GRANTSMANSHIP FOR SMALL LIBRARIES AND SCHOOL LIBRARY MEDIA CENTERS

Sylvia D. Hall-Ellis, Doris Meyer, Frank W. Hoffmann, Ann Jerabek

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Edited by Frank W. Hoffmann

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Introduction

Few educators or librarians have been able to carry out their professional responsibilities without being introduced to the grantseeking process. Their interest may have started with a slowly building curiosity that was further fed by attendance at conferences or site-based workshops. On the other hand, it could have begun as a tentative involvement stimulated by the desire of administrators to mine this mother lode of funding possibilities.

While the larger libraries have generally been the most involved grantseekers in the past, the current financial picture—i.e., a leveling off of local, tax-based support, an increasing number of corporate and private donors available to fund worthy projects—combined with new educational challenges related to areas such as distance learning, the role of technology in the dissemination of information, etc., has made it imperative that smaller institutions, most notably public libraries and school media centers, also become actively committed to the process. However, small libraries are frequently unprepared to make a smooth transition into grantsmanship, lacking both the resources and staff expertise to effectively compete with their larger colleagues. Recognizing that any grantseeker must go after funding one step at a time, *Grantsmanship for Small Libraries and School Library Media Centers* focuses on the fundamentals of the process. Presuming little or no background knowledge on the part of the reader, the book will guide one through the primary stages comprising the grant development process:

1. Planning
2. Project Design
3. Project Narrative
4. Project Personnel
5. Budget Development
6. Project Evaluation
7. Supplementary Materials

One of the more confusing aspects of the grantseeking process has to be differentiating between the diverse array of grants. One source has noted 19 types along with examples of each:

Challenge Grant: money used as a magnet to attract additional funds. The Memorial Public Library receives $100,000 as a challenge grant to expand its collection.

Conference Grant: money to cover the expenses of holding a conference or seminar. The Keystone Center for Continuing Education receives $5,000 to support its Keystone Workshop Series.

Construction Grant: money for building construction. The Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp receives $65,000 for construction of a rehearsal hall.

Consulting Grant: money to hire consultants for an organization or project. The Unity Church receives $50,000 to hire a financial consultant to develop a long-term financial plan.

Demonstration Grant: money to demonstrate or prove that a particular project or idea actually works. The National Council on the Aging receives $70,000 for a demonstration program in student-provided services for the elderly.

Dissemination Grant: money to spread the results or funding of a successful project. The Project on Helping receives $23,000 to examine various aspects of volunteerism and to disseminate findings to local nonprofit organizations.

Endowment Grant: money to be kept permanently and invested to provide continued income to an organization. Harvard University receives $90,000 to support a permanent endowment for the Center for Hellenic Studies; the income will be used toward stipends for Junior Fellows and library and publication costs.

Equipment Grant: money to purchase new or replacement equipment. The Fellowship of Christian Athletes receives $75,000 toward the purchase and installation of computer equipment.

General Purpose Grant: money to further the general purpose or work of an organization rather than for a specific purpose. The Chicago Theatre Group receives $30,000 for general purpose support of the Goodman Theatre.

Land Acquisition Grant: money to purchase real estate property. Beloit College receives $75,000 toward the purchase of land to expand campus parking facilities.

Matching Grant: money to match funds provided by another donor. The Texas Panhandle Heritage Foundation receives $50,000 for matching support toward operating reserve fund.

Operating Grant: money to cover the daily costs of running an existing program or organization. The Mount Sinai Medical Center receives $10,000 for operating support.

Planning Grant: money to assess the need for and develop plans to implement a project. Montgomery County receives $25,000 to assess the feasibility of developing a rural health care delivery system.

Publication Grant: money to publish a report, book, magazine, or other publication. The New York Public Library receives $200,000 to support the publication costs of a new catalog describing its fine arts collection.

Renovation Grant: money to renovate, remodel, or rehabilitate property. Babson College receives $300,000 for the renovation of the Sir Isaac Newton Library.

Research Grant: money to cover costs of investigations or clinical trials. The Salk Institute for Biological Studies receives $10,000 for biological and medical research.

Seed Grant: money to start up or establish a new product or organization. Marquette University receives $15,000 to develop pilot data on causes of hypothermia.

Special Project Grant: money to support specific projects or programs as opposed to general purpose grants. Planned Parenthood receives $20,000 to survey teen attitudes toward adoption counseling.

