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Dear Reader,

As always, the wide variety of paper topics presented in the *Journal* mirrors the diversity of work that members of our profession perform, and this diversity provides a rich variety of experience from which to learn. This issue of the *Journal* is different from the past few editions in that it contains a "mini-theme" – nearly half of the papers are on topics regarding teaching others about grant development. Does this influx of grants-education-themed papers reflect a greater need for grant funding, thus requiring a larger number of grant development instructors? Does it suggest an increasing interest in the grants profession? Consider the wider implications of these paper topics as you read this issue.

We invite you to contribute your valuable experience to the *Journal* in the form of an article. Our priorities are articles that address new ideas in our field, contribute research-based information, provide a case study or best practices, and examine any of the competencies and skills described in the *Table of Validated Competencies and Skills* (available at http://www. grantcredential.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/GPC-Competencies-Skills.pdf). You can also navigate to the table through the GPA website, or via www.grantcredential.org. (Click on "The Exam;" then "Competencies Tested;" then "Download a detailed list of GPC Competencies Skills.")

We invite your comments on this issue of the *Journal,* and we welcome suggestions you may have for future issues.

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- Serves as a leading authority and resource for the practice of grantsmanship in all sectors of the field
- Advances the field by promoting professional growth and development
- Enhances the public image and recognition of the profession within the greater philanthropic, public, and private funding communities, and
- Promotes positive relationships between grant professionals and their stakeholders.

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The *Journal* of the GPA is devoted to the improvement of the grants professional and the profession. The *Journal* provides a forum for scholarly examination of the profession, discussions of best practices, and presentation of case studies. Research papers are peer-reviewed by top professionals from around the country.

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Articles must be relevant to the grants profession. If you have questions, please email journal@grantprofessionals.org. Submission deadlines are posted on the GPA website.

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Signals of Support: Cultural Policy's Shifting Rationales for Funding of the Arts

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GPCI Competency 01: Knowledge of how to research, identify, and match funding resources to meet specific needs

Abstract

This article addresses a critical skill needed by grant professionals in the arts: when cultural policy is changing, how can we decode funders' signals about their motivations, and prepare proposals appropriate to those purposes? An emerging shift in public policy is informing new trends in funding for the arts. The older model called on policy to disseminate aesthetic excellence and encourage cultural access. A still-evolving model fashions policy around the arts' contributions to the quality of life in a civil society. Understanding the theory, history and language that reflects these concepts helps grant professionals interpret the funders' intent, and can also send signals back to decision makers. Since it is difficult to assess "successful" support unless we understand the rationales behind it, interpreting the funder's intention can also lead to better, more competitive evaluation plans.

Introduction

The days of the private art patron whose personal preferences would keep open the doors of the opera house (or museum, cultural center, theater, or library) are long gone. The arts are but one of many charitable causes that have public value, all vying for the next check. In 2007, nonprofit organizations (NPOs) in the arts, competing against all other types of nonprofits, received 10.6% of grants awarded by private foundations, a decline of 4.2% from 1998 (Kushner & Cohen, 2010). The share of the federal budget that goes to the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities is a tiny fraction of the amount that goes to the National Institutes of Health: the combined

budgets of NEA and NEH are about 1% of the $30 billion allotted to NIH. The philanthropic forecast since the 2008 recession began remains bleak three years later; public funding for the arts at the state level tends to recover slowly during periods of recession, and private foundations, including those that favor the arts, were predicted to reduce their giving by an estimated 10% (Han, 2009).

Whether public or private money is at stake, grant professionals in the arts can attempt to reverse this downward trend by decoding funders' motivations. The goals of this article are to

1) summarize the last 50 years of cultural policy in the United States, which points to an emerging shift in ideas about the value of art;

2) illustrate signals of support for the arts in the older and newer policy models through the language of recent grant guidelines and awards; and

3) briefly discuss how the interpretation of a funder's intent can also guide creation of an appropriate evaluation plan.

With this knowledge, grant professionals may be better prepared to address two important competencies: "(01/01) identify major trends in public funding and public policy," and "(01/09) interpret grant application request for proposal (RFP) guidelines and requirements to accurately assess funder intent" (Grant Professionals Certification Institute, 2007, p. 1).

A brief history of U.S. cultural policy

One definition of public policy is, "the intentionality behind the collection of programs that are intended to achieve a particular set of outcomes," with the aim of transparent allocation of resources to achieve those goals effectively (Schuster, Karraker, Bonaiuto, Rothfield & Smith, 2003, p. 7). A national intent regarding public allocation of resources for cultural activities occurred with the establishment in 1965 of tax-funded national endowments for the arts and humanities (NEA and NEH). Support for the arts during the era of "cold war" politics put a global spotlight on American culture and Congress was initially enthusiastic. In its first decade, NEA's budget skyrocketed from $2.5 million to just under $100 million (Bauerlein & Grantham, 2008).

A highly influential argument that helped make this possible was the diagnosis of what came to called "Baumol's cost disease" (Baumol & Bowen, 1966). In the cultural sector, a widening gulf between income and expenditures was an inherent problem and not something that could be fixed by firing the director or rehearsing more hours. Unlike the factory owner who can increase productivity by improving technology or employing more highly skilled labor, a concert hall manager cannot

increase output. Moreover, the operating costs will be ever higher, primarily due to wages, and the income limited by the number of seats. Much of the NEA's initial agenda and rapid expansion derived from fears that without public support, the unbalanced budgets of the nation's art NPOs would force a relentless march toward decline (Urice, 2001).

Calculation of art's public value was always part of the equation. One of the first assessments of NEA's record by an economist (Netzer, 1978) considered both potential benefit and drawback. Netzer compared art funding in the United States, the United Kingdom, and other European countries; he also studied the impact of government funds on 16 major art organizations in the U.S. His conclusion that benefits outweigh drawbacks legitimized direct public subsidy, although he recommended that decision makers for art funding should exercise greater selectivity. The benefits that Netzer identified were higher earnings for artists, a slow-down in the rise of ticket prices, longer performance season, and stimulation of artistic innovations. The drawback was failure to increase attendance at art events by lower-income populations (Blaug, 1999, p. 31).

The beginnings of a policy shift

Two of Netzer's suggestions may have planted the seeds that led to the beginnings of a shift in U.S. cultural policy by the 1990s, though they played out in different directions. His recommendation to increase support for artists sometimes resulted in creations that provoked demands for NEA's abolition. Opponents argued, "Government is incapable of detecting artistic genius," and should have no authority to endorse controversial art (Ryerson, 1990, p.32). In 1995, the outcry over Robert Mapplethorpe's NEA-funded homoerotic photographs, and other artworks that offended the conservative Republican majority in Congress, led to a budget slash of more than 40%. NEA has never since recovered the level of its peak 1992 budget of $175,054,680.

Yet while that particular recommendation (to support individual artists) slipped out of favor, another of Netzer's ideas—to make for-profit arts activities eligible for government support—began to find traction. Works of art have never been immune from market forces. However, the thought that government should support art the same as it does the agricultural and automotive industries involved a metamorphosis in attitudes toward art and the metaphors to describe it. Cultural audiences became a market of art consumers, and art purveyors and producers became an industry where "the bottom line" mattered most (Stevens, 1996). While some stopped short of acknowledging full transformation or advocating actual public subsidy for commercial arts, others spoke of the need for "connections" between the for-profit and nonprofit sectors (Arthurs & Hodsoll, 1999) or cross-sector "strategic collaboration" (Scheff & Kotler, 1996).

