Grant Writing: Steps to Success

Presenter:
Rhonda Williams, MES
Independent Grant Writer

American College of Chest Physicians
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Disclosure

- I have no financial disclosure or conflict of interest
Grant writing is our power!
(but it’s nerve wracking)

- Time consuming
- Requires creativity, precision, and importantly... planning
- Demands collaboration within a tight timeline
Myths About Grant Writing

- If you don’t get the funding, you have failed
- Small grants require more work than they are worth
- Being lead is better than being a partner or subcontractor

Challenge = Opportunity

<table>
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<th>The Challenge</th>
<th>The Opportunity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Selecting grant opportunities carefully</td>
<td>Prep and planning remind us of strategic plans and program goals</td>
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<td>Being open to partners yet careful to commit</td>
<td>New partners and synergies can emerge, established further deepen</td>
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<td>Supporting your programming, not leading it</td>
<td>Opens ideas on growth areas programmatically &amp; organizationally</td>
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<td>Having the grants process be a staff building v staff breaking exercise</td>
<td>Strengthen staff individually and as team</td>
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Step 1: Commit to Quality

- Decide if this is the right opportunity for your org. or collaboration – check in with others

- Better to submit a smaller # of high quality applications than large # of mediocre

- Give the team enough time; if don’t have it, think carefully and proceed quickly

Process and Product

- Both are important!
- Create the 3 C’s:
  - Clarity of Vision
  - Coordination
  - Communication
Step 2: Select the Leads

- Read carefully the RFA/RFP on who can qualify as lead
- Is your organization or collaboration ready to be lead?
- Being a partner or subcontractor is not inferior (your org may be stretched already, not closest fit, need exp., etc)

Step 3: Choose the Writer(s)

- Ideally lead is a skilled writer & coordinator
- If not, offer targeted assistance and coordination (e.g. draft a timeline)
- Divvy up the sections among partners
- Are you lead? Ask for help to offset your weaknesses:
  - Strong writer may need help with mtg. facilitation
  - Gifted facilitator/creative thinker may need help with being realistic
  - A “talker” may need help in making deadline
Step 4: Push the Plan

- Prevent grant horror story
- Let data speak in grant design
- Online apps pose additional challenge – give extra time for submission
- Many RFPs are very specific – offers a roadmap if “drivers” read it
- Circulate plan with initials/dates – remind, & remind again

Step 5: Program Design

- Add new program or improve existing one per the opportunity (and feasibility)
- Look at the evaluation data you have or want to have – spend time planning on how to incorporate in text and in design
- Two important questions
  - Is it too much? Funders may question...
  - Is it too little? Funders aren’t inspired...
Step 6: Elevate Evaluation

- Don’t make it too simple, make it meaningful
- Think through outputs and outcomes
- Check to see if you need an “evaluator” or if you or your staff need addt’l training
- Evaluation is $$ - leverage your partnership and future grants

Step 7: File (or Pile) Application

- Once submitted, never seen again?
- Make past applications your planning tool!
- Past apps make future ones easier – but don’t force a fit
- Review at years end – what went in, what worked, what is on wish list, what is ready to let go
Step 8: Communicate Outcome

- Submission is cause for celebration
- Keep track of data
- Watch out for success bind
  - Staff (you!) have new major project but nothing else drops off plate
  - Major funding begets more funding. Don’t overlook writing in new hires with new funding streams

Step 9: Grants are Year Round Effort

- Divvy up research on grant opportunities even if you have a dev dept
- Drill down when opportunity arises and you/your org/collab wants to be lead – first to call it has best chance
- Develop grant writing & manag. skills
Summary

- Process and Product = More Benefits
- Collab. grants take more time in present, more opportunities in future
- Pick the lead, Prepare for partner meetings, Focus on data and evaluation early on, Push your plan, Celebrate the submittal, Communicate the outcome(s)
Resources

- Grants: foundationcenter.org, grants.gov, grants.NIH.gov, thompsoncenter.com, lifp.org

- Grant writers: Word of mouth, guru.com, Elance.com

Rhonda Williams, MES
rhondawilliamsvt@gmail.com