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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.

GPA Mission

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

- Serves as a leading authority and resource for the practice of grantsmanship in all sectors of the field
- Advances the field by promoting professional growth and development
- Enhances the public image and recognition of the profession within the greater philanthropic, public, and private funding communities, and
- Promotes positive relationships between grant professionals and their stakeholders.

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

About This Publication

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

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

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

Articles should be submitted as email attachments in Microsoft Word format. Any graphics or tables must be compatible with Word or Microsoft software. Each article must contain a short biography of each author (100 words) and an abstract (150 words). References, punctuation, grammar usage, and paragraph formatting must follow the *APA Style Manual for Publication* (5th Edition); articles not following this format will be returned to the author(s).

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

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Responding in the Twitter Age: Proposal Writing for Electronic Applications

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

Abstract

The *Chronicle of Philanthropy* reported in 1998 that foundations were slow to embrace technology. More than a decade later, that is no longer the case, with many foundations moving to a paperless on-line grant application system. As with any major shift in process, the transition has not always gone smoothly. Proposal writers often criticize the electronic applications for word restrictions, technological glitches, and lack of human interface. The same applications are also praised for eligibility screens and reduced paperwork. Whether grant professionals embrace or despise the new order, it is time to immigrate to a new age and change work processes and writing styles for the digital world. Fortunately, today's abbreviated grant applications still require sound program planning and clear writing, but they demand it faster and in fewer words. This article explores the positive and negative components of on-line grant applications and offers a few salient tips on how to write more effectively for the digital reader.

Introduction

Is this the grant of the future?

> Need $25,000 to enhance after-school program @Agency. Goal = smart kids, Outcome = stronger test scores for 80% of kids. Staff is qualified.

Proposal writers have not yet started writing grant applications on Twitter, but it might be just around the corner. On-line grant applications are commonplace, and some writers may be navigating unfamiliar digital terrain. While most initially embraced the new order of computers, the Internet brought with it a new way of doing grant business. Before wholeheartedly changing the grant development paradigm, two questions beg answers: does the shift to an electronic medium diminish the craft of proposal writing to a series of programmatic tweets and if so, how does a proposal writer create a style to find success in abbreviated grant applications?

The digital age changed the craft of grant writing

Marc Prensky (2001) calls the arrival and rapid dissemination of digital technology in the last decades of the 20th century a singularity — an event which changes things so fundamentally that there is absolutely no going back (p. 1). The shift to a digital medium has changed the very character of information vehicles. Reference books, journals, and monographs have given way to hyperlinked electronic databases, digital books, and e-journals, an amalgamation of content, easily accessed and searched for key-word related content. Clearly, "…the world we used to know is not the world of today's information user" (Badke, 2010, p. 52).

The change is deeper than the shift from scrolls to books. This change has embedded itself in the collective psyche and created a new culture of information gathering and sharing, and this new culture has spilled over into the public sector. Social networking websites have become the most popular and effective form of fundraising (*Chronicle of Philanthropy,* April 2010), and more and more foundations have started using the Internet to offer non-profits an on-line grant-application system. In 1996, only about one percent of foundations said they accepted proposals from grantseekers via their websites (Demko & Dundjerski, 1998). In a 2007 survey of 300 foundations, 28 percent offered an on-line grant-application system or service, up from 22 percent in 2005 (Frazier, 2008). Diane Gedeon-Martin, faculty member at Indiana University's Center on Philanthropy, said that on-line application systems "are growing by leaps and bounds because grant makers realize it really helps them streamline the review process" (Frazier, 2008). Also, it helps funders "guard against getting incomplete and random information by asking very specific questions" (Bearman, 2008, p. 23).

The negative side

On-line applications, while ostensibly reducing the paperwork burden for applicants and streamlining the review process for funders, have both technical and philosophical weaknesses. The technical weaknesses are easier to identify and overcome. Many on-line grant application systems have the same weaknesses that the Common Grant Application (a.k.a. common proposal format) had when it first proliferated in the 1990s.

The fill-in-the-blank format yielded essential data (especially financial data) but "too many of the common forms appear to be heavily weighted towards financial information in the summary, with little (or no) attention paid to the need for the funding, or the work that will be accomplished with it" (Wolfe, 1995, p. 3).

In addition to a fill-in-the-blank approach, a primary weakness of most on-line applications is a strict limit on the number of words permitted to answer a question. For example, one on-line foundation application had a question that was 247 characters long and delved into an analysis of programs, their relationship to core mission, and their return on investment. While a valid question, the on-line application only allowed a response of 248 characters. Needless to say, the answer provided can only be a mere shadow of the information requested. Challenges surrounding word and character limits prompted a call for improved online processes in The Center for Effective Philanthropy's *Grantee Perception Report* (Bearman, 2008, p. 21).

Another challenge to on-line applications is that the logical sequence for presenting the case for support is sometimes interrupted. For example, a large healthcare foundation with an online-only application does not ask about the need for the program or whom it serves until questions 45 and 46 of a 68-question application. This is a reversal from traditional applications where the need statement came first and the program plan subsequently addressed the need. The story seems to flow more naturally when explaining why and who before explaining what.

On-line applications have leveled the playing field between applicants who have an understanding of readability and those who do not. While arguably this is fair and allows funders the opportunity to judge the proposal solely on its content, the writer can no longer control the final quality of the proposal document. The electronic format usually does not allow the writer to provide restful breaks in the copy, such as subheads or bullet points. In fact, on-line applications are often criticized because some text features do not transfer well at all and the applicant never knows what actually arrives on the screens of the funder. There are other technical issues, such as difficulty in uploading attachments, inability to save and return to work in progress, time limits, and rigid budget forms (Bearman, 2008, p. 19).

These technical issues, while irritating, can usually be resolved or at least accommodated, but a larger more philosophical issue looms for grant applicants and grant makers. The digital age is characterized by "data chunks," or pieces of a whole. Many on-line applications are simply a series of data chunks, or in the language of the day, a series of programmatic tweets. Applicants must describe needs or evaluation plans in 2,000 characters or less, roughly one double-spaced page of type (Frazier, 2008). The result is the loss of meta-narrative, the "broader explanation that encompasses the history and beliefs of the writer. An author brings to the table such metanarrative elements as motives, presuppositions, personal experiences, and writing style" (Badke, 2010, p. 53). William Badke, associate librarian at Trinity Western University, wrote:

> …every word has its context in a sentence, every sentence has its context in a paragraph; every paragraph has its context in a chapter or on a page. Words by themselves mean nothing until they are put in sentences, paragraphs or larger passages. Thus, any genuine interpretation of information requires us to understand the context before we can understand the words on a page. (2010, p. 53)

An unfortunate consequence of the rigid construct of on-line applications is that writers are not given the opportunity to place their program into an organizational or community context. Proposal writers lose the ability to add important historical information or relevant program data. In essence, they present a program skeleton, and the program's persona and character are never fully communicated.

The positive side

In spite of inherent challenges, the digital shift to electronic grant applications offer some significant benefits, including eligibility screenings and 'goodness of fit' filters, a reduced investment of time, and a significant reduction in paperwork that benefits the environment.

Establishing 'goodness of fit' between the funder and the project should always be the first step, and applicants should not "expect funders to depart from their objectives just because they have a good project idea" (Ward, 2002, p. 47). Some funders proactively seek to reduce the number of inappropriate proposals by instituting a short eligibility quiz at the start of their application. Before applicants can even register to submit a grant application to The Humana Foundation, they may have to click through five eligibility questions (e.g., *Is your organization a non-profit and classified as 501(c)(3) tax-exempt by the Internal Revenue Service? Are you applying on behalf of a non-profit organization in the Louisville, Kentucky area?*). These screening tools prevent applicants from wasting time preparing an application that will not be considered.

In addition to eligibility screens, electronic applications have the capability to demand more specificity about expected outcomes. The WellPoint Foundation expects applicants to choose one of ten signature metrics (e.g., reduce low birth-weight, decrease adult diabetes, decrease adult cardiac mortality, etc.). If the proposed program does not directly target one of these metrics, it is probably pointless to apply. Like non-profits, foundations exist to accomplish a purpose. The applicant's goal is to work in tandem with the foundation toward the same end. This metric-selection process significantly de-mystifies what the foundation is looking for and careful writers will heed what it tells them.

One possible benefit of electronic applications is a reduced investment in time. The W.K. Kellogg Foundation officials say that a grantseeker should be able to submit a proposal in the on-line system in about an hour (Frazier, 2008). This, of course, varies widely and some writers say electronic applications take longer because of the intense editing of information that is required. On-line applications do reduce the amount of time applicants and foundations spend moving paper. According to Project Streamline, some of the more advanced on-line grant systems "enable coordination with grants management software and automatic checks on an organization's tax status. Grantees can store their financial, board, and historical information, retrieve past proposals and reports, and upload directly and efficiently to the system" (Bearman, 2008, p. 18).

The digital age demands a digital response

Like it or not, the digital age is here to stay, and grantwriters have to adapt their work processes and writing styles accordingly or be left on the wrong side of the digital divide. How does a proposal writer adapt his or her style to find success in abbreviated grants? Marc Prensky said, "It's not actually clear to me which is harder – 'learning new stuff' or 'learning new ways to do old stuff.' I suspect it's the latter" (Prensky, 2001, p. 4). Proposal writers over the age of 20 cannot be digital natives. However, it is possible to become digital immigrants — people who were not born into the digital world but who have adopted many aspects of the new technology (Prensky, 2001, p. 2). Digital immigrants can learn to communicate effectively in a web-based environment because the language of proposals remains virtually the same. Proposal writers still must deliver the essential components of sound program planning. It just has to be delivered faster and in fewer words. "Good writing is pointed, angular, vivid, and forceful" (Bauerline, 2010, p. 25) regardless of its delivery medium.

Be concise

The electronic grant application has simply reinforced and institutionalized what proposal writers knew all along: write fewer words with greater clarity (Porter, 2005, p. 41). Senior grant reviewers, when asked to describe characteristics of good grantwriting, placed "clear" and "concise" at the top of the list (Porter, 2005, p. 41). Clarke and Fox in their book *Grant Proposal Makeover: Transform Your Request from No to Yes* surveyed 69 funders representing a cross-section of the funding world. They asked funders what writing styles were particularly annoying.

Nearly two-thirds checked "florid writing" (too many adjectives and adverbs) and "academic, vague language" was cited more frequently than any other writing style as "annoying" (Clarke & Fox, 2007, p. 168).

Research into how people read websites discovered 79 percent of people scan them while only 16 percent of users read word-by-word (Nielsen, 1997). In response, electronic copy should be succinct and include no more than 50 percent of the text that would have been used in a hard-copy publication. In other words, write for scanability, and avoid long, continuous blocks of text (Nielsen, 1997).

Jakob Nielsen, a leading consultant in website usability, says electronic copy "must be brief and get to the point quickly, because users are likely to be on a specific mission … users want actionable content; they don't want to fritter away their time…" (Nielsen, 2008). Strunk (1918) captured the essence of concise writing when he wrote:

> Vigorous writing is concise. A sentence should contain no unnecessary words, a paragraph no unnecessary sentences, for the same reason that a drawing should have no unnecessary lines and a machine no unnecessary parts. This requires not that the writer make all his sentences short, or that he avoid all detail and treat his subjects only in outline, but that every word tell.

Use simple sentence structure and active voice

Given the demand to capture and keep the digital reader's attention, use simple sentence structure and write in the active voice instead of the passive voice. William Strunk says, "The active voice is usually more direct and vigorous than the passive" and "…it makes for forcible writing. This is true not only in narrative principally concerned with action, but in writing of any kind" (1918). It is interesting to note that the writing advice given by William Strunk in *The Elements of Style* 92 years ago in a decidedly analogue world has found its way into writing for the Web guidelines. Good writing transcends time.

Front load important words and concepts

The notion of starting with the conclusion is not new for the digital age. In fact, journalists have long written in the inverted pyramid style. The inverted pyramid starts with the most vital information – generally, who, what, when, where, why and how – followed by the most important supporting information, and ending with background information. This construct allowed newspaper editors and typesetters to fit the text into limited space by cutting from the bottom with reasonable assurance that readers were still going to receive the most important parts of the article.

While no longer a necessity of typesetting, the inverted pyramid is invaluable in the electronic context for several reasons. Today's reader of electronic content, according to a story in *USA Today,* is more inclined to read longer sentences at the top of a page and is less and less inclined to do so when scrolling down, making the first two words of a sentence very important (Baig, 2006). Additionally, today's readers are not terribly inclined to scroll down. It is interesting to note that Web users spend 80 percent of their time looking at information above the page fold (the area viewable without further action, such as scrolling) and allocate only 20 percent of their attention below the fold (Nielsen, 2010). This concept is important in electronic grants because many of the text boxes extend below the fold and the reader must scroll to finish the paragraph.

Keep formatting simple

The digital age has certainly changed the way grant applications look. Many of the old tricks to set a proposal apart are no longer available through the digital medium. *Grant Writing for Dummies* (2001) made the following suggestions to personalize the request: incorporate color graphics in strategic places, use brightly colored envelopes, mimic the funder's corporate colors, and use a watermark theme. Not only are those tricks now obsolete, the conventional use of differing fonts, subheads, charts and tables, and bulleted lists are generally not possible either. The prevailing rule in electronic applications is to keep the formatting simple because a transmission problem can occur and litter the text with computer symbols rather than recognizable words, making it difficult to review the proposal (Clarke & Fox, 2007, p. 187).

Be selective with statistics

Statistics can be a powerful way to paint a portrait of need and, when used correctly, can "convey importance, size and urgency" (Clarke & Fox, 2007, p. 82). In a survey of 69 funders, they were also almost unanimous in advising judicious selection of just the right statistics (Clarke & Fox, 2007, p. 76). When words and characters are limited, this becomes especially important. In addition to being selective, the method for presenting statistics electronically is different than for print publications — write numbers with digits, not letters (23, not twenty-three). Nielsen suggests using numerals even when the number is the first word in a sentence or bullet point. Eye-tracking studies revealed numerals stop the wandering eye, even when they're embedded within a mass of words that users otherwise ignore (2007).

Be relational

Research shows that non-profits view the quality of their relationships with funders as a critical factor in their success (Center for Effective Philanthropy, 2004). Unfortunately, on-line grant making "has made it harder than ever to have a conversation with a real person; many funders expect that nonprofits will find everything they need online" (Bearman, 2008, p. 19). This is not surprising given the criticism the Internet has received for its negative impact on social skills and the role it has played in diminishing the importance of face-to-face interactions. Regardless, grants have always been and will always be relational. Joel Orosz, a grant expert and former officer at the Kellogg Foundation, said "One of Joel's Laws of Foundations is that nobody gives grants to organizations. You give grants to people because you believe in them, think they can handle the money and do a great job with it. In this high-tech world, it's one of the last high-touch things we have" (Orosz, 2002). White Courtesy Telephone, a blog from inside the Third Sector, encourages grantseekers to "move from a paper relationship to one of flesh and blood at your first opportunity" (http://postcards.typepad.com). Phone calls, personal visits, and other touches should still work in tandem with grant applications whenever possible.

Conclusion

The digital age has changed the craft of proposal development to be sure. The shift is, arguably, both negative and positive. It is negative for those "old dog" writers who will forever lament the loss of long narratives and complicated grant publications. It is positive for those who are willing to immigrate to a new way of doing business, even as the art of their craft changes. It is important to remember, though, that the more things change, the more they stay the same. Grant applications still require careful and concise writing and awards still often depend upon relationships. With a few adjustments to style, proposal writers can expect to be successful in the digital age. Those who refuse to migrate to the digital world can expect to be left behind.

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Beyond the Dollars: Effective Strategies for Demonstrating Success as a Grant Professional

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

Abstract

The predominant criteria used to evaluate the success of grant professionals is the amount of money raised over a specific period of time and an overall success rate. However, given the myriad factors outside a grant professional's control and the extenuating circumstances of a struggling economy, both consultants and staff-level grant professionals will benefit from additional strategies to demonstrate their success. Furthermore, the establishment of best practices in outcomes achievement will effectively raise the level of professionalism in the grants field. The authors provide specific recommendations for demonstrating the value of grant professionals' work beyond dollars raised. Strategies include:

(1) Providing expert guidance in program development

(2) Developing community relationships

(3) Growing an organization's long-term capacity to win grant awards

(4) Promoting the overall value of grant professionals' work, and

(5) Promoting the professionalism of the grants field.

These strategies are particularly important during a challenging economic climate when grant funding is increasingly limited and competitive.