In part this shift in perspectives is the culmination of historical tensions between those who argue whether "instrumental" vs. "intrinsic" ends justify public support of art. At its most simplistic, this debate implies a valuation of art based on market-driven terms vs. an appreciation of art for its own sake. Among the instrumental purposes ascribed to art are its functions as an economic driver. For example, the cultural sector in New England employed an estimated 250,000 workers in 2002, or 3.97% of the labor force (DeNatale & Wassall, 2007). Some say the arts have strong appeal to the "creative class" of workers, who are highly mobile and drawn to places where local support allows cultural organizations to thrive (Florida, 2002). The arguments dear to art educators about the arts' ability to improve cognitive skills that enhance all forms of learning (Asbury & Rich, 2008) or that foster the creativity and moral insights needed by today's leaders (Jones, 2005; Ross, 2005) are, of course, no less instrumental ends.

Others believe the arts satisfy an intrinsic human need—some argue moral right—for self-expression (Ivey, 2008). Creation and enjoyment of art are acts of individual communication and perception that also promote a collective identity on a local, regional, or national scale. In this view, art is a cultural asset that "may be irreplaceable, and its value to society is likely to transcend its market value" (Throsby, 1995, p. 203). Indeed, for some people the arts symbolize a measure of civilization, which lovers of art have an ethical responsibility to preserve for future generations (Rushton, 2004, citing Rawls, 1971). Support for the arts in this intrinsic context emphasizes both participation and the creative settings where art flourishes as essential centers of community life.

The theories shaping the policies

What are the theoretical foundations behind these two rationales for support of art? The language of the older cultural policy borrows largely from economic ideas about public vs. private goods. In economic thinking, goods are characterized by the qualities of depletion, exclusion, and rivalry. Goods at the spectrum's public end are less subject to being used up when consumed, less restricted to only private consumption, and the benefit for one more person does not add to the social cost. Art shares characteristics of both public and private goods depending on context and dimension. Some types or aspects of cultural goods, in some circumstances, may be used to the point of depletion and others not. Their enjoyment by a private consumer may be enforceable at times and impossible at others. The benefits may accrue to only one or many. Still, the key markers in this economic conception of benefit are access to cultural resources and preservation of those resources. Support for art that increases access and preservation moves cultural goods closer to the public end of the private/public continuum.

In comparison, the language of the newer cultural policy borrows heavily from ideas about social capital: community engagement through social networks is the core concept here. Robert Putnam's warning about the fundamental changes to civil society when people go bowling alone (Putnam, 2000) is only one voice of many in the last 20 years to express similar concerns. Citizens who live in an increasingly isolated and sometimes polarized society struggle to understand the issues facing democratic institutions. One antidote is for individuals to pay attention collectively to issues that affect the entire community, with "schools, museums, concert and lecture halls" noted as the places where "an attentive people" gather (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler & Tipton, 1992, p. 275). The value of art comes through participatory engagement and the collaborations they entail. The role of community organizations where these networks arise and reach out are thus as central to the formation of social capital as the art itself. In the U.S. arts sector, the usual path to preserve, interpret, create, teach, and allow public enjoyment of art leads through the cultural NPO.

In Table 1 below summarizing the theories that frame the evolving history of cultural policy, it is important to note that the various conceptions of public benefit are not in opposition. They might easily coincide in the same funding guidelines. Nor should it be assumed that the "instrumental" vs. "intrinsic" debate is a fully satisfactory motivation for one funder vs. another. A cultural NPO receives its 501(c)(3) tax designation because it has an educational, charitable purpose. At least when public funding is involved, the reason to invest public money is inherently instrumental: to promote the public good of education. However, the next section explores subtle differences in the way that funders believe this is best accomplished.

Table 1. Summary of Theoretical Frameworks for Grantmaking Dimensions

Dimension	*Older Model Cultural Policy*	*Emerging Model Cultural Policy*
Where is the focus?	• Approval of art • Aesthetic excellence • Cultural access	• Engagement with art • Creativity • Innovation
What is the purpose of art?	Art belongs in a democratic society because it helps to "level the playing field" for all citizens.	Art belongs in a democratic society because it contributes to the quality of life necessary for a civil society.

Dimension	Older Model Cultural Policy	Emerging Model Cultural Policy
How does art achieve this purpose?	Attendance at art events is a better predictor of educational success than knowledge of art.	Engagement with art increases involvement in communities and enhances workers' creativity.
What is the public benefit from support of art?	Benefit is providing access to cultural resources and preservation of those resources.	Benefit is providing participatory education and community agendas that enable/employ social networks.
What concepts inform the model?	Economic ideas: support for art moves cultural resources along the spectrum from private good to public good: more accessible, less prone to depletion.	Social capital ideas: cultural resources are accessible through networks. Access to social capital is through engagement with art and cultural organizations.

Translating signals of support

The new slogan at NEA since 2009 is a good illustration of how theoretical shifts play out in grant language. Since its inception, NEA's approach to policy "enshrines long-held beliefs about the superiority of the fine arts: Art with a capital A" (Ivey, 2008, p. 6). While this sounds elitist, the motivation was broadly democratic. For 30 years, studies revealed that attendance at arts events was a better predictor of educational success than knowledge of the arts (DiMaggio, 1982; DiMaggio & Muhktar, 2008).The basis for the older policy of public support was to serve quality products to pluralistic audiences in large numbers (Skiles, 1989), an objective that lingered in the former slogan: "A great nation deserves great art." Increased opportunities to see outstanding art extended the benefits to more than a privileged few. The goals of government support embedded in the former slogan were access and excellence, the actual title for one of NEA's grants.

Critics have long objected to the old slogan as paternal and parochial. As Bill Ivey, the NEA Chairman who served under President Clinton, noted about the agency's slogan, the art one deserves is not always the art one

wants (Ivey, 2008, p. 213). The new slogan, "Art Works," is a triple play on words, referring to works of art, the ways that art works on imaginations, and the reminder that art is a vital segment of the economy. This trio of meanings goes well beyond access and excellence; the second and third capture the arts' dual role in increasing citizens' involvement in civil society and enhancing workers' creativity. Central to both roles is engagement in the arts—a distinction from mere approval of art. The best indicator of the art one wants is actual participation, whether that be singing in the church choir, strolling along a sidewalk art festival, or joining a book club. A new category of grant at NEA is called "Our Town," to support "the livability of communities and help transform them into lively, beautiful, and sustainable places with the arts at their core" (National Endowment for the Arts, 2011, p. 1).

Fortunately, grant professionals who work for cultural NPOs will likely never need to reference the history and theory of U.S. arts policy in their proposals. Nor is it critical to pinpoint where a particular funder aligns with national trends. Chances are good that both the older model of preservation/access and the newer social capital model inspire a given sponsor. Nonetheless, it can be helpful to read the RFP guidelines and the thumbnail sketches of previously funded projects with this knowledge in mind and make it work to the applicant's advantage.

