Writing Successful Proposals: A First Course for Young Nonprofit Leadership

September 3, 2008
Volunteer Center of Los Angeles

RESOURCE GUIDE

Workshop Leader
Dr. Jerry Seliger
California State University Northridge
Agenda

WRITING SUCCESSFUL PROPOSALS:
A FIRST COURSE FOR YOUNG NONPROFIT LEADERS

11:00 AM  Welcome and review of workshop objectives; round-robin introductions
11:20 AM  Elements of proposal writing
11:30 AM  Funding systems
  • Government sector: grants, contracts
  • Private sector: grants, loans, contracts
12:00 PM  Break (box lunches will be provided for working lunch)
12:15 PM  Working lunch – review proposal types - project, program, capital, capacity building, research, “seed,” evaluation grants
1:00 PM  How proposal writing applies to participant organizations
2:15 PM  Proposal writing as a career-enhancement skill
2:45 PM  Review of learning resources
3:00 PM  Adjourn
LEARNING RESOURCES

Books


Nine out of ten grant proposals are rejected. Grant Proposal Makeover shows how to transform lackluster proposals into excellent ones—that have the potential to be funded. This book stands out from other traditional grantwriting books because it illustrates common flaws and problems in proposals and shows exactly how to fix them. It also includes helpful tips and quotes from foundation program officers and funding community insiders taken from an international survey of foundation professionals.


Grantwriters often have little or no training in the practical task of grantseeking. Many feel intimidated by the act of writing, and some don't enjoy writing. In Storytelling for Grantseekers, Second Edition, Cheryl Clarke presents an organic approach to grantseeking, one that views the process through the lens of the pleasures and rewards of crafting a good story. Grantseekers who approach the process as one in which they are connecting with an audience (grantmakers) and writing a narrative (complete with settings, characters, antagonists and resolutions) find greater success with funders. The writing process becomes a rewarding way to tell the organization's tale, rather than a chore, and their passion and creativity lead to winning proposals.

This book walks readers through all the main phases of the proposal, highlighting the creative elements that link components to each other and unify the entire proposal. The book contains resources on crafting an effective synopsis, overcoming grantwriter's block, packaging the story, and the best ways to approach the "short stories" (inquiry and cover letters) that support the larger proposal.


The Ask is a complete resource for teaching anyone—experienced in fundraising or not—how to ask individuals, in person, for a contribution to a local nonprofit or a special event or community project, an enhanced annual gift, a major or planned gift, or a challenging capital campaign gift. Written by fundraising expert Laura Fredricks, The Ask shows what it takes to prepare yourself and others to make an effective ask and includes over one hundred sample dialogues you can use and adapt. Step by step, the book reveals how to listen, what to say, and how to follow up on each and every ask until you receive a solid and definitive answer. In addition, The Ask covers such topics as how to:

- Examine your views on money before making an ask
- Learn the ins and outs of asking for money
- Work with others to make an ask
- Determine if you should or should not ask a friend, colleague, or peer for money
- Figure out how many asks you can do given your time constraints
- Deal effectively with all the responses you will get to an ask
Articles

Grant Proposals Must Promote Funders Goals Not Yours

Selling Your Ideas to Funders

Researcher Behavior that Leads to Success in Obtaining Grant Funding: A Model for Success
http://www.ncura.edu/content/news/rmr/docs/research_behavior.pdf

Nonprofit Fundraising in Competitive Donor Markets
http://nvs.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/35/2/204

Writing A Successful Grant Proposal by Barbara Davis. Connecticut Council of Philanthropy.


Training and Technical Assistance

Center for Nonprofit Management The Center for Nonprofit Management periodically offers
courses on grantwriting at its downtown Los Angeles location. For more information:
www.cnmsocal.org.

The Grantsmanship Center The Center’s basic training program is designed both for the novice
and the experience grantseeker. The intensive five-day workshop combines expert instruction
with practical exercises through all stages of planning programs, locating funding sources and
writing grant proposals. For more information contact Joan Sullivan at 213/482-9860 or
joan@tgci.com. www.tgci.com

Nonprofit Guides: Grant Writing Tools for Nonprofit Organizations Nonprofit Guides are free
web-based grant-writing tools for non-profit organizations, charitable, educational, public
organizations, and other community-minded groups. The guides are designed to assist
established US-based non-profits through the grant-writing process. www.npguides.org

Valley Nonprofit Resources VNR offers training and technical assistance on grantwriting on an
individual basis to nonprofits in the San Fernando Valley, as well as grantwriting workshops like
this one. Contact the VNR Concierge at 818/990-0176 or infonow@valleynonprofitresources.org,
www.valleynonprofitresources.org
CONTENT OUTLINE

The workshop addresses seven themes:

- Health and human services system
- Private Philanthropic system
- Government grant/contract systems
- Community and organization needs, program/project planning
- Proposal writing elements, do’s and don’ts
- Development function in community-based nonprofit organizations;
- Grants/Contract Management

Government funding systems
Opportunities
Solicitations
Grants/contracts
Eligibility

Getting ready to write
Approvals
Case Statement
Project description
LOI
Project/program elements
Community/organization needs/challenges

Private funding systems
Philanthropic/Charitable
Interests
Opportunities
Eligibility

Projects vs. programs
Project vs. Program funding
Capital funding
Expansion funding
Seed funding
Capacity building funding
Endowment

Sources
Foundations/Trusts grant making, operating foundations
Community Foundations
Business Corporations
Individual sponsors
Organization constituents

Proposal writing essentials
Required paperwork/boilerplate
Overview/Abstract of Project/Program proposal
Purpose
Need
Data sources & referencing
Literature referencing
Goal/Objectives
Project/Program description
How Project/Program meets needs/challenges
Project/Program timeline
Applicant Organization description
Key personnel referencing
Organization chart showing links to Project/Program
Collaborator description(s)
Budget and budget narrative
Attachments
Do’s and Don’ts