mission drift"). In such times, it becomes the responsibility of the grant professional to educate key stakeholders and to keep the process client-centered and mission-focused.

- *Project Ownership:* Grant development needs to be a team effort for the project to be successful. "The grant professional should NEVER be the sole author unless he or she is also the project director, the recipient of the service, and the provider of the service all rolled into one person." (Renninger *et al.,* 2007). A design team comprising subject matter experts, administrators, fiscal managers and grant professionals as facilitators is the best model for development of large projects (Renninger, *et al.,* 2007). At the same time, to bring a great idea to fruition, it is crucial that the project have a champion who is an expert in the field, is enthused about the project and is willing to commit the time and resources needed in implementation of the project if funded (Herbkersman and Hibbert-Jones, 2003). An effective technique that promotes project ownership and development is "Compression Planning and Storyboarding" (developed by Jerry McNellis, www.CompressionPlanning.com).

- *Organizational Readiness to Undertake the Project:* Even if the project is in perfect alignment with the vision and mission and has a committed champion, sometimes the organization still may not be grant-ready due to lack of personnel, space, time, equipment, volunteers, or other resources needed to complete the project (Martin, 2000). Successful proposals are the result of careful planning and design that will not only win the grant, but will also permit successful implementation of the project. For most large state and federal programs, project planning and development must begin several months in advance to ensure a thorough proposal that meets deadlines. These large programs typically give a turnaround time of only 45-60 days (Renninger, *et al.,* 2007). A proposal assembled in a hurry or without proper planning at the front end can result in poor project management and inability to deliver

intended results in the implementation stage, hurting future funding opportunities (Brumbach and Villadsen, 2002).

● *Funder's Priorities:* Before the design team and the grant development staff spend a significant amount of time developing a proposal, the grant professional must review the funder's priorities and mission to ensure that the organization's project goals fulfill the funder's vision and mission (Brumbach and McGee, 1995). Just as the grant-seeking organization has a mission and clientele that it strives to serve, the grant-making agency also has a mission that guides its activities. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the grant professional to research the funder's priorities in assessing if the funder is a suitable match for the project (Harvey, 1999).

● *A Sound Evaluation and Sustainability Plan:* As with any savvy investor, funders like to invest in projects that produce measurable results, make the intended impact, and are sustainable. A project that does not have a sound evaluation plan with measurable outcomes or the means to sustain itself after the course of the grant is not grant-ready and not worth the investment of time and energy.

Practices that Advance Grant-Readiness

In addition to managing the grant development process, it is the role of the grant professional to advance the grant-readiness of the organization by implementing strategies that support and strengthen the organization's ability to apply for and secure grant funds. Some of the key strategies a professional can use are:

● *Educate the Staff and Administration about the Grants Process:* One of the most common erroneous assumptions made by grant professionals is that the administration and staff of organizations understand the grants world and its various requirements. While some key administrators may have been involved with grant-funded projects, it is not true of the majority. To assume that a clinician or a faculty member understands what grants entail is equivalent to assuming that the grant professional has the expertise and knowledge of the clinician's or the faculty's work.

   The responsibility of training the administration and staff about grants and the grant professional's role and expectations lies with the grant professional. The grant professional must educate the staff about the importance of the team approach in the proposal development process and about the importance of assessing each project's grant-readiness before proceeding. In institutions with limited grant history, this educational process might take time and continuous effort by the grant professional, yet it is critical to invest

that time and effort to advance grant-readiness in the organization. Several methods, such as presentations about the grants process, regular newsletters from the grants office and grant trainings for the staff, might facilitate this educational process.

- *Annual Planning of the Grants Agenda:* An effective strategy in advancing the organization's grant-readiness is involvement of the board and executives in developing an annual grants agenda based on the organizational strategic plan and institutional priorities (Herbkersman and Hibbert-Jones, 2003). All opportunities cannot be planned at the beginning of the year and may be initiated due to a sudden emergence of a pressing need or an opportunity presented by a funder. However, an agenda dictating the major projects and anchored in organizational priorities helps the organization stay true to its mission and allows for enough planning time for critical projects (Martin, 2000).

- *Funder Stewardship:* An important step in advancing organizational grant-readiness is cultivating professional relationships with the grantors and maintaining consistent open communication. Funders who have supported the organization have a stake in the project's progress and should be kept informed with regular progress reports, press clippings, newsletters and invitations to events. They should not be forgotten until the next funding cycle (Seltzer, 2001). The board and executives should maintain a development mindset and actively participate in funder cultivation (Brumbach and Villadsen, 2002). However, it is crucial to develop and maintain good communication within the organization among the development office, executives, and board members to ensure against duplication of efforts that might portray the organization in a poor light to the funder.

These practices, combined with the "Checklist For Success" discussed earlier, can help the organization become grant-ready.

Conclusion

The grant professional must assess an organization's preparedness to seek, implement, and manage grant-funded projects and to implement practices that advance its readiness. While the "Checklist For Success" is an important starting point in assessment of organizational preparedness to seek grant funding, grant-readiness may vary from project to project and funder to funder. Therefore, the grant professional, working with other key players, has the ongoing responsibility of assessing each project's applicability and readiness to obtain grant funding. Alignment of the organization's annual grants agenda to the institutional strategic plan and priorities, education of the administration and staff about the

grants process, and cultivation of funders are some of the strategies a grant professional may use in advancing any organization's grant-readiness.

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Moving Out of the "Stranger Pile": Relationship Building for Grant Writers

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Abstract

The "stranger pile" is what a foundation might call a group of incoming, unsolicited proposals from organizations that are completely new to foundation officers. These organizations have never initiated contact through a phone call, an email inquiry, or any other form of contact. Proposals in the stranger pile receive little, if any, consideration. The best way to get out of the stranger pile is to research first, strategically introduce an organization to the foundation, meet in person, and listen to the foundation's needs, and respect the time of all involved in the proposal process.

Introduction

Many fund development professionals look back on seasoned careers, think of those very first requests they sent out and realize a little more relationship-building finesse would have been useful prior to submitting a proposal to prospective funders. Nearly every grant professional has rushed past a relationship-building opportunity at one time or another. Consider the over-eager submitter or the strapped-for-cash startup that sends the same boilerplate proposal out to seven foundations with which they have never made contact. Consider the 20-year seasoned non-profit executive, who calls a funder with a question regarding the proposal, makes contact with a board member and then hangs up the phone without a proper introduction describing the organization. These individuals all missed a valuable chance to jump out of the stranger pile, and into the relationship zone.

The Stranger Pile

The "stranger pile" is what a foundation might call a group of incoming, unsolicited proposals from organizations that are completely new to the foundation officers. These organizations have never initiated contact

through a phone call, an email inquiry, or any other form of contact. Proposals in the stranger pile will receive little, if any, consideration.

Soliciting much-needed grant funding can be a situation that understandably brings out the nervous Nellie or the eager beaver in everyone. This is just the problem – asking for money causes discomfort to surface in many people. For every one unsolicited stranger-proposal an organization sends to a private foundation, be sure that the foundation has received 100 more unknowns and placed them in the stranger pile, too. Likewise, for every pile of unknown grant applications in a funder's inbox, there is a pool of familiar names – organizations the foundation knows and trusts.

In some cases, that trust can gain the proposal special consideration or attention from the funder. Along these lines, when millions of dollars are on the line, special consideration in any amount is worth making an effort to achieve. Recently, after a Pacific Northwest non-profit submitted an application to a foundation with whom a strong relationship had been built, the foundation's program officer made a visit to the organization to discuss an application for a two-million dollar project, taking time to guide the applicant after the proposal was submitted. The purpose of this special attention was to gain a better understanding of the proposal and suggest revision before the final presentation to the foundation's trustees. The proposal was given a more thorough consideration than many other applications, simply because of the strong relationship between the foundation and the applicant. The applicant received extra feedback and clarification, and was allowed to submit additional supporting documents to the proposal package. The program officer provided candid, targeted guidance for the strategy most likely to impress the executive board members. Relationship-building leads to more careful consideration and guidance, and can sometimes lead to extraordinary consideration.

Moving Out of the Stranger Pile

While proposals from applicants whose names are familiar will be more likely to receive full consideration, John H. West, Executive Director of Corporate, Foundation and Major Gifts at Seattle Pacific University, cautions that there is no straightforward, cookie-cutter approach to becoming a familiar name to a funding officer. Some foundation offices maintain irregular hours and most program officers are on the road, making face-to-face visits with grantees and potential grantees with whom they already have relationships. West says, "If I feel there is a real fit, based on thorough research into the foundation's interests, my first impulse is to make a phone call … depending on that response, if I am in the region, I'll make an appointment, or simply stop by for a visit." J. West (personal communication, August 8, 2008).

Many organizations will hesitate to book an appointment with an unknown person. If that is the case, West continues, "Don't be intimidated by large foundations, or the appointment-making process. Most funders, with the exception of federal foundations, will be OK with you stopping by if you happen to be in the area." J. West (personal communication, August 8, 2008). Even if the person you intend to meet is out, introducing yourself to front-line staff is important, too.

The First Step

Beginning a working relationship with the foundation's front-line staff can be the key to developing a working relationship with the foundation's officers. Front-line and administrative staff often have valuable advice on proposal development, and access to recent information that has not yet been released or updated on the foundation's website. Their unique insider take means developing a pre-proposal relationship with front-line staff is as important as developing relationships with more senior positions at the foundation.

To take this front-line relationship to the next level, request the email or direct phone number of the program officer, executive director, or president of the board of the foundation. Make the initial contact to the foundation a meeting request. According to David Derbyshire, program coordinator for the UK-based Hamilton Community Foundation's *Growing Roots, Strengthening Neighbourhoods* program, the relationship made possible by actually being face-to-face with a funder is so much more intimate than reading about what they are doing. Face-to-face time is how David does his work at the foundation, and how he learns about applicants.

Increasing the Success Ratio

Organizations that never send out a stranger pile proposal typically list a higher success ratio for grants awarded, according to The Fundraising School at Indiana University. A rule of thumb to begin a relationship with a foundation is to familiarize the staff of the foundation with the agency's name and tagline. If the name of the organization and its tagline have been spoken at that office (ideally by the executive director) before the proposal arrives, it can open the minds of those who will read the proposal and cause them to be more positive toward it.