For example, if an art NPO seeks support for the direct preservation or protection of assets in its care, or the commission of new work that increases cultural resources, the language of economic goods might be appropriate. However, preservation can also be indirect. Sustaining a cultural NPO dedicated to the arts also preserves the resources themselves. Now the language of social capital may be more appropriate. Table 2 provides examples of language for these two models.

Table 2. Fundable Preservation Projects

Direct Preservation (support sustains the cultural resource)	Preservation/restoration of historic structures, creation or commission of new work, conservation assessment or treatment, acquisition of library or museum collections, oral history interviews, climate control, apprenticeship programs with master artists, conversion of degrading format to more sustainable one, resource management, rehousing or relocation of resources
Indirect Preservation (support sustains the grantee organization)	Endowment, annual appeal, feasibility study, capacity building, peer assessments, self-study, general operating or unrestricted support, staff training, new hires, board development, fundraising, long-range planning, research, challenge grants

If the funder is interested in expanding access to cultural resources, the appropriate language in the proposal might borrow from the "old school." Yet there are many points of access that might be in line with the NPO's needs and goals and any of them might appeal to the funder if phrased as having the ultimate result of exposing more people to the benefits of the arts. Access points for potential increase are listed in Table 3.

Table 3. Increasing Access Project Examples

Access: Time	Expansion in number of hours, days, length of season
Access: Space	Satellite venue in the same location as the NPO or towns other than the grantee location, touring exhibitions, traveling companies, statewide programs, cultural tourism, mobile unit or van, facility expansion, pilot programs that can be replicated in many other sites
Access: Subsidy	Transportation costs for schools, free hours or days, reduced admission, giveaways for visitors
Access: Audience	Reaching out to populations characterized as: elderly; children or youth; families; disadvantaged; immigrants; at-risk; physically or developmentally disabled; professional associations; incarcerated; under-served related to racial, ethnic or religious identifiers.
Access: Alternative	Alternate format that makes the original cultural resource or art form more accessible, such as: exhibit catalogue, video or audio tape of a performance, conference proceedings publication, transcription of oral history tapes, documentary photography.
Access: Virtual	Internet media such as: Web site, software products, digitization, listservs, chatrooms, GIS, laptops or computers, wireless, electronic database, podcasts, social media networks, Information Technology.
Access: Festivals	While festivals are themselves a cultural form, they provide access to other types of art/culture that might be important to the funder.

If the need for support involves education, and the sponsor seems to adhere to the older policy model, it may be sufficient to name the program type that the NPO wants to offer through grant support. If the funder appears to favor social capital ideas, consider the level of engagement. The higher the degree of participation, the more the project probably fits with ideas about building social capital. Especially if the educational component of the project involves a social agenda—such as community issues, identity, or commemorations—the appropriate language would follow social capital thinking. Table 4 presents examples of language describing levels of engagement and social agenda.

Table 4. Engagement vs. Social Agenda Project Examples

Engagement: Passive	Engagement comes from the audience showing up at event (exhibits, displays, performances, pageants, parades, festivals, heritage/art trails, lectures) or from the NPO making publications (print or web-based) available.
Engagement: Active	Engagement comes from interactive teaching and learning for any age in any setting. This requires a participatory component to the program types listed above, such as workshops, hands-on activities, mentoring, discussions, audience Q & A, seminars, curriculum, teacher training or professional development for grantee staff or other clients, audio/visual add-ons.
Engagement: High	Engagement comes by confronting audience's usual comfort level. Code words (in the RFP or proposal) include unexpected, creative, contemporary, innovation, new interpretation, differences, original, little known, unknown, groundbreaking, trail blazing, excite, explore, demystify, introduce, unsettle—all in relation to what the audience will experience. The opposite of such words might also appear: classical, traditional, favorite, perennial, usual, typical, standard but still convey the idea of challenging the status quo.
Social Agenda: Community issue	Environment, health, preservation, public space, tolerance/diversity, violence/crime, other social welfare issues
Social Agenda: Commemoration	Anniversaries of events or buildings, celebrations, "Old Home" days, landmarks, founding figures, memory, re-enactments
Social Agenda: Community identity	Demographic-based: racial, ethnic, religious, age, gender, profession, occupation. Geographic-based: local, regional, state, national

If the project involves collaboration, it would likely appeal to social capital interests. The task of the grant professional is to distinguish between "bonding" and "bridging" networks. Consider whether the sponsor seems interested in strengthening the cultural sector itself (bonding networks) or building ties across sectors (bridging networks). In thinking about bridges, remember that partners might come from NPOs with non-art missions, the different divisions of civil society (government, commercial, and nonprofit entities) and even different cultural disciplines or forms (e.g. dance and visual art). Table 5 presents examples of bonding and bridging language related to collaborators.

Table 5.   Examples of Network Partners

Network Type	Nonprofit collaborators from other cultural organizations
Encourage collaboration by strengthening ties within the cultural sector: Bonding networks	Private sector art vendors: goods or equipment primarily or exclusively used by cultural organizations rather than the general public: archival supplies, theatrical lights, specialized storage units, environmental control systems Individuals who work as contractors or consultants for the project in positions primarily associated with the cultural sector: curators, archivists, artists, musicians, dancers, poets, conservators, film makers, photographers, historians, restoration architects Art schools (pre-K through university) or a unit devoted to the arts or humanities within an educational institution (e.g. parents' booster organization, college library, arts/humanities department, drama club). People involved in the grant might be teachers, students, parents, administrators
Encourage collaboration by reaching out beyond the cultural sector: Bridging networks	NPOs without a cultural mission, such as the environment, health, human and social services Private sector vendors of goods and equipment not primarily or exclusively associated with cultural organizations: food, lodging, craft or educational supplies, computers, hardware of the type that any building owner might need Individuals who work as contractors or consultants for the project in positions not unique to cultural organizations: grant writers, marketing specialists, fundraisers, accountants, meeting facilitators, IT specialists, or construction trades Non-art schools and other educational institutions. People involved in the grant might be teachers, students, parents, administrators. Journalists, public or commercial radio or television, newspapers, social networking media, bloggers, other media

Successful evaluation

Since it is difficult to assess "successful" support without understanding the rationales behind it, interpreting the funder's intention can also lead to better, more competitive evaluation plans. This discussion will be brief, as evaluation is itself a separate competency for grant professionals (04/11: "Identify evaluation models and components appropriate to grant applications," Grant Professionals Certification Institute, 2007, p. 2). In the context of the policy language noted in the tables, the three following examples link evaluation possibilities to these signals of support.

First, if the project relies on networks to accomplish grant activities, the evaluation plan should include measures that assess collaborations in the context of the arts. In the museum field alone, many studies have focused on collaboration, among them, Schauble, Leinhardt and Martin, 1997; American Association of Museums, 2002; Association of Art Museum Directors, 2006; and Waibel and Erway, 2009.

Second, if greater access to art is the funder's stated reason for grantmaking, an evaluation plan that offers to count the number of occupied seats and promises to fill them at every performance may be missing out on measures that the funder would find more interesting (and perhaps, more plausible). Different kinds of audiences, satellite venues, or a project where one art form records another (e.g. filming the progress of a mural's creation) also increase access. Whatever the access point, it will be important for the evaluation plan to document a baseline relative to that point. If such statistics are unavailable, consider asking the funder to support two seasons and include a logic model describing how the funding will allow the NPO to move to the next level.