Introduction

Over time, the term "grant professional" has evolved to encompass the collective skills and expertise of proposal developers, grant managers and other fundraising professionals that dedicate their careers to writing grant proposals and managing grant awards. The formation of the American Association of Grant Professionals 12 years ago and the Grant Professionals Certification Institute (GPCI) three years ago further established the role of grant professionals in non-profit and public agencies. While grant professionals across the country continue to refine their skills and become experts in their craft, many non-profit organizations have yet to recognize the grant professional's role and their skills as distinct from other roles within a fundraising department. All too often, grant professionals must creatively recognize and promote their expertise and achievements beyond the bottom line.

Total dollars raised and success rate are the two most common benchmarks used to evaluate grant professionals. While important, these benchmarks measure only a portion of what a grant professional brings to an organization. This article compiles and analyzes the factors organizations typically consider in evaluating the success of their grant professionals and/or grantseeking office and recommends strategies for grant professionals to demonstrate success beyond the amount of grant income received and their overall success rate. The benefits of evaluating other areas of a grant professional's work will not only raise the level of professionalism in the field, but also increase the value of employing a highly skilled grant professional or consultant.

Strategy 1: Demonstrating the grant professionals' contribution to program development

Successful grant professionals are deeply involved in project planning and design alongside the staff members responsible for project creation and implementation. Grant professionals often spend a significant amount of time helping to shape project ideas, goals and objectives, outcome based evaluations, and project budgets. In some cases, they conduct scholarly and other types of topical research to create a compelling needs statement. The end product is not only a well-written proposal, but also a well-designed project or program. Despite the outcome of the proposal, the grant professional still makes a significant contribution to the project and the organization.

However, when grant proposals are not funded, many employers and clients of grant professionals fail to recognize the value of their work. Grant professionals are responsible for educating others about their valuable skill sets, beginning with project planning (Ingledue, 2009). At a minimum, grant professionals need to ensure that they are adept in the Grant Professional Certification Institute's (GPCI) competencies for effective program development. In addition to these competencies, grant professionals can be recognized for other contributions as described below. For example, many non-profits recognize grant professionals' ability to seek resources that improve the quality of a project/proposal; knowledge and understanding of outcome-based evaluations; subjective vision to see gaps in project design; and shaping how the project or idea is presented to an outside funder (Kraus & Porteous, 2010; Jaggers, 2010). Suggested strategies for grant professionals to demonstrate their contributions to program planning include:

- Tracking the number of hours spent on project planning and design separate from the act of writing the proposal
- Maintaining a bibliography of the outside references used to strengthen the project and distributing it to the project team
- Documenting instances when the grant professionals' research and knowledge made a significant impact in project design, and
- Documenting and tracking the grant professional's role in project planning.

Strategy 2: Developing community relationships

Experienced grant professionals are savvy about using their networks, peers, and other social capital to enhance the fundability of projects and proposals. Key relationships with grantmaking agencies and other community organizations can significantly enhance the fundability of programs or proposals. Grant professionals need to be proactive about making the most out of these relationships.

Relationships with grantmaking agencies

Grant professionals' relationships with prospective funders adds tremendous value to the organizations they serve. For example, foundation staff members are the conduit to most foundations' boards of directors or reviewers who make funding decisions. Often, if a program officer does not bring a proposal before the board or review panel, it will not get funded. Developing an authentic, open, and honest relationship with program officers is key to future proposal submission and the organization's ongoing relationship with the foundation (Horwitz, 2008; Jaggers, 2010). Even if the proposal goes unfunded, the information gained from conversations with grantmakers is a powerful determinant of whether or not a program or organization will be competitive with a particular funder (or other funders) in the future (Karsh & Fox, 2006).

Grant professionals typically have a keen understanding of funders and their decision-making processes and are in a unique position to establish neutral relationships with funders, often starting with simple logistical questions about an application. These relationships are much more common with private funders than with public/government granting agencies.

Relationships with community organizations

In addition to relationships with funders, grant professionals typically have a network of potential collaborators and/or project evaluators. This is an important asset for consultants, who work with a variety of non-profit organizations. The value of community partners and collaborations is well-documented within the literature on effective non-profit management and grantseeking. Moreover, grantmaking agencies often require or strongly encourage collaboration. A recent article in the *Journal of the American Association of Grant Professionals* discusses the importance of cross-sector partnerships and how non-profits are being pushed to collaborate more (Harney, 2009). Grant professionals need to capitalize on their skills in this arena and learn how to obtain recognition for their contributions. Suggested strategies for grant professionals to ensure their non-profit employers or clients recognize their role in relationship-building include:

- Documenting all meetings, conversations and stewardship activities with grantmakers, and sharing the results of these conversations with all relevant stakeholders, and
- Making relationships with potential project collaborators well known, such as project evaluators and other partnering agencies; and proactively making these connections unless there are specific reasons not to do so.

Strategy 3: Demonstrating growth in organizational capacity to secure grant awards

If non-profit organizations merely focus on the bottom line when it comes to grant income, grant professionals must demonstrate that there is more value behind that number than the number itself. For example, if an organization receives a modest grant from a nationally known foundation or a federal agency, is it less important than the large grant it receives year after year from a local family foundation? That depends on how the organization values the role of grants. Awarded grants represent more than income. They are a testament to the organization's reputation, ability to meet community needs, and overall capacity. Moreover, a modest grant from a first-time funder may be necessary to building a relationship and establishing a track record with that funder. Therefore, such an award might signify a breakthrough to the possibility of increased future support from that funder, and then leveraging their support with other prospective funders.

Moreover, grant professionals should also be savvy about which funding opportunities will be successful and identify which opportunities are less promising than others. One approach for grant professionals to improve their success rate is to limit their grantseeking to opportunities that are realistically fundable, rather than applying for multiple prospects that may be less promising. Grantseekers should always perform research and identify what is fundable through such strategies as examining funders' geographic priorities and recent giving history. Suggested strategies for grant professionals to demonstrate their contribution to increasing the capacity of grantseeking offices include:

- Tracking incremental increases in funding from a variety of grantmakers
- Tracking the total number of proposals submitted and number of new grants awarded each year, categorized among small and large funders, private and public funders, and first-time approach vs. history with funder, among other distinguishing characteristics (Kraus & Porteous, 2010)
- Tracking the overall growth from small to large grant awards, and
- Tracking the number of new prospects identified as potential funders.

Strategy 4: Promoting the overall value of grant professionals' work

Grant professionals often work behind the scenes and must find unconventional ways to obtain recognition for their overall accomplishments. Few others within an organization may understand the time and effort that goes into developing outstanding grant proposals. If the organization or client does not already have a standard method of tracking grant activities, the grant professional should create a reporting process. This will allow the grant professional control over what metrics to track and report (Kester, 2009). The metrics suggested in the previous section are all acceptable criteria to include in such a report. Additional methods for promoting a grant professional's work with employers or clients may include:

- Sharing copies of entire application packages with appropriate constituents to demonstrate the level of detail and rigor required for grant applications (Kester, 2009)

- Encouraging publication of grant awards to various media outlets and/or issuing press releases as appropriate, and
- Hosting a grant management meeting with all key players, reviewing tasks, responsibilities and deadlines for reports.

Strategy 5: Promoting the professionalism of the grants field

Grant professionals must pursue professional growth opportunities and continuously hone their expertise to be as successful as possible and continue to advance the field. Because the grants profession is still a fairly new field, it is important to identify those characteristics that define the difference between a novice grantseeker and an expert grant professional. This is particularly relevant for consultants. Seeking certification through the Grant Professional Certification Institute (GPCI) is one of the primary avenues to elevate recognition with employers and clients.

The authors conducted several interviews with non-profit and public agencies to determine the professional characteristics they seek in their grant development staff or in consultants, beyond their ability to raise money. Interviewees included the Indianapolis Parks Foundation, Indianapolis Marion County Public Library Foundation and five anonymous organizations. The following are the most common characteristics these organizations consider in employing or contracting with a grant professional:

- Having the ability to develop and maintain relationships with funders
- Having expertise in outcome-based project planning and knowledge of various evaluative tools
- Developing a good rapport with the program/project team and willingness to work one-on-one with program staff
- Having the vision and analytical tools to translate ideas into written words and compelling proposals
- Being organized
- Developing and using tracking tools and/or grants calendars to effectively monitor deadlines, project development and implementation, and communication among appropriate stakeholders, and
- Having the willingness to spend time learning about the organization and its role and value in the community.

Grant professionals must also take the time to sharpen their professional skills and keep pace with a rapidly changing field. Strategies grant professionals may want to consider in sharpening their skills and demonstrating their professionalism include:

- Belonging to professional organizations (such as the American Association of Grant Professionals) and adhering to and promoting the code of ethics
- Becoming Grant Professional Certified through the Grant Professional Certification Institute (GPCI)
- Participating in speaking engagements and tracking the number, quality, and rigor of such engagements
- Publishing articles and op-eds, particularly in industry-specific journals and newsletters (CharityChannel is a good place to start for gaining publication experience)
- Demonstrating repeat clients (or for staff-level grant professionals, repeat requests for assistance, particularly with regard to program/ project planning), and
- Volunteering and serving in leadership roles with non-profit and community organizations.

Conclusion

Experienced and successful grant professionals likely already implement many of the strategies described in this article. However, these strategies are less effective if the fundamentals of a strong grantseeking program are not in place. If an organization is struggling to obtain grant funding, then it is critical to examine the elements that contribute to a low success rate, such as poor project design, poor writing quality, or a poor match with the grantmaker's interest. The strategies described in this article should not be used to circumvent larger issues within an organization or with a grant professional's skills. Rather, these strategies are tools for grant professionals to further establish their role within an organization or with clients.

As the grants field continues to move forward, it is important that grant professionals educate their employers and clients about the comprehensive role of grant professionals beyond dollars raised. Suggested strategies to broaden this recognition include: providing expert guidance and input during project planning, using community relationships to strengthen the project, growing an organization's long-term capacity to win grant awards, promoting the overall value of grant professionals' work, and promoting the professionalism of the grants field. These strategies were compiled from interviews with seven organizations that have successful grantseeking programs and place tremendous value on the role of their grant professionals. Furthermore, grant professionals must learn how to elevate their role in an organization or with their clients and be valued as an expert. Implementing the strategies described in this article will not only raise the level of professionalism in the field, but also increase the value of employing or contracting with a highly skilled grant professional.

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Biographical Information

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Sara Forbes Landrum has 10 years of experience in the non-profit sector, helping organizations earn more than $9 million in grant funds. Professional experience includes leading a multi-million dollar grants program at The Children's Museum of Indianapolis for four years. In 2008, Landrum founded SFL Consulting and began working with a variety of non-profit organizations in the arts, education and health and human services sectors. Landrum works with small to mid-sized organizations and helps them establish a grantseeking program or refine an existing one. In addition to her work as a consultant, Landrum volunteers for a variety of organizations and is on the Board of Directors for Giving+Sum, a grantmaking organization. Landrum earned a Master of Public Affairs in Nonprofit Management from Indiana University in 2005. Landrum is also a grant reviewer for the Indiana Arts Commission, a state agency, and recently became Grant Professional Certified through the Grant Professional Certification Institute. (sarafl@sflconsult.com; 317.300.0125.)

Strategies for Successful Site Visits: Tips and Techniques for Grant Professionals and Managers

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

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

Abstract

Many private and corporate foundations are requiring site visits before making their final funding decisions and post-award site visits and audits are vital steps in the management of federal and state funding. Successful site visits are also part of the GPA's key competencies on building and maintaining relationships with funders. This paper combines advice from several sources, including interviews with program officers from three major foundations, to provide specific tips and techniques for ensuring a successful site visit or audit.

Introduction

Most grant professionals spend hours sorting through databases looking for the most likely funders for their organization's programs, narrowing it down to a few funders, and finally, developing a compelling well-crafted grant proposal. Then it is time to submit the application and wait … or maybe not.

A site visit or an audit is when program officers, trustees or other officials from a funder come to the applicant's office or program site on a fact-finding call. Site visits can occur both pre- and post-award. Private, corporate, and community foundations often require site visits before making their final funding decisions. Site visits and audits are also vital steps in the post-award administration of federal and state funding. Program officers from government funding agencies most often focus on program and financial tracking of a program in progress during their site visits, also known as audits.

Today's grant professionals are often responsible for developing the application as well as managing the grants post-award. The Grant Professionals Certification Institute (GPCI) recognizes that the knowledge and experience to hold successful site visits are components of cultivating and maintaining relationships between fund-seeking and recipient organizations during the award period, and between funders and grant managers post award—two of the key competencies covered in the GPCI credentialing exam.

The site visit is a singular event that can make or break an organization's chance at receiving funding. Preparation is key to presenting a clear and favorable impression. This paper will help grant professionals prepare to host site visits by presenting tips gathered from published literature, interviews with program officers, and the authors' experience.

Purpose of the site visit

In general, the purpose of a site visit is to gather information about the qualifications of a potential grantee, but there are some differences between site visits conducted by foundations, and site visits conducted by government agencies. Many family, corporate and community foundations use the site visit to learn more about a new applicant or an unknown organization and about an organization's capacity to deliver the proposed project. Program officers also visit those they have supported to hear updates and to see the impact of their grants, to become active partners in the work of the organization, to see a program in action, and to meet new staff. Site visits from program officers or trustees can also help determine whether or not the organization receives new or continuing funding. For most family, corporate and community foundations, the site visit occurs in advance of funding.

Government site visits take several different forms, and nearly always occur after the program/organization receives funding. The actual term "site visit" is, in reality, a generic term that has a friendlier connotation than "audit." The basic purposes of site visits and audits are similar, since both serve as monitoring tools. Federal and state funding agencies have several monitoring protocols in their portfolios.

Desk reviews or desk audits are the first line of review for government funders in monitoring grantee performance. At both the federal and state funding levels, desk reviews are typically conducted on either a monthly or a quarterly basis. While not as intensive from the grantee's perspective, desk reviews afford the funder the ability to focus monitoring efforts on grantees who demonstrate the greatest need through the submission of incorrect reporting documentation and records.

The second step in a government funder's overall monitoring program is a programmatic or performance audit. A programmatic or performance audit is a chance to meet the funding agency's program manager and to begin building a relationship. In some instances, this is not even a formal visit. The program manager simply wants to meet the agency's leadership and the person or persons charged with oversight of the grant project. The program manager may have a questionnaire that will be completed either prior to or during the visit.

A far more in-depth monitoring tool is the financial audit. A financial audit includes the results of the desk review and encompasses a complete programmatic audit and a full financial audit. Financial audits are typically handled by a monitoring team as opposed to only the program manager assigned to the grant. These reviews often last for more than a week and include the review of any and all records associated with the grant-funded project.

Preparing for community, family and corporate foundation site visits

Preparing ahead for a site visit will help it go more smoothly. Knowing who will conduct the visit and what types of information they will need is a good start towards preparation. The representative conducting the site visit will want to hear about the organization's work and the purpose for the grant … specifically they want to know what impact the project will generate. Be prepared to be specific when describing the project's impact. It is useful to:

1) Find out who, from the visiting foundation, will be present and then research any connections the applicant organization's board members may have to the funder and to the board on which the visitors serve

2) Be familiar with other organizations the funder supports
3) Be prepared to differentiate the applicant organization and its approach from all others. Make sure the review committee can picture the project – provide a tour, show a program in action, and be able to describe the project well with words.

It is helpful to brief all staff prior to the site visit and be prepared for questions from the funders. The types of questions that funders might consider during a site visit are:

- Does the organization have the time and ability (program capacity) to undertake the project?
- Is there President/CEO and board support or "buy-in" for the project?
- Does the organization have a previous track record for undertaking a project of this scope and magnitude?
- Is there a consistent message from staff about the organization and the project?
- Who is the target population? The foundation representatives may want to meet members of the target population.
- Is the project/program director enthusiastic?
- What are the best practices in the field?
- Does the grant project duplicate other efforts in the community?
- How will the grant project/program's results be measured?
- How does the grant project align with the funder's goals and the applicant's mission?

Interviews and advice from funders

The best advice about preparing for foundation site visits comes from foundation staff. The authors interviewed key staff in person, by phone and/or email at a community foundation, a corporate foundation and grant-making civic association about what makes a successful site visit. The funders' responses are presented in a panel discussion format following brief descriptions of each participant and organization.

Founded in 1945, healthcare provider Kaiser Permanente has 8.6 million members in nine states and the District of Columbia. Kaiser Permanente of Georgia Corporate Giving (KPGA) donated more than $7.5 million in the Metro Atlanta area in 2009. Gloria Kemp, Community Benefit Manager for KPGA, conducts more than 80 site visits a year.

