Funding Tips and Tricks for Grant Writing Success

March 12, 2024
Background and Experience

• Background in environmental science

• Close to 20 yrs experience in grant research, writing, and management

• 40-50 grants annually

• Manage 30+ grants/contracts annually
Why Do We All Need Funding?

To support mission-driven work
  Increase staffing
Expand existing projects/programs
  Launch new programs/projects

To do good work that benefits
  your community
our region, the world
The Status of Giving in the US
In 2022, American gave $499.33 billion to charity, a 3.4% decline compared to 2021. Adjusted for inflation, total giving declined 10.5%.

From GivingUSA.org
Giving Information - USA

64% $319.04 billion
Giving by Individuals
† declined by 6.4% over 2021

21% $105.21 billion
Giving by Foundations
† increased 2.5% over 2021

9% $45.60 billion
Giving by Bequest
† increased 2.3% over 2021

6% $21.08 billion
Giving by Corporations
† increased 3.4% over 2021

While giving by individuals continues to grow over time, it has fallen below 70% of all giving for the fourth consecutive year.

Foundations are growing as a share of giving over time. In 2022, over $1 out of every $5 that went to charity came from a foundation.

*All figures on this infographic are reported in current dollars unless otherwise noted. Inflation was especially high in 2022, at 8.0%, and results may differ when adjusted for inflation. Learn more in the chapters.

From GivingUSA.org
# Giving Information - USA

## Where did the charitable dollars go?

**Contributions by destination**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of Total Contributions</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.2% 27%</td>
<td>$143.57 billion</td>
<td>Religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.6% 14%</td>
<td>$71.98 billion</td>
<td>Human Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6% 13%</td>
<td>$70.07 billion</td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.1% 11%</td>
<td>$56.84 billion</td>
<td>Foundations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1% 10%</td>
<td>$51.08 billion</td>
<td>Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.4% 9%</td>
<td>$46.86 billion</td>
<td>Public-Society Benefit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.9% 6%</td>
<td>$33.71 billion</td>
<td>International Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.9% 5%</td>
<td>$24.67 billion</td>
<td>Arts, Culture, and Humanities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6% 3%</td>
<td>$16.10 billion</td>
<td>Environment/Animals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.6% 2%</td>
<td>$12.98 billion</td>
<td>Individuals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Change in comparison to total raised in 2021*

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**Donor-advised funds** are among the fastest growing forms of giving. Learn more about where grants from DAFs go in the chapter on donor-advised funds.

Giving to **international affairs** organizations grew by 10.9% in 2022, in part due to donors responding to world events. Despite uneven results in 2022, six of nine subsectors continue to exceed pre-pandemic levels, even when adjusted for inflation.

From GivingUSA.org
Grant Funding Types and Sources
Typical Nonprofit Funding Sources

Donations –
  • From individuals/businesses, including bequests

Sponsorships –
  • From businesses or larger companies

Fundraising Events –
  • Involving your community/supporters

Grants – great source of funding to support your work!

The key is to DIVERSIFY FUNDING!
Types of Grant Funding

**Restricted**
- Used for specific purpose
- Defined Budget
- Defined scope of work
- Defined timeline

**Unrestricted**
- General Operating Support
- More flexibility
- Can be used as needed
- Helps fill gaps in funding
- Address immediate needs

**Capacity Building**
- Increase staffing
- Hire critical services
- Expand ability for your organization to be successful
Grant Funding Sources

- Federal Government
- State Government
- Local Government (city, county, etc.)
- Private and Family Foundations
- Corporate Foundations
- Community Organizations
- Nonprofits – regranting to other organizations
Steps in the Grant Proposal Process
Determine Funding Needs

- Meet with your team
- Identify areas of work where funding is needed
- If possible determine:
  - How much funding is needed
  - How soon funding is needed
- Update list as conditions change
- Think about partnering opportunities – access different types of funding
Research Funding Opportunities

Free options include:

• Google searches – keyword searches
• Grants.gov – all federal grants
• NJDEP - https://dep.nj.gov/grantandloanprograms/
• New Jersey - www.nj.gov/nj/gov/njgov/grants.html
• PA DEP - www.dep.pa.gov/Citizens/GrantsLoansRebates/Pages/default.aspx
• Many companies have online funding applications

Join email lists for funder notifications

Keyword search ideas:
Environmental justice grants
Community environment projects grants
Community clean up/tree planting/gardening grants
Research Funding Opportunities

More Free options include:

• Guidestar - [www.guidestar.org](http://www.guidestar.org) —
  • Sign up for free (paid memberships available)
  • Can look up 990s, assets, etc.

• Foundation Directory Online —
  • *Available for free at several locations across the region*
  • Univ. of Delaware, Free Library of Philadelphia

*Talk to other organizations and partners*
Research Funding Opportunities

Paid options include:

- GrantStation
- Grant Watch
- Many others available online

PDE subscribes to GrantStation and many email lists.

