



9/19/2013 Anyone Can Write a Grant! Q&A Log **Questions from Live Demco Webinar as answered by Catherine Hakala-Ausperk & Janet Nelson**

Sources

Q: Where is the best place to look for sources of funding for library grants? Where do we find Requests for Proposals?

A: A great starting point is your State Library. They often have LSTA (Library Services and Technology Act) funds that are often administered based on IMLS (Institute of Museum and Library Services) guidelines. Your project may fit into the scope of some of those programs. The Foundation Center <http://foundationcenter.org/pnd/> is another place to check for grants relating to numerous initiatives. They identify funds available for a wide variety of initiatives. Keep in mind that you may need to search often. New grants become available on a continual basis so just because there is not a grant available today that fits you're the scope of your needs, it doesn't mean that there won't be something next week or next month.

Q: We are a small municipal library, I sometimes find it difficult to find grants for which we are eligible. What are some good suggested sources for finding grants?

A: Usually, the smaller the library, the more locally you should look. That would be my first suggestion. Think of leading families in the community or the larger stores, banks, non-profits and ask them for help. Otherwise, I'd suggest you build a collaboration with lots of other partners. If you can get several, you might be able to prove that your project would benefit the whole town! It would help if one of your partners was a 501 C3, since you are not.

Q: I am at a vocational technical center and wonder if grants are available for our school. We have dual enrolled high school students as well as adults at our center and there don't seem to be any grants that apply to us.

A: There seems to be money out there to help adults "re-train" and get back to work. I'd search for "return to work" or "non-traditional students."

Q: How do you find viable grants? I applied for the Laura Bush grant, but it was so labor intensive and I didn't get it. I would love to find out about more grants that help update library collections.

A: There's a newsletter called "Grants for Libraries Hotline," which is a great source for ideas, if not funders. The Laura Bush grant was big – it might be useful to start smaller. Also, don't hesitate to contact the Foundation Center Library. Also check the resources found with this article including a free grant database and a comprehensive document that highlights grant sources.

Q: How do you find funders interested in libraries that are not in in the U.S.—In Mexico, for example.

A: I'd suggest you try some larger source books (found in most libraries). For this challenge, you might also want to consult a specialist for help, such as a librarian in a Foundation Center Library. Or, see if there's someone in your community with philanthropic experience.

Collaborations

Q: Are there opportunities to merge efforts between school and public libraries?

A: Yes and these efforts have been very successful and are very, very popular. Do some keyword searching in library literature to find some success stories, then contact those involved to get some advice. Communities love to see schools and libraries working together! (Also, don't forget to talk to your local PTA.)

Q: Where do you find grants that cross goals—for example, I'd like a Techmobile that's eco-friendly, with wi-fi, I-pads, etc.

A: Often proposals such as this can get funding from multiple sources due to the cross-functional nature and more complex needs. There may be grants that address the technology aspects separately from the sustainability aspects. It may even strengthen the proposal to demonstrate that funding is being obtained from multiple sources in order to ensure the success of the project. Sources of these funds may be found in some of the places described above.

Application Guidelines

Q: Can the same information used to prepare a grant be used for more than one application?

A: Absolutely. As long as you refine each proposal to meet the qualifications and guidelines of each funder, you can definitely tweak sections you've used before – and you should!

Q: How does one get over the stigma of prompt or automatic denial when writing a grant? You often hear of many grants being approved for big government or business, but seldom for small businesses or individuals.

A: You just have to keep trying, keep looking for the right funder and ask for as much advice and feedback as you can!

Q: I have written grants before but my success rate is pretty low. Our school is poor but it always seems like we are not poor enough. Any info would be appreciated.

A: Try getting a "non-traditional" grant for something very specific. Maybe go to a large department store (Target, Walmart) and start there. Also, be sure to build on something great you already do, so you can show success.

Q: I have written several grants and actually was awarded two grants. I did not receive one grant I really wanted so am interested in how to improve writing my applications.

A: I'd read some books, or take a class or ask an experienced grant writer for some advice. See if there are any retired or laid off people in your community who can help. Put out an ad!

Q: Our school is fairly affluent with a very low Free & Reduced Lunch. I'm running the media center on a shoestring with budget cuts. How can I compete with needier schools?

A: Perhaps you should try partnering with them, rather than competing. You may have a lot to contribute that would be a "match" and could help you both get a grant.

Q: What are the charitable organizations looking for when they read a grant application?

A: They want you to match their mission. They want you to show that you'll be successful, to inspire confidence in your program and to have lots of support and partners.

Q: What will help a library stand out especially if the area served is not low income?