Seeing the value that an organization's program can provide to the foundation is key before the first meeting, West says. Doing research and homework allows an applicant to be as sure as possible that their programs would be an added value to the foundation's purposes. West tells a story of his visit to Weyerhaeuser for a meeting he scheduled to formally thank the foundation for a grant. The foundation officer turned

the meeting around on West, and insisted on thanking him in front of the rest of the meeting attendees. The foundation officer explained that the foundation exists for distinct purposes, and is legally obligated to give out a set amount of funds only for those purposes. Organizations whose projects match the foundation's unique purposes and take the initiative to make an introduction actually enable the foundation to live out its purpose. "It's about having the mindset that your program is bringing the foundation added value, and allowing the foundation to realize the goals they intend to fund," West concludes. J. West (personal communication, August 8, 2008).

The Importance of Listening

Understanding how an organization's program could contribute to the work of a foundation requires organizations to do their detective work. Listening should be the primary method for uncovering the purposes of the foundation. West talks about how listening to the funder (either verbally, or through written materials they provide) is the homework. "Many times, we don't spend enough time listening," West cautions. He has taken the approach of specifically asking the foundation's representatives for an initial meeting to discuss *their* interests, not the interests of the organization he is representing. "We let them know that we are interested in learning more about them, and that based on our research, we believe we can find a program that will meet the needs of the foundation … that we would like to hear the kind of work they enjoy funding, and the kind of lasting impact they hope to have." This, West advises, is what the initial contact should be about, and understanding this has lead him to understand how to meet funders' needs, instead of the other way around. J. West (personal communication, August 8, 2008).

The end of the conversation is as important as listening throughout, West mentions. "If, after learning more, we see that we need more development in order to be able to execute the missions of the foundation, we let them know we are working towards serving their causes and interests in the best way, and look forward to applying when we've developed the best plan to meet the foundation's priorities. It's simple mutual respect of the relationship being built with the funder to let them know what direction the potential proposal is headed." J. West (personal communication, August 8, 2008).

Conclusion

All strategies aside, in the fascinating world of grant funding there are no guarantees. Yet it is critical for an organization to move from being an unknown to a known name before submitting a proposal. This will keep the proposal out of the stranger pile category. The other relationship-

building tactics (long lunches, site visits) will follow. This strategy will prevent wasting valuable time and money on a proposal attempt that ends up in the stranger pile, and thus the recycle bin. Further, some foundations limit the number of attempts an organization can make *per annum.* Thus, a project may be in a waiting pattern of a year or longer before the agency can attempt another proposal.

A true relationship-based grant development approach requires grant-seekers to practice more strategic relationship-building and networking than actual writing of proposals. The direct financial results of laying the groundwork of a relationship with a grant-maker before submitting come with time, but the decrease in proposals ending up in the stranger pile will take effect immediately. A relationship-focused approach that respects the time and interests of both the funder and the applicant results in higher submission-to-success rates and a larger bottom line for the applicant.

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Biographical Information

Laura Lundahl has been working in the non-profit industry since 1997. She has experience writing winning proposals, teaching the fund development process, and reviewing and scoring applications for private and federal funding, both as an employee and as a consultant in states throughout the country, and in DC. Currently, Laura serves in academic and advancement grant development at Seattle Pacific University, a former client of Iden Advancement. Workshops Laura teaches at the Center for Nonprofit Success and elsewhere includes topics such as federal funding, researching grant proposals, understanding RFPs, applying for federal awards, and creating evaluation plans. Laura lives in Seattle. When not researching a grant-maker or writing a proposal, she enjoys involvement in her church, community work, cooking, digital photography and design, fitness, snow sports, and considers family her highest priority.

All in the Family: A Mother and Daughter Use the Same Skills for Large and Midsize Employers

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Abstract

The authors examine non-profits by size and then look at the key differences and similarities of non-profit agencies when pursuing and preparing grants. Differences in institutional policies and procedures, the process of proposal preparation, and the resources available to grant professionals are explored within the context of the grant-seeking activity at two non-profit agencies in Kansas City, Missouri, one classified as midsize and the other as large. Although the procedures and resources vary tremendously at the two agencies, grant professionals use the same skills at both.

Introduction

Larger and smaller non-profit institutions alike need grants. Regardless of institutional size, the skilled grant professional shapes a proposal that not only persuasively describes the particular program and its benefits but also honors the mission of the institution and fulfills its needs. While the infrastructures of larger and smaller organizations influence the type, number, and size of proposals, all grant professionals use the same skills to craft each proposal. As grant professionals, the co-authors use the same skill set in developing and writing proposals. As mother and daughter, the co-authors are uniquely able to share details of their organizations and provide each other with honest feedback.

From 1997 through mid-2008, Cynthia A. Robinson wrote proposals for Truman Medical Center, the "safety net" hospital in Kansas City, and helped raise more than $28 million in grants. She was part of an

11-person team that also raised funds from special events as well as individual and corporate donations. As Director of Grants, she was in charge of private-source grants and coordinated with another employee who oversaw government grant activities.

Marcella Robinson McMurray, new to the grants profession, has worked since 2006 at Mattie Rhodes Center, a Kansas City non-profit agency providing mental health and social services as well as arts programming to a primarily Latino clientele. As Development Associate, she focuses a portion of her time on grants and also works on marketing, public relations, specials events, individual donations, website maintenance, and administrative tasks.

In many ways, both are typical grant professionals: specializing for a large employer and juggling disparate tasks for a smaller employer. Both have professional experiences typical of many AAGP members.

There are key differences between larger and smaller non-profit agencies when pursuing grant opportunities. There are differences in formal policies and procedures, speed and flexibility in preparing a proposal, the resources available and the responsibilities of the grant professional. The focus of this article is a comparison of these two non-profits in Kansas City, Missouri: Truman Medical Center, a large non-profit healthcare provider, and Mattie Rhoades Center, a midsize non-profit health and social services provider.

Differences Between Non-profit Employers Based on Size

Categorizing Nonprofits by Size

The literature of the non-profit sector seems to have no generally accepted definition of large, midsize, or small non-profits. For data collection and analysis, the National Center for Charitable Statistics of the Urban Institute uses eight size classifications (A through H), based on IRS registration and Form 990 filings. In May 2006, nearly half (48.8%) of all Public Charities filing a Form 990 were Category A, with revenue less than $100,000. Only 0.5% of Public Charities were Category H, more than $100,000,000 in revenue. Many Category H agencies are universities or hospitals.

The shape of the non-profit financial world is a pyramid. By *number of groups*, Category A (under $100,000) non-profits are the broad base and Category H ($100,000,000+) are the narrow peak. By *revenue or assets*, Category H non-profits are the base and Category A the peak.

In the non-profit fiscal pyramid, Mattie Rhodes Center ranks in the middle by number of groups and by revenue or assets. In fiscal 2006, Mattie Rhodes Center reported revenue of $1,799,121, placing it in Category E, the fifth largest of the eight size categories ($1 – $5 million in revenue). In fiscal 2006, Truman Medical Center reported revenue

of $327,121,970, placing it in Category H (more than $100 million in revenue). Thus, Mattie Rhodes Center is midsize and Truman Medical Center is large.

Literature Review

Some publications examine non-profits of one size in a particular context, such as capital and endowment campaigns by large non-profits (Minnesota Council on Foundations, 2008), needs and challenges for boards of directors at midsize non-profits (Ostrower, 2008), and the importance of very small grassroots associations (Toepler, 2003). These articles, although they discuss some aspects of fund raising, focus on organizations of only one size.

Articles that compare non-profits based on size do not usually focus on grant seeking. Recent reports that segmented non-profits by size examined fiscal fitness (Keating, 2008) and financial trends (Nelson, 2007) but not specific grant-seeking practices.

Peer-reviewed literature in a research database yielded articles that compared non-profits based on size relative to monitoring costs (Pearson, 1998), executive compensation (Oster, 1998), returns on fund-raising expenditures (Sargeant, 1999), United Way and government funding (Stone, 2001), and change and continuity (Cornforth, 2002). Innovation and organizational size have been studied repeatedly, and some articles include non-profits as well as for-profit businesses (Damanpour, 1992; Damanpour, 1996; Camisón-Zornoza, 2004).

Grant-seeking behavior in midsize and large non-profits has not been the subject of any published article.

Institutional Approvals and Formal Policies and Procedures

Grant Personnel

The infrastructures of large and midsize non-profits vary greatly. Truman Medical Center (TMC) has 3,500 employees, including 11 in its Charitable Foundation, which functions as the hospital's fund-raising department. The Charitable Foundation's director of grants focuses full-time on private-source grants and works closely with a hospital employee who is responsible for government-source grants. When a professional vacates a position, TMC or its Charitable Foundation hires a new individual with the necessary skills.

In contrast, midsize organizations like Mattie Rhodes Center (MRC) often are in flux. The Development Department changes each time an employee leaves, with more or fewer individuals dividing the duties. Currently, MRC employs two full-time development professionals who can dedicate only a portion of their time to grant development. The agency's total employment is around 35 persons.

Policies and Procedures

TMC has policies and procedures that were drafted by its two grant professionals and approved by several layers of administrators. The policies and procedures summarize how to initiate, prepare and submit grant proposals. The two dedicated grant professionals have the discretion to pursue a grant opportunity without formal permission when the hospital will not incur any new liability, but all other employees must fill out a form for approval to pursue any grant. The form requires signatures from three levels of administrators.

While MRC employees have no formal procedures and have more flexibility to pursue new opportunities, the lack of a formal process can sometimes complicate matters. While anyone in the organization can suggest pursuing a grant opportunity, the director of development and executive director decide if the development professionals have the time to prepare a proposal. On occasion, program personnel have been asked to write the proposal. This flexibility allows the organization to pursue a worthwhile opportunity while the development staff members are working on other projects, but the proposal may not be consistent with previous proposals and can reach a grantor without going through the development department.

Approval to Submit

Without formal policies or even informal expectations, it is easy and quick to pursue and submit proposals at MRC. There are no complicated levels of approval. In contrast, TMC policy requires that three levels of administrators approve pursuing a proposal: the department director, associate administrator, and the head of the hospital campus where the project would take place. Although in many cases this process is time-consuming, it assures that all relevant personnel agree. The hospital personnel reach consensus and maintain continuity.