The Rochester Area Community Foundation (RACF) was formed in 1972 in Rochester, New York and is one of the largest community foundations in the region. The RACF awarded $22.9 million in grants during fiscal year 2008/09. The foundation manages approximately 1,000 funds and has six committees that advise on grantmaking. The RACF grants mostly from donor-advised funds (pre-selected, non-competitive), and also administers a competitive process. Ed Doherty, Vice President of Community Programs, shares insight on the RACF's site visit process.

Founded in 1916, the Junior League of Atlanta (JLA) is now one of the largest chapters in the country. The women of JLA share a commitment to promoting volunteerism. Last year JLA raised and distributed over $700,000 to its non-profit partners who focus on services benefiting women and children. Audra Dial, President of the Junior League of Atlanta (JLA) and partner with the law firm of Kilpatrick Stockton in Atlanta responded to the following questions.

Question 1: *What determines whether or not you schedule a site visit with a potential grantee and/or current grantee?*

KPGA: Site visits are our primary strategy to better understand an applicant's project, and to get to know an organization. We have a dollar threshold for our general contributions, above which we visit with applicants. Additionally, we visit all organizations submitting proposals for our strategic program areas, which are initiated via Requests for Proposals (RFP).

RACF: The Rochester Area Community Foundation (RACF) does not have a systematic approach to conducting site visits. Some site visits are highly structured while others are more informal. Some are proactive —conducted prior to receipt of a written grant proposal—and others are conducted after a grant has been awarded. In the case of major donors and donor-advised funds, the RACF staff sets up site visits and sometimes accompanies the donors on these visits. One of the larger funds held at the RACF has a volunteer committee that conducts site visits after they review grant proposals; only proposals that the fund is considering granting are scheduled for site visits. Sometimes CF program officers/staff will conduct proactive site visits to learn more about organizations – this assists with the decision-making process once a grant proposal has been received.

JLA: We schedule a site visit with every agency that meets the minimum requirements for partnership with the League and is applying for a "placement" opportunity with the Junior League, which means the agency is requesting volunteers who will commit 50 hours each of volunteer work and potentially also seeking funding relevant to what our volunteers would be doing.

Question 2: *What makes a site visit successful for you?*

KPGA: A visit is successful if we've learned things about the organization and the project that weren't required or presented or apparent in the proposal. In certain cases, the site visit has either helped us gain a much better understanding of the organization and its proposed work, or it has left us confused about the purpose of the proposed work—and has stopped the progress of that particular proposal.

RACF: We want to learn something from a site visit; so having the opportunity to ask questions is important. Ideally, potential grantees should identify all the issues (positive and negative) associated with a program/proposal, so that we learn how to best assist. Access to the organization's staff, and sometimes the target population/clients served by the program, has been shown to be an illuminating experience in the past.

JLA: We appreciate having an in-depth perspective on the agency's work through the site visit, which helps us truly understand the agency's mission and whether there is a great fit with our organization.

Question 3: *What are the top things/facts/items you are looking for during a site visit?*

KPGA: I want to walk away knowing that the group is a good steward of its current resources (human resources, revenue including prior grants). A red flag could be if there doesn't appear to be enough staff, or if there is a lot of turnover in the organization. Plans for sustainability are key, as well as strong relationships with other funders.

RACF: The Community Foundation conducts a site visit to learn more about the organization and/or evaluate the success of an organization and its programs (if they are a longer-term grantee).

JLA: To get a feel for the agency and their work, to see that there is a viable program opportunity for our volunteers, and that the agency seems interested and in need of help from the JLA and our volunteers.

Question 4: *What kind of contact do you prefer to have with the potential grantee following the site visit?*

All respondents agreed that a thank-you note is not required, but a quick "thank-you" email is always appreciated. Furthermore, if a question arose at the site visit that the grantee was unable to answer, someone should contact the funder soon after to provide the answer.

To summarize, the respondents provided advice for grant seekers for what "to do" and "not to do" prior to, and during the site visit:

What To Do	*What NOT To Do*
Be prepared to explain the program (know the project's budget, work plan, organization's history, similar projects, etc.).	Do not give long answers that do not answer the question. Instead, listen, and give concise answers.
Have relevant supporting materials on hand for easy reference.	Do not fail to follow up on questions or send additional information when promised.
Brief staff on the project so that they can be prepared to answer questions about it.	Do not answer phone calls or emails during the site visit.
Make a strong case for the need for the project and why the organization is uniquely positioned to deliver on the project.	Do not provide an extravagant lunch – it is too costly and time-consuming. Instead, serve light refreshments as a better option.
Give a tour and/or show the project to the funder.	Do not hide any bad press or challenges the organization is facing. Instead, be upfront so that the funder can be of assistance.
Schedule ample time for the visit.	Do not rush the visit.
Thoroughly research the funder and their priorities.	Do not make a poor visual impression. Instead be sure the office, building, and grounds are neat and uncluttered.
Allow the funder to interact with the project's target audience (e.g. youth, volunteers, etc.).	Do not give the funder excessive materials – a one-page fact sheet is enough.

Preparing for government audits

Federal and state governments are required to monitor how taxpayer money is spent. They do this though site visits and audits, both of which can happen pre- or post-award. The relationship between grantee and grantor can be characterized as a binding partnership. Remember that the funder and grantee have essentially entered into a contract. The grantee is the applicant, accepts the award, and signs the grant agreement, often with pages and pages of terms and conditions. The grantee is the partner that must implement the proposed project, provide evidence of the expected outcomes, submit reports in a timely fashion and subject themselves and their record keeping to an external audit. The partnership can dissolve quickly if the grantee fails to perform its contractual obligations.

The grantor makes the rules and requirements on the use and accounting of the grant funds. The partnership can be strengthened when the grantee communicates effectively with the grantor, and that communication must begin before the grant award, during the site visits, during the audit, and should continue throughout the grant period. The relationship building is not for just the grant professional's personal growth or for the organization's sole benefit. The true beneficiaries of a solid and well-established relationship "are the individuals or communities whose lives the grantee and grantor seek to make better. And it is this fact that not only justifies but also demands that due diligence be duly done." (Brest & Harvey, 2008, pp. 82-84.) Government audits, therefore, serve the functions of providing accountability, and opening communication.

Audits

For the federal government, a Single Audit is the most common type of audit. A Single Audit is a thorough audit or examination of organization or a specific program. Getting ready for the federal Single Audit ideally starts the day the new fiscal year begins. However, there are a number of ways to get grant files ready for the auditors. The Single Audit Act of 1984 and subsequent amendments requires that nonfederal entities, such as cities, counties, Local Education Agencies (LEAs), institutions of higher learning, or other local organizations that expend $500,000 or more a year in federal awards have a single or program-specific audit in accordance with the provisions of the Act's audit requirement. The award activity determines how to establish when an award is expended. Expenditures include cash transactions, loans, loan guarantees, federally restricted endowment funds, and various other types of noncash assistance, such as interest subsidies. A program-specific audit may be elected only when an auditee expends federal awards under one federal program (excluding research and development, which is considered as one major program) and the federal program's laws, regulations, or grant agreements do not require the auditee to have a financial statement audit. (Siebert & Walker, 2010, pp. 3-48)

Government audits result from numerous rules and regulations. Some of these rules include:

Recipients of federal awards must:

1) Maintain a system of internal control over all federal programs in order to demonstrate compliance with pertinent laws and regulations

2) Identify all grant programs by Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number and title, awarding agency, year of award, and any pass-through entities if applicable

3) Ensure that audits mandated under OMB Circular A-133 are performed and filed with appropriate federal entities as required

4) Follow up on any audit findings, questioned costs, or compliance issues, which involves specific responses and, when necessary, take corrective action that will resolve current and/or previous findings

5) Sign the official data collection and single audit submission form that is prepared in conjunction with the independent auditor.

The recipient organization is legally responsible for the accuracy and timely submission of these forms even if the auditor prepares the forms.

Auditors of recipients of federal awards must:

1) Plan and conduct the audit in accordance with GAAS (generally accepted auditing standards) and GAGAS (generally accepted government auditing standards)

2) Determine if the organization-wide and federal awards financial statements are presented fairly in accordance with GAAS and GAGAS

3) Determine if Schedule of Expenditures of Federal Awards is presented fairly in relation to the organization's financial statements as a whole

4) Perform tests that demonstrate an understanding of the recipient's internal controls in order to support a "low assessed risk" for major programs

5) Determine that the recipient has complied with laws, regulations, and grant agreements through review and testing procedures

6) Follow up on the status of previous audit findings.

Awarding agencies have the following responsibilities in the audit process:

1) Ensure that audits are completed and filed on time

2) Provide technical assistance to auditors and recipients who may have audit questions

3) Issue a management decision on financial and compliance audit findings within six months after an audit report has been submitted

4) Ensure that recipients follow up on audit findings and develop and implement a corrective action plan if necessary. (Siebert & Walker, 2010, pp. 10-12)

Anyone new to Single Audits should first locate a copy of the organization's most recent audit and management letter. The audit document will identify any audit findings and these should be reviewed carefully to ensure that internal controls are in place and followed. This also will prevent or identify issues in advance so corrective action can be taken before the books close and auditors arrive. The corrective action plan should also be reviewed and evaluated for effect. The management letter often includes items identified by the auditors that are issues, but that did not rise to the level of an audit finding.

The required Single Audit is drastically different from the funding agency's site visit. While an outside auditing firm conducts the single audit, employees or contractors of the funding entity always conduct site visits by a funding agency. Those funding agency staff persons have been specially trained to recognize "red flags" in the programmatic and financial performance of a program and of an agency as a whole. Potential problems discovered during an audit include grantees maintaining multiple time sheets, lack of fund accounting, petty cash fund not reconciled and balanced, lack of sufficient match by non-federal funds, lack of an accounting manual and chart of accounts, and no evidence of periodic reviews of management by the board of directors.

Detailed grant files are vitally important to exceeding the monitor's expectations. The organization's grant files can be arranged in a number of ways. Some grant professionals prefer to use 3-ring binders, some use expandable pocket folders and others are completely paperless. Arrange the grant files in a manner that is easy to follow; some grant professionals prefer chronological order or reverse chronological order. At a minimum, organize files into the following categories: Application, Award, Budget, Reimbursements, Correspondence and Reports. Using these categories will streamline the review process. Even though federal and state funding agencies do not dictate the format and layout of files, it behooves the well-prepared grantee to develop separate program files for each grant. Maintaining all documentation related to a specific award in one folder minimizes the work that the program manager will have to do when performing a site visit. It is helpful to develop a spreadsheet of items each grant file contains. The order should be the same for each file and it should be updated annually to incorporate auditor preferences, requirements and new funding authorizations, such as the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. (Pub.L. 111-5)

Conclusion and analysis

Very few relationships are as important to a grant professional as the relationship between the grantee and the grantor. It can take years to build an open, professional relationship and a matter of minutes to tear it apart. Site and audit visits are a critical component of what grant professionals do and should not be overlooked or trivialized. Funders are not hoping to "trip up" the grantee; in all instances, the funder has a vested interest in ensuring the project's success! A site visit should always be viewed as a chance for positive interaction with a funder. It is important to remember that foundations want to give out money to those organizations that can truly have a positive impact – and some types of foundations (e.g. private) are required by law to give minimum distributions each year. Through successful government site visits and audits, funded non-profits demonstrate their capacity to manage public funds and help facilitate future awards. To continue building a source of information on site visits and audits, larger scale interviews and surveys of public and private funders may help identify more ways to host favorable site visits – a potential benefit for all grant professionals. The most rewarding part of the work of being a volunteer, family member or staff of a foundation is the ability to support the work of an organization that is making a strong impact in the community. The site visit is an opportunity to demonstrate that impact in person.

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A New Architecture of Grant Writing: Lessons from the 2008 Presidential Campaign Trail

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

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

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

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

Abstract

While the 2008 presidential election season is a distant memory for many, it continues to leave an indelible mark on the political and larger fundraising universe. For the first time in history, more than $1 billion was raised by candidates (*Banking on Becoming President,* 2010). Key lessons from the campaign trail are outlined that can be successfully infused into the work of grant professionals for many years to come:

1) Start with a heartfelt cause then propose steps to support it
2) Adopt credible, charismatic language to shape image
3) Use technology to build a strong presence and attract funds
4) “Spin” is everything: repackage ideas for multiple purposes
5) Take credit wherever possible.

Ultimately, this article suggests a new frontier for grant development professionals. Those who take advantage of these exciting possibilities will better communicate with funders, garner support more adeptly and appeal to a broader base.

Introduction

Fundraising is the centerpiece of presidential campaigns. Identifying and communicating ideas that stir passion and commitment is essential to garnering political dollars. Prospective leaders must painstakingly build a case that not only puts forth a set of solutions to the greatest national challenges but resonates with tens of millions of supporters. Grant professionals also craft elaborate language to address compelling social issues. Superior grantseekers harness these opportunities to improve visibility, strengthen relationships, develop sustainable sources of income and build capacity. Upon limited analysis, the parallels between presidential and grant fundraising campaigns are clear. The issue is how political tactics can be successfully applied in grant development activities.

Incorporating political approaches to grant development is difficult not due to relevance but because most writers learn to compartmentalize fundraising methods. Cultivation techniques to secure major gifts from individuals are, for example, considered separate and apart from grant-seeking techniques. The larger aim of this article is to encourage readers to engage in a new architecture of proposal writing that integrates fundraising approaches wherever they are useful while honoring the traditions that make the field truly unique.

Lesson One: Start with a heartfelt cause then propose steps to support it

Those who prepare grant applications often take a technical approach: research, analysis and organizational information are intricately weaved into a coherent request. Grant professionals do an excellent job of building factually supported arguments. While grantmakers appreciate being well-informed about issues, they desire clear communication about the importance of immediate action and the exact action needed.

During the 2008 campaign season, the presidential hopefuls took clear and obvious positions, shared personal information with the public and made specific calls for action. *The 2008 Presidential Campaign: A Communication Perspective* suggests that the manner in which these candidates delivered messages was given as much – if not more – weight than the content of those messages. Smerecnik & Dionisopolous conclude "when politicians discuss issues … the policy details expressed may be less important than the worldview presented in the attempt to connect with the audience"(p. 163). Further, "voters who see their moral beliefs affirmed in a candidate's framing of an issue will be more inclined to view that candidate favorably, even when disagreeing with the specific policies expressed" (p. 164).

Not unlike voters, funders prefer to support specific causes. Grant development professionals should remember that real people read and respond to proposals, and these readers have distinct personal backgrounds, perspectives and motivations. When seeking awards for programs or services, proposal writers should be sure to deliver a universal message up front – thinking big picture, using broad strokes and being forthright. A natural opportunity is the first text that a funder reads: the proposal's title. Examples of compelling cause-based titles include:

- *The Enhancing Learning for Disadvantaged Students Initiative:* a technology project to support an after-school student engineering club in an urban low-income high school

- *Healthy Mothers Build Healthy Communities Project:* a fitness initiative targeting expectant teen mothers at a community health center, and

- *Recognizing Seniors and Cultural Awareness:* a program to establish a team of paid senior volunteers at a non-profit arts institution that has limited resources to employ regular staff.

When an audience encounters cause-based messaging strong emotions arise, inspiring the audience to act. However, the audience also needs to believe that the proposed actions will be effective. If a fund seeker or candidate simply elicits emotions, the audience (grant maker or voter) has not received a reason to give money or votes. After leading with a cause, a grant professional should therefore go on to outline a proposal that makes a causal connection between alleviating an emotionally challenging circumstance (e.g., disadvantaged students, unhealthy teen mothers, marginalized seniors) and a specific philanthropic solution (e.g., a two-year $75,000 program grant to support after-school student enrichment, a $15,000 capital contribution of exercise equipment to a community-based fitness center for pregnant teens, a technical assistance award to build a curatorial database for senior arts institution volunteers). In the end, a compelling proposal will appeal to funders' sentiments and propose a viable solution that is directly connected to the need.

Lesson Two: Adopt credible, charismatic language to shape image

Beyond providing an emotional appeal to act immediately for a single cause and clearly stating what actions should be taken, a grant professional must convince funders that the applicant organization deserves an award more than others. In an ideal fundraising universe, only the most compelling causes with the best aligned solutions are awarded. Yet experienced grantseekers acknowledge an additional variable. Here, Aristotle's time-tested principles on winning over an audience provide the answer: well-crafted arguments appeal to reason (logos), emotions (pathos), and the speaker's credibility (ethos) (Bizzell & Herzberg, 1990). In Lesson One, above, pathos was the primary appeal. But Aristotle regarded ethos as arguably "the controlling factor in persuasion" (Kennedy, 1991, 1356a).