A: Remember how you have to match your project to a real need, something you can prove. Maybe you shouldn't do something that would support low income people, if you don't have any. What problems does your community have? Find a real issue that you can help solve – and your solution will stand out.

Q: I know there are certain buzz words that should be used. I have written one before with help, and we received the grant. Our school really needs books, and I would like to write a grant for our library.

A: There are lots of books to help you with advice and even more webinars and classes you can take. Do some research looking for just the help you need. Also, try talking to some libraries that have received grants to get advice. You can find them by searching through the library industry magazines.

Q: Is empirical data necessary when writing a grant, i.e. evidence from academic journals?

A: Any data or evidence to support the need, your previous successes or your credentials will help to validate your request. You need to prove your case with data.

Q: I've heard of people applying for the same grant multiple times. Is this standard practice?

A: It can be a standard practice to apply for the same grant multiple times as long as the application doesn't look the same each time that you submit it. You should take the opportunity to continue to update and improve your application each time that you submit it.

Q: I have been under the assumption that it is not appropriate to ask why you didn't receive the grant. Is there a clue to look for that would suggest it is okay to ask an organization why my application did not receive the grant?

A: Cathy indicated that she has never heard this assumption. A respectful e-mail requesting guidance on how to better present a proposal in the future would most likely receive some type of response regarding what the organization was looking for. If they don't have time, they may tell you that but at least you have attempted to gain some clarity. Funders want to give their money away and they are going to want you to get better and write stronger programs to make their job of awarding proposals easier in the future.

Q: In general, what % of proposals are rejected?

A: I'm sorry but I don't know that. More positively, think of the percentage that are received!

Q: Is it better to ask for a small dollar amount versus a large dollar amount?

A: Most grants have guidelines around the size of the award that is being giving. The most important thing that you can do is to make sure that your objectives match your budget. Don't worry about asking for too much as long as it is within the guidelines, but it is especially important to make sure your requests and the costs associated are realistic. Don't pad your figures just to get to a number.

Q: How long should the grant application be?

A: Most funders tell you how long your response should be and the most important thing is to follow their guidelines. If they ask for a certain segment of the proposal to be one page long, make sure that the response is less than one page. Like a job interview, it's important to make sure that you are answering each question in a concise but compelling way while staying within those guidelines.

Q: Should anecdotes be included in the actual grant application, as opposed to just the post-grant results?

A: That depends up on the directions given, but the more human and compelling you can make your proposal the more likely it is that you will be funded. It is especially helpful when the brief asks for an

opening summary. Quick stories that relate to reasons behind your proposal and stay within the limits of the application can be particularly effective in bringing the project to life. Remember to keep audience and requirements in mind and stay on task.

Q: Often the template for a grant looks like a fill in the blank format. Do you use this to fill in or do you create a separate document using those headings to write the grant?

A: This depends upon how specific the instructions are around how the information is presented, but typically it's best to copy the template rather than recreating to be sure you get everything in the right place and don't miss anything that has been asked for.

Q: Will newspaper clippings or articles help the cause or objective or goals of the application?

A: If the clippings relate to the program that the requested funds will support, then go ahead and put them into the appendix of the proposal as support documentation. The only caution here would be to be sure that they really relate to what you are requesting. Extraneous information can dilute your focus and make your proposal less effective.

Q: I am interested in starting an independent school. How can I write a grant to purchase a building or library books to fill it?

A: An endeavor like this may require multiple grants and fundraising activities outside of the grant process. This may be a particularly good time to challenge your community to match grants raised to double your money. Sources for some of these grants are referred to above and in some of the additional resources available with this webinar.

Organizational Support

Q: How do you approach your executive team with your grant idea?

A: Show them that your project will help them reach their goals. Every administrator wants to be able to show her board that the library is achieving its strategic plan.

Q: I am the only full time employee in a small library. My time is so limited so I need to be able to apply for grants that do not have voluminous paperwork involved.

A: Then, start small and get help. Ask for partners or volunteers – even someone from your Friends group. Don't try to do it all yourself.

Grant Proposal Grading

Q: How did you become a grader of grant proposals?

A: Contact your State Library—that's the simplest way to start. They often have LSTA funds that they award and are looking for people to help read them. Your local community college would potentially provide additional opportunities—sometimes they have classes in grant writing and you can volunteer to help review proposals.

Q: How do you become a grant grader if you have never worked with grants?

A: Start by contacting your State Library to see if they have a Grants Advisory Committee. That's what I did.

Q: Can we contact you for any information as we are doing a grant?

A: Sure, I'll give you any help I can. My email address is chakalaausperk@gmail.com

Good luck!