Speed and Flexibility of Proposal Preparation

Approval and Consensus

Large organizations such as TMC are not built for speed. When left to percolate through in-boxes unassisted, the paperwork that approves pursuing a grant opportunity can take weeks. However, when speed is important, the grant professional can usher the proposal through much more quickly, sometimes in a matter of hours. This requires dedicated attention from the proposal writer, who must focus on the process rather than on preparing the urgent proposal. Often, accelerating the process is a matter of having the right connections with the right hospital administrators – as well as pure luck in whether they are instantly

available. However, the levels of approval assure agreement by everyone who will be responsible for implementing a grant if it is funded.

With fewer staff needed to approve a proposal, midsize organizations can prepare and send off proposals relatively quickly. Many times it is only the development personnel and one program staff who agree on the proposal and receive endorsement from the executive director. At MRC, with around 35 employees, finding the necessary staff and arranging to meet with them is also fairly easy; and very often meetings about proposals spring up at the coffee machine or lunch table. Yet consensus can sometimes mean consensus between two people involved in the process. Without set policies regarding approval and consensus, an important person might be overlooked or might not be reached before the deadline.

Preparation of Proposal

Like many midsize non-profits, MRC can submit a grant quickly, even finding a funding opportunity and finishing a proposal in one day. The executive director puts a great deal of trust in the grant professional when proposals are submitted without his formal approval, as many are. This trust allows great flexibility, including last-minute changes. Yet the danger for midsize agencies is that there may be no clear consensus about which grants to pursue, how each grant relates to the mission, and whether each program is growing in the right direction.

TMC requires approval of program personnel before a proposal is submitted – which can take longer than the quick turnaround of MRC – and the first draft of proposals may be prepared by program staff, filling in a template provided by the grant professional. The grant proposal writer and program personnel have to educate each other because, although the TMC grant proposal writer has a good general knowledge of the hospital, she may know nothing about a particular department. The collaboration between program personnel and grant proposal writer must be tight. By contrast, at MRC everyone knows one another, and everyone has a good grasp of all the agency's programs, so there is much less for the writer to learn when preparing a proposal.

Resources available at different size institutions

Personnel

Large institutions have many staff members with different expertise who are available for help or advice. Those with expertise in clinical areas, data collection, outcomes, budgets and proposal preparation each contribute to a grant proposal. With 11 individuals specializing in different aspects of development, at TMC each development professional can hone his or her focus. Grant professionals are free to concentrate on grants without the distraction of other duties. They can pursue

professional development, attending classes and conventions. Without the size and personnel limitations of midsize organizations, fundraising needs other than grants – annual appeals, major gifts, special events, donor cultivation – can be met.

On the other hand, midsize organizations benefit from the absence of levels of administration: grant proposal writers and development professionals are often closer to the program personnel, interacting regularly and talking about things other than grants. They may see programs in action, interacting with clients and program patrons. The proposal writer learns about the entire agency – at MRC, counseling as well as arts programming – in a comprehensive way that is not possible at a behemoth such as TMC.

Physical Resources

A fund raising database can make a huge difference to a non-profit. TMC utilizes the well-established Raiser's Edge™ software for grants and fund raising data. TMC trains each development employee to use it; one full-time employee manages the database. MRC has kept donor information in a Microsoft Access™ worksheet for years, and tracks almost everything in Excel™ spreadsheets. Software to track grants and fundraising has until recently been beyond MRC's budget, although a recent capacity-building grant should help.

Large non-profits must track a tremendous amount of information. TMC strives for thorough documentation in both hard copy and electronically. TMC has bulging filing cabinets, a user-friendly filing system, sufficient electronic storage and a subscription to a database of local foundation and corporate grantors. Between the in-house Raiser's Edge™ and the purchased database of local grantors, the TMC director of grants has a wealth of information about past and potential grantors.

In contrast, midsize agencies such as MRC too often make do with donations and gifts they receive, with boxes of old floppy disks and well-worn file folders. MRC has the basics and makes do with the tools at its disposal, which are, for the most part, Microsoft Office applications. Like many other midsize agencies, MRC does not have any subscriptions to funding databases so it relies primarily on free Internet and library resources to research grant sources.

Relationships

Both TMC and MRC often collaborate with other institutions, although the reputation of a bigger institution can make collaboration easier to arrange. As grant professionals know very well, collaboration is nearly always a plus in a grant application.

Close relationships with grantors, whether private sources or government agencies, can occur at a non-profit of any size. In cultivating relationships, large and midsize agencies may be equally effective, although success for a midsize agency may depend on having a staff

person who has time and enthusiasm. At MRC, the executive director spends a tremendous amount of energy cultivating all types of community relationships, including those with potential grantors. This is not true of all midsize agencies. At TMC, many different employees have relationships with foundation officers, foundation board members, individual donors, government agencies, corporate officers and other potential sources of grants. Although these relationships can help TMC find grant opportunities and submit strong, focused applications, it is a challenge to keep everyone informed and working together rather than at cross-purposes.

Relationships within an organization also serve as an important resource: depth within a large organization such as TMC allows employees to split up the labor and ask for backup from colleagues. A vacation, sickness, or maternity leave can strain the few employees at a small agency such as MRC. Yet the relationships between a few development professionals repeatedly working as a team can be very strong and such collaboration and proximity often help. Working in one large room, the development director, development associate and the individual formerly in charge of individual donor cultivation at MRC are in constant contact. In contrast, the 11 staffers of the TMC Charitable Foundation meet only once monthly, because they work at two campuses.

Conclusion

Despite the differences between large and midsize grant-seeking organizations, the responsibilities of grant professionals at any size institution are remarkably similar. Ultimately, the best interests of the organization and the specific program are at the heart of the proposal, with the final product being a grant proposal that promotes the mission and is feasible, measurable, and written well. Feedback and changes, whether from administrative or program personnel, should be incorporated. The final arbiter of the tone and content of the proposal is the head of the organization, or his or her delegate, who also decides which grants to pursue and what to request. While structural differences in proposal preparation – achieving consensus among many persons versus one or two individuals crafting a proposal – and the process can be strikingly different, the goal of any proposal is to raise the funds necessary to support positive programs and initiatives.

As mother and daughter, the co-authors can share with honesty the strengths and limitations of their respective organizations. The intimacy of the relatively small grant community of Kansas City and the occasional collaboration between TMC and MRC has only enhanced that sharing. As this paper demonstrates, glimpsing the processes of another agency prompted each of them to analyze the similarities to and differences from their own agencies. Although they tailor their grant-development

and proposal-writing activities to the resources available to them, they use the same talents – resourcefulness, creativity, persistence and flexibility – to marshal agency support and win grant awards.

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Biographical Information

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Cynthia A. Robinson earned a B.A. from Pomona College and a J.D. from the University of Kansas. After practicing law for two years she switched to non-profit management, winning her first grant in 1981. From 1997 through mid-2008 she was the Director of Grants at the Truman Medical Center Charitable Foundation in Kansas City, Missouri, responsible for private, non-governmental grants for the "safety net" hospital system for the city and county. In 11 years she helped Truman Medical Center raise $28 million in grants. She joined the AAGP in 2003. In September 2008, she became the Foundation Director for the American Heart Association – Midwest Affiliate. cynthiaarobinson@gmail.com

Avoiding Mission Sway in Grant Seeking

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Abstract

This article identifies the steps agencies can take in order to find appropriate funding to support their mission and activities. In order to maintain a strong mission, the agency leaders must articulate their vision to all levels of employees in a way that builds cohesion and direction. As these leaders begin to seek funding for the projects and activities of the organization, they need to differentiate between which costs should be met through fee for service, private individual donations, and grant seeking. Many agencies lose sight of their missions through chasing funding opportunities. With the proliferation of information coming through various listserves and email networks, project and agency leaders are often tempted by this low-hanging fruit. This activity can lead to mission sway as leaders chase funding opportunities instead of funding partners. This article ties together the identification of needs and of funding partners. The information is supported by research and best-practice methods.

Introduction

The primary purpose of grant seeking is to garner funding to support the good works of an organization. The process is important and strategic and not one to be left to the occasional email notifications from the various groups that provide a weekly or monthly synopsis of the latest requests for proposals (RFPs). These RFP notification services are useful but should never serve as the only manner of grant seeking. Responding only to RFP notices leads to organizations chasing the latest funding opportunity and not using a strategic, planned approach. This chase can lead to mission sway, whereby the organization begins to shift from its stated core purposes.

Mission sway is not a deliberate or singular event. The diffusion often happens through decisions made at the mid-management level without rigorous oversight from the organization's senior leaders. This is not to

say that program managers should not have decision-making authority. Rather, the premise is that the senior leaders of the organization have the responsibility for maintaining the integrity of the mission and vision and therefore, must ensure that all projects and programs fit well within the established core purposes. The grant professional must also have this same attentiveness to the mission and be able to articulate such to program managers during project funding discussions.

This article seeks to guide the grant professional in the quest for project funding while maintaining the integrity of the mission. The grant professional must understand the organization's needs for funding and help to articulate the mission and vision to the program managers, funders, and other stakeholders. When everyone is clear about the needs and mission, the grant professional's job becomes one of seeking the right partners and opportunities rather than reacting to the latest funding opportunity.

Identification of Funding Needs

The organization's mission and vision are developed to provide guidance and direction to all stakeholders. Since the goal of the mission statement is to communicate the core purpose of the organization, it fits that the mission statement is the one document that should be referenced for all important grant-seeking decisions. The mission and vision also serve to rally the stakeholders around the goals and efforts of the organization (Williams, 2008). The first step in avoiding mission sway, therefore, when evaluating the latest RFP is to ask, "Will this project support our mission?" A well-written mission statement, based on the true values of the organization, leads to predictability and stability (Miller, 2008). It sets the tone and provides direction for grant seeking.

After determining that the project meets the mission/vision test, the next step is to ensure the project will fall within the current organizational structure. Does this project fit into an existing department/division or will the agency need to create a new one? Again, the leaders must rely on their current documents and vision. Does the strategic plan contain flexibility for new plans or directions or does the plan keep the current structure stable for the foreseeable future?