Third, especially in the arts, the opportunities for funding can be creative. Perhaps the NPO needs new sponsors for a community theater. Perhaps a particular funder is not traditionally known for support of the arts, but is keen to support issues of social justice. Could the theater seek support for a play like "The Crucible," with conversation among the director, the audience, and a historian accompanying every performance? In this example, the evaluation plan might involve new territory for both the grantor and grantee: the former to understand what constitutes successful performance, and the latter to document its success in engaging the community.

Conclusion

Because every funding agency and foundation that supports the arts has its own agenda, *ars gratia artis* is rarely a winning argument. The cultural NPO clearly has incentive to act strategically in making the case for support. Whatever policies dominate the grantee's field, an essential lesson from Grantwriting 101 applies: know the audience and write to that audience. The central question for the grantseeker in the

arts to ask is: what is the public benefit from art championed by the funding opportunity? The history of prior support may suggest that access to excellence is the chief goal; or that the ideas of social capital are most appealing; or that both models of cultural policy are in play. By interpreting the funder's intentions accurately, and using the code words that demonstrate the grantee's ability to understand and fulfill policy goals, the grant professional can strengthen not only the case for support of the arts, but also the evaluation plan that contributes to a competitive proposal.

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Sustainability Savvy: the Real Key to Maintaining Grant-funded Service Programs

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GPCI Competency 02: Knowledge of organizational development as it pertains to grant seeking

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to identify successful practices used by Community, School and Family Engagement (CS&FE) programs to get the funding they needed to continue providing services. Results from the study established that programs that are strong in six specific areas are more likely to procure grant funding and thus sustain funding for their services. Programs that continued to be effective over time were Visionary, Focused, Respected with organized documentation, Connected, Strategically Planned and Well-constructed. Programs that were weak in even one area demonstrated less success in obtaining funding. The study used both quantitative and qualitative comparative analysis research methods including observation, interviews and surveys to examine 20 case studies (International, n=3; USA, n=17) using an ethnographic case study research design. The international sites are in Australia, St. Eustatius in the Dutch Caribbean and Peru. The USA programs are in six states (Arizona, California, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Tennessee and Washington). Unexpected results from this study also indicate at least three possible benefits for a grant professional who understands sustainability strategies: 1) improved success in grant procurement, 2) clients with more successful programs over a longer period of time and 3) a client base that will recommend the grant professional to new clients.

Introduction

The current economy demands that service programs do more and do it with less: less time, less support, and especially less money. Some

clients deal with budget shortfalls by immediately calling in the grant professional to "bring in the money." GPA professionals know very well that there is more to helping clients sustain their programs than simply getting more money. This five-year study used ethnographic methods with 20 grant-funded service projects to identify six specific areas — Visionary, Focused, Respected with organized documentation, Connected, Strategically Planned and Well-constructed — in which clients must be prepared in order to have a "competitive edge" to procure grant funding successfully, and thereby sustain their programs. Grant professionals who work with clients to implement all six sustainability areas also foster a long-term working relationship with each client. This article discusses the results as a composite report for the sake of confidentiality.

Challenge: How to do more with less

All of the projects investigated during this study were struggling with how to provide quality services and to meet their goals, while experiencing an increase in demands and responsibilities and a decrease in resources and funding. The compelling purpose for this study was to identify strategies that each project could use to find the resources it needed to continue providing services. The position each project took in addressing this challenge involved the consultant, the program personnel and community partners working as a team to develop the needed resources and answers. Because each project was unique, the outcomes that worked for each were different. However, the process for addressing the issues of each project was remarkably similar as discussed in this article.

Key concepts and supporting research

This article uses the following three terms with specific meanings important to the study: Sustainability; Community, School and Family Engagement; and Program Life Cycles. There is no established research base for studying how to correlate sustainability strategies for service programs with success in procuring grant funding; therefore the research background supporting this study was drawn from a diverse array of sources including systems design, educational reform, permaculture practices, business, professional development practices, and evaluation, among others.

Sustainability

For this study, the term sustainability refers to a program's ability to continue to provide quality services, especially in the face of challenges, such as budget cuts, personnel changes and increases in service or

legislated demands. Sustainability also carries the idea that a program can continue to evolve, rather than degrade, over time, in the face of these challenges (Salatin, 2010). The sustainability process can include a variety of approaches such as asset mapping, capacity building, fundraising, resource development, maximizing local resources, staff or board development, strategic planning and creating a business plan. The concept "understanding sustainability," as used in this study, means knowing how the six components of sustainability preparedness (as identified in the results section) work together to support a service program. There is little research to support this concept. Resources which do address project sustainability tend to be specific to one kind of project or agency (e.g., service learning or family literacy), rather than applicable to service projects in general.

Community, School and Family Engagement (CS&FE)

This study targeted a specific kind of grant-funded service project, namely Community, School and Family Engagement (CS&FE) programs, for comparison purposes. CS&FE is an interactive process where the school, families and the community work together, creating networks of shared responsibility to meet and solve local issues for the success of all (Berg, Melaville, & Blank, 2006). Each program carried out this process according to its own networks and needs. For some it meant working with local partners, for others it meant developing global partnerships. Existing research on CS&FE, such as that carried out by the Harvard Family Research Project and the National Parent/Teacher Organization (Caspe, Lopez, Chu, & Weiss, 2011), is designed to demonstrate that CS&FE is beneficial for those involved. Research on how to sustain those benefits and programs is incomplete and often fragmented by separate, specific program interests.

Program Life Cycles

As discussed by Simon and Donovan (2001), projects and organizations go through observable "life-cycles." Understanding how programs change over time is important for assessing their sustainability strategies and options. While there is a wealth of research in organizational development regarding this phenomenon, there is a lack of research in how to use this information to sustain service projects.

Understanding life cycles is important because the features of new collaborative projects tend to be noticeably different from older (usually larger) ones. For this study, projects fit into one of four developmental cycles with the knowledge that the cycles can overlap.

- *Pre-operation:* (Can the dream be realized?)
- *Start-up (1-3 years):* (How is the program going to pull this off?)

- *Established (4-6 years):* (How can the program build this to be viable?)
- *Mature (7-12 years):* (What does the program need to redesign?)

Design and methods

The research project began with the overarching question of how service programs could continue to sustain their services in the face of program challenges and budget cuts. This research question became a testing project by refining which sustainability questions to study, what data were relevant, what data to collect, and how to analyze the results.
A flexible research design developed because the variable of interest (sustainability strategies) could not be quantified. Furthermore, there was no existing theory regarding sustainability for service projects to test. For these reasons, the project used an ethnographic case study research design, which means the key researcher spent time in the field with each program, using qualitative methods of inquiry and treating each program as a separate case. This approach allowed research questions to evolve along with the progress made by each program to sustain its services.

How the study was conducted

The study occurred in three overlapping phases, using quantitative and qualitative comparative data gained through observation, interviews and surveys.

- *Phase I (year one):* During the initial planning meetings, the priority for programs was to obtain funding, and the priority for the researcher was to fully understand each program's sustainability strengths and needs. Interview questioning started with curiosity as to how each program operated based on SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) assessments (Armstrong, 1982).