The work of communications scholar Cooley A. Horner (2009) examines how ethos is injected into contemporary presidential politics' persuasive tactics. Horner suggests that ethos is intimately related to charisma, which includes the "character and personality of the speaker, both real and perceived" (p. 13). Charismatic leaders are "envisioned and esteemed" by supporters in unique ways (p. 39). Charisma can be "framed, bolstered, and protected over the course of a presidential campaign" (p. 39).

> Naturally an individual must possess specialized characteristics to be perceived as charismatic, including the ability to speak well and perform to the expectations of a crowd or constituency, but the speechwriters, photographers, planners, and strategists behind the scenes play a profound role in shaping the image that is presented to the voters (p. 206).

If the organization that applies for funding is likened to a presidential candidate, then programmatic and administrative personnel are akin to campaign staff who work behind the scenes. The value of what others (non-grant professionals) will bring to a funding bid has already been added by the time project planning is in progress (e.g., development of a top-flight service delivery model, impressive annual performance results, cultivation support via site visit participation). What is left for the writer is to further shape organizational image through the written word. To take full advantage of this moment, a wise writer will use powerful language to support credibility and what Horner references as the "charismatic storyline" (p. 5).

The 2008 presidential hopefuls were, in part, the embodiment of rich candidate narratives that allowed for connection with the electorate on multiple levels. Grant proposals are carefully staged opportunities to create imagery that appeals to organizational ethos. Requests that simply respond to application requirements and do not fully harness credibility building opportunities are at risk for rejection. Three strategies to bolster ethos in grants include:

- Image One: "An expert in the field." Voters routinely infer candidates' ability to successfully hold the presidential office from their political resumes. Grant professionals should, in turn, include resumes and/or biographical sketches in proposals (whether or not required) from senior management, the board and high-profile or key program staff. Superior credentials and in-depth experience of members can shift the overall perception of an organization. (Newly launched non-profits with limited track records greatly benefit from this principle.) A very broad representation of expertise should be at the disposal of a writer, to be selected based on the purpose of each grant.

- Image Two: "Best stance on the issues." Presidential candidates are very good at making distinctions from one another – whether during a fundraising rally or televised debate. Grant development professionals should not hesitate to compare and contrast an organization's approach to the challenge at hand with top competitors. Writers should be sure to communicate evidence for the approach and why the approach is more responsive in the short and/or long term.

- Image Three: "The storybook hero." Of successful presidents, Cornog (2004) writes "the stories we like best contain heroes … such men advance in politics because they understand how to build on them, to burnish their existing reputations, presenting themselves to the world in a flattering light, and allowing that which is best about them to be seen" (pp. 11-12). Writers should not hesitate to incorporate storytelling into grant proposals. When a funder reads about how a child from a troubled neighborhood faces an uncertain future, utilizes a non-profit after-school drop-in center for seven years and then graduates in the top 5% to go on to a prestigious university, there is a deeply moving response – and the non-profit organization becomes "the hero." The story also communicates organizational credibility by reinforcing how contributions have tangible results.

Lesson Three: Use technology to build a strong presence and attract funds

The Internet has emerged as one of the best ways to improve visibility, spur activity and raise money. In 2008, presidential candidates took effective use of the Web to extraordinary levels – building unprecedented constituent bases and shattering political fundraising records to raise one billion-plus dollars. According to the Pew Internet & American Life Project:

> More than half the adult population were online political users in the 2008 election. Three-quarters (74%) of

> internet users went online during the 2008 election to take part in, or get news and information about, the 2008 campaign. This represents 55% of the entire adult population, and marks the first time the Pew Internet & American Life Project has found that more than half the voting-age population used the Internet to connect to the political process during an election cycle (p. 3).

Grant professionals would be wise to follow the candidates' lead by creating a strong online presence to rally existing and potential supporters. While many view technology as a passive, less personal tool for engagement, the possibilities that it brings to establishing trust, making connections, and gathering information can all help to support the bottom line.

Trust is a key ingredient in fundraising – and can be established with the aid of online environments.

People give to people. Trust is a very important variable. In many ways, the reputation of a funder is on the line in selecting grantees. Relative unknowns pose real risks. The more a grant officer knows about an organization, the more confident that person feels vouching for an application in the board room or with the review committee. An organizational website that establishes trust with potential donors includes information about history, mission, board composition and senior leadership, key programs and services, press and donors (including past supporters and how contributed funds are used). Grant professionals should be formally involved in website development and maintenance to ensure that content and the overall presentation are attractive to potential donors.

Funders receive countless requests. Use the Internet to improve odds by making and sustaining connections.

Blogs, e-newsletters and email blasts serve as powerful social connectors. Such online resources allow funders to obtain firsthand, current knowledge about an organization and to share leads with others who might also provide support. The 2008 national elections showcased the power of the Internet to support social networking. One example of that power is the proliferation of political viral videos (clips that feature politicians or political subject matter and gain rapid popularity through Internet sharing). While often containing humorous material, these videos served as powerful marketing tools that instantly attracted the attention of, and created a shared dialogue among, tens of thousands of viewers. In addition, during the most recent campaign season, the website YouTube hosted presidential debates for the first time. Moderated by

CNN, ordinary people from across the country posed questions to the candidates via webcam. Grant professionals should harness such creative Internet tools to highlight fundraising programs and effective strategies.

The more that is known about potential grantmakers, the better a writer can tailor submissions. Engage in online research to gather valuable information.

Well-crafted research tends to result in well-crafted proposals. Through a one-time sweep of websites, online news and other funder information sources, grant professionals can gather background information about financial data, giving priorities and past grantees. However, through regular online research of the same funder, a grant development professional gains insight about variance in financial position, shifts in strategic goals and changes in funding mechanisms. These long-term trends are important to forecast – and give a grant professional a real competitive edge. Grant development professionals are encouraged to subscribe to an online monitoring service to receive automatic email notifications when new content is published (e.g., news, web, blogs, video and/or discussion groups) that matches with a set of specified search terms about donors. In fact, all communications with a funder – from cultivation and solicitation to ongoing online interactions – can be customized based on information gathered through regular Internet monitoring.

Lesson Four: "Spin" is everything: repackage ideas for multiple purposes

While the term "spin" does not have the most positive connotations on the campaign trail, it is prevalent. Politicians acknowledge that perception is everything. Political spin is, at once, the process of agenda resetting and strategic marketing:

> … [M]ass audiences have been broken down or segmented in the present era into strategically targeted groups for which highly personalized messages and delivery systems are constructed by the growing ranks of pollsters, strategists, and spin doctors who work behind the scenes of modern democracies (Lance Bennett & Entman, 2001, p. 17).

Grant professionals are not unfamiliar with selective communication – sending customized program updates to cultivate donors, tailoring grant submissions based on information gathered through research, or networking and submitting project reports that highlight particular results. When establishing a fundraising audience, however, it is customary to do so based on the missions of the requesting organizations. An alternative approach is first to identify a range of messaging possibilities for an initiative and then to identify prospects whose priorities align with those messages. Three projects that were explored in Lesson One are subjected to 'spin tactics' below:

Project Title	*Project Overview*	*Messaging Possibilities for Funding*
The Enhancing Learning for Disadvantaged Students Initiative	A technology project to support an after-school student engineering club in an urban low-income high school	• Technology access • Science achievement • After-school programming • College preparation • Career development
Healthy Mothers Build Healthy Communities Project	A fitness initiative targeting expectant teen mothers at a community health center	• Community empowerment • Youth/family services • Sports and recreation • Health promotion/ obesity prevention
Recognizing Seniors and Cultural Awareness	A grant to establish a team of paid senior volunteers at a nonprofit arts institution that has limited resources to employ regular staff	• Arts and culture • Civic engagement • Senior services • Voluntarism

Engaging funders with different core interests increases avenues for support. The 'spin approach' also expands the philanthropic profile of an organization. Grant professionals should take the same steps employed with all new funders by first introducing the organization (including key initiatives) and then presenting a rationale for why a partnership makes sense.

Lesson Five: Take credit wherever possible

Presidential candidates never hesitate to take credit for positive results that were in any way related to the efforts of those candidates. For less successful outcomes, "[s]ome candidates can overcome a track record of poor judgment and inconsistencies with a polished presentation on the stump" (Foer, 2008, p. 82). Grant professionals should take this same approach – being forthright with what the presence of an organization means for those it serves (e.g., measurable program results) and presenting the overall proposal in an appealing manner.

One way to "market" the successes of an organization is to attach a press kit. In the past, large, expensive public relations firms that had access to journalists with printworthy news developed such releases. With the advent of technology and social media, applicants have the internal capacity to create press. Two to three press items should be appended to each and every proposal – unless a funder explicitly requests that such information not be included. If such attachments are not allowed, the background or relevant narrative section can reference a webpage that permanently houses press on the organizational website and is regularly updated. Notable items include:

- Coverage in the media
- Receipt of awards
- Special events
- New programs or services
- New and high-profile employees
- New and high-profile clients, and
- Website or blog launches or enhancements.

Funders must be certain that investing in a partnership will produce favorable results for as many stakeholders as possible. As a result, grant professionals must develop proposals that espouse value, establish authority and improve public relations for both the applicant and the funding organization. In order to strengthen a submission, writers should routinely include a 'visibility plan' that supports donor image – offering to work in concert with community relations personnel as appropriate. Possible activities to include in the plan are:

- Acknowledging the funder on the organizational website and newsletter as well as in written program communications
- Disseminating press releases that announce the grant award to local newspapers, trade publications, radio and television stations

- Inviting the funder to participate and/or speak at high profile program events, and
- Establishing a scholarship or award program to be named after the funder and formally publicized.

Conclusion

Too many grant writers use the same old formula to develop proposals in a fundraising landscape that is capable of changing rapidly and fundamentally. The 2008 presidential election season surpassed all-time records by raising more than $1 billion for all candidates combined. The value of political tactics to build a powerful base of support cannot be denied.

This article supports a holistic understanding of the essential factors of the 2008 candidates' fundraising success as well as how those elements practically apply to proposal writing. Evidence-based literature and real-world examples strengthen high yield grant-seeking skills. Five key lessons emerge that are summarized below.

1) Start with a heartfelt cause, then propose steps to support it. During the 2008 campaign season, the presidential hopefuls took clear and obvious positions, shared personal information with the public and made specific calls for action. Ultimately, a compelling proposal appeals to funders' sentiments and puts forth a viable solution that is directly connected to the need.

2) Adopt credible, charismatic language to shape image. Beyond providing an emotional appeal to act immediately for a single cause and clearly stating what actions should be taken, a grant professional must convince funders that the applicant organization deserves an award more than the other "candidates." Requests that simply respond to application requirements and do not fully harness credibility building opportunities or create "charismatic storylines" are at risk for rejection.

3) Use technology to build a strong presence and attract funds. The 2008 candidates took effective use of the Web to extraordinary levels, building unprecedented constituent bases and shattering political fundraising records. Grant professionals should follow this lead by using the Internet to establish trust, make connections and gather information – strongly supporting the bottom line.

4) "Spin" is everything. Repackage ideas for multiple purposes. While the term "spin" does not have the most positive connotations on the campaign trail, politicians widely acknowledge the power of perception. Grant professionals should first identify a range of

messaging possibilities for an initiative and then prospects whose priorities align with those messages.

5) Take credit wherever possible. The presidential candidates never hesitated to claim responsibility for positive results that were in any way related to the efforts of those candidates. Grant professionals should take this same approach – being forthright with what the presence of an organization means for those it serves and presenting the overall proposal in an appealing manner.

Grant development is revealed as a multidimensional and integrated process. Innovative strategy is the driving force. Ultimately, this article explores how grant professionals can engage in a new architecture of fundraising that honors formulas for success wherever found.

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Why Grant Applications Fail

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

Abstract

Securing grant funding is always a competitive process, but never more so than during periods of natural disasters and difficult economic periods that direct resources away from other causes. In order to remain competitive, organizations must do everything possible to ensure that proposals are well-written and that specific key components are addressed. Although the writer is often held responsible for a successful proposal, it is actually the obligation of the grant-seeking organization's leadership to optimize a number of other conditions in order to ensure success. This article details some of the primary reasons that a grant application fails, and offers some solutions that can help grant-seeking organizations avoid these pitfalls.

Introduction

Over the last decade, multiple natural disasters and a worldwide economic recession have put more pressure on non-profits, schools, and local governmental agencies to find alternative funding to sustain or create programs. Adding to these difficulties is the fact that the number of non-profit organizations are on the rise, with nearly 1.5 million non-profits now operating in the United States (Wing & Blackwood, 2009). At the same time, charitable contributions within the United States between 2007 and 2008 decreased 2% because of the economic downturn – the first drop since 1987 (Giving USA, 2009).

Typical proposal pitfalls

How does an organization succeed in the search for grant funding? There is a plethora of material describing how to write a good grant proposal. Numerous web sites from federal agencies, such as www.grants.gov, and private foundations such as www.gatesfoundation.org are filled with helpful, detailed advice. But information about what not to do when applying for funding is scattered throughout the literature. In the vein of the currently popular "top 10 lists," here is the top 10 list of proposal pitfalls.

The ten areas of a grant proposal where fundamental errors are common and easily avoided include:

- The organization's mission does not match the grant objective
- The organization has a limited history
- The application forms are incomplete or inaccurate
- The submission deadline has passed
- The project, goals, or outcomes are poorly planned
- The organization has limited board support
- The proposal does not describe the project clearly and convincingly
- The evaluation process is unclear
- The budget is vague or poorly developed, and
- There is a lack of collaboration with other organizations.

The organization's mission does not match the grant objective

Too often, organizations are so passionate about their mission that they fail to ensure their activities adequately match the requirements or mission of the grant maker. The Requests for Proposals (RFPs) or guidelines state the eligibility requirements, but ambiguous language is often used to describe which organizations should apply for funding or a particular grant opportunity and which should not. It is the responsibility of the grant-seeking organization to clarify whether it meets the eligibility requirements of the foundation, and this may require directly contacting the funder's program officer. Most program officers work with applicants to clarify the grantor's mission and to diminish the number of unacceptable proposals submitted. It is critical that the grant-seeking organization first conduct a thorough investigation of the grantor's mission and goals in order to ask pertinent questions (Karsh & Fox, 2009).

Grantseekers who disregard the process of self-examination regarding their organization's status or scope of work may suffer a lack of understanding of their own mission. If an organization's leadership fails to understand its own mission, it cannot properly align its projects with the goals and aspirations of the granting institution. Worse still is the long-range damage that may occur if a granting foundation is continually beset with deficient proposals from that same organization. Such a situation may cause reviewers to develop a prejudice against the organization and future grant applications from that organization.

The organization has a limited history

An important component of the grant application is organizational history. Many small startup organizations are eager to move beyond organizing fundraising events and to seek foundation or government grants to support special projects and operating expenses. Sometimes these organizations seek grants prematurely. Grantmakers closely scrutinize potential grantees to see if there is a significant track record of related work, a clear vision of what they want to accomplish and a dedicated board of directors (Karsh & Fox, 2009).

To include a thorough description of your organization's history, include a concise explanation of the year the organization opened services and why. List any significant accomplishments and awards the organization has received in order to demonstrate organizational capacity. Without these fundamental elements, funders may have doubts about the organization's viability and not be willing to approve an application. Funders may see newer organizations as risky investments, because if a grantee is unable to sustain itself or does not manage the grant well, this could reflect unfavorably on the funder as well.

The best course of action for a startup is to rely on volunteers and local funding sources to develop a functional internal funding base. It must be clear that the new organization is able to sustain itself and that it is implementing its mission and goals. Startups can also partner with an established organization with a similar or complementary mission to seek grant funding. Many grantmakers hope to see collaboration in proposals. Newer organizations can benefit from proactively seeking and building these types of partnerships.

The application forms are incomplete or inaccurate

Grant guidelines are directions for what must be included in a grant proposal. Proposal writers must follow directions exactly if they wish to avoid disqualification. These guidelines may be as simple as an outline showing the order in which information must be supplied, or as complex as prescribing the page limit for the narrative, the type of font to use, and the size of the margins (Kurland & Malekoff, 2004; Smith &

Tremore, 2008). Regardless of the level of complexity, failure to follow the grantmaker's directions demonstrates the writer's inability to follow specified guidelines. This lack of thoroughness may afford a cause for concern when the funder requests any type of progress report or financial audit of the grant.

Because of competition for funding dollars, grant reviewers follow score sheets to rate the numerous proposals they review. If a section is not in the proper order there may be a penalty. This may also happen when a funder requests information that does not apply to the grant seeking organization. A request for information must be addressed, letting the reviewer know that this section of the proposal does not apply and was not merely overlooked. Proposal writers should not ruin the chance of receiving funding before the proposal has even been read by assuming that the guidelines are optional.