The last step is to consider all the senior leaders when identifying funding leads. In addition to the organization's executive director or chief operating officer, the board of directors should have a say in the decision of what to pursue and when to pursue it. This group has the responsibility for oversight of the organization's direction and fiduciary compliance. It is reasonable, then, to expect that this group should also weigh in on the avenues taken, especially when this involves grant-funded activities.

Communication of Priorities

The decisions made by organizational leaders in determining the direction of the organization must be communicated to all stakeholders. Of course, this includes the employees, but others are often neglected in the communication loop. The decisions regarding direction and priorities are of little good if they only reside with the senior leaders. All levels of staff and volunteers must be involved, as those on the front lines will implement the ideas.

Some leaders believe that simply stating their views in general staff meetings or through an agency-wide email is sufficient communication. Many books and articles have been written on the topic of effective communication, and in general they all suggest that not everyone receives messages in the same manner. For instance, unlike paid employees, the volunteers and supporters of the organization may not read the internal documents and do not often hear directly from the CEO.

Thus, it is imperative that leaders regularly be in contact with managers and staff through emails, staff meetings, casual conversations, publications, newsletters, and annual reports. When the senior leaders communicate their vision and expectations, the program managers have a clear idea of which projects will be supported and which will be denied. Then, when program managers hear the great new idea for the fantastic new project from staff, it will either receive a go-ahead or be stopped by program managers before valuable time is wasted in its pursuit.

Making the Decision

When the agency has properly set its priorities and communicated them effectively to all stakeholders, the task of finding funding to support these priorities can take place. This stage includes the decision of what funding is necessary to support the ideas. Some costs can, and should, be written into the agency budget, as they are normal business expenses. Of course, if a funding opportunity presents itself for budgeted expenses, the grant seeker should pursue the prospect.

For example, textbooks would be a normal business expense for a school. The expenditure for new books would be written into the budget each year. Suppose then, that a parent of a student in this school happens to work for a publishing company and informs the school leaders that a grant opportunity exists for free textbooks. Commencing the grant-seeking process with this publishing company would be well within the best interests and mission of this organization. However, if the grant is not awarded, the school still has the money to purchase the textbooks, as it was an approved expense.

Many non-profit leaders welcome general operating support as the unrestricted funds allow for more versatility in use throughout the organization. This is an important focus of fundraising, and the focus lies in working with individual donors. Fewer foundations offer grants for general operating support, even though the need is great. According to the Ohio Grantmakers Forum's *Grantmaking Outlook for Ohio*, foundations in Ohio expect to see an increase in general operating support requests this year (2008). Similar trends can be expected throughout the U.S. However, general operating support is best met through fundraising and individual donors rather than through grant seeking.

Grant seeking is best used for program or project support. In 2008, Ohio foundations expect to give far more support to this category than to any other, which matches the national trends (Grantmaking Outlook for Ohio, 2008). Whether the organization is seeking to initiate or continue specific programs, the generally larger monetary contributions awarded through grants make grant seeking a good choice. An additional benefit to grant seeking is the ability to widen the community of funding partners.

Grant seeking is not simply sending a large number of proposals to a myriad of funders; it is the targeted partnership between a funder and the grant-seeking organization. To build any relationship, there must be a matching of ideals and objectives.

Seeking versus Responding

Grant seeking is very different than grant responding. Grant seeking entails building a relationship with various partners and stakeholders. The first step involves having a clear outline of project ideas. After the senior leaders have set the priorities, the project leaders and the grant professional should thoroughly discuss the ideas and create a short synopsis of what each project requires. This will serve as a "leave-behind" or marketing brochure for the funder. The format does not need to be flashy. A simple, well-written fact sheet giving a short overview of each project or program with a few bulleted outcomes, successes, or expected results will serve as talking points during the discussion and a reminder to the foundation officer afterward.

When the grant professional has a clear picture of the projects, he or she can begin to research foundations that support such activities. A good starting place is one of the many foundation search databases that are available. Many of these have a fee associated with them, but most main library branches offer some databases at no cost. The agency's board is also another good source of information, as board members often have knowledge of corporate foundations or other sources of grant

making. Grant-making professional organizations are another avenue, as is the Internet.

So, what about all of those email notification services that deliver a ton of RFPs to the inboxes of grant professionals, nonprofit leaders, and program managers on a regular basis? These notification systems have a definite place in grant seeking, but they should not be the sole tool in the grant seeker's kit. The primary difference is that simply responding to RFPs can lead the grant seeker to a funding opportunity that may or may not fit the mission of the organization.

The grant professional should be seeking funding partners and opportunities that match the organization's strategic vision. If the grant professional or program manager is clear about the projects and priorities, RFP notification services can be helpful in uncovering new or current funding partners. However, if the program manager seeks to modify a program (or worse, to create a whole new program or project) to fit the criteria of an RFP, then the proverbial tail wags the dog. It is through modifications and new projects in response to RFPs that mission sway can occur.

Conclusion

Grant seeking is a methodical process involving a number of steps and the input of people from various levels of the organization. The savvy grant seeker works to build relationships with funding organizations and responds to RFPs only when they meet the needs of the projects that have been identified as priorities. The chase becomes one of partners and relationships, not of the latest funding opportunity.

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Biographical Information

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Group Approach to Studying for the Grant Professional Certification Exam

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Abstract

Seven grant professionals, members of the Broward County, Florida Chapter of the American Association of Grant Professionals, formed a study group to prepare for the first Grant Professionals Certification Institute exam and discovered that the team experience generated unexpected yet gratifying results. While each grant professional recognized the benefits of certification, each had major concerns prior to the exam and was disappointed with the results of self-directed preparation. To remedy this, these professionals formed a study group, supplemented the Institute-supplied *Literature Review* with additional sources, created a comprehensive study guide, and supported one another throughout the preparation for the examination. The small-group construction of knowledge through collaborative and cooperative peer education was highly consistent with current theory of adult learning. The result was 100% success in passing the exam. These grant professionals recommend a group approach to studying for the certification exam.

Introduction

Professional certification can be an important method of demonstrating competence in a professional discipline. Because obtaining certification can have an impact on the course of a professional career, and because the typical certification exam is usually a wide-ranging test of knowledge in the field, preparing to take the exam can be stressful. A certification for grant professionals has been available only since October 2007, so most workers in the field do not have experience preparing for an exam of this type. This article will discuss why obtaining certification was so important to a group of grant professionals. It will analyze the study group experience and review current literature on adult learning to make a comparison with the reality of a group study experience.

The Decision to Obtain Certification

Group members had found it was important to obtain grant professional certification for many reasons. Each believed that the field of grantsmanship has emerged as a profession; certification would positively influence potential job marketability and make it easier for employers and clients to find qualified grant professionals. In addition, the group agreed certified grant developers can provide more breadth to potential employers. Employers and clients can avoid disappointment in their expectations, time, and money by using qualified grant professionals. Another shared belief was that certification presents the opportunity for grant development to stand out as a profession, increase stature among other professions, and influence authority. Certification may also offer an opportunity for grant development to gain recognition as a distinct, accountable profession with its own skill sets and knowledge base.

Apprehension about Learning and the Exam Experience

Once each member decided that obtaining certification was worth the effort and began reviewing books listed on the *GPCI Literature Review* (available on the AAGP Web site at www.go-aagp.org), each individual soon became frustrated by an inability to focus and maintain a study schedule.

    In addition, fears of personal and professional failure abounded. Most were taking the test with their peers and supervisors/employers. Discussion about the potential embarrassment of failing crept into the group and personal conversations. Financial pressures also created anxiety since expenses for the exam averaged $1,500 (with travel). There was a lot at stake.

Another fear-inducing factor was recollections of the pilot exam, distributed during the test development stage by GPCI. Those who had taken the pilot exam admitted they had had difficulty answering many of the questions.

The possibility of failing weighed heavily on the group, although collectively they had over 80 years of proposal writing experience. Those who were specialists expressed concern with the general knowledge expectation, because their experience was so focused. In addition, there was general test anxiety, since many had not studied for an exam in more than 20 years.

Additionally, this was the first time the exam was offered, so no one with experience was available to quell the group's fears. A list of main topics, titled *Validated Competencies and Skills* (available on the AAGP Web site at www.go-aagp.org) and the *GPCI Literature Review* provided direction; however, the extensive reading list also added to the feeling of apprehension. After all, the *GPCI Literature Review* was a 17-page document recommending numerous books and publications that would have cost well over $250 to purchase. It also represented hundreds of hours of reading, and there was no way to discern if some publications would be more helpful than others. The study preparation was challenging for busy grant professionals with pressing deadlines, volunteer commitments, and family obligations.

All these stress factors motivated the individuals to come together and form a study group. They recognized that together they could work through their test anxieties, learn from each other's work experiences, and divvy up the reading list.

The Study Group Process

The study group met over a five-week period, until the day of the exam. The group chose to meet once a week for three hours. The weekly study session required travel (25 miles was the maximum) for several members, and all took time away from work with the permission of employers. There was only one day when more than two members were not present. The members took this endeavor very seriously.

The group first developed a protocol for collecting information in a summary format and then entering the information into a table they had re-created based on the GPCI *Validated Competencies and Skills*. Each week, the group focused on one or two content areas from the *Validated Competencies and Skills*. To prepare for the upcoming topic discussion, each member of the group completed independent reading and research. At the study session, group members shared information on the key points for each book and provided additional information for each content area. The experience of talking through the information was invaluable.

When GPCI mailed out a *Candidate Information Guide* to those registered for the exam, group members completed the sample test items individually, discussed selected answers, and supported one another. If a group member did not understand or agree with an item, there was openness and freedom within the group for discussion and clarification. The process went very smoothly and each study group member gained confidence.

The Value of the Study Group Approach

There were many benefits to studying for the GPC exam with a group. First, each group member represented a different field and background – some were consultants, some worked for large healthcare agencies, and some came with non-profit experience. This breadth of knowledge and experience provided multiple perspectives and various interpretations of the reading materials. The focus area each person represented at the table reflected the diverse skills of the group.

Some members specialized in grant applications to foundations, while others were more accustomed to writing large, multi-year federal applications. Group members from large organizations shared their knowledge of post-award federal grant-management practices, while group members who serve as consultants to multiple agencies shared their experiences in working with different leadership structures. The synthesis gained from free and open sharing of experiences and knowledge gathered throughout the career of each member was invaluable for a generalist exam that could include anything from any of the competency topics.