- *Phase II (years two, three and into year four):* During this period of team development to procure grant funding and to assess the programs' sustainability practices, program staff focused on implementation improvements of their programs, while the researcher was most interested in how effective programs differed from the those less successful in reaching their goals. The researcher analyzed program feedback to identify reoccurring themes and the key discussion areas.

- *Phase III (years four and five):* The program staff and the researcher focused on sustainability practices beyond the grant period, working in teams. In year five, the program staff assessed their level of sustainability preparedness using a survey and scoring rubric

developed by the researcher, as discussed under Results. Based on their scores and interviews each project was given a composite score. The process for analyzing their scores was modeled after Hall's Levels of Concern (Hall & Hord, 1987) as used to evaluate staff training using four levels of effectiveness (Awareness, Adoption, Integration and Adaptation.). Projects ranked in the lowest quartile (#1 or Awareness) demonstrated some knowledge of how they rated in the six survey areas, but were not fully functioning in all six. Projects in the 2nd quartile (Adoption) had adopted the practices in each of the six areas, and were beginning to use them. Projects that scored in the 3rd quartile (Integration) had integrated practices in all six areas into their existing program operations. Projects that scored highest on the survey (4th Quartile or Adaptation) not only demonstrated high levels of effectiveness in all six areas, but were also at a point where they could refine the general strategies to meet their unique program needs and contest.

Contexts of participant projects

The 20 participant projects were very different from one another in size, expertise, location, local culture and "context characteristics." Context characteristics refers to the "who," "when," "where," and "why" of each participant project (Sparks, 1996). Examples include the type of organization in which the project operates, variations in the cultures involved, and differences in how decisions were traditionally carried out for each project. For example, a change in personnel during the study affected some projects, while changes in the governmental structure affected another. The role of the outside consultant differed for each project; ranging from being a member of the local community collaborative, to being an outside proposal writer, program administrator, or agency advisory council member. Contact with each program ranged from monthly contact to intermittent reporting. Interviews were sometimes in other languages using translators (e.g., English, Spanish, Dutch and Achual). All of these factors affect the reliability of comparing projects with one another.

Participant projects

This study focused exclusively on clients seeking to sustain programs that serve community and family engagement (CS&FE) with schools and who were willing to share information on project funding and management. This five-year study started with 25 participant sites, of which 20 successfully completed their data. The projects were in four countries: Australia, St. Eustatius (Dutch Caribbean) Peru and the USA. The majority of the projects were located in the USA representing six states: Arizona (n=1), California (n=12), Oregon (n=1), Pennsylvania (n=1), Tennessee (n=1), and Washington (n=1). Participants in Australia are part

of a pilot project in Bendigo, committed to delivering the Family Friendly Schools model (Samples, 2009). The concept of CS&FE projects in St. Eustatius is a new social/educational innovation, building on a unique history while moving into a challenging modern reality. The projects in Peru took place over 12 years with an indigenous people living along the banks of an Amazon tributary.

Each project is a unique design; however, they share similar design elements such as a collaborative approach to governance and decision-making, ongoing data collection (baseline and tracking), use of data to inform decision-making, and ongoing adaptations to project design. Project size was defined by the number of participants as small (less than 200), medium (200–1500) or large (over 1500). Table 1 shows the projects by location, stages of development and size.

Table 1. Participant Programs by Location, Developmental Stage and Size

Project life cycle	USA (n=17)	Australia (n=1)	St. Eustatius (n=1)	Peru (n=1)
Pre-Operation	1 large	1 large	1 small	
Start-up (1-3 years)	4 small			
Established (4-6 years)	1 small 4 medium 1 large			
Mature (7-12 years)	3 small 1 medium 2 large			1 small

Discussion of results

The issue of sustainability within service programs is complex and colorful. High-performing, effective programs have committed leadership, strong service design and a dedicated, qualified staff. However, this study identified six crucial components of sustainability preparedness that service programs must demonstrate in order to successfully secure funding. Sustainable programs are visionary, focused, well-respected and well-known with organized documentation, well-connected, strategically designed, and well-constructed. Programs that succeeded in obtaining funding answered the following questions in the affirmative (average of 87%) in each of the six areas described below.

Sustainability From six perspectives:
The S-Cube of sustainability practices

One way to visualize how the six sides of sustainability work together is to remember the Rubik's Cube®, a 3-D mechanical puzzle that came out in 1974. Think of each of its six colored sides as one aspect of sustainability, where each little piece must align with the others to solve the puzzle. Program participants began calling these six interactive aspects of sustainability the "S-Cube." Each program ranked its sustainability status using a scoring rubric developed using questions similar to those listed below.

1. *A "visionary" program has a clear, shared vision.* Can you communicate your vision clearly? Do you and your staff know clearly, what your project stands for, so you can tell others? For example, can all of your staff describe your organization in one or two sentences conveying the same message? If someone walked in and asked "What's going on here?" would all members of the organization use similar key words to share a common message in less than a minute?

2. *A focused program has determined what it stands for and what it wants to sustain.* Do you know in specific terms what it is you want to sustain? Do you have written outcomes and goals? Can you assess exactly how you are doing? How would you assess your program's effectiveness in these key capacity components: mission and strategy, governance and leadership, finance, internal operations and management (facilities, equipment and supplies, skills and staffing), strategic relationships, program delivery and impact?

3. *A well-known and respected program documents and communicates its success, publicly.* Can you demonstrate what records should be maintained and why? Do you have a media binder, collecting all magazine and newspaper stories or interviews about your organization? Do you have a portfolio binder or website showing pictures, statistics and stories of your history of success, collaboration and activities – and how people can contribute or join in to support you? How well-developed is your social media platform?

4. *A well-connected program knows how to work with partners to build collaboration.* Do you work together well, as partners and staff, as part of the community, with families and students, with partners, funders and the people you serve? Do you have multiple options for working with other stakeholders? For example, can you distinguish between collaboration, cooperation, coordination, contract and

competitor-partnering as options for connecting with other programs or partners (Applegate & Kloth, 2004)? Do you have an up-to- date list of potential donors and supporters, and is it growing?

5. *A strategically designed program prioritizes its desired sustainability strategies from the start of its design phase.* Are you clear on your strategies and methods/tactics for growing your program? Do you have a workgroup to address sustainability and strategic planning? Do you have a checklist of strategies and specific tactics? Do you know the difference between strategies, tactics or goals, objectives, benchmarks, outcomes/ outputs and activities? Are your strategic plans up to date and reviewed regularly by key decision makers?

6. *A well-constructed program benefits from both planned action steps for sustainability as well as flexible adaptability for continuous improvement as situations change.* Do you know where your funding comes from? Have you analyzed your funding streams within the last year? Do you know what is meant by the term "maximize your resources" or how to blend, braid, leverage, and diversify your existing funding? For example, do you use "blending" and 'braiding" as sustainability strategies? "Blending" is when your funding streams pour into each other, rather like oil and vinegar in salad dressing, you can taste both flavors; they differ, but blend together. "Braiding" is like hair strands, where funding streams are woven together, but stay distinctly different, especially when the accountability requirements differ. Have you analyzed what funding strategies are available and how they are changing? Do you have a process for identifying the best strategies for you? Do you have processes for developing new funding streams or prospects?

