EFFECTIVE GRANT WRITING
Presented to SDA
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HOUSEKEEPING
• Please turn cell phones to vibrate or silent mode
• Questions at any time

THE MAIN TOPICS
• Finding/researching appropriate funders
• Understanding funding limitations and requirements
• Building relationships with potential funders
• Using a Common Grant Application or other format
• Why grant proposals are not successful
• Key components of successful grant proposals
  • The outline
  • The audience
  • The “Cs” of effective writing
SHOW OF HANDS: HAVE YOU WRITTEN A GRANT PROPOSAL OR APPLICATION? IF YOU WERE SUCCESSFUL, KEEP YOUR HAND UP.

WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU DID RIGHT? WHAT WOULD YOU DO/ARE YOU DOING DIFFERENTLY?

FINISH THE FUNDING
- Developing a “mission” or “purpose” statement: your “statement of need”
- Identifying your “community”
- Developing key words/search parameters
- Researching potential funders

WHAT IS YOUR MISSION/PURPOSE?
- What activity or service do you want funded?
- Take a few minutes to write down two or three “mission” or “purpose” statements: your “statement of need”
- If YOU controlled the funds would you fund this particular need?
- Anyone want to share their statement(s)?
WHO/WHAT IS YOUR COMMUNITY?
- Grants are funded to benefit a “community”
- Reflect this community in your statement of need
- Examples:
  - People suffering from malarial in sub-Saharan Africa (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation)
  - Shelters and services for battered women (various)
  - Animal rescue operations
  - International Watershed Coastal Area Management (via UNEP/UNDP/CEHI, others)
- Who or what is your community?

REVISE YOUR MISSION/PURPOSE STATEMENT TO REFLECT THE COMMUNITY YOU INTEND TO SERVE OR BENEFIT IF YOUR GRANT PROPOSAL OR APPLICATION IS FUNDED.

EFFECTIVE SEARCHING
- Libraries have great resources:
  - Search: grant funding directory
  - Possible sources: the Foundation Grant Index, the Grants Database, the Foundation Directory
- On line resources:
  - www.grants.gov
  - The Foundation Center (www.foundationcenter.org)
DEVELOPING SEARCHES

- Include the current year
- If you are looking for RFPs or solicitations, also add the month proposal would be due
- Visit potential funders' web sites:
  - Note the words they use
  - Mirror their words
- Make sure all words are spelled correctly
- Search regularly

RESEARCHING POTENTIAL FUNDERS

- Funders are VERY specific about what they will fund
- Pore over directories
- Get annual reports to see what and who got funding
- Take note of who is on board of directors—they are often the decision makers for grants

RELATIONSHIPS ARE KEY

- You have a better shot if you are known to the potential funder
- Contact the funder:
  - Ask for assistance/tips
  - Ask for contacts with past grant recipients
  - Become known to potential funders
- Consider getting involved in organizations supported by the board/potential funder
- Respect the time of the contacts and evaluators
FUNDING LIMITATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

- 100% funding is rare
- Norm is 33 to 50%; up to 67%
- Fully disclose how funds will be used
- Fall within funder’s range
- Make sure to respond by the due date—this is rarely flexible or waiverable
- Make sure your financials are up-to-date and accurate
- Identify “in-kind” and funded resources

GRANT SEEKERS OFTEN WANT TO PAY A “PERCENTAGE OF FUNDS RAISED” OR “PERCENT OF GRANT” TO THE WRITER. THIS IS ALMOST ALWAYS A VIOLATION OF THE FUNDER’S TERMS AND CONDITIONS AND MAY RESULT IN TERMINATION OF THE GRANT. WHY?

GRANT PROPOSAL FORMATS

- Common grant applications
- Funder-specified formats
- Do-it-yourself formats
NO MATTER THE GRANT PROPOSAL’S FORMAT... ALWAYS FOLLOW THE GUIDELINES TO THE LETTER. THAT MEANS PAGE COUNTS, FONTS, DELIVERY METHODS AND DATES, FORMATTING AND NUMBERING, AND SO FORTH.

COMMON GRANT APPLICATIONS
- Many states/funders have a standardized form:
  http://foundationcenter.org/findfunders/cga.html (links to forms)
- Highlights of the Colorado Common Grant Application (CGA)
- Some online resources provide formats:
  http://www.commongrantapplication.com/

OTHER FORMATS
- Funder-specified:
  - Follow the instructions—to the letter
  - Please do not play games
  - Get samples of successful grant applications
- No specified format:
  - Choose a CGA as a baseline
  - Contact a previous awardee (from annual report)
  - Less is better: No more than 20 pages
  - Mirror the solicitation: fonts, spacing, margins, tone, formality, and so forth
WHY GRANT PROPOSALS OR APPLICATIONS LOSE

- Did not follow all the rules
- Failed to consider the goals of the funder
- Delivered proposal late/incomplete
- Did not indicate a community that benefits
- Did not have quantifiable goals and outcomes
- Did not meet the funding min/max requirements
- Did not meet in-kind or other funding requirements
- Did not use an outline or include the “Cs” of effective writing (more later)
- Did not identify and write to the audience

Key Components of Effective Grant Proposals/Applications

- The outline
- The audience
- The “Cs”
- Grammar and punctuation

The Role and Value of the Outline

- Good writing is logical and uses a road map
- The best road map is an outline:
  - Manage page counts
  - Simplify writing
  - Deal writer’s block
  - Create organization
- Essential for page-limited grant proposals
- Supports coordination and time management
- Clarification of roles and responsibilities
- Example: how it works
KEEP WRITING SIMPLE

- Sentences: 10 to 15 words on average
- How to simplify sentences
- Paragraphs:
  - One idea per paragraph
  - One idea several paragraphs
  - Two ideas in one paragraph—never
  - Two to six sentences per paragraph
- Bullets are a great simplification and clarification tool
- Open/white space “tells” reviewers this is an “easy” document to read/follow

CONSIDERATION IS CRITICAL

- Who is the audience?
- What do you know about the audience (reviewers) and funding organization?
- Value their time
- Write to the amount of time the audience can/will spend
- Use acronyms and jargon with care
- Reviewers understand their mission and the value of money—remember this
- They don’t usually know your business

IMAGINE HOW MANY GRANT PROPOSALS/APPLICATIONS THE REVIEWERS HAVE TO GO THROUGH. NATURALLY THE FIRST STEP IS TO REDUCE THE STACK. DON’T GIVE THEM TRIVIAL REASONS TO REJECT YOUR PROPOSAL WITHOUT EVEN GETTING PAST THE COVER SHEET.
THE ELEMENTS OF “GOOD” WRITING
- The Cs of good writing:
  - Clear
  - Concise
  - Correct
  - Considerate
  - Consistent
  - Complete
  - Current
  - Compliant

GRAMMAR AND PUNCTUATION
- Grammarians are everywhere
- Have someone read/edit before sending
- The important of a comma: “Eats, Shoots & Leaves (Lynn Truss)
- Pronounitis
- Modifiers: I saw a statue of the famous editor Henry Grady walking down Main Street
- One too many words: BP executive’s misstatement
- Spell- and grammar-check
- The thesaurus and dictionary
- Readability

ALWAYS REMEMBER—THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE THE MONEY MAKE THE RULES!
...AND WHEN YOU THINK YOU ARE DONE WRITING, ASK YOURSELF, “COULD OR WOULD I READ AND UNDERSTAND THIS DOCUMENT? COULD OR WOULD THE REVIEWERS?”