An unexpected consequence of studying with a peer group was the individual pressure to complete reading assignments. Each person wanted to be able to contribute to the weekly study group meeting. This was good peer pressure. It kept each member on track and resulted in the ultimate success of the study group as a whole. There was a real sense that each member had contributed equally to the effort.

One of the best things about having a study group was being able to divide and conquer, that is, the ability to divide the reading list, share books, and exchange pertinent journal articles. The group fostered community reading as opposed to each individual struggling to get through the extensive reading list alone.

GPCI Literature Review

As a result of the intensive work of this multi-faceted group, they created their own study guide based on the *GPCI Literature Review* and the *Validated Competencies and Skills*. It started out with the original list of competencies and skills from the AAGP Web site, and expanded as each

person entered information from the various books, journal articles, and other publications. The purpose was to ensure coverage of all of the competencies and skills typical of a grants generalist with three to five years of experience.

Sections in the document corresponded to knowledge of the following competencies/skills:

1. Research, identify, and match funding resources to meet specific needs

2. Insure organizational development as it pertains to grant seeking

3. Use strategies for effective program and project design and development

4. Craft, construct, and submit an effective grant application

5. Observe nationally recognized standards of ethical practice by grants professionals

6. Maintain knowledge of post-award grant management practices sufficient to inform effective grant design and development

7. Employ practices and services that raise the level of professionalism of grant professionals

8. Practice methods and strategies that cultivate and maintain relationships between fund-seeking and recipient organizations and funders, and

9. Maintain the ability to write a convincing case for funding.

Two members agreed to maintain this document throughout the group process. Group members located many books from the *GPCI Literature Review* at the local library and others purchased books to ensure that all skills and competency areas were covered. Throughout the process, the document grew, until it was more than 70 pages long. The study group subsequently copyrighted this review, now titled the *Study Guide and Annotated Bibliography,* and donated it to the Broward County Chapter of AAGP, which is now selling it online at: http://goaagp.org/Chapters/FindAChapter/FLBrowardCounty/Home/tabid/4307/Default.aspx

Adult Learning and the Study Group Experience

The study group's experience was very positive and seemed to reflect the findings from years of research on adult study habits. Adults learn differently from youths, and this has become increasingly noticeable as the population of the U.S. ages. Adults, 21 years and over, now comprise 70% of the U.S. population (Census, 2006). Adults are motivated to participate in learning activities by developmental issues and changes in their lives (Merriam, 1991).

A primary perspective on adult learning is that adults define themselves by their experiences, accumulate a reservoir of experience, and use that experience. "Learners must connect what they have learned from current experiences to those in the past as well as see possible future implications." (Merriam, 1999) The members of the study group had strong backgrounds with non-profit organizations and grant writing. The *GPCI Literature Review* essentially created a seminar in the history, principles, and processes for funding development and application.

Merriam goes on to identify four abilities critical to adult learning:

1. To be open and willing to involve oneself in new experiences

2. To view new experiences from various perspectives

3. To analyze and use concepts and ideas created from observations

4. To make decisions and problem-solve in using new ideas in actual practice.

These are also characteristics of grant professionals as they identify, engage, and develop new sources of funds and work with program managers to provide innovative services and products.

Developers of curricula and training opportunities use characteristics of adult learners to ensure that the construction of the educational experience meets expectations. Characteristics of an ideal adult education include:

1. Open and free exchange of real-life experiences to foster mutual learning

2. Demonstration of an ability for problem solving to collaboratively engage the group

3. Recognition that learning is continuous and occurs in many different ways, never stops

4. Varied teaching methods to accommodate different learning styles, such as reading vs. doing

5. "Real world" application to make the topics relevant to participants

6. Flexibility to enable self-management of schedules and tasks to increase learning.

The study group featured all of these characteristics by including adults with real-life experiences as grant professionals. These group members have histories of resolving challenges and continuously learn on the job and through reading prodigiously (fiction and non-fiction). The various learning styles within the group included translation onto index cards, reading, and talking through the *Study Guide and Annotated Bibliography*.

The decision to seek certification and its perceived benefits established the value and meaning of the learning experience.

Collaborative and cooperative learning represents "educational activities in which human relationships are keys to welfare, achievement, and mastery" (Bruffee, 1999). The distinct characteristic of study groups is that members construct knowledge as they work together. Driscoll cites research that indicates that members of small groups teach one another. Members contribute more effort because their peers review their work product and members learn to a greater depth because of their involvement in teaching others. Driscoll (1998) also reports that adult learners often have responsibilities beyond the training situation and this was true for the study group.

The experience of participation in the study group was consistent with current perspectives on adult learning. The group formed to assume control of a stressful learning experience. Members contributed their experience and expertise and researched additional information that has resulted in a comprehensive *Study Guide and Annotated Bibliography.* The dedication and commitment of each member promoted a supportive and safe environment for reflection and motivation. The total of the group effort far surpassed the individual efforts.

The Exam Experience

Throughout the 2007 AAGP Conference, where the first GPC exam was offered, the seven-member study group met during breaks, meals and in the evening to offer support and to review the *Study Guide and Annotated Bibliography.* Together, the group prepared for the writing sample portion of the test, discussed possible test questions, shared information on strategies for taking multiple-choice tests, and compared and contrasted the various versions of logic models and evaluation components. They also discussed situational ethics for grant professionals.

At the conference, the group attended the GPCI-hosted workshop about the exam, "Sneaking a Peek at the GPCI Credential Exam." Workshop attendees asked many questions and offered many different scenarios. The test anxiety in the room was palpable; however, the study group members continued to be a source of support for one another.

Following the exam, GPCI carefully validated the results over an extended period. During this time, the study group eagerly awaited pass/fail news. Group members reassured and supported one another to manage individual anxiety. Finally, on the 120th day after taking the exam, the news was exciting. Each group member had passed and earned their GPC credential! The hard work paid off, and just as they had done everything else, the group members celebrated their success together.

Conclusion

This group experience was invaluable because it offered structure and support prior to and during the conference. By studying together, this group of grant professionals gained confidence and covered all the bases. In addition, the group developed a thorough exam preparation alternative for busy professionals, the *Study Guide and Annotated Bibliography*. This ultimately led to their success.

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Missed Opportunities: Taking Care of Donors with Jane Austen

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Abstract

Using the unusual reference of the books of Jane Austen, this paper suggests ways to take care of donors. The underlying themes of Austen's books provide a rich resource to consider fundraising from a different perspective and to make the time to consider any opportunities that might be missed.

Introduction

Fundraising professionals are often under pressure to find new donors and funding sources and in that process can neglect the potential of the donors in hand. Turnover also creates missed opportunities as new staff traverse the learning curve. Taking care of donors and soliciting new resources are not mutually exclusive, and can be mutually supportive. While grant professionals try to minimize missed opportunities, they should not fail to use every opportunity to identify new prospects. Each missed opportunity could have provided an opening for a new resource. Using the unusual reference of the books of Jane Austen, this paper suggests ways to take care of donors. The underlying themes of Austen's books provide a rich resource to consider fundraising from a different perspective.

Six Jane Austen Works

With admiration for and apologies to Jane Austen, begin with *Pride and Prejudice*. When people believe they have the best programs in an incredible organization providing amazing services, it is easy to let pride bring on anger and disappointment at what is perceived as rejection when the foundation that seemed like a perfect match declines funding.

How many grant professionals have worked for or consulted with a non-profit, found a perfect match foundation, but then heard from co-workers comments like "we tried them," "it will never work," or "they hate us?" Then, based on prejudice, it is likely that the answer will be

"no" when those same co-workers are asked if anyone followed up with the foundation, has submitted another proposal, or has begun to develop a relationship with the foundation.

How many grant professionals stay away from funders that rejected a previous proposal? Does pride stand in the way? These professionals should review the requirements or the request for proposal and compare with the submitted proposal: Was the project/program in keeping with the funder's priorities? Did the responses answer the questions? Did the proposal adhere to the guidelines (all of them)? Review the submitted attachments: Was the budget consistent with the narrative? Did it clearly indicate how the program would support itself? If comparison shows that the proposal and programs are something to be proud of, do not write off funders; plan a strategy to win them over.

Grant professionals who become prejudiced against funders who have rejected their organization in the past may miss opportunities. These potential funders with interests matching the organization's, and who have already received a proposal, are a great place to start for those new to the organization. One or two phone calls will serve as an introduction, elicit positive and negative feedback, begin a relationship, and show if this might be the right time for a submission. Often there is a good proposal that was not funded, because the foundation received many more proposals than could possibly be funded, or because their format was not followed. If a proposal has just been declined – be disappointed. It is allowed! Then take a deep, calming breath and call to thank the funder for considering the proposal, ask for any feedback, and inquire when it would be appropriate to apply again. A detailed analysis of the proposal is not likely, but an opportunity might become apparent.

Ms. Austen would agree that a common-sense, practical, and organized approach is a fundraising requirement. There is a sensibility with which a funder makes that first commitment to an organization. However, a beautifully crafted request will not evoke the emotional response and funds needed if a lack of common sense and sensibility caused missed opportunities. Examples of missed opportunities might be the donor that requires only an annual report to receive a renewable award, but the report isn't completed; the donor that gives in-kind, but who can afford to give in cash and is never asked; the donor that is not acknowledged in a way that means something to them.

Every donor is different and sufficient staff and time are often lacking to spend adequate time with each donor. Tools do help, and there is a variety of database options and constituent-relations management systems available for any budget. However contacts are managed, the process still needs the right information in the right place, and you have to use it. The communication options available are overwhelming – direct mail, newsletters, and annual reports have a time-honored place in our traditions, but email, listservs, blogs, MySpace, YouTube, and text messaging have been added. Every donor is important – ask, talk, listen,

and find out what motivates. Set aside time each day to call donors and chat – not a survey, just a short hello, and then to listen. Train a volunteer (who is also a donor) to help with the calls. The list of donors may be long, but word gets around. People talk and the word about the agency that develops relationships with donors will spread, and soon that agency might expect to be receiving as well as making calls.