Discussion of participant program data

In phase III of the research study, each of the 20 projects completed interviews and scoring rubrics to assess its sustainability practices. The composite scores from these responses were then averaged for each participant project and used to place them within one of the four sustainability levels listed below.

1. Awareness (organization has a knowledge base of sustainability, but not a well-developed sustainability practice)

2. Adoption (organization is using and applying some sustainability practices, but not a well-developed practice)

3. Integration (organization has existing well-developed sustainability practices)

4. Adaption (organization is refining and improving its well-developed sustainability practices)

Scoring for the four average sustainability levels was determined by the percentage of "yes" answers to questions similar to those listed in the "Sustainability from six perspectives" section, above (i.e., Awareness = 1-25% "yes;" Adoption = 26-50% "yes;" Integration = 51-75% "yes;" Adaption = 76-100% "yes.")

Symbols are used in Table 2 to convey specific information on each participant project regarding size, life cycle and whether the project client had a repeat contract.

*   Project sizes are represented by the following letters: l=large, m=medium or s=small. Project size was defined by the number of participants as large (over 1500), medium (200-1500) or small (less than 200).

*   Projects were classified by organizational stage of development. Project development cycles are represented by the following letters: P=Pre-operational, S=Start-up, E=Established and M=Mature as discussed above.

*   Projects were tracked for referrals and repeat contracts with program personnel. Project repeat use of the author/consultant is represented by either "Y" for a "yes" regarding repeat work or "N" for no new contract.

In addition, Table 2 shows projects' success in procuring grant funding by displaying those projects (n=6) who were not successful in procuring grant funding in *italics,* and those who did successfully get grant funding in **bold** (n=14).

Table 2. The S-Cube Sustainability Scoring Rubric Results

	Sustainability Practice Levels			
	1. Awareness (Knowledge base)	2. Adoption (Using, Applying)	3. Integration (Existing Practices)	4. Adaption (Refining, Improving)
Program Scoring Results	*sP- N* *sE -Y*	**sS - Y** *sS - N* *sM - Y* *sS - N* **sM - Y**	**IP - N** **mE - Y** *IP - Y* **mM - Y** **sS - Y** **mE - Y**	**sM - Y** **IM - N** **IM - N** **mE - Y** **IE - Y** **mE - N** **sM - Y**

Data in Table 2 show several interesting correlations related to sustainability.

First and perhaps most important, about funding:

• Projects that scored highest in sustainability practices (integration and adaption levels) also had the highest rate of grant procurement (12 out of 13, or 92%). Those that scored lowest in sustainability practices (awareness and adoption) had the lowest rate of grant procurement (2 out of 7, or 29 %).

Second, about size:

• Out of the 10 small projects, 7 (70%) had low levels of sustainability (either awareness or adoption).

• Out of the 5 medium and 5 large projects, all (100%) had high levels of sustainability (either integration or adaption).

Third, about program life cycle:

• Out of the 7 early cycle projects, (pre-op or start-up), 4 (57%) had low levels of sustainability (either awareness or adoption).

• Out of the 7 early cycle projects, none scored in the highest level of sustainability practices (adaptation).

• Out of 13 late cycle projects (established or mature), 10 (77%) had high levels of sustainability (either integration or adaption).

Other correlations not specifically about sustainability but about size, cycle and funding can be gleaned from these data. They include:

• Of the 10 small projects, 5 (50%) were early cycle (pre-op or start-up).

• Of the 5 medium projects, all (100%) were late cycle (established or mature).

• Of the 5 large projects, 3 (60%) were late cycle (established or mature).

• Of the 10 small projects, 5 (50 %) were funded. Of these 5 funded small projects, 3 (60%) were late cycle (established or mature).

• Of the 10 medium and large projects, 9 (90 %) were funded. Of these 9 funded projects, all (100%) were late cycle (established or mature).

From study, it is clear that projects rating high overall in all six sustainability components had better success in procuring funds. A low score in even one area seemed to affect their capacity to obtain needed resources to sustain services. Other factors such as a change in personnel or leadership affected programs regardless of their size or stage of development; however, it did not appear to affect their success

in getting funding as long as they still scored high in all six sustainability components.

Unexpected results with implications for grant professionals

While the data from this study clearly show that clients who addressed all six aspects of sustainability had greater success getting funding, other interesting observations also surfaced. There is a strong correlation between a project successfully getting funding and its repeated contracts with the same consultant (10 out of 13, or 71%). However, it is equally true that 3 out of 6, or 50%, of the projects that did not procure funding still renewed their contracts. Therefore, it is clear that keeping long-term clients involves more than just getting the funding.

Out of the 20 projects, 13 became repeat clients and 7 did not. The life cycle of a project was a strong factor, with 10 of those repeats (77%) in the later cycles (established or mature). Early results seemed to indicate that smaller and developing projects were more likely to become a repeat client with an outside consultant to help with their sustainability plans (7 out of 10 or 70%). However, by the end of the 5-year project, the medium-sized projects renewed their contracts at the highest rate (4 out of 5, or 80%), possibly because they were large enough to afford an outside grant professional, but not yet fully developed and thus had a need for outside consulting support. Larger projects were the least likely to continue with the same contract or grant professional (2 out of 5 or 40%). Larger projects were also more likely to have their own grant professionals on staff.

Projects at all levels of sustainability practices renewed their contracts. Those at the higher levels (integration and adaption levels (9 out of 13, or 69%) were slightly more likely to be repeat clients than those at the early levels (awareness and adoption; 4 out of 7 or 57%), possibly because the lowest level programs were often occupied with survival issues which limited their attention on long-term sustainability strategies. From this data it would appear there is no one type of client which is most likely to be a long term client.

However, this study did uncover some interesting patterns among long-term clients. Projects which are in the late cycle of development are more likely have experience with the benefits of hiring a grant professional and have the resources to contract for outside services. Medium and smaller-sized projects are more likely to forge an ongoing personal relationship with the grant professional which may result in referrals if not a renewed contract. However, smaller, newer projects may have an unrealistic expectation of what a grant professional can do for them. Projects at all levels of sustainability practices will contract with a grant professional; however, those at the higher levels are more likely to successfully procure funding.

 Results from this study also indicate that high-performing projects had several common characteristics. First, they have a very clear understanding of what their program is about and why it exists. They are grounded in a three-point foundation based on their reputation, their relationships, and their integrity. Finally, it seemed that those projects able to thrive even through challenge had a "Wow" factor, a genuine passion to push themselves, to exceed expectations and to fulfill big, "impossible" dreams.

 Another implication is that consultants who know exactly what areas have to be in place for clients to be grant-ready can not only help vetted clients procure funding, but they can also help clients who are not yet ready to become prepared. This article presents some of the practical results from the study about how to sustain service projects, but the single most important unexpected lesson from this study is that while knowledge is power, passion is an indefatigable energy. Passion fuels hope, courage and willingness to give. While programs that fulfilled all six areas presented in the S-Cube had better odds of succeeding, sustaining passion was the one resource that never failed to produce forward momentum.