The submission deadline has passed

No matter how excellent the proposal, missing the submission deadline will almost guarantee disqualification from the review process. Whenever possible, a proposal should be submitted earlier than the required date to avoid the risk of missing the deadline.

It is important to understand that the funding organization must be able to rely on grantees to supply required documentation in a timely manner. The inability to submit a proposal by the deadline (no matter what the reason) signals a lack of time management and follow-through on proposed activities.

One method of avoiding this pitfall is to use a team approach to grant development whenever possible, to benefit from the talents of multiple individuals rather than placing the burden of researching, organizing and writing all on a single person. "The necessity of having a team approach to grant development exists for many reasons, including time management, fields of expertise, contractual obligations, and brainstorming power" (Renninger, Bastuscheck, & Brandolini, 2007, p. 41).

The project, goals, or outcomes are poorly planned

Reviewers often complain that the projects and activities detailed in grant proposals lack focus or have an unclear rationale for implementation. Grant-seeking organizations sometimes have a difficult time justifying the relevance of a certain activity or will demonstrate a certain naiveté about the time commitment necessary to complete stated tasks (Sontheimer & Bergstresser, 1991). Such difficulty can indicate a lack of planning or that sound procedures to ensure meeting the organization's proposed goals do not exist.

Grant-seeking organizations must fully understand the scope of work that they are proposing and, equally important, the limitations regarding what the project's goals and activities will actually produce. Funders are looking for practical projects with a detailed plan on implementation, goals, and evaluation. Grantmakers also want to know whether the project can be implemented immediately upon receipt of the grant, or whether the project is still in the planning stages (Porter, 2003).

The organization has limited board support

A "board" refers to the group of individuals who oversee the governance of an organization. Sometimes a board helps to decide whether the pursuit of a grant is truly beneficial to the population served by the organization, or distracts it from accomplishing its mission. In either case, funders want to see engagement on the part of the board, and anything less illustrates a lack of commitment from the governing body.

Many non-profit organizations find it difficult to attract dedicated board members who bring with them expertise or a willingness to be fully engaged in the responsibilities of the board. This is due in part to the expansion of non-profit organizations over the past few years and the limited number of individuals willing or able to serve as board members. In order to overcome these challenges it is recommended that the board have a diverse membership that includes members with leadership, personnel, financial and legal expertise, as well as a wide range of ages, races, backgrounds and income levels (Sand, 2005).

The proposal should describe how the board oversees the financial health of the organization and demonstrate that fiscal systems exist to ensure the proper handling of grant funds (Karsh & Fox, 2009). Board support may include a letter of support from the entire board, signed by the president, or be individually written by each member. This letter should be included in the appendix and referenced in the narrative of the grant proposal wherever possible, to demonstrate a strong, cohesive drive to ensure the organization's mission, goals and projects are a success.

The proposal does not describe the project clearly and convincingly

If a grant seeker is unable to clearly articulate an organization's goals and operations, it leaves the impression that internal stakeholders either lack a good grasp of their mission or that they are tailoring the proposed project to acquire grant funding. "Good project ideas have to be well expressed and must fit into the sponsor's high priority areas for funding" (Molfese, Karp, & Siegel, 2002, p. 21). The most successful and trusted organizations are not "grant-driven," but instead are "mission-driven," with well-developed programs that demonstrate they have properly utilized other available resources.

One way to avoid mission drift or mission sway (Mitchell, 2008) is to develop an established case statement that can be kept in an electronic file and be continually updated as changes in the organization occur. Completing a grant requires the grantee to identify a need the organization meets; name the organization's projects and activities that address that need; describe a method of evaluating the success of the organization's projects; and define a budget that illustrates how the organization is leveraging its resources. This information should be compiled well before any RFP is released so that any alterations can be made easily, yet not deviate from the organization's core message. In this way, the organization is well prepared for multiple RFPs or related types of grants, and avoids having to rewrite this information every time a new grant opportunity presents itself (Karsh & Fox, 2009).

Another issue regarding clarity is the readability of the proposal itself. If the proposal is poorly written, it is difficult for a grant reviewer to understand the significance of the planned project, which is especially true if the reviewer is rushed and has multiple proposals to read. Avoid using acronyms, jargon or slang in order to keep the message clear and prevent misunderstandings regarding intent. Likewise, errors in grammar and word usage can be misconstrued as a careless attitude on the part of the organization (Kurland & Malekoff, 2004; Sontheimer & Bergstresser, 1991). Allow multiple internal and external stakeholders to read the proposal before submission. Scrutiny by individuals other than the writer increases the chance of catching any typographical errors and also provides objective feedback regarding the clarity of the description of the proposed project (Porter, 2003).

The evaluation process is unclear

Reviewers seem to favor proposals with demonstrable and quantifiable outcomes (i.e. measurable outcomes), and including these will carry more weight in the scoring process. Purely qualitative outcomes (i.e. surveys and anecdotal accounts) and evaluations conducted entirely by staff can leave the funder with the impression that the program is not viable. In the evaluation narrative, be certain to discuss who will participate in the evaluation process, who will conduct it, what will be evaluated, and what type of evaluation will be conducted (Sand, 2005).

The use of outside evaluators adds objectivity and provides additional credibility to the proposed activities. Local universities and some for-profit companies offer the services of well-established individuals with a record of using adequate data-collection tools and proper methods of reporting project outcomes. It is important that such evaluation is a key component of the grant proposal from the beginning and is not considered as an afterthought once the project is designed and the grant awarded (Osborne, Overbay & Vasu, 2007). Evaluators can supply valuable information about how to structure the project in order to gather suitable data and also provide specific costs to be included in the budget.

The budget is vague or poorly developed

Reviewers like a budget to be transparent and to provide justification for all costs explicitly. For example, some writers will not build in the cost of overhead expenses or are not fully aware of specific costs until after the project begins. Budgets must include both a budget detail (using numerals) that summarizes costs and a budget narrative (using text) that relates costs to the completion of a proposed activities. "For proposals, the budget must reflect as closely as possible the activities and staffing described in the narrative" (Karsh & Fox, 2009, p. 311).

All budgets will not look the same, but a budget detail is typically written in a table format and comprised of four main sections and their related costs. These four main sections include Personnel Services, Fringe Benefits, Other Than Personnel Services (OTPS), and Indirect Costs. OTPS covers all of the travel, training, equipment, supplies and contracted work that is required to complete the proposed goals. Some funding agencies will require the subsections under OTPS written as distinct sections, so the proposal writer must ensure that the guidelines specified by the funding agency are followed completely.

There is a trend on the part of organizations' management to underestimate the value of in-kind contributions in proposal budgets. Many RFPs will be explicit about the requirements related to providing matching funds, but will often be ambiguous about utilizing in-kind funds in meeting a portion of the matching funds stipulation. It is crucial that communication with the funding organization be part of the budget proposal process in order to clarify whether or not the match must be in cash or may include in-kind contributions (Sand, 2005).

There is a lack of collaboration with other organizations

There is increasing demand from granting agencies that the awarded funds be used to create the greatest impact on the target population. Federal funding agencies in particular prefer to see Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) or related types of formal agreements rather than letters of support. MOUs do more than show support for an organization and a project; they are a written record of what specific activities each partner will provide or oversee. They also explain how collaboration will provide an increased benefit. Excluding such collaborative efforts in a proposal suggests funding may not be fully leveraged for maximum impact (Sand, 2005).

Grantmakers value collaborative efforts that indicate strategic relationships and give the grantseeker a competitive edge in the review process. On the other hand, there should be a clear reason for authentic partnerships and not those arranged merely for the sake of expediency (Sontheimer & Bergstresser, 1991).

Conclusion

There is a saying among fundraising professionals that proposal writing is both an art and a science. The art aspect refers to how well an inspired writer describes a project and the grant-seeking organization. The science aspect refers to the comprehension of the technical structure upon which those words are arranged. By rectifying some of the most common pitfalls to which grant-seeking organizations often succumb, writers, as well as organizational leadership, can enhance their processes and help improve the chances of securing grant funding.

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The New Age of Accountability: Linking Activities to Outcomes and Cost

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

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

GPCI Competency 06: Knowledge of nationally recognized standards of ethical practice by grant developers

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

Abstract

Within the arena of grants management, buzzwords such as *accountability, responsibility, transparency,* and *cost-effectiveness* are receiving increasing attention and significance. These core concepts represent a shift in how grants are managed, tracked, and reported to funders. This shift may be intimidating to many grant managers who are not confident about how this trend may affect their current methodologies and systems for tracking grant activities, budgets, and outcomes.

This article outlines standard regulations and provides a practical framework for compliance. The step-by-step process provides much needed support to grant managers for successfully operating and managing an open, cost-effective program.

Introduction

With *performance* and *accountability* as hot topics in the grant community, grant managers can no longer afford to simply "keep track" of their data. Administrators must manage program activities to ensure alignment with grantor requirements and budgets, to determine the cost-effectiveness of specific service types/activities, and ultimately to substantiate the success of the program's goals and objectives over time. Effective evaluation requires grant managers to analyze the impact of activities relative to the specific costs incurred to bring about those results.

This is important because federal regulations stipulate that grantees must relate cost to performance. New standardized reporting formats issued by the Federal Office of Management and Budget (OMB) require grantees to show accountability in this area. Several federal agencies have adopted the new formats and others are following suit. It is only a matter of time before these new reporting standards become the mandated norm.

At the April 2010 National Grants Management Association (NGMA) conference, Jeanette M. Franzel, Managing Director of Financial Management and Assurance (FMA) at the Government Accountability Office (GAO) made it clear that grantees have significant stewardship responsibilities for the effective use of federal funds to achieve intended program and performance results. Ms. Franzel went on to describe activities that both the GAO and the OMB are working on to advance accountability and performance at the grantee level. Grantees can expect further policy development and guidance on this topic from the OMB over the next year.

The impact of this change applies to federal grants but may set an example for other grantors looking to make sure that their grant funds are spent in the most cost-effective manner. With the economic climate as it is today, grantees must accomplish more with less. Competition for these funds is becoming increasingly intense. It is imperative that grantees understand what it means to manage a cost-effective program, and they must prepare to track and to share this information with their funders in a clear and concise manner.

To illustrate how the regulations, reporting forms, and increased attention to performance and accountability may affect a grant manager, this article will describe:

Why a framework is so important

- What are the regulations?
- Interpreting the regulations
- Upcoming changes to grant management reporting

How a grant manager defines and assesses compliance data

- Logic models
- A Cost-Effectiveness Model
- Determining effectiveness of activities
- Calculating unit cost of activities
- Integrating cost and effectiveness data

Why a framework is so important

Within the arena of grants management, buzzwords such as *accountability, responsibility, transparency,* and *cost-effectiveness* are receiving increasing attention and significance. These core concepts represent a shift in how grants are managed, tracked, and reported to funders. This shift may be intimidating to many grant managers who are not confident about how this trend may affect their current methodologies and systems for tracking grant activities, budgets, and outcomes.

Understanding standard regulations and using a practical framework for compliance can provide much needed support to grant managers for successfully operating and managing an open, cost-effective program.

What are the regulations?

The most logical way to gain a thorough and working understanding of the regulations is to actually read the regulations. However, since many grant managers feel the formal language of the regulatory documentation is tedious, this article strives to highlight the most significant sections and present the key message points in a format that is both concise and accessible.

To get a clear understanding of grantee responsibilities as fiscal agents, grant managers must turn to grantor regulations and program requirements. From a federal standpoint, the Circular A-110, titled *Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and other Non-Profit Organizations,* (located in Code of Federal Regulations Chapter II (2 CFR) – Office of Management and Budget Circulars and Guidance, Section 215), becomes a primary guiding document.

The highlights of Section 215.21 *Standards for Financial Management Systems* include the following*:

*Disclaimer: This information is to be used as a general guideline only and is not meant to be all inclusive. For more explicit details specific to your organization, please reference the appropriate Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circulars or your Grantor's General Administrative Regulations. For more information go to http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/assets/omb/circulars/a110/2cfr215-0.pdf

a) Federal agencies shall require recipients to relate financial data to performance data and develop unit cost information whenever practical.

b) Recipients' financial management systems shall provide for the following:
   1) Accurate, current and complete disclosure of the financial results of each federally-sponsored project or program in accordance with the reporting requirements set forth in § 215.52.
   2) Records that adequately identify the source and application of funds for federally-sponsored activities.
   3) Effective control over and accountability for all funds, property and other assets.
   4) Comparison of outlays with budget amounts for each award. Whenever appropriate, financial information should be related to performance and unit cost data.

Interpreting the regulations

Regulations are not designed to create bureaucratic red tape. These rules are purposeful and ultimately lend themselves to a higher level of governmental accountability. It is on the basic premise that federal funds originate from taxpayer's money that the regulations organize around four main goals.

Accountability and responsibility

Regulations state that grantees must maintain control and demonstrate accountability over all funds and that it is necessary to have *accurate, current,* and *complete* disclosure of financial results. Grant managers must be diligent in safe-keeping and accounting for these funds on a regular basis, not just when it is time for reporting.

Systems need to show a comparison of *actual expenditures* vs. *budget projections.* This level of detailed accountability is meant to ensure grantees do not overspend. The ability to monitor in this way helps in program management, specifically ensuring that funds are expended within the confines of the pre-determined grant period.

Transparency

Records are required to include the source and application of funds for federally-sponsored activities. The source of the funding must be clearly identified, whether it is federal, matching, or cost-share. For the application of funds, it is necessary to capture how much has been spent, from all sources and on individual activities, as this represents the total cost required to provide the service.

Cost-effectiveness

Note that the first requirement listed above in Section 215.21 (a) is that grantees are to relate financial data to performance data, and develop unit cost information whenever practical. For grant managers, this means that costs must be tied to a specific service or activity, and those services or activities must have measurable results. The relationship between costs and results becomes transparent. The funders should be able to see exactly how much it cost to achieve desired results.

Additionally when "cost per" measures are tracked, such as cost per recipient or cost per activity hour, then a comparison of these unit costs for similar activities from period to period can be made. Based on this information, grant managers can make informed decisions as to which activities make the most sense to continue into future periods.

The final stipulation of the regulations listed above in Section 215.21 (b) (4) again states that, whenever appropriate, financial information should relate to *performance* and *unit cost data.* Since the importance of relating cost to performance is mentioned twice in this short section, it is evident that regulators are sending a clear message: understanding the cost-effectiveness of a grant program is critical to proper grants management.

Upcoming changes to grant management reporting

To illustrate how important government agencies think cost-effectiveness is, one must only look to the Performance Progress Report (SF-PPR) (The White House Office of Management and Budget, n.d.). The SF-PPR is a standard, government-wide performance progress reporting format used by federal agencies to collect performance information from recipients of federal funds awarded under all federal programs that exceed $100,000 or more per project/grant period, excluding those that support research (which has its own standard report).

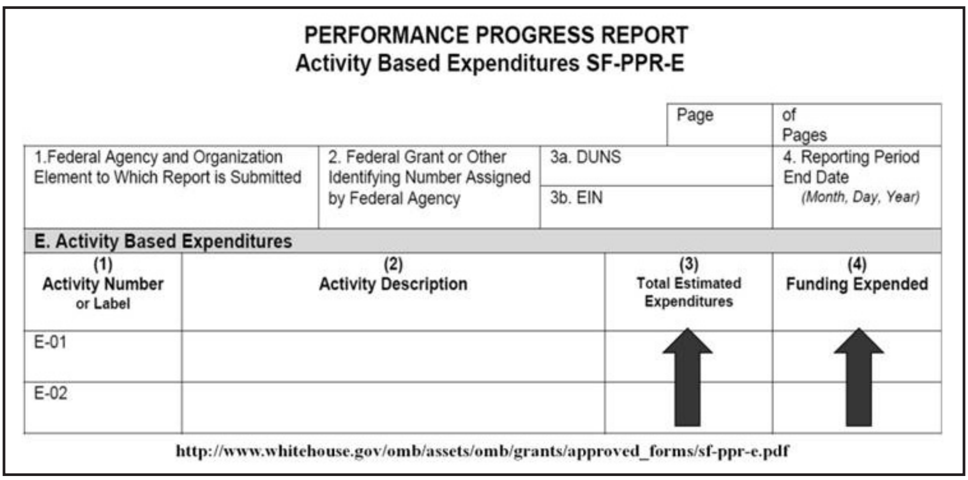
The SF-PPR consists of the following sections:

- SF-PPR and SF-PPR-2: Cover Pages
- SF-PPR-A: Performance Measures (lists goals, objectives, and performance measures)
- SF-PPR-B: Program Indicators (lists activities and their status)
- SF-PPR-C: Benchmark Evaluations (lists benchmarks, outcomes, evaluation and measurement tools)
- SF-PPR-D: Activity Results (lists activity outcomes)

- SF-PPR-E: Activity Based Expenditures (lists budget vs. actual by activity)
- SF-PPR-F: Program/Project Management Questions

Sections SF-PPR-E and SF-PPR-F are highlighted below, however, a thorough review of the entire report (available at http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants_forms) is strongly recommended.