During all communications, remember to ask how the donor would like to be contacted. This is particularly effective with email, because most people have been trained to "opt-out" of receiving emails. Since email is such a valuable form of communication ask how many and how often communication is welcomed – weekly, quarterly, annually. Get feedback and use it – make sure that the process begins and ends with "listen and learn." People are often judged, not on their intentions, but on their actions, so use sense and sensibility to customize an approach. Time spent in research, listening, and learning will make all the difference.

In addition to keeping track of which donor needs what and when use *Persuasion* by including colleagues and partners to make the most of every opportunity. Use persuasion – a little time spent in helping the finance office understand their importance in the fundraising process could deliver a regular quarterly report where needed. Understanding the needs of the finance office can only help. Educate – there are probably some who believe that grant professionals have a magic wand that delivers funders and donors. Involve everyone in understanding the process of grant development. In addition to persuading your co-workers to be involved in the grant process, you may learn about your co-workers' community connections – that the receptionist is on a first-name basis with the manager of every business in the area, or that the IT person serves on the board of the local community foundation. These connections can be useful in your efforts at persuasion.

During the years in which Austen's novels were set, marriage was an intricate process of persuasion; the suitors hoped to marry for love, but the most important characteristic was a financially advantageous marriage. In *Mansfield Park* one of Austen's characters says that "…a large income is the best recipe for happiness I ever heard of." As with many of Austen's characters, the topic is marriage and marrying well, which was, perhaps, an 18th-century form of fundraising. *Pride and Prejudice* opens with the lines:

> "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man
> in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife.
> However little known the feelings or views of such a man
> may be on his first entering a neighborhood, this truth
> is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families,
> that he is considered the rightful property of some one or
> other of their daughters."

Fundraisers use similar skills and persuasion in the process of wooing a donor – that is, creating a financially advantageous marriage between a donor and an organization. Occasionally, fundraisers might even consider a funder to be the "rightful property" of their organization. The ideal is a match of donor interests and program needs. A donor, much like an Austen suitor, must be in want of a program with which to share good fortune.

Communication is important to persuasion. In Austen's world letter writing and story-telling were common activities. In the grant professionals' world, there is always the foundation that does not specifically ask for any type of report from their fundees, and therefore may receive nothing. The foundation would have no idea of the impact of their grant investment when solicited for further funding. When considering the world inhabited by Austen's characters, where correct and polite behavior would have demanded communication, it is simply impolite to fail to respond with interesting and timely information.

No one asks, but everyone expects to receive a thank-you note – the theory applies – everyone wants information. A post-grant report is a great way to stay in touch, communicate successes, and alert funders to any potential changes. If grant-making bodies were pleased with their investment the first time, they might be more likely to commit funds the next time. The same rule applies to individual contributors. Every contribution, no matter the size, deserves gratitude. A paragraph telling in-kind donors how their contributions are used, a page-long collection of stories illustrating the difference that is made by financial contributions, or a progress report connecting your community of donors to your organization displays proper etiquette. Every donor is important.

Much like Austen's *Emma,* there are foundations that will gladly play matchmaker. Grant professionals often feel as Emma does, when she declares early in the first chapter "...it's such a happiness when good people get together—and they always do." A foundation is a source of far more than money; it is also a source of good people. The foundation that will gladly open doors for the organization but is never asked is a missed opportunity. Invite a foundation to visit the organization, even when (especially when?) there is no grant request to submit. Ask a foundation to open doors to meetings with other funders. Encourage a relationship that is about more than the money.

Conclusion

A fundraiser requires both sense and sensibility; knowing when each is required in making the case for a program is critical. Neither pride nor prejudice should discourage a fundraiser, and a fundraiser should never hesitate to use persuasion, or to think like a matchmaker.

Even if a grant professional follows the maxims of taking care of donors as suggested by Jane Austen, there will be ups and downs in funding. In *Mansfield Park*, Austen perfectly describes the life of a grant professional when she says:

> "There will be little rubs and disappointments everywhere, and we are all apt to expect too much; but then, if one scheme of happiness fails, human nature turns to another; if the first calculation is wrong, we make a second better: we find comfort somewhere."

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Biographical Information

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Unlocking the Mystery of www.census.gov

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Abstract

"Unlocking the Mystery of www.census.gov" provides an overview of the United States Census Bureau web site as a wealth of information for grant professionals. It can help in predicting the need for services, in describing and tracking changes within a community, and with calculating comparison data to prove a point. Understanding the geographic terms used among census units will help locate and identify different areas. Comparing data sources such as the Decennial Census, American Community Survey, and population estimates will make data retrieval easier and efficient. The Economic Census provides data detail about a geographic region and its specific industries and products. There is a plethora of resources available on www.census.gov; the web page has become much more than a web-based report on population growth and demographic changes within the United States. By accessing, understanding, and using this resource, grant professionals will learn how to use Census data to better argue a case.

Introduction

McHenry County, Illinois, is a wonderful place to live: the schools are good, incomes high, and unemployment and crime rates fairly low. What makes McHenry County a lovely area in which to live also presents a challenge for grant-seeking. Grant professionals frequently face the same challenges in finding appropriate data to tell a story, but a wealth of data are available from the U.S. Census web page, even for a region like McHenry County.

Each click of the mouse reveals an amazing amount of information that has been collected, analyzed, and posted for public use. That is the positive news. On the other hand, there is so much information it can be overwhelming and challenging to navigate without an inkling of 1) what to look for and 2) the fastest way to find it.

This paper strives to provide a skeleton for understanding www.census.gov. It will provide an explanation of the different demographic and economic data, an explanation of the geographic entities, and finally a snapshot of how McHenry County College's grants office uses the data. It may be helpful to open the Census web page while reading this article.

Census Basics

The first census, taken on August 2, 1790, consisted of four questions. James Madison, primary author of the Constitution, urged the census be used for more than a population headcount. Today Madison's vision has come to fruition, in part because the federal government has an increased need for data when distributing funds to state and local governments. The federal government's need also benefits grant professionals. From the humble beginning of four questions, there is now a plethora of up-to-date information available. For grants work, www.census.gov is a treasure trove of information that helps grant professionals:

- Determine if an institution is an eligible or strong candidate to apply for a grant by examining economic and demographic data.

- Discover, through analyzing data sets, unmet needs that could be funded.

- Compare data across years or decades to identify growth or patterns.

- Build a case using facts and statistics.

- Provide primary source data rather than secondary source data.

The Census Bureau breaks down the data into two classes: 1) The term **demographic** refers to data collected from households; 2) **Economic** surveys or economic censuses refer to data that is collected from businesses. The Census Bureau collects data in different ways. In addition to the Census itself, data are collected through **surveys** and **estimates** for both demographic and business and industry information. How the data are collected makes a difference in reading and using the data in grants.

Demographic Data

To obtain more current, up-to-date information, the Census Bureau (Bureau) designed the American Community Survey (ACS). The American Community Survey doesn't count the population, but provides estimates of demographic, housing, social, and economic characteristics. Every year population groups of 65,000 are surveyed; these groups include 783 counties, 436 congressional districts, 621 statistical areas, all 50 states,

and the District of Columbia. Each year the agency surveys approximately three million households by mail, and Bureau staff members contact those who do not return the survey. Therefore, the ACS estimates describe the average characteristics for the year.

The American Community Survey does not replace the census. The U.S. Constitution mandates that a census of the entire population be taken every ten years in a year ending in zero (decennial census). The results determine the number of Congressional representatives apportioned to each state and serve as the basis to redraw the boundaries of state legislative districts. To achieve the federal command, all U.S. residents are asked to fill out the census short form every ten years.

> McHenry County was one of the fastest growing counties in Illinois with the population burgeoning from approximately 183,000 residents in 1990 to approximately 315,000 residents in 2006. The Hispanic population within the county increased even more rapidly. The updated information available through the American Community Survey helps make McHenry County College more competitive when submitting proposals.

American Fact Finder

To locate information quickly, click on a link entitled *American Fact Finder* that provides access to prepackaged data products, data tables, and maps from past censuses, the Population Estimates Program, annual economic surveys, and the American Community Survey.

By filling in the window under *Fast Access to Data* with the name of a town, county, ZIP code, or state, a *Fact Sheet* on an area's population, racial characteristics, age, housing, income range, education, and poverty level appears. *Fact Sheets* are only available for areas with a population of 65,000 or more; in more sparsely populated areas,

> I keep a copy of area Fact Sheets for McHenry County College's district on my desk for easy reference when working on Census demographic comparisons or data.

county-level data may be more appropriate. The *Fact Sheet* also provides links to more in-depth break-outs of all the data if there is a need to drill deeper. Fact sheets for larger geographic areas like states or counties list both the 2000 Census data and the 2006 American Community Survey Data.

The *Fact Sheet* provides links to *briefs* or *maps* of the area. A *brief* describes how the data were collected in the 2000 Census and provides a more in-depth analysis of the data. Maps provide a pictorial representation of each geographic area. The Bureau uses slightly different geographical definitions than those typically used when defining

geographic areas. Clicking on *map* will lead to one of the geographic areas within the line chosen.

When I first starting using the maps for reference, I didn't realize the geographic areas were different and would change the configuration of the data pictured. Knowing the geographic definitions helped make the depicted data more meaningful.

At the top of each map, a drop-down window entitled "Display map by:" allows for a choice of geographic areas. Each geographic area listed will change the configuration of the map. The smallest geographic areas to which the Census refers are **blocks.** Blocks cover the entire nation, are used for 100 percent of data tabulation, and nest within all the other geographic entities. **Block groups** are the smallest groups used for tabulation of sample data; the population within a block group ranges from 600 to 3,000 people. The 65,000 **census tracts** are made up of block groups and consist of approximately 1,000 to 8,000 residents. They are small, relatively permanent statistical subdivisions of a county. From these smaller entities, the geographic units build to counties, states, and then the nation. Other geographic areas used by the Census Bureau include commonly used terms like school district or ZIP codes.

The federal government issues grant opportunities for colleges in rural areas. Because there are still fields, cows, and a few tractors in the area, colleagues assumed McHenry County is still a rural farm community. The debate raged until I consulted the Census Web site. I determined McHenry County is aligned with the Chicago Statistical Area, which is urban. A Census map showed population density. With the facts in hand, I put the debate on the issue of eligibility for federal RFPs serving rural areas to rest.