Training Grant: money to train or instruct others in a method, technique, or procedure. The American Red Cross receives $25,000 for training programs in life-saving techniques geared to volunteers.

An understanding of these grant types can assist in either describing or redefining a proposed project. This categorization process facilitates efforts at matching your organization's strengths with the priorities of potential funders. Such comparisons, in turn, lead to the identification of marketing strategies for the proposal.

Given the fact that funders generally choose to work with known commodities, organizations new to the grants arena are readily apt to become discouraged. In order to circumvent the "catch-22" situation of needing to establish a record as a

successful grant getter before obtaining a grant, the following strategies should be considered:

1. Include individuals in the proposal who already have a significant degree of experience with your targeted sponsor. If you lack credibility with the sponsor, borrow credibility from those known to the sponsor by having them serve as project co-directors or consultants.

2. Apply to sponsors with which you or members of your organization have established contacts and relationships. Use existing networks to help establish credibility.

3. Concentrate funding efforts on sponsors that have a history of taking on the uninitiated and the inexperienced. Some sponsors pride themselves on funding "high-risk, high-return" projects and organizations. They are willing to fund the "organizational underdog." Your prospect research, particularly a review of prior funding history, will help reveal such sponsors.

4. Demonstrate any crossover experience you might have had with programs of similar magnitude and complexity. Often you can cite experience managing other projects or personnel that will help successfully administer your proposed project.

5. Provide independent certifications and endorsements of qualifications from known authorities. This represents another means of borrowing credibility; i.e., respected experts can testify to your integrity.

6. Invite sponsors for an on-site visit or offer to visit them to discuss and demonstrate capability. This will provide you a first-hand opportunity to show the crispness of your organizational management skills.

7. Begin by requesting nonfiscal support. Sponsors often provide grants for things other than money; e.g., technical assistance, equipment donations, executive loan programs. This gives you a "foot in the door" of your target sponsor. If the experience is a positive one for both parties, the likelihood of receiving subsequent fiscal support from the sponsor increases notably.

8. Piggyback on the coattails of another organization or consortium with successful grant experience. In other words, join forces with others to build your credibility in subsequent proposals.

Above all, the success of the proposal depends upon your ability to convince the funder that a decision to provide support will pay dividends for that organization. Regarding a corporation, these benefits might include:

1. An improved image.

2. Enhanced corporate environs, covering areas such as ecology, transportation, communication, etc.

3. An upgraded benefits package, relating to new or better health programs, cultural activities, recreational facilities, etc.

4. A better pathway to attaining organizational goals; e.g., the provision of previously unavailable resources, the implementation of more effective training techniques, the development of new services.

Inexperienced grantseekers are likely to find grantsmanship a confusing, sometimes intimidating, process. Every effort has been made to cover the full spectrum of grantsmanship in a lucid, straightforward manner. In short, this book is devoted to providing the information necessary for librarians and educators to become effective members of grant development teams. The insights included in its seven chapters and three appendices are based upon experiences of professional grantseekers whose occupational backgrounds encompass school districts, state-supported region service centers, public libraries, higher education, private consulting, and entrepreneurial information services. The book's authors reiterate that ultimate success in grantsmanship, however, comes only with practice-based effort, combined with the commitment to turning temporary setbacks (i.e., proposal rejections) into eventual grant awards.

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1

Planning

The Core of Grant Development

The writing of a successful grant proposal—one that ultimately secures funding—requires a well-designed plan. The planning process is a collaborative effort built around the individual and group contributions of a grant development team. Group members must share responsibilities for proposal development activities as well as a commitment to secure funding. Within an educational setting, an effective team should include administrators (principals, assistant principals, appropriate department heads), classroom teachers (the experts regarding instructional strategies in the educational environment), librarians (frequently considered to be active participants in the teaching program), curriculum specialists (program directors), support staff, faculty members from academic institutions, business and industry leaders, technology specialists, consultants, internal and external evaluators, a coordinator of grants development and management, students, and parents.

Self-directed professional teams are the key to effective grantsmanship. Tasks that team members can perform include researching funding sources (particularly federal and state governments, and agencies within the private sector), analyzing requests for proposals (RFPs) and requests for applications (RFAs) from funding sources, conducting local needs assessments, surveying the available literature to identify research-based models and "best practices" sites (see "Visits to 'Best Practices' Sites" in Chapter 2), inviting collaborators to participate in the project, and writing components of the proposal.