Conclusion

This study demonstrated that successful and sustainable programs must have effective practices in six sustainability areas. They must be Visionary, Focused, Respected with organized documentation, Connected, Strategically Planned and Well-constructed. This project occurred in a changing fiscal climate that became more unstable as each year passed. This leads to the final conclusion that a focus on developing a sustainable relationship with each client is more crucial than ever. This is true for the client, because what is being called the "new normal" requires innovative, collaborative strategies to sustain services. An informed focus on sustainable relationships — using the six crucial areas referred to as the S-Cube — is also important for grant professionals to improve success in grant procurement; help clients with more successful programs over a longer period of time and develop a client base that will recommend the grant professional to new clients.

 Further research into the viability of the concepts presented in this article has already begun. In 2011, select nonprofit projects and faith-based clients within the USA are piloting the S-Cube approach to sustainability strategies for service projects. The results are also being correlated with tribal outcomes from research in the area of Invitational Education (IE). IE (Purkey, 1991) is rooted in perceptual tradition, which suggests that individuals behave according to how the world appears within five components (i.e., People, Places, Policies, Programs and Processes). This second round of research will focus on improving the practical application of the S-Cube with diverse populations.

The challenge of this decade is how to do more, do it better and do it with less. Sustainability — really understanding sustainability — is key to achieving successful projects. Grant professionals who can do this also help themselves succeed by more effectively supporting the success of their clients.

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Biographical Information

Dr. Christine Rowe, founder of Los Padres Consulting, has improved service program outcomes for over 25 years. Clients most appreciate that Christine zeroes in on unique strategies for their success. She develops collaborative teams using an integrated approach to planning and organizational development, needs assessment, grant procurement, project design and evaluation for program improvement. She is passionately dedicated to sustaining the "social profit" provided by programs around the world. She wishes to thank the team at Familyfriendlyschools.com and the FACE Foundation (Family and Community Engagement) for their support during this study. Dr. Rowe's book, *Sustainability Success for Service Programs* — scheduled for publication in fall, 2011 — describes how to identify effective and innovative sustainability practices best for your program. For more information, contact Christine Rowe, Christine@los-padres-consulting.com or (530) 345-6549.

The Unethical Practice of Commissioned Grant Development Services: Causes and Remedies

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GPCI Competency 06: Knowledge of nationally recognized standards of ethical practice by grant developers

GPCI Competency 07: Knowledge of practices and services that raise the level of professionalism of grant developers

Abstract

Relevant professional associations consider commissioned grant development services unethical. Despite this, the expectation for this practice as an appropriate form of financial compensation still exists. This paper examines the extent of payment on commission for grant services and beliefs regarding this practice. It also poses some possible explanations for causal factors (including analogues from other professions, fundraising pressures and bid procurement practices) that continue to reinforce these beliefs. Lastly, the paper proposes potential remedies.

Introduction

In the field of professional grant development, a number of misconceptions and false expectations exist. The concept of receiving financial compensation based on a percentage or contingency basis as an acceptable form of financial compensation (hereafter referred to simply as "commissioned services") is one of the most frequently cited.

Prior research analyzes why these practices pose ethical dilemmas. Many professionals in the field point out that this practice creates a conflict of interest. For example, in her analysis of the inherent conflicts of interest that can arise when grant development professionals carry out their duties, Hoham argues that ethics, relationships and trust are three primary reasons for avoiding conflicts of interest. "The grant

professions inherently involve a high level of trust. Grant professionals are trusted to obtain accurate information, make reasonable requests to funders, provide accurate budgets and maintain the integrity of their organization's mission…" (Hoham, 2007, p. 14). Hoham also asserts that "commissions on grant awards presents a very obvious conflict of interest" (p. 15) in that the fundraiser may be more motivated by increasing his/her own level of financial compensation than ensuring that grant-funded activities are consistent with the organization's mission and capacity to carry out the project.

Both the Grant Professionals Association (GPA) and the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP) explicitly prohibit commissioned services. In its Code of Ethics (2007), the GPA states: "Members shall work for a salary or fee. Members may accept performance-based compensation, such as bonuses, provided that such bonuses are in accord with the practices of their organization." The AFP similarly states: "Members shall not accept compensation that is based on a percentage of charitable contributions; nor shall they accept finder's fees. Members shall not pay finder's fees, commissions or percentage compensation based on charitable contributions and shall take care to discourage their organizations from making such payments" (Code of Ethical Principles and Standards, 2007).

Deacon (2004) considers additional arguments regarding why this practice is unethical. He points out that charging percentage fees "usually involve falsifying the project budget in the proposal. Very few funders— and no government agencies—allow the grantwriter's fee to be 'written into the grant' as a line item in the project budget. So organizations that do this frequently disguise the grantwriter's fee as something else—a salary for the 'Project Director' or 'Evaluator'" (Deacon, 2004, p. 14). Although commissioned services "may not be unethical in and of themselves," Deacon argues, they create a "slippery slope" that can lead to other more serious transgressions (Deacon, 2004, p. 18).

Given the clearly delineated standards that exist, two questions arise: How prevalent is the formal solicitation of commissioned services today?; and why is it that so many people soliciting grant development services still believe that this practice is acceptable?

Methodology

To examine the prevalence of solicitations for commissioned grantwriting services, the author conducted a random sampling of online job solicitations for grantwriting services. For a period of 15 days, the author conducted a daily search of grant development and proposal writing job postings on national employment clearinghouses (including Monster.com, Craigslist and Careerbuilder.com). The author searched using such relevant keywords as "grant," "grant writer," "grant writing,"

"proposal writer" and "fundraising." The author recorded all entries in a spreadsheet marking those postings that referenced "commissioned" or "percentage basis" services.

Findings

Of the 310 job postings identified, 18 (or 5.8%) referenced "commission" or "percentage based" compensation. Specific job descriptions included:

- "Commission based grant writer to assist financial services to a not-for-profit organization"
- "The compensation for this position is commission on the total amount of grants written each month. We also offer an attractive bonus schedule."
- "Compensation: 5-7% commission."
- "Willing to work on a commission basis."
- "The position is 100% commission based."
- "Seeking professional grant writer who will provide their services based on a commission only fee structure."
- "Compensation: Percentage of grants received."
- "Compensation will be based on a percentage of the grant awarded. The percentage will be determined on a grant by grant basis."
- "We are willing to negotiate a commission based "salary" based on total dollars raised over a period of time."
- "Salary: base salary negotiable w/ possible commission."
- "Compensation: 5 percent of the amount funded from the proposal submitted."
- "% of how much is awarded"
- "Compensation based on grant funding."
- "Commission based opportunity."
- "We are offering 10% of the grant award as compensation for your efforts."
- "…seeking a commission only grant writer."

Of those organizations soliciting commissioned grant development services, 55.6% openly identified themselves as 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations (one apparently long-standing organization stated that it had been in existence since 1906); 22.2% identified as private businesses (one a manufacturing company engaged in contracting with the United States Agency for International Development and Department of Defense) and another 22.2% did not specify organizational status therein.

While this sample did not indicate a far-reaching prevalence of commissioned hiring practices, one unexpected finding was that the majority of these solicitors were established, nonprofit organizations who, one could argue, "should know better." Unfortunately, of those organizations referencing themselves as nonprofits, only six gave enough identifying information that would have allowed for further organizational and budgetary analysis on Guidestar.org.