Maps are helpful because they provide another dimension to the data sets. When using the data, it is difficult to determine exactly where target populations live. The maps with blocks are particularly helpful in pinpointing exactly where certain ethnic groups, sexes, or ages, to name a few, are located. By looking at a map, areas of greatest economic need can be determined immediately. Maps provide a pictorial representation that can be used for faster decision-making in meetings, particularly ascertaining eligibility based on population criteria.

Population Estimates

When using demographic data in proposals, another source of information on a locale is the population estimate, which refers to the population on July 1 of the previous year. To calculate these estimates, the Bureau uses birth, death, migration, and other administrative records to measure population change. Although population estimates and the

American Community Survey may seem to provide the same data, they do not, because the methodology to calculate them is different. The ACS asks three million residents questions and then draws conclusions based on that sampling. Population estimates are calculated using administrative records.

Economic Data

The Census Bureau also compiles and publishes data about the economic status of the country. The economic data and the demographic data are organized differently and use different vocabulary and geographic designations.

Economic censuses are primarily national in scope, limited in detail, and are used to make timely decisions. The Economic census is taken every five years (in years ending with 2 and 7) and provides detail about a geographic region and specific industry and the products produced. The Census Bureau defines types of businesses differently than common usage. A business **establishment** is a store, warehouse, or factory operating at a specific physical location, which is not the same thing as a company or firm. A **company** consists of one or more establishments under common ownership or control.

The official system for classifying industries for the Economic Census has changed, which produces difficulties in producing longitudinal data. The manufacturing-based Standard Industrial Classification (or SIC) system was changed to the more all-inclusive Northern American Industry Classification System (or NAICS) in 1997. When comparing data from different Economic Census years, note that both the SIC and NAICS systems are used, and allow for those differences.

The new NAICS codes have two to six digits, replacing the 4-digit SIC system, and the long strings of digits designate a hierarchical classification code system. All NAICS Codes are found in the *NAICS Manual.* Each digit in the code is part of a series of progressively

> When a significant-dollar federal RFP for job development was posted, every community college in the country wanted to apply, including one in McHenry County. Economic data helped to determine and predict job development needs within McHenry County. To prepare for the meeting that included stakeholders from around the county, I developed a short, two-page report on the current and projected industry needs around the county.
>
> My main source was the Census Bureau's economic data. I exported the data into Excel spread sheets and massaged it. I was then able to create charts and tables that were easily read in the meeting. In part, the meeting went smoothly, because I had the job needs of the county charted from the greatest need to the least need.

narrower categories, and more digits in the code signify greater classification detail.

For example, the number 621112 is broken down thus: The first two digits (62) designate Health Care and Social Assistance, an economic sector, The third digit (62<u>1</u>) designates Ambulatory Health Care Services, a subsector of the economic sector. The fourth digit (621<u>1</u>) designates Offices of Physicians, the industry group. The fifth digit (6211<u>1</u>) designates Offices of Physicians, the NAICS industry and the sixth digit (62111<u>2</u>) designates Offices of Physicians, Mental Health Specialists, the national industry. By changing the last digit, the number 62111<u>1</u> is now NAICS code for Offices of Physicians (except Mental Health Specialists).

The Economic Census details information in map form using some different geographic designations than those used in the demographic census. The Economic Census publishes data for the whole nation, states, counties, or cities and other places that have 2500 or more inhabitants, and ZIP Codes. A **Metropolitan Area** contains a core urban area of 50,000 or more population. A new designation, **Micropolitan Area** contains an urban core of at least 10,000 (but less than 50,000).

The term **Core Based Statistical Area** (CBSA) is a collective term for both metro and micro areas. Each metro or micro area consists of one or more counties and includes the counties containing the core urban area, as well as any adjacent counties with a high degree of social and economic integration (as measured by commuting to work) with the urban core. Federal grants, in particular, discuss CBSA, and it is important to know in which CBSA a constituency or institution is located.

The Economic Census is listed on the Census Bureau homepage in the Business and Industry section. A handy tool on the Economic Census page is the **Industry Statistics Sampler**. Typing an industry of interest in the open window will immediately bring up a page of industries that start with that word. For example, typing the word "education" will result in 11 hits, of which most are industries: educational consultants, testing services, and educational service, to name a few.

Navigating the Home Page

The Census Bureau wants the public to use the information available through its web site, and the Bureau's home page provides a portal to it. A toolbar located at the top of the web page supplies options to help users navigate, in particular the *Search* box located at the top of the page. By typing a keyword in the box entitled *Search*, a number of hits should quickly show answers. For example, typing the word "education" will result in approximately

> You may pull up an area called a CDP or Census Designated Place and not know what that means. Click on the Glossary and quickly find the answer!

seven hits. The first hit is listed under *Data* and the six others are links to the *Frequently Asked Questions* section.

Frequently Asked Questions lists almost 6,000 answers to questions others have posted. It is searchable by keyword. The keyword "education" results in 132 answers listed. The answers may contain data locations on the Bureau web page, a data analysis, or alternative suggestions for finding the data of interest, to name a few. All the answers are thorough.

Subjects A to Z provides succinct definitions to any vocabulary or methodology questions that arise while using the data. The concepts are grouped alphabetically. Click on a letter to be linked to the grouping of subjects starting with that letter under the *Subjects Index*. This section is particularly helpful when quick answers are needed for unclear concepts or census jargon. When more in-depth information is needed, the Census Bureau home page often provides links to other pages and lengthier explanations.

Conclusion

The Census Bureau web page has many resources available; it isn't possible to cover the numbers of exceptions to every area of the country. The Bureau tries to explain its methodology and vocabulary in usable terms, to answer questions, and to provide untold pages of analysis and reports. Every grant professional's needs will be different when using this valuable tool, but something on the web page will help in writing a better proposal or determining eligibility.

Biographical Information

For the past eight years, **Caroline Sobolak** has worked with McHenry County College, a community college located 35 miles northwest of Chicago. As a grant professional, Caroline combines her life-long interests in research, education, and writing. Caroline graduated from Pennsylvania State University and continued her education at Wheaton College by earning a Master degree in Communications. A charter member of the AAGP Chicago-area Chapter, she continues to serve as the chapter secretary.

Winning Federal Grants for Transportation Projects: The Phoenix Success Story

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Abstract

The passing of the Federal Transportation Bill of 2006, called the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users, provides federal funds to State Transportation Departments. These funds are disbursed to local communities, most often through regional councils of government, and assist in providing vital and critical aspects of a local community's transportation system. Over the past five years, the City of Phoenix Street Transportation Department, working with the support of the Citywide Grants Coordinator, has had tremendous success in obtaining funding for new federally aided transportation projects. This success can be attributed to developing an overall strategy involving specific elements. These elements are the hallmark of the City of Phoenix Street Transportation Department. The following paper will provide an overview of how the City of Phoenix coordinates with multiple local, regional, and state agencies to achieve success in obtaining federal aid funding for transportation projects.

Introduction

In any regional area, understanding the flow of federal dollars from the federal agency through the state department of transportation to the regional decision-making body is important when the goal is to increase federal dollars for construction of local projects.

In 1973, the Federal Transportation Act required that each urbanized area (50,000 or more population) establish a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). The law required that the governor of each state

designate an agency to serve as the MPO. In the State of Arizona, in 1973 that assignment was given to the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) for the Phoenix metro region.

What is MAG?

The Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) is a Council of Governments (COG). A regional council is a multi-service entity with state- and locally-defined boundaries that delivers a variety of federal, state and local programs while continuing its function as a planning organization, technical assistance provider and "visionary" to its member local governments. (http://narc.org/regional-councils-mpos/what-is-a-regional-council.html) MAG provides a regional forum for COGs to promote analysis, discussion and resolution of issues including areas of transportation, air quality, environment, regional development, and social services.

In Arizona, there are six Councils of Governments. The COGs, as voluntary associations, have formed within these planning boundaries. In the rural areas of Arizona, the COGs perform planning services and direct service functions such as operating the Area Agency on Aging, the Head Start programs, and employment programs. These COGs form the MAG Regional Council, which comprises 31 local jurisdictions in Maricopa County; Maricopa County, itself; and three Indian nations. The mayor, county board of supervisors' chairman, tribal governor or president from each jurisdiction serves as the governing board. A matrix of committees vets regional planning and distribution of funding, and their recommendations flow through the system to the regional council.

How does MAG create grant opportunities?

Regional planning for the Phoenix metropolitan area, which is Maricopa County, is based on a series of comprehensive planning studies and involves collaboration among the more than 30 communities that are part of the MAG) As shown in Figure 1, MAG has three tiers of membership: Governing Board, Executive Group and Technical Subcommittees.

A competitive local and statewide process filters all federal funding that is allocated for MAG. Approved federal aid projects are placed into three main transportation/capital improvement programs. These programs consist of MAG's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), a Local Community's Capital Improvement Program (CIP), and the Arizona State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). These programs all include a 5-year timeframe. This structure is mandated by federal law. It also satisfies the need for accounting between the granting agency, MAG, and the accounting agency, which is the Arizona Department of Transportation.
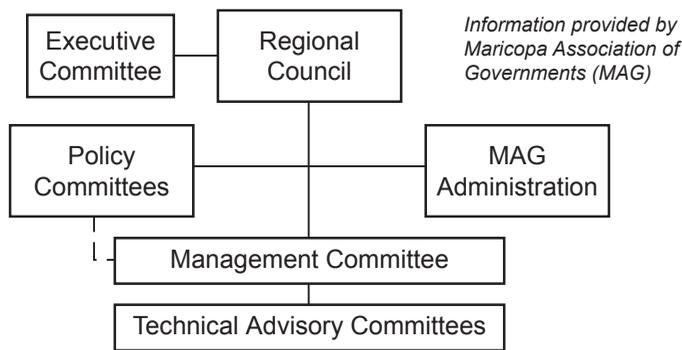
Figure 1. MAG Policy Structure

For the City of Phoenix to maximize its outcomes in the MAG grant process, it has to have achieved a high level of credibility. The city has accomplished this by creating a strong relationship with the funder, which leads to successful applications. In Maricopa County, transportation activities managed by MAG include creating: long- and short-range plans for all modes of transportation; infrastructure projects; street projects; traffic forecasting and modeling; application of technology based solutions such as advanced sensors, computers, electronics and communication technologies, to improve the overall safety and efficiency; transportation safety planning; and transportation studies and reports.