We will share grant opportunities with Urban Waters Federal Partnership partners whenever possible.
Review RFPs & Select Opportunities

• **Review the RFP closely**
  • Is my organization eligible - 501(c)(3) required?
  • Is our project a good fit
  • Is the notification timeline and project timeline feasible
  • Can we provide the match required

• **Stay mission-focused!**
  • Don’t develop new projects/programs to fit the RFP priorities
  • Can dilute your impact and lead to “mission drift”

• **Be selective about what you decide to pursue**
Review RFPs & Select Opportunities

Many grant opportunities have one deadline per year

Start tracking of opportunities for future reference

• Things to Track
  ✓ Funding source
  ✓ Grant program name
  ✓ Estimated due date
  ✓ Contact
  ✓ Website
  ✓ Funding focus areas
  ✓ Budget minimum and maximum
Prepare the Proposal

• Preparing proposals takes time
  • Make sure you can dedicate the time needed
• Reread the RFP and follow the format provided exactly
• Develop project specifics
  • What do you want to accomplish? Who will be involved? How much time will it take? End results, Outputs vs outcomes
• Write proposal text
  • Be clear and stick to the RFP requirements!
• Create project budget
  • Thorough and well justified
• Secure match
• Letters of support/commitment

Matching funds
Cash –
Other funding you’re bringing to the project

In-kind –
Volunteer services, donations of goods and services
Prepare the Proposal

- Make it as easy as possible for the reviewer
  - Title and number your responses in alignment with the RFP language
- Clear yet concise responses
  - Spell out all acronyms the first time uses
  - Make it readable and understandable to someone not in your field
- Note page limit, font size, spacing, etc.
  - PDF attachments whenever possible to lock in format, length
- Look at review criteria
- Check for all required attachments
  - Financial documents, Organizational documents, Budget justification

*Failure to do any of these can result in your proposal being disqualified*
Thinking About the Pitch

How to “sell” your project

- What makes your project unique?
- What need are you trying to fill?
- What challenge are you looking to address?
- Why is it important to be doing this project now?
- What makes you the best organization to take on this project?
- What will happen if this is not funded?
- What are the intended outputs and outcomes?
- How will this project positively impact the community/region?
- Who will you work with? What do they bring to the project?
- How will you measure success? Think qualitative and quantitative.

Thinking through these questions will result in a stronger proposal!
Submitting and Next Steps

Submit and save verification!

Funder may have additional questions
• Be responsive and thorough

If selected for funding –
• Often requires additional information
• Compliance review
• Budget/scope/timeline adjustments
• Agreement - By signing and accepting the funds, you are agreeing to abide by all terms and conditions
More Next Steps

What if your proposal is denied?

• Request reviewer feedback!
• Was it not a good fit? Was your narrative not clear?
• Share the feedback with project team
• Use results to refine your pitch
• Try again or looking for other opportunities
Pros and Cons of Various Funding Sources
Government Grants

Pros -

• Many funding opportunities available
  • Many have annual RFPs –
  • Plus increased funding available currently
    • Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)
    • Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL)

• Typically larger, multi year projects
  • Good if you need high dollar amount
Government Grants

Federal Grants - Things to consider/Possible cons

• Register with SAM.gov and grants.gov
• 1:1 non-federal match
• Require a high level of administration
• Compliance with federal regulations (financial, record keeping, nondiscrimination, procurement, DBE, etc.)
• Need a single audit ($750,000 threshold)
• Longer time between submitting application, receiving decision, and starting the project
Foundation/Corporate Grants

Pros / Cons

• Opportunity to tell your story - Proposal structure is typically less formal

• Funding decision time tends to be shorter

• Often lower amounts –
  • Both Pro and Con - might be more manageable for smaller organizations

• Some Foundations don’t publicly advertise
  • Need a personal introduction/invitation
Increasing Success
Increasing Success

No way to guarantee successful funding. However here are some ways to increase your odds.....

• Creating a compelling Project Description aligned with funding priorities

• Making sure the Project Purpose, Goals, and Outcomes are clearly communicated

• Demonstrating that you have the capacity and expertise to complete the project successfully
Establishing Funder Relationships

• Important to researching the funder not just the funding opportunity

• Reach out to funder to discuss ideas and get feedback before submitting proposal

• Develop relationship with the funder – engage them in your work, invite them to see your organization in action
Strengthening Funder Relationships

• Important to keep accurate and thorough record

• Be responsive to information requests during project implementation

• Keep funder informed of progress and any challenges encountered/changes anticipated

• Invite funder to key milestones in project completion
Final Thoughts

Diversify your funding sources

Plan ahead – grant funding has a longer lead time than donations or sponsorships

Do your research (on funders and funding opportunities)

Decide if you have the capacity to take on government funding

Think like a grant reviewer – would I want to fund this project?

Reach out to partners – collaborate to make your projects better

Don’t give up – often takes more than one attempt to successfully fund a project!
Questions?

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Partner ship for the
DELAWARE ESTUARY

Connecting people, science, and nature for a healthy Delaware River and Bay