Section E represents a significant shift in accountability because most grantees are not accustomed to creating budgets and tracking expenditures at an activity based level of detail. While tracking expenditures by activity has always been mandated, most grantees were required to report financial data by category: ex: Salaries and Wages, Employee Benefits, Travel, Equipment, Contractual, etc. This restructuring represents a significant change for grantees from past reporting requirements. Many grant managers will need to develop new processes to capture and report this information efficiently and accurately (White House Office of Management and Budget, n.d.).



PERFORMANCE PROGRESS REPORT
Activity Based Expenditures SF-PPR-E

		Page	of Pages
1.Federal Agency and Organization Element to Which Report is Submitted	2. Federal Grant or Other Identifying Number Assigned by Federal Agency	3a. DUNS 3b. EIN	4. Reporting Period End Date *(Month, Day, Year)*

E. Activity Based Expenditures

(1) Activity Number or Label	(2) Activity Description	(3) Total Estimated Expenditures	(4) Funding Expended
E-01			
E-02			

http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/assets/omb/grants/approved_forms/sf-ppr-e.pdf

Figure 1. Section E of the SF-PPR

Section F directly addresses cost-efficiencies. For example, question F-1c asks, "Do you link your budgets to program/project activities and make adjustments to achieve cost-efficiencies? If the answer is yes, please describe what efficiencies are achieved. If the answer is no, explain and provide a plan to put in place to improve cost-effectiveness and efficiency." Simply stated, managing budgets for cost-effectiveness is not an option, it is a requirement. (White House Office of Management and Budget, n.d.).

Line Item Instructions for Attachment F, Program/Project Management (cont.)

Program/Project Management (cont.)		
Questions		
F-1c	Do you link your budgets to program/project activities and make adjustments to achieve cost-efficiencies?	A yes answer would require that you have procedures to measure and achieve effectiveness and cost efficiencies in your program/project, such as per-unit cost of outputs and outcomes, timing targets, and other. **Explanation Section**--If the answer is yes, please describe what efficiencies are achieved. If the answer is no, explain and provide a plan to put in place or improve cost effectiveness and efficiency. Indicate N/A if this does not apply.
F-1d	Do you collaborate and coordinate effectively with related programs/projects (if applicable)?	A yes answer would require that you collaborate, to the extent appropriate or possible, with related State, local and private programs. **Explanation Section**--Describe collaborations leading to meaningful actions in management and resource allocation. This can include planning documents, performance goals, or information and referral systems.

http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/assets/omb/grants/approved_forms/sf-ppr-f.pdf

Figure 2. Section F of the SF-PPR

How a grant manager defines and assesses compliance data

A practical approach to managing a cost-effective program begins with an understanding of logic models for grants management. Logic models provide the basic foundation for the more detailed Cost-Effectiveness Model used for understanding and managing cost-effective grant programs.

Logic model

A logic model is a framework for describing the relationships between *Investments, Activities,* and *Results.* It provides a general approach for integrating planning, implementation, evaluation, and reporting for a grant program.

In the most basic sense, the purpose of any grant-funded program is to improve a particular situation. Improvement requires *input* – most often in the form of money or other resources. With that input in place, program managers can deliver *output* – such as activities or services. Output is meant to achieve *outcomes* – which are measured in short-, mid-, or long-term results that ultimately improve the situation. Results are analyzed and evaluated to prove *impact.* Impact is reported back to the grantor.

Cost-effectiveness model

In order to see the practical relationship between inputs (cost), outputs (activities), and outcomes (performance measures), four basic parameters must be defined and their interconnectivity identified.

- **Goals, Objectives, and Benchmarks** – the outline of what the project will accomplish, how it will accomplish it, and the measures of its success
- **Activities** – the tasks that lead to the accomplishment of objectives
- **Performance** – measurement of the achievement of benchmarks, by which evaluations help to determine the actual benefits of activities
- **Cost** – outlay of resources to provide activities and data on participation in those activities are used to develop unit cost data

These parameters, and their interrelationships, can be described with simulated data as in the example to follow. These data can be divided into two broad categories: how much it cost, and whether it was effective. These data can then be viewed through a Cost-Effectiveness Model (Shontz, 2009), shown in Figure 3.

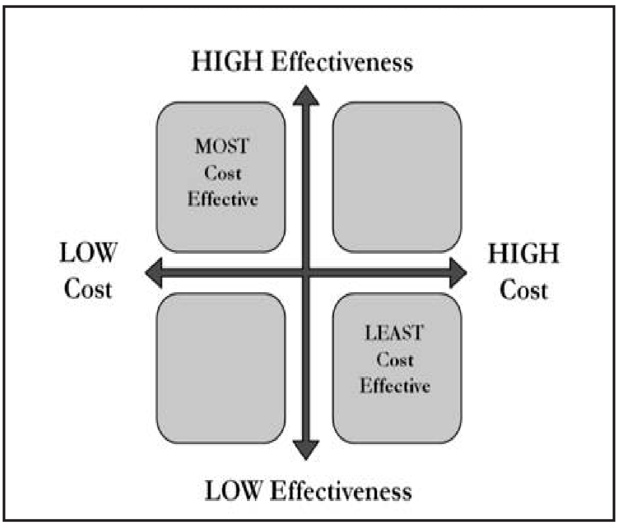


Figure 3. The Cost-Effectiveness Model

The Cost-Effectiveness Model shows that by analyzing the data and the relationships of the goals, objectives, benchmarks, activities, performance, and cost, identification of those activities that are *most* and *least* cost-effective can be identified. Following are step-by-step instructions for using the Cost-Effectiveness Model to analyze individual activities for regulatory compliance.

Performance

There are two very practical issues to consider when it comes to the topic of performance. First, when identifying activities intended to accomplish a particular objective, grant managers must estimate to what degree the activity will impact that objective. A number value can be assigned to help organize the data for comparison.

As an example, would a grant manager be very certain (3), somewhat certain (2), or only slightly certain (1) that an activity such as math tutoring would have a direct impact on whether students pass pre-algebra by the end of 7th grade? Chances are that most people would respond "very certain" because it seems logical. However, not all degrees of impact may be this simple. It is recommended that grant managers estimate their best guess at the time and, as additional data become available, modify the number as needed.

Second, grant managers must gather evidence to prove whether or not an activity had the expected impact. There are two types of evidence. Each of these, and their respective subtypes, carry discrete weight in demonstrating impact.

- Theoretical: A grant director's knowledge of the population that has not yet been tested
- Empirical:
  - Qualitative Data: Observations; Interviews; Focus Groups (Good)
  - Quantitative Data: (Better)
    - Descriptive Statistics: Helps to organize and summarize the data. Ex: Showing if benchmarks were met.
    - Inferential Statistics: Helps to interpret the data gathered. Ex: Regression and Correlation Analysis used to determine if variables are associated with one another.
  - Integrated Data: The use of both Qualitative and Quantitative evidence to prove impact. (Best)

Sample process to determine cost-effectiveness

With performance and budget information, grant managers can determine the cost-effectiveness of their programs, and use this analysis in their Performance Progress Reports. The following steps describe one method for determining cost-effectiveness, but keep in mind that there are many ways to calculate effectiveness.

Step 1: Identify which activities are intended to meet objectives

In Step 1, grant managers can easily collate objectives and specific activities using a matrix similar to the one shown in Figure 4. The Figure 4 example indicates that both the activities of "Tutoring" and "Homework Helpline" are theoretically associated with Goal 1.

ABC GRANT - OBJECTIVES/ACTIVITIES MATRIX							
Objectives:	Tutoring	College Fair	Mentoring	Job Skills Online Course	Afterschool Computer Program	ESL Classes	Homework Helpline
Goal 1. Increase the academic performance and preparation for postsecondary education for students							
a. Increase the percentage of students that pass pre-Algebra by the end of 7th grade							

Figure 4. Objectives/activities association matrix (Shontz 2009)

Step 2: Determine if you have met your benchmarks using descriptive statistics

In Step 2, the grant manager uses descriptive statistics to organize and summarize the data for comparison. The example compares benchmarks with results, the variation, and indicates if the objectives have been met based on that data. As shown in Figure 5, this example's results exceeded its benchmark for the percentage of students passing pre-algebra by end of 7th grade. This is empirical evidence and quantitative data.

ABC GRANT - OBJECTIVES/ACTIVITIES MATRIX				
GOALS AND OBJECTIVES	Benchmark	Results	Difference	Objective Met?
Goal 1. Increase the academic performance and preparation for postsecondary education for students				
a. % of students passing Pre-Algebra by end of 7th grade	35%	36%	1%	Yes

Figure 5. Benchmark/results worksheet (Shontz 2009)

Step 3: Use inferential statistics to explore relationships between activities and objectives

In Step 3, inferential statistics are used to interpret the data gathered. Regression and correlation analysis were used to determine if variables are associated with one another. The example shown in Figure 6 indicates that an in-depth statistical analysis revealed a correlation between hours participated in tutoring and the opportunity to achieve the objective. The conclusion from this sample is: "For each hour of tutoring, the likelihood of a student passing pre-algebra by the end of the 7th grade increases by 5%." This is empirical evidence and quantitative data.

Grant managers can use statistical calculators, spreadsheets, or statistical software to perform the calculations of regression and correlation analysis.

ABC GRANT - OBJECTIVES/ACTIVITIES MATRIX								
GOALS AND OBJECTIVES	Objective Met?	Tutoring	College Fair	Mentoring	Job Skills Online Course	Afterschool Computer Program	ESL Classes	Homework Helpline
Goal 1. Increase the academic performance and preparation for postsecondary education for students								
a. % of students passing Pre-Algebra by end of 7th grade	Yes	5%/Hr				?		-5%/Hr

"For each hour of tutoring, the likelihood of a student passing pre-algebra by the end of the 7th grade increases by 5%."

Figure 6. Objectives/activities statistics worksheet (Shontz 2009)

Experienced grantees should have at least a basic understanding of the evaluation concepts outlined in Figures 5 and 6.

Step 4: Develop "unit cost" data for each activity

By dividing the total project cost by the number of recipients, the average cost per recipient can be determined. By dividing total cost by quantity of service hours, the average cost per service hour can be identified. In this particular example the collective data was used to calculate cost per recipient and cost per activity hour. The same concept can also be used for other types of unit cost measurements such as cost per site or cost per item. These costs can and should be summarized for periodic analysis.

Figures 7 and 8 indicate that a variety of data calculations can be run to generate cost per unit figures such as cost per recipient or cost per service hour. Unit costs are summarized for analysis.

PARTICIPATION & COST DETAIL FOR ACTIVITIES							
Goal 1. Increase the academic performance and preparation for postsecondary education for students							
SERVICE TYPE (ACTIVITY)	Qty of Students	Qty of Service Hrs	Average Hrs Per Student	Average Cost Per Student	Average Cost Per Service Hr	TOTAL COST	% of Budget
STUDENTS:							
Tutoring	42	440.50	10.49	$163.69	$15.61	$6,874.77	3.44%
Mentoring	4	16.00	4.00	$105.00	$26.25	$420.00	0.21%
TOTALS	46	456.50	14.49	$158.58	$15.98	$7,294.77	3.65%

Figure 7. Unit cost worksheet (Shontz 2009)

Activity Summary

TOTALS	AMOUNT $ 24,544.44	RECIPIENTS 81	HOURS 1,840.10	$/RECIP 303.02	$/HR 13.34
Admin	1,477.35	0	.00	0.00	0.00
Parents	315.00	0	.00	0.00	0.00
Teachers	707.08	0	.00	0.00	0.00
Students	22,045.01	81	1,840.10	272.16	11.98
ACTIVITIES	AMOUNT	RECIPIENTS	HOURS	$/RECIP	$/HR
Tutoring	6,874.77	42	440.50	163.69	15.61
College Fair	1,400.00	50	100.00	28.00	14.00
Mentoring	420.00	4	16.00	105.00	26.25
Job Skills Online Course	6,000.00	30	120.00	200.00	50.00
Afterschool Computer Program	1,300.00	10	20.00	130.00	65.00
ESL Classes	2,500.00	50	500.00	50.00	5.00
Homework Helpline	2,600.00	81	50.00	32.10	52.00
Financial Data - No Funding Source	500.00	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
Financial Data - No Activity	450.24	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
Participant Data - No Activity	0.00	40	593.60	0.00	0.00

Figure 8. Activity Summary grid (Shontz 2010)

Step 5: Determine where activities fall – "HIGH" cost or "LOW" cost per service hour

In Step 5, a comparison of the unit costs for various activities can be conducted and average cost per activity hour for all activities can be identified. Those activities that fall below the average will be classified as "LOW" cost and those that fall higher than the average will be considered "HIGH" cost. Grantees can use this measure as a starting point and revise the defining cost point based on what is reasonable.

ABC Grant	Cost	
	A. Cost Per Student Per Hour	B. High Cost or Low Cost Per Student Per Hour? ($33/hr is the cutoff in this example)
Tutoring	$16	Low
College Fair	$14	Low
Mentoring	$26	Low
Job Skills Online Course	$50	High
Afterschool Computer Program	$65	High
ESL Classes	$5	Low
Homework Helpline	$52	High

Average Cost Per Service Hour
- Add Up All Costs per Hour
- Divide by Total # of Activities

(16+14+26+50+65+5+52)=$228

$228/7 Activities = $33 Avg Cost Per Hr

Start Here and Revise Based on What Seems Reasonable

Figure 9. Relative cost worksheet (Shontz 2009)

Figure 9 shows an example of a report that further helps grant managers evaluate if the resulting cost per service hour falls into "HIGH" or "LOW" determinations.

Step 6: Integrate data – cost and effectiveness

In Step 6, each activity has been associated with either "HIGH" or "LOW" cost and effectiveness evaluations. Figure 10 is an integrated data spreadsheet which provides a quick glance at cost and effectiveness data based on earlier grant manager input.

Looking at "Tutoring" from Figure 10, data reveals that "Tutoring" is considered "LOW" cost and has proven to be "HIGH"-ly effective. Therefore, "Tutoring" should be placed in quadrant (Q1) of the Cost-Effectiveness Model.

The next step will translate these evaluations to the Cost-Effectiveness Model, where each activity is assigned a quadrant within the model matrix.

ABC Grant	Cost		Effectiveness			Cost Effectiveness Quadrant
	A. Cost Per Student Per Hour	B. High Cost or Low Cost Per Student Per Hour? ($33/hr is the cutoff in this example)	C. How Well Can You Align the Activity with Objectives with Some Certainty? (1=Low Certainty; 3=High Certainty)	D. Is the Intended Objective Met?	E. High Effectiveness or Low Effectiveness?	
Tutoring	$16	Low	3	Yes	High	Q1
College Fair	$14	Low	2	No	Low	Q3
Mentoring	$26	Low	3	Yes	High	Q1
Job Skills Online Course	$50	High	2	Yes	High	Q2
Afterschool Computer Program	$65	High	1	No	Maybe low	Q4?
ESL Classes	$5	Low	3	No	Low	Q3
Homework Helpline	$52	High	3	No	Low	Q4

Figure 10. Cost/effectiveness integration worksheet (Shontz 2009)

Step 7: Place activities in the cost-effectiveness model for analysis and decision making

In Step 7, each activity is placed within the Cost-Effectiveness Model. Grant managers can quickly identify those that are most cost-effective (Q1-upper left quadrant) or least cost-effective (Q4-lower right quadrant.) Activities falling in the "LOW" Effectiveness quadrants (Q3 and Q4) may indicate the need for additional data and evidence to illustrate impact.

Similarly, those activities in the "HIGH" Cost quadrants (Q2 and Q4) may suggest additional analysis on cost measures is required.