According to a 2007 presentation to the MAG Regional Council there is currently $7.682 billion programmed in the federal budget for the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) for the years 2008–2012 (Figure 2). Fourteen percent or $1.146 billion is federal highway dollars and 10% or $798 million is federal transit dollars. The amount of funding MAG will receive depends on population and transportation activity.
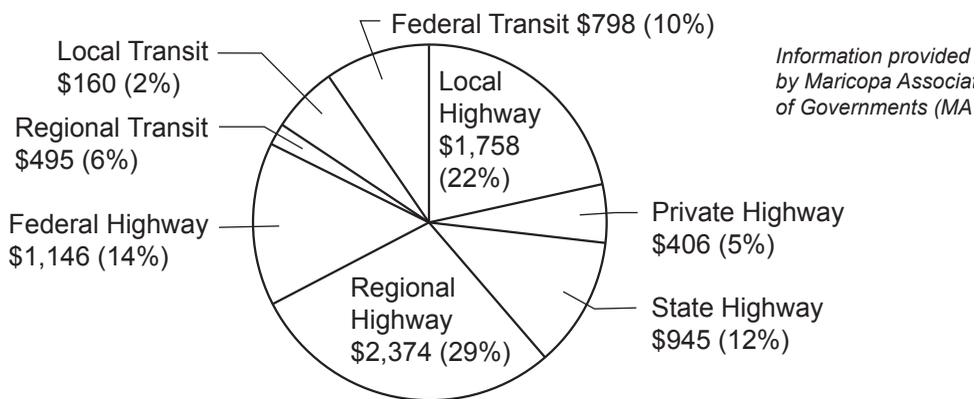

Figure 2. Funding for FY 2008–2012 TIP Projects (in millions)

Political and Government Affairs

The Maricopa Association of Governments' region is a very political environment. Not only does the City of Phoenix have to create a positive and worthwhile project proposal, but it must also gain overall support by the other members of the technical and political committees of MAG. Credibility for the city comes from having a great working relationship with the other agencies of MAG, and when they need the city's support, the city is there to support their issues.

The key word for political success is "credibility." Webster defines "credibility" as: "the quality or power of inspiring belief". Positioning an entity politically to compete for federal funding is, on all levels, about convincing the person who decides where the money goes that this entity is the most credible recipient of the funding.

Government Affairs folks are sometimes described as those "relationship" people. They are out in the front of any organization trying to "make friends and influence people." The target is generally the policy makers, elected officials who set policy (make the rules) and budgets (rule the gold). But elected officials are surrounded by layers of staff and constituents who all have their influence on how the official views an agency's credibility and that of its representative. In the government and political affairs area, the work is never done. There is constant building and rebuilding of relationships, all for the sake of credibility.

The story of federal aid success in Phoenix is based squarely on the relationships the city has created with the members of MAG. However, some credibility comes with size. At MAG, Phoenix, is humorously referred to as the "800 pound gorilla." Although suburban communities continue to grow faster than the central city, as is typical in many areas of the county, Phoenix still represents approximately 41% of the region's population. This fact potentially gives Phoenix greater influence within MAG.

However, at the MAG Regional Council each member has an equal vote. Nonetheless, the MAG Regional Council operates under a rule that allows any member to call for a "weighted vote" to prevent action from being taken. A weighted vote is measured by population. So in short, Phoenix and one or more other cities with a population totaling more than 51% of the county's population can control a decision. A weighted vote is rarely used. The goal is to reach regional consensus well before an issue or funding decision reaches the Regional Council.

Getting the Grant – The City of Phoenix Success Story

The City's success has come through a vigorous internal process improvement that was implemented a few years ago. Previously, the city's grant proposal development was disjointed and unfocused. With a new

focus from city management and the addition of new staff, the direction was realigned to obtaining as much federal aid funding for transportation projects as possible. This full support from city management is a key function to getting more dollars for any organization.

The city has quadrupled its federal funding capacity and obligation authority in the last five years by developing a comprehensive internal technical committee to strategize, develop, review, and submit federal transportation grant applications. Phoenix generally ranks first or near the top of MAG scoring processes. The process improvement includes the following steps:

1. *Select a project that will have the greatest benefit to the community.* Extensive planning and selecting the "right" project for the "right" federal grant application is crucial for a successful award and ultimate implementation of a federally-funded project.

2. *Make sure that local community groups embrace the project.* In transportation projects understanding the surrounding area of focus and determining logical terminus is a critical. For example, researching the surrounding area is critical to connecting critical community resources such as neighborhood centers, public parks/ libraries, universities/colleges, etc. By connecting all of these essential community magnets, makes a transportation project more realistic and thus helps in creating a sense of place and need. Many of the city's projects originate from community interest. It generally starts with a phone call from a neighborhood leader or nonprofit agency; sometime even a business coalition or developer. Many projects are born when citizens approach city staff at the annual Enhancement Funds Workshop hosted by MAG to kick off the annual application process. Some conversations begin a year of planning, perhaps a design application to be followed in a few years by a TIP proposal for full construction. The fact that a local government must be the official applicant should not deter the private sector from pursuing ideas for which federal transportation dollars might be a sane strategy.

3. *Make the match.* Of growing concern is the assurance that the city has the full budget to build a federally-funded project. To implement a federal aid project, the city first has to appropriate the granted federal aid share and also the city's share of the funds. Typically, federal aid projects have a local match. In most cases the Federal Aid funds are utilized primarily for construction and the local match is used for design and administration activities needed to process a federal aid project. However, with the escalating cost of concrete and other building materials, federal funds often fall short of the full construction costs. Recently, the city has slowed its volume of grant applications; to be sure it can meet the match requirements.

4. *Have political backing for the project.* What makes an application competitive – meaning credible?

   - Can the project be sold as "regional" in any way? Does it cross jurisdictional boundaries? Is the street, intersection, park and ride, etc. serving customers that travel from other jurisdictions?

   - Does the project serve kids or low-income individuals? (always a high priority for people deciding who gets the money)

   - Is the project time-sensitive? If asking for design money, is there a plan and funding source to construct?

   - If the request is for construction money, is a design ready to go?

5. *Develop sound preliminary documents* such as scope of work, budget and schedule. In the last five years, Phoenix has taken the time to prepare good applications with accurate budgets.

6. *Build a team approach* to research and prepare the grant proposal. In support of its applications, the city generates letters of support from community leaders, neighborhood associations, and other constituents. When public comment is allowed at a meeting where funding decisions are being made, the city invites constituents who will benefit from the project to help make a pitch to the committee. It is influential to have a volunteer from the local bicycle club advocate for a bike path, rather than the traffic engineer who is paid to be at the meeting.

7. *Determine if there are any major environmental impacts* to consider.

8. *Develop a professional grant application* including strong four-color graphics and photos.

9. *Spend the time and money* to answer all of the questions and include color maps and photographs.

10. *Obtain comments from multiple readers* prior to final application edits.

Overall, the City of Phoenix grant professionals have learned to maximize success by forming a strong grant-writing team comprising transportation engineers and intergovernmental affairs staff. This team has learned to be at the table at MAG, not just some of the time, but all of the time. Key staff members sit on technical committees. Government affairs staff members monitor all of the committee agendas and carefully track the process involving the distribution of funds. When possible, the city seeks leadership positions on committees and working groups. When city staff members do not have control of the agenda, they talk to the chairperson who does. Staff members make sure they know about all funding opportunities and apply for those that complement the city's Capital Improvement Program (CIP) schedule and funding needs.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the City of Phoenix has had a tremendous transformation in obtaining and implementing Federal Assisted Projects. The City's CIP has gone from $1-1.5M per year to almost $10-12M per year in federal share funding. Currently the City of Phoenix has approximately $112M in federal aid funding through Fiscal Year 2012. This transformation has made it possible for the city to leverage more outside funding to be utilized for sustainable improvements for the citizens of Phoenix. Continuous overall coordination is a vital key for the success of using federal aid funding. The notion that federal grants are very difficult to use is not an excuse that the city manager accepts. The key to developing this kind of program depends on the people who are coordinating and interacting with the agency staff at the local, state and federal levels. By teaming neighborhood vision, professional engineers and government relations, any community can navigate and succeed in the federal grants process.

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Biographical Information

Ray Dovalina, PE has 17 years of experience in civil and transportation engineering. After graduating from Texas A&M University in 1990 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Civil Engineering, he began a career with California Department of Transportation (CALTRANS) in 1991. Ray moved to Phoenix in 1993 and worked for private consultant engineering firms for four years. In the last 10 years, his positions with the City of Phoenix have included: Senior Transit Facility Engineer, Floodplain Manager, and Freeway Coordinator. Currently, he is the Acting Deputy Street Transportation Director of the Planning, Design, and Programming Division. Registered as Professional Civil Engineer in the State of Arizona, Ray is fluent and proficient in English and Spanish. He has worked in California, Nevada, New Mexico, and Texas, and in the international consulting arena for the State of Sonora, Mexico. Contact: City of Phoenix, Street Transportation Department, 200 West Washington Street, 5th Floor, Phoenix, AZ 85003, USA; Tel +1 602 262 6284; Fax +1 602 495 2016; email: raimundo.dovalina@phoenix.gov

Lynn Timmons, MPA worked as a government relations representative for the City of Phoenix from 1994 to 2008, retiring this past July. Lynn graduated from Denison University in 1976 and received a Master's Degree in Public Administration from Arizona State University in 1982. Lynn served as a Grants and Contracts Specialist for the Vice President for Research at Arizona State University. Then, as a member of the City of Phoenix government relations staff, she specialized in securing federal dollars for city projects and services. During her tenure with the City, Lynn served as the Vice President of the American Association of Grant Professionals (AAGP) – Arizona Chapter and on the AAGP national committee for Professional Development. She served four years on the Board of Directors of the Arizona Grantmakers Forum. Lynn worked with several Transportation committees at the Maricopa Association of Governments and provided intergovernmental staff support for the City with Valley Metro, the regional transit authority. Contact: Ltimmons@cox.net