Credit: Sandi Bisgood

Funding Tips and Tricks for Grant Writing Success
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Background and Experience

- Background in environmental science

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

- 40-50 grants annually

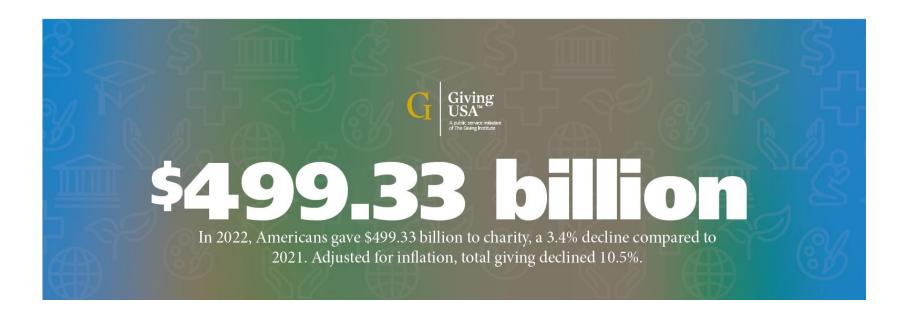- Manage 30+ grants/contracts annually

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

Giving Information - USA

$499.33 billion

In 2022, Americans gave $499.33 billion to charity, a 3.4% decline compared to 2021. Adjusted for inflation, total giving declined 10.5%.

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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

percentage of the total contributions*

	Change		Amount	Destination	Percentage
↑	5.2%		$143.57 billion to	**Religion**	27%
↓	0.6%		$71.98 billion to	**Human Services**	14%
↓	3.6%		$70.07 billion to	**Education**	13%
↑	10.1%		$56.84 billion to	**Foundations**	11%
↑	5.1%		$51.08 billion to	**Health**	10%
↓	8.4%		$46.86 billion to	**Public-Society Benefit**	9%
↑	10.9%		$33.71 billion to	**International Affairs**	6%
↑	2.9%		$24.67 billion to	**Arts, Culture, and Humanities**	5%
↓	1.6%		$16.10 billion to	**Environment/Animals**	3%
↑	0.6%		$12.98 billion to	**Individuals**	2%

change in comparison to total raised in 2021

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!

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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

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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

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

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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

- DNREC Grants - https://dnrec.delaware.gov/water/resource-protection/grants/

- PA DEP - www.dep.pa.gov/Citizens/GrantsLoansRebates/Pages/default.aspx

- Many companies have online funding applications

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

Join email lists for funder notifications

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Research Funding Opportunities

More Free options include:

- Guidestar - 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.

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Review RFPs & Select Opportunities

- **<u>Review the RFP closely</u>**
  - 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

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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

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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

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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

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Thinking About the Pitch

How to "sell" you 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!

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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

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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

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