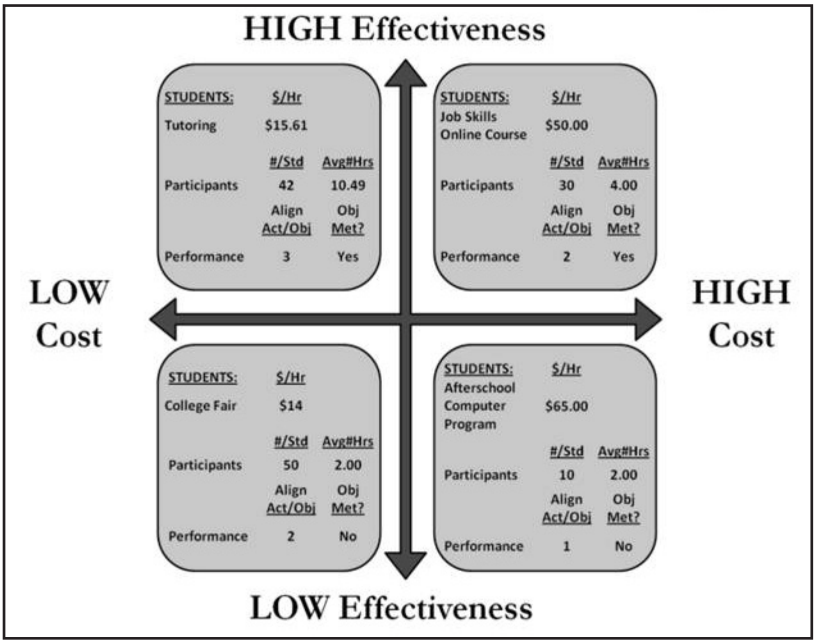


Figure 11. Using the Cost-Effectiveness Model (Shontz 2009)

Figure 11 illustrates that tutoring represents the most cost-effective activity. Comparatively, the Afterschool Computer Program was both costly and did not meet its objectives.

Conclusion

Through deliberate identification and thorough understanding of a grant program's goals, objectives, benchmarks, activities, performance and costs, grant managers can comply with the regulations and increased scrutiny, and also systematically analyze the cost-effectiveness of their efforts.

Grant managers can compare the cost-effectiveness of each activity utilizing the Cost-Effectiveness Model. Activities that prove cost-effective could be retained or repeated in future programs. Activities that were not so successful could be restructured or eliminated. This information is a powerful tool in planning for existing programs and applying for future funding.

As with any statistical analysis, the conclusions of the Cost-Effectiveness Model are not guaranteed. For example there could be reasons such as unusual circumstances or initial investments that may warrant a higher unit price for an activity. Or perhaps the activity did not begin as planned; and consequently, it was impossible to meet the benchmarks.

By reviewing the data and accounting for peripheral circumstances, grant managers may more easily come to an evidence-based conclusion that an activity did or did not have the intended impact and how the costs compare to the other activities. While the model is sound, a grant manager's professional experience and common sense are crucial in final planning decisions.

Additionally, this application of the Cost-Effectiveness Model can be utilized within a grant program and also across multiple sites, multiple programs, and even other grants.

Grant managers can use a variety of tools to accomplish these tasks; from spreadsheets to grant management software. For this article, simple spreadsheets and the grant management software Grant Maximizer Solution™ were utilized. Grant managers should research what works for their program and use appropriate technology to simplify the process as much as possible.

In closing, attention to accountability, responsibility, transparency, and cost-effectiveness will continue to increase at the grantee level over time. As Jeanette Franzel from the GAO stated at the recent NGMA annual conference, more policy guidance it is on its way. It can only benefit grant managers to stay informed and be prepared.

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Grant Professionals as Funder Liaisons and Organizational Shapers

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Abstract

Effective grant professionals play an integral role beyond resource identification and procurement. They deeply consider mission, objectives, funder interests and their role in creating the partnerships that wed these elements. At their best, they are liaisons between grantors and their own organizations: liaisons who increase interest in the work of the organization while bringing introspection and attention to outcomes that can reshape organizational strategies to create meaningful social change.

Introduction

Those in the field of grant seeking and grantor relations have a responsibility to find the dollars that empower organizations to satisfy their missions. The programs these organizations undertake require a continuous revenue stream which emanates from sometimes undependable sources. That an expected grant which is normally received could be lost and that organizations regularly expand with increased services and new programs requires that grant professionals be on the lookout for new sources of funding in good times and bad. They must 'make the case' to grantors through convincing proposals showing programs to be well-conceived, effective and impactful, thereby illustrating their worth. Grant professionals are responsible for revealing to the outside, in the best possible light, what the inside is doing. In this, they have the keen interest of their executive directors and the scrutiny of donors—and with that they have the opportunity to foster real change.

In the search for funding there is temptation to write proposals that gently distort mission in the aim for increased support from a variety of familiar and potential new sources. Yet, aware of mission drift, proposal writers cannot chase the dollars by bending programs to align with grantors' interests, or create new programs solely to produce the results grantors hope to see. However, they must deeply consider organizational mission and program effectiveness in ways that can move the organization to new approaches and better strategies in meeting its goals. To do so, professional proposal writers will position themselves at the core of organizational planning rather than considering themselves only as fundraisers.

To be effective, grant professionals must be involved in discussions of mission, program goals and action plans, and operational needs. They must first realize that although they know what grantors wish to fund and see as outcomes, the people within their organizations who develop programs and make the work happen largely do not. If program planners only match requests to established programmatic needs and familiar results, they will miss funding that could improve organizational results. A closer look at the outcomes funders want to see can guide reconsideration of goals and strategies without changing mission.

Knowing what executive directors and program managers really wish to accomplish and knowing what grantors hope to see for results gives grantseekers the responsibility to meld the two. Grantor relations should be understood as reciprocal communication. Grant professionals transmit to funders what their organizations do and also inform their organizations of changes in funding priorities and expectations that may impact organizational approach to mission fulfillment. As such, grant professionals can be seen as liaisons between grantors and grantees as well as organizational shapers of programmatic methodologies and mission strategy.

The call for innovation and measureable outcomes

As funding availability and grantor expectations have changed over time, non-profits have become less able to depend on block grants and the unconditional largess of private philanthropy. Nor will expressive giving, that without clear donor expectations, bring sufficient funding but for the smallest of non-profits.[1] Other than individual donors whose interests simply coincide with the organizations they give to, most of those parting with dollars do so to support or initiate focused change.

Grantors, from foundations, to corporations, to government entities, increasingly have specific results in mind and will fund those who work toward those ends. In social justice grant-making those results often include addressing root causes of problems in addition to ameliorating hardship or supporting the vulnerable. Grantors want to see change happen. Although making awards for familiar methods of addressing

[1] The terms 'instrumental giving' and 'expressive giving' are used by Peter Frumkin (2006) and again by Joel Fleishman (2007) to distinguish between types of charitable giving. Instrumental giving is strategic in that it comes with policy objectives and expectations of specific and significant impact. Through expressive giving a donor shows support for a cause or may simply want to be associated with a particular organization. Both can come as restricted or unrestricted funding.

perennial problems may continue for some funders, eventually they may not feel that they are supporting progress. Human service funders, in particular, hope to see causality addressed and improvement in conditions over time. They will be most likely to be onboard with programs that show thought and innovation in grappling with difficult issues and that produce results. This is articulated in numerous books and articles as the following *Chronicle of Philanthropy* articles make evident.

Promoting reconsideration of how foundations create broad impact and exhorting them to consider how to change dynamics for entire groups, rather than focusing only on individuals, Rosenman (2009) said “to fully benefit the common good, grant makers would focus on the causes of the problems they seek to solve, and their efforts would be informed by an understanding of the interdependence of people, communities, and institutions” (para. 9).

Hall (2010), speaking about revenue diversification that increasing numbers of foundations now encourage, described how grantors “are also seeking to take a leading role in devising fresh responses to stubborn and rapidly escalating problems like poverty, joblessness and crime” (“Solving Social Problems,” para. 1). Hall noted that the economic crisis caused funders to be more accountable for their grant decisions and to hold grant seekers to tougher standards. Quoting a grantor from the Chicago Community Trust, Hall wrote, “‘before the recession we could count on new dollars available for grant making every year. Our tolerance for mediocre performance by grantees was higher’ … but now that they and most other foundations are seeing that their grant making budget will not increase until 2013 he says ‘we have no room for poor performers’” (“Who Should Survive,” para. 9).

Gregory and Stid (2009) wrote that “nonprofit groups must get better at measuring, tracking, and improving results. …State and local governments will need to get better at shaping policies based on proof that an idea works and issuing contracts and grants based on an organization’s performance” (para. 11). Referring to a 2008 *Harvard Business Review* article, Wallace (2008) summarized that “to achieve results, nonprofit organizations need to manage their operations with a set of focused, concrete, and realizable goals in mind, rather than a broad mission statement.” She offered the questions: “Which results will we hold ourselves accountable for? What will results really cost, and how can we finance them? How do we build the organization we need to deliver results?”(para. 4).

The federal government has now also introduced a sharper results focus, and some controversy, with the $50 million Social Innovation Fund administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). CNCS seeks to finance promising non-profits prioritizing “projects to improve ‘measurable outcomes’ in three areas: economic opportunity, youth development, and public health. Grant makers must support programs that serve low-income regions and show progress in either a specific issue or a geographic region" (Perry, 2010a, para. 3). The CNCS defined social innovation as "development of a potentially transformative practice or approach to meeting critical social needs" (Perry, 2009, "Definition of Social Innovation," para. 1).

Patrick Corvington, the new head of CNCS, promotes spending government money on projects that can measure results and that ask the question: what difference did we make? The CNCS wishes to see "outcomes-based" assessments and gives the example that "a community-gardens project could measure its output by counting the number of gardens created, the number of people involved and amount of food produced. … But to measure outcomes, it would assess how many people developed healthier habits, or took up 'community-change' projects after working on the garden, along with whether the project prompted children to eat more fruits and vegetables" (Perry, 2010b, "Room for Experimentation," para. 4,5).

Such results can be extremely difficult to measure, if not impossible, and may have a gestation period much longer than most foundation and government reporting periods. Stannard-Stockton (2010) wrote in the *Chronicle of Philanthropy* that most non-profits lack the incentive or money to get beyond anecdotal evidence of effectiveness. He takes issue with the Social Innovation Fund guidelines that suggest that is the exception when it is actually the rule. Prior to the economic declines of 2002 and 2008, Wing (2000) stated that "emphasizing measurable outcomes comes with many risks, including the danger that mundane projects with tangible results will receive foundation money more readily than those programs that aim to solve crucial problems in ways that cannot be easily reduced to a series of measurable results" (para. 12). Wing went on to say that "The result of the push for outcomes is most likely to be a triumph of form over substance" (para. 14). However, as nonprofits today see a wide range of social problems in conjunction with a decreasing funding base, their conclusion must be that performance, including how to determine what "performance" is and the best possible ways to measure it, will be at the forefront of the discussion between grantors and grantees.

Also increasingly at the forefront of accountability discussions and innovation in service is how to use business approaches in solving social problems. Korngold (2005) encouraged non-profits to accept business assistance and models, saying that funders are changing their approaches and expectations and challenging non-profits to realign organizational structures and program-delivery models. He stated that "corporate funders are becoming increasingly strategic, focusing their donations in particular areas that complement their business missions … the changes in funding priorities bring new pressures to organizations; many are left out altogether if their services are not aligned with the funder's priorities"(p. 6). Foundations and individual donors are also more clearly defining their areas of interest for greater impact. Many now interested in economic development promote a focus on entrepreneurship and innovation among grantees. Noting that it is exceedingly more difficult for a non-profit to show that it is achieving its mission than it is for a for-profit, Korngold also pointed out that "funders are placing new demands on non-profits to measure and document their impact in addressing social, cultural, economic, and education issues … nonprofits are now expected to show a return on investment in the sense of achieving positive results for the benefit of the community" (p. 7).

While providing necessary services, and possibly experiencing increases in demand, non-profits are being asked to develop new ways to procure funds and show new measures of success. They may also be expected to employ strategies more familiar to the business world. However, under the right conditions, new strategies can improve results and subsequently generate the increased support needed to rise to new levels. Grant professionals must recognize this and introduce the ideas to organizational planners. Often the grantee knows best how to approach a problem, but sometimes the funder has excellent ideas and wants to fund specific action. If the funder and grantseeker have well aligned missions and goals, then it is the grant professional who should recognize this and be the matchmaker.

The founder of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation believes society's problems are insurmountable for governments and private philanthropy, but solvable using business strategies that address impoverishment and many other social ills, in what Gates termed "creative capitalism." This, in his description, is "an approach where governments, businesses, and nonprofits work together to stretch the reach of market forces so that more people can make a profit, or gain recognition, doing work that eases the world's inequities" (quoted in Kinsley, 2008, p.10). Gates elaborated, "what unifies all forms of creative capitalism is market-driven efforts to bring solutions we take for granted to people who can't get them" (quoted in Kinsley, 2008, p. 14). Kinsley explained that Gates hopes to move beyond philanthropy and government, neither of which has the resources to get the job done, and use capitalism itself to solve the world's problems. Although the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's assets amounted to $29.7 billion in 2008, and will come to include the $31 billion fortune of Warren Buffet, Gates believes that philanthropy cannot complete the work before us. Many other foundations and governments as well are rethinking their approaches to meeting their goals. They will fund non-profits and projects that demonstrate creativity in thought, innovation in design, and business acumen in practice across a spectrum of new ideas.

Gates' idea is a large and controversial step away from the norm that the wealthy, upon acquiring fortunes through profit-driven forces, distribute wealth back into society in the form of grants supporting social change. However understandable it may be that some believe the power of capitalist enterprise can solve entrenched social problems, many others do not see social change as the work of corporations. Neither, it can be pointed out, has it been the successful outcome of philanthropy. For as commendable is it was for John D. Rockefeller to attempt to "remove the causes that lead to the existence of beggars" (Fleishman, 2007, p. 46), philanthropy has not achieved that specific outcome over the intervening century, even with 118,473 American foundations redistributing $45.6 billion in 2008, and with another 997,579 public charities and 377,640 religious organizations also working towards social change (National Center for Charitable Statistics, 2009).

Grant professionals and organizational change

Creative rethinking, strategic innovation, results assessment—understanding the dynamics between these, understanding the goals and expectations of funders, and understanding organizational capacity is the responsibility of development staff, and specifically of those preparing grant proposals. Turner (2008) wrote, in this journal, that "Grant professionals, like social entrepreneurs, act as change agents, are dedicated to a mission, and are innovative in their approaches to social change … they strive for impact resulting in meaningful social change by ensuring their organizations obtain the necessary resources to make positive social change a reality" (p. 3). He encouraged those in the field to take a proactive stance and a positive view of their role in alleviating social problems. To expand on that theme, development professionals must internalize the very real quest for true social change that financial backers increasingly expect, and the impact that measurable outcomes reveal. To do that, they may have to work to move their organizations to new thinking. They have the ability to bring the ideas and goals of funders to their organizations, similar to a liaison, or intermediary, and thereby help to shape organizational strategies and outcomes. However, organizations must be ready and show the capacity for change.

In his extensive research on defining social entrepreneurship, Light (2008) came to the conclusion that organizations ripe for substantial change contain a robustness where "high performance and innovation reinforce each other to create a tight alignment with a vision … adaptability in moving ideas … alertness to opportunities for attacking the prevailing social equilibrium … and agility in their organizational responses" (pp. 47-48). He also said that such organizations maintain their capacity to achieve through investing in management and a robust infrastructure because they know that efficiency and effectiveness demand investment in the business (p. 77, p. 90).

Innovation requires infrastructure, and grantors with new expectations from a business perspective understand this. Those that only want to fund the mission miss it. Light (2008) also noted that high-impact organizations start out with great programs but eventually realize that service delivery alone will not produce large-scale social change (p. 71). Those who work in human service non-profits who think deeply about their work will instinctively understand this. To get at the foundation of social ills, the roots must be exposed through education and advocacy that first bring awareness and then bring other forces to bear on entrenched problems that organizations may not be able to change alone.

The best proposal writers have their hearts in the organization's mission and its outcomes. They use their knowledge of funding imperatives to stimulate a discussion of organizational strategies around creativity and innovation that will bring desired results. Discussions might begin around the causality of the problems confronted, what program managers want to see as positive outcomes, and an evaluation of initiatives and methods to achieve them. On the table should be examples of how others are using new ideas to approach old problems, gleaned from reviewing the funding histories of foundations and contacting like organizations. Most will be more than willing to share their successes with their counterparts. Examples of success might be a food bank that mulches its organic waste to sell or trade for fresh produce, creating revenue *and* jobs; or a community kitchen producing meals for shelters while also providing job training for the homeless, thereby distributing resources *and* addressing the issue causing the need for them.

Whatever the mission of the organization, funding will be there for sound approaches that show innovation, well-developed planning and measurable outcomes. The work of the development professional is not only to locate funding possibilities, but also to ask questions of the organization and to work with those who will move program methodologies in new ways that create successes grantors want to see. They must ask: can the organization reach its goals in creative ways that will increase funder interest and produce better organizational outcomes? Will a more innovative or entrepreneurial approach increase effectiveness and attract savvy and proactive foundations to our work? Who in the organization can I work with to develop new initiatives, methodologies and programmatic assessments?