A. Planning Defined

The teamwork approach begins with a mutual commitment to planning. Planning is, in essence, a stratagem for doing, arranging, or producing something. In a library setting (or broader educational environment) planning will usually result in providing a service for, or imparting knowledge and skills to, a specific target group. Regarding proposal development, planning is ongoing in nature, spanning the entire grantseeking process. Step by step, this process includes

1. developing a conceptual design for the project and budget;

2. securing organizational approval to submit the grant proposal;

3. researching and identifying potential funding sources;

4. requesting guidelines and application forms;

5. writing the grant proposal;

6. submitting the proposal to the funding source on or before the deadline;

7. reading, evaluating, and ranking proposals (by a panel of reviewers);

8. deciding which proposals will receive funding (by a panel of reviewers);

9. notifying applicants regarding the award;

10. negotiating the nature and extent of the award;

11. celebrating the resulting agreement (e.g., publicizing award to profession and community);

12. implementing the program;

13. performing the formative and summative program evaluation;

14. submitting required programmatic and financial reports to the funding source in accordance with mutually agreed-upon deadlines;

15. (where applicable) submitting an application for continuance funds.

Table 1-1 provides a means of visualizing the planning process.

Table 1-1

Grant Development Flowchart

Project Initiator/Team creates idea; writes abstract; submits permission form	**Administrator/Supervisor** reviews and approves idea

Grants Office
reviews idea; searches for
potential funding sources

Project Initiator/Team writes proposal	**Grants Office** reads, edits, and critiques proposal; acts as liaison with the funding source

Project Initiator/Team
completes proposal

Grants Office
submits proposal to superintendent/
board of trustees

Superintendent/Board of Trustees reviews/approves proposal	**Grants Office** submits proposal to the funding source

Funding Source
decides whether or not to
accept proposal

<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>
Project Director/Grants Office negotiates award with the funding source **Project Staff** conducts project	**Grants Office** requests reviewers' comments about declined proposal, recommends improvements, and searches for other funding sources **Project Initiator/Team** revises project and/or proposal for resubmission or submission to new funding source

B. The Rationale for Planning

Grantseeking is an ongoing process. The time frame required to develop innovative projects does not necessarily coincide with particular dates in the calendar year. Funders issue announcements and requests for proposals on an almost daily basis.

Traditionally, administrators in many organizations have tended to view grantseeking as peripheral to the job descriptions of their subordinates. Accorded such a low priority, the task of seeking and securing additional financing is conducted hastily, without adequate attention to planning concerns. Grant proposals prepared in such a manner are frequently declined in deference to applicants who present more inclusive plans for an award.

The steady decline in state and federal funding during the 1990s has encouraged many organizations to hire at least one individual who coordinates efforts to procure external funding. Such positions carry various titles, including grant writer, proposal development specialist, federal programs officer, development officer, grants and proposal development specialist, and grants administrator.

Regardless of the titles, the establishment of an office to identify funding sources, to prepare and coordinate the writing of proposals for consideration by potential funders, and to manage grant awards has become increasingly important to libraries and other educational institutions. An inability to access discretionary money from government agencies, foundations, private corporations, and other supporters can force a reduction of programs and services.

C. Readiness for Planning

Once an organizational team is formed, grant project planning truly begins. An effective planning process is not always considered requisite; in fact, it may be ignored or underestimated by inexperienced grantseekers. Furthermore, the team's productivity may be limited if the level of support and commitment from within the organization is insufficient for the task at hand.

Organizational barriers can potentially contribute to the failure of a grant development team. The team must recognize and respond to a notable principle of behavior: Organization prevents reorganization. Organizational commitment to a successful grants program changes priorities. Time and resources must be allocated differently, and new systems and procedures must be implemented. Resistance by the organization to such changes should be anticipated. However, an effective grantseeking process that secures additional funding will usually convince leadership that the changes in question promote the vitality of the organization.

Because successful grantseeking is a collaborative process, individuals throughout the organization must be properly motivated. The following steps can help lay the foundation for a favorable climate:

1. Encourage a high-level administrator to issue (or endorse) a policy statement indicating that grantseeking is an organizational priority.

2. Provide the time, resources, personnel, and training needed by grant development teams.