It is clear that the number of foundations transforming their giving towards strategic and instrumental giving is increasing. Fleishman (2007, p. 48) asserted that that instrumentalism is generally closer to the essence of their missions and, therefore, is the more effective and appropriate focus. That these foundations do much to empower the great American civic sector requires grantees to take seriously their requests for clear social impact. Those accepting their grants should produce the outcomes the funder wishes to see. Foundations have made it possible for people with ideas, but without capital, to work for the common good. It is only reasonable that applicants accept those dollars that support projects with mission alignment and work to shape strategies that produce significant social benefits. As Fleishman said, “Without foundations and the wide range of nonprofits they support, there would be today fewer institutions in America with the effective power to stand up to corporations and government where matters of the public interest are concerned” (p. 43).

Conclusion

Foundations, government entities, and corporate philanthropy are increasingly aiming for greater innovation in the organizations and projects they support with an eye toward improved outcomes that reveal meaningful social impact. Social entrepreneurialism is also expanding as a promising means of action for solving long standing problems. It is clear that grant professionals who embody these trends will straddle the grantor-grantee relationship, providing reciprocal flows of information and ideas between their organizations and their funders. They will come to consider their role as that of a liaison and as a change agent within their organizations. They must grow from funding-seekers to shapers of organizational strategy and outcomes. To do this they must go beyond the role of proposal writer to partner with leadership, program directors, and others who set policy or oversee the work of the organization and the outcomes produced. Effective grant professionals will fully understand and articulate the goals and expectations of grantors, and relate to grantors what their organizations can truly accomplish. They will promote creative programmatic strategies that get the job done and that align with external organizational stakeholders to bring those funders onboard as long-term partners.

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The Intricacies of Grant Consultation: Working Well with Clients of All Myers-Briggs Personality Types

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

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

GPCI Competency 08: Knowledge of practices and services that raise the level of professionalism of grant developers

Abstract

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) is a valuable tool for grant consultants. Consultants can tailor their client recruitment and interaction strategies based upon strengths and weaknesses identified by the MBTI. Furthermore, awareness of common behaviors and speech patterns based upon MBTI preferences can inform consultants about their clients' personality, organizational style and decision-making preferences. Observant consultants can build rapport with their clients by varying their communication styles and providing directed information for their unique clientele. Several techniques are presented that facilitate consultant-client interaction and collaboration throughout the recruitment, rapport building, organizational assessment and grant development processes. These include what personality cues to look for during the early stages of client recruitment and rapport building, how to best engage a (possible) client and how to organize documentation and proposals for individual clients, referees and grant makers.

Introduction

Developing good relationships with a variety of individuals and organizations, from clients to grantmakers, is vital to grant consultants' careers. In order to maximize those relationships, consultants must be flexible and sensitive to the needs and wants of those they serve. A savvy grant consultant can quickly recognize a client's strengths and weaknesses and provide useful suggestions and information. Few people, however, are born with brilliant interpersonal intuition skills. Thus, self-assessment and education about interpersonal communication skills are important parts of career growth in grant consultation.

One tool that is commonly used for personality self-assessment is the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). While the MBTI has been frequently used in team-building, management development, decision making, conflict management and leadership development (Gardner & Martinko, 1996), the MBTI has not been suggested for use by grant consultants. This article describes how the MBTI can be used by grant consultants to develop good interpersonal observational and communication skills, useful templates and tools that can be tailored to the needs of diverse clientele. Although grant consultants should not administer the MBTI to their clients, understanding MBTI concepts can be helpful in effective relationship management, organizational planning and proposal development.

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) is based upon a psychological type theory that proposes that people have distinct preferences in decision-making, world-view, and organizational style. These preferences range along the following four scales: introversion/extraversion, sensing/intuition, thinking/feeling, and judging/perceiving. Typical characteristics for each preference may be found in Table 1. In the MBTI, people self-identify which characteristics best fit them using a self-completed questionnaire. Results from this questionnaire categorize people into one of 16 distinct personality types (which will not be discussed here). (Note: While free online assessments are available, only a certified MBTI instrument administered and interpreted by a certified professional can guarantee accuracy.)

If grant consultants identify their own MBTI personality types, it can help them understand their preferred communication, problem-solving, decision-making, and interpersonal relationship styles. This knowledge can be beneficial for recognizing strengths and weaknesses in work and personal settings and for recognizing how clients may react to a given consultant's personality preferences. This use of the MBTI is often seen with psychological counselors. Counselors frequently attempt to

Table 1. Interactions and tools for maximizing grant consultant-client relationships

Client's personality preference	*Characteristic*	*Suggested interactions/ tools for grant consultant*
Extraversion	interactive, sociable, outgoing cues: uses small talk; often leads conversations	direct engagement and interaction: phone, Skype or meet directly; ask leading/directing questions
Introversion	reflective, quiet, thinks before speaking cues: gives brief verbal answers; may ask leading questions	send written materials prior to meetings; email or blog
Sensing	detail-oriented, pragmatic cues: organized desk, paperwork; is interested in "steps" to writing/winning grant	prepare lists, guides, timelines, flow charts, templates
Intuition	imaginative; sees possibilities, associations and "big picture" cues: interested in trends, future possibilities, implications; is focused on why a grant is needed	prepare diagrams or models
Thinking	analytical, logical, systematic cues: wants statistics, facts or credentials	focus on statistics, data, details, process; provide compelling evidence
Feeling	sympathetic, compassionate, trusting cues: focuses on social impact of grant; accepts all suggestions with little to no questioning	build rapport with client; focus on values and relationships; be empathetic and supportive
Judgment	"planner," decisive, persistent cues: has prepared questions; is timely at meetings or with information/ documentation	prepare structured plan, including outcomes; be direct
Perception	spontaneous, inquisitive, adaptable cues: wants all information prior to making a decision; pays little attention to deadlines	provide "possibilities"; act as guide or coach; make suggestions; make "deadlines" well in advance

moderate their personality preferences to match clients' personality preferences in order to have good communication and build rapport (Provost, 1993). In a similar way, observant grant consultants may mirror (match) their clients' personalities to establish a connection.

Know thyself

Self-assessment is a good first step for grant consultants who desire to maximize interpersonal client relations. The MBTI, which is widely available, can help grant consultants understand their preferences for communication, problem solving, and decision making. Once grant consultants identify their personal strengths and weaknesses, consultants can employ a variety of techniques to capitalize on their strengths and compensate for weaknesses. In particular, consultants may choose to design documentation for clients with MBTI preferences that differ from their own. These techniques may include the following:

- Design flowcharts or brochures describing the grant consultation/ submission process
- Create a standard list of questions when assisting with clients' organizational development
- Develop diagrams to describe short- and long-term client organizational needs and plans for meeting those needs
- Prepare timelines and templates for clients, and
- Build a grant consulting team with a diverse range of skills and personality preferences.

While MBTI self-assessment may identify consultants' strengths and weaknesses, self-assessment does not provide an indication of which techniques to employ with which clients. Thus, grant consultants must learn how to observe cues that relate to client personality preferences.

Preliminary observations

Since a grant consultant will not be using the MBTI to ascertain client personality preferences, the consultant must use verbal and non-verbal cues for observation. Most grant consultants do preliminary research on their clients prior to the first interview. A potential client's web site (or lack thereof) can provide a great deal of information beyond the text therein. For example, if the web site is systematically detailed with factual information (MBTI type "sensing"), the grant consultant should provide specific, step-by-step brochures and plans that detail both short-term and long-term goals. Conversely, if a client's web site presents primarily "big picture" goals ("intuition"), the consultant may be more successful with flow charts, diagrams and models to convey an overview of the connection between the consultant's services, the client's organizational needs and the client's long-term goals.

Winning a client largely depends on a good first impression. During the first few minutes of speaking to a (potential) client, a grant consultant can observe whether the client is extraverted (talkative, outgoing, expansive) or introverted (quiet, reflective, reserved). The preference for introversion or extraversion is not solely an indicator of interpersonal styles; these traits are also tied to thought, communication and expression patterns. It is common for extraverted people to vocalize their ideas and thoughts as a means of organization and development. Extraverts often enjoy "bouncing ideas off someone." An extraverted person will likely prefer instant communication – whether via phone, Skype, or in formal or informal meetings – to relay status updates or communicate new ideas. Conversely, introverts typically want to process all information before they speak. An organization primarily composed of introverts may appreciate receiving reports via email in advance of (or in lieu of) a meeting or possibly use a blog to communicate ideas in process. Please refer to Table 1 for additional interaction strategies.

Building rapport

One of the first steps of client relations is building rapport, which is critical when trying to win a client and in subsequent communication with that client. Interestingly, to communicate most effectively and built rapport, grant consultants should attempt to match their clients' personality preference (Provost, 1993; Ryder-Smith, 1998). For example, when a client is talkative and expansive, the grant consultant should reflect this personality preference, which conveys excitement and self-confidence. Introverted grant consultants working with extraverted clients may compensate by preparing a list of questions to direct meetings, demonstrate a high level of interest for the discussion, and keep conversations moving in a directed fashion. Introverted grant consultants might also write a meeting summary for use in a follow-up phone call to an extraverted client. An introverted grant consultant may need to schedule personal reminders for providing regular feedback or motivation to a client.

Conversely, an extraverted consultant should slow down to match an introverted client's personality preference. As suggested by Provost (1993), extraverted grant consultants may try to slow their rate of speech and allow silence during meetings to make introverted clients more comfortable. Asking an introvert a string of questions may inadvertently make the client uncomfortable and cause withdrawal. On the other hand, providing an introverted client with a list of questions in advance is likely to be well-received.

Preparing information and documentation

Recognizing a client's preference for interactions does not necessarily inform a grant consultant on what information to present or how best to present it. Some people are clearly organized and detail-oriented, with a focus on deadlines, facts and practical issues pertaining to working with others. These "organized" people are characterized in the MBTI schema as "judging." Conversely, clients who are open-minded, flexible and inquisitive may prefer "perceiving." The category sensing/intuition is manifested in the individual's personal work style, where "sensing" individuals are systematic and practical and "intuitive" people prefer innovation, imagination and "big picture" outcomes and goals. Clearly what is important here is not to recognize what personality category a client prefers; rather, to recognize what types of interactions or documentation will be best for maintaining a good client-consultant relationship.

Guiding organizational development

In practice, it is likely easier for grant consultants to work with clients who have current, orderly information about their organization and their goals. With these clients, consultants may develop lists, instructions and timelines to provide the necessary structure that their clients crave. It is often helpful for both consultants and clients to have templates for a variety of tasks, including deadlines for different grant proposal sections; a list of questions to help guide meetings; a template table of objectives, methods for obtaining those objectives and outcomes measures; etc.

For an "intuitive" client, however, having many pages of lists, templates or instructions may cause the client to feel intimidated, restricted or bored. In this case, a grant consultant may need to produce a diagram/flow chart showing how individual steps lead to the client's goals. For example, for the research scientist with many ideas, it may be beneficial to make a diagram showing how those ideas could fit together and/or lead to several grants. Another possibility is to have a diagram depicting the grant planning and submission process. Visual aids can help reassure clients who get overwhelmed by lists and details.

Consulting for organizations with multiple personality preferences

How does a grant consultant handle working with teams who have individuals of differing personality preference? An easy solution is to prepare (multiple) documents/presentations that will appeal to a variety of clients. (*Note:* These documents can become templates for future use.) A more elegant approach than providing multiple hard or electronic copies may be to use a secure network or web host/wiki to allow clients to access various documents at their leisure. Other programs, such as Google Docs (Google, Inc., Mountain View, CA) or Microsoft Groove (Microsoft, Inc., Redmond, WA), serve the same purposes; however, some organizations may have specific rules and procedures for maintaining secure documentation. In addition, grant consultants can use their web sites to provide generic documents, templates or tutorials (web-based or slide presentations such as Microsoft PowerPoint) to registered users.

Motivating clients

Finally, grant consultants must be motivational for their clients. Motivation can be based on "thinking" or "feeling" personalities. Those that prefer "thinking" are typically rational, analytical and logical. The most prevalent motivational personality preference of university professors and managers/supervisors is "thinking" (Macdaid, McCaulley & Kainz, 1986). Many philanthropists and non-profit employees may prefer "feeling." Grant consultants must be cognizant of a client's motivational preference when delivering feedback/encouragement. While it is always advisable to give constructive feedback, those of thinking and feeling personalities will likely respond differently to the same suggestions. When advising those preferring "thinking," one may be able to convince a client to consider a different viewpoint with compelling reason or sufficient data or facts. Conversely, a "feeling"-preferring client is more likely to be empathetic and sensitive. This client may be overly sensitive to feedback, requiring encouragement and gentle persuasion from the consultant in order to develop an organizational development plan or proposal.

Writing a proposal for reviewers of any personality preference

While working well with clients is obviously important, in order to win a proposal, it is also important to fit the proposal to the reviewers' and grantmakers' expectations in a clear and organized fashion. Reviewers and grantmakers are likely to use a formulaic list of criteria to determine whether or not to review and/or fund a proposal. These include eligibility criteria, scope of the proposed work and proposal scoring. For example, grantmakers typically list the basic eligibility criteria early within the grant announcement. Often, these criteria are part of a form and/or may be delineated in a cover letter. It is also important to detail how the goals of the proposal, the submitting organization and the grantmaker coincide, which is often done in a cover letter or letter of interest. If there is not a clear overlap, a proposal may be summarily dismissed. Also, proposals must address all questions listed in the grant announcement, ideally using similar verbiage as that given in the scoring criteria. For example, if a scoring criterion is "The need for the program is clearly addressed at the local and regional levels," the proposal should use a subtitle "Need," have statements pertaining to "This program will address the local and region need by…" and possibly include a table providing numerical values relevant to the need, what the program proposes to do and predicted outcomes due to the program.

While a proposal must have all the requisite details, a great proposal also provides sufficient motivators to pique the interest of the readers. Which motivators to use depend on what is known about the reviewers and the grant makers. For example, a proposal submitted to a federal or large foundation and reviewed by scientists or business people (i.e. those with a likely preference for "thinking") should be logical, rational and data-driven. Conversely, grant proposals submitted to local grantmakers may be better with more poignant details and community relevance. Ultimately, grant consultants must use their best judgment to balance motivation and detail within a proposal.

MBTI limitations

While use of the MBTI has benefits for grant consultants, there are also limitations. First, the MBTI tool is a self-assessment measurement. Consultants may make reasonable guesses as to their clients' personality preferences based on MBTI cues, but administration of the tool is necessary for an accurate personality assessment. Furthermore, MBTI results only provide a small picture of a given person's personality. In addition, a full MBTI assessment requires professional analysis. Finally, MBTI personality types are not the only important factor in a good consultant-client relationship. Many personality conflicts can be overlooked if the client perceives good results and outcomes. Furthermore, even with a good personality fit, certain consultants may be a better fit for clients depending upon client organizational needs and consultant specialties.

Unfortunately, even with the use of the MBTI, not all clients and consultants may work well together. One option may be for the consultant to build a team of colleagues or start a consulting firm. If this is not possible, a grant consultant may ask for advice from someone with the opposite personality preference. What motivates or engages him or her? How would you handle a similar situation?

Conclusion

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator is a valuable resource for grant consultants. The MBTI can provide insight into grant consultants' preferred working, interaction and decision-making styles. While there is no right or wrong personality preference, each preference has its own strengths and weaknesses. For example, a grant consultant with a strong preference for judging must be careful to remain flexible to alternative points of view and ideas. A grant consultant must be detail-oriented and open-minded while cognizant of the larger goals and possibilities for the client and his or her organization. Sometimes grant consultants may need to emulate counselors, moderating their own preferred personality traits to better suit those of their clients. Alternatively, consultants may build a consulting team with various personality traits to best serve a diverse clientele.

The MBTI can also serve as a guide for consultant-client interactions throughout the recruitment, rapport building, organizational assessment and grant development processes. Personality preferences influence social interactions, organizational styles and work styles. Grant consultants can observe their clients' personality preferences through a variety of verbal and non-verbal cues based upon MBTI preferences. These cues can be used to build rapport and aid in organizational planning and proposal development. As described in Table 1, consultants may use a variety of methods and documents to try to fully engage their clients. Consultants can prepare a variety of informational guides, lists, templates and instructions that are suited for their clients' personality preferences. Ultimately, the most important feature is to provide the utmost in grant consultation services to any and all clients.

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