Causal factors

One question that begs further discussion is: what causes solicitors of grant services to seek out commissioned services? There are various potential causes of this phenomenon. The general public may see an inherent analogy between grant development professionals and other service providers (e.g., personal injury attorneys, realtors and automotive salespeople) where commissioned payment is normalized and accepted.

While pejoratively characterized as "ambulance chasers," the reality is that many attorneys work on a commissioned basis. The American Bar Association (ABA), an organization prized for its high standards regarding ethics and conflicts of interest, condones the practice of commissioned services. The Tort Trial & Insurance Practice Section of the ABA has convened a task force "charged with reviewing and evaluating the current state of contingent fees, the recent wave of petitions to change ethics rules to limit lawyers' fees, and what effect such changes would have on lawyers using contingent fees and their clients" (2003). However, the author was unable to identify any publicly accessible information indicating momentum in the legal field toward the prohibition of such services.

Likewise, the National Association of Realtors (NAR) appears to have no "ethical problem" with the prospects of realtors working on commission. The NAR ethical code references commissioned services numerous times. For example, NAR Standard of Practice 3-4 states that realtors have an "affirmative obligation to disclose the existence of dual or variable rate commission arrangements" (Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice of the National Association of Realtors, 2011). Article 6 states that realtors "shall not accept any commission, rebate, or profit on expenditures made for their client, without the client's knowledge and consent." This guideline is the closest the NAR gets to citing ethical dilemmas based on commission. However, this provision only emphasizes the need for clients to be aware and consent to this practice, but it does not question the practice itself.

Another profession that commonly relies on commissioned services is that of automotive salespersons. The National Automotive Dealers Association (NADA) has a professional Code of Ethics (2002) outlining provisions against discrimination, not misrepresenting products through

advertising, and resolving concerns promptly. However, nowhere is commissioned services cited in their code of ethics. Similar to the ABA, the prevalence of commissioned services does not appear to pose an ethical transgression for the NADA.

Given the above examples, it would appear that there are various other professions which condone, if not encourage, commissioned services. As such, it is plausible that the general public may interpret these standards as being transferable to the grant development profession. An unknowledgeable consumer of grant development services may draw an analogy between these professions.

However, as borne out in the sample cited previously, it would appear that many of the violators of this rule are legitimate, philanthropic organizations that would presumably have more knowledge and awareness of professional fundraising standards than would the general public. As such, one might question why this practice continues to be prevalent in philanthropic organizations. Perhaps many nonprofit organizations that are struggling to survive in today's economic climate are willing to engage in practices which, despite being "unethical," are still technically legal. Due to economic variables and pressures from boards and constituents, many grant seeking organizations, vulnerable and desperate for generating revenue, hope to minimize "up front" costs. Lastly, bid procurement practices may encourage employers to hire the lowest bidder on a fundraising project. However, the finding that the majority of solicitors of commissioned services were seemingly "established" nonprofit organizations (that would presumably be under less pressure to "survive") discredits this hypothesis. In either case, it appears that the nonprofit sector may be one of the culprits in perpetuating the practice of commissioned grant development services.

Potential remedies

A number of potential remedies may exist. Increased dissemination and visibility of professional fundraising ethical standards could reduce the frequency of these activities. As organizations such as the GPA and AFP gain credibility in the philanthropic sector, their respective ethical standards will become more recognized and respected. Likewise, should grantors and funders require charitable organizations to abide by similar codes as a condition of receiving funding, this financial pressure may result in systemic change. These developments, in turn, would presumably result in a decreased frequency of nonprofit organizations that actively solicit for commissioned services.

Additionally, increased regulation and certification of grant professionals may allow for increased personal accountability. For example, over the last decade there has been increasing momentum regarding "standards-based" certification for grant development

professionals, including state-based licensing standards (similar to provisions concerning licensed fundraisers). For example Certified Fund Raising Executive (CFRE) International, an organization responsible for managing the widely-recognized CFRE certification exam, references the increasing prospect for government licensure, citing global trends for the government regulation of fundraisers (CFRE, 2002, p.4). Current certification, such as that offered by the GPA, depends on criteria including sufficient professional experience, the successful completion of an examination and the willingness to adopt the ethical standards of the organization. Future certification and membership criteria by professional associations such as the GPA and AFP may be contingent on ensuring that applicants pass a criminal background check (to exclude those convicted of felony money laundering, fraud, tax evasion or other similar financial offenses), further ensuring that unethical conduct is minimized. However, the latter may be particularly onerous and difficult to implement given the costly burden of such screening processes.

Unfortunately, the above two options are institutional matters, which may or may not be considered. As a group, grants professionals may still be able to leverage their collective knowledge, skill and dedication to counter the prevalence of commissioned services. Specifically, grants professionals can increase their engagement in professional activism, acting as "watchdogs" for the profession by educating individuals and employers who violate these standards. This is similar to the AFP's ethical standard, cited previously, which states "members...shall take care to discourage their organizations from making such payments." It could similarly be argued that AFP and GPA members should "discourage" other agencies from engaging in such practices as well.

For example, in conducting research for this study, the author felt it morally incumbent to send email responses to those organizations that were identified as soliciting commissioned grantwriting services. The author's emails stated:

> *Dear_____,*
>
> *I recently came across a job advertisement online referencing your solicitation for a grant development professional who is willing to work on commission (aka on a "contingency basis" based on the percentage of grant funds raised). I would like to kindly point out that the practice of commissioned grant development services is universally condemned as unethical by national fundraising and grantwriting organizations. For example, I would refer you to the Grants Professionals Association (GPA) website (www. http:// grantprofessionals.org/about-gpa/ethics/code-of-ethics.*

> *aspx) or the Association of Fundraising Professionals
> (AFP) website (http://www.afpnet.org/ Ethics/content.
> cfm?ItemNumber=3093&nav ItemNumber=536). Given
> the existence of these ethical standards, it is highly
> unlikely that you will receive qualified and certified
> applicants. Any grant development professional that is
> "grants professional certified" ("GPC") or holds a similar
> certification is prohibited from working on such a
> basis. I strongly encourage you to adjust your agency's
> hiring and contracting practices. Those philanthropic
> agencies engaging in the solicitation of commissioned
> services put themselves at risk for reduced credibility
> with funders as well as with the constituents they serve.
> Should you wish to obtain additional clarification
> on these matters, I'd be happy to provide more
> information. Thank you for your time.*

While the author's attempts at "grantwriting activism" did not result in any significant positive outcomes (either in the form of a thoughtful response or in causing the aforementioned "violating posts" to be removed), the author at least felt confident about educating organizations that grants professional jobs which pay by commission undermine the credibility of grants professionals. This correspondence constituted only one lone email to each organization. However, should other grants development professionals draft and send similarly worded correspondence, it is possible this collective action could stop the prevalence of such job postings. It might even be possible for professional organizations such as the GPA to create advocacy sections on their website where grant development professionals may publicize "offenders" and encourage members to send additional strongly worded messages to these organizations.

Implications for further research/study

Future studies may use larger samplings (e.g., over the course of six months) to obtain a more comprehensive assessment of the true prevalence of commissioned grant development practices. Given that the job postings surveyed were public postings, it may also benefit future researchers to examine less formal and quasi-anonymous solicitation networks (example, local bulletin boards, electronic listservs, etc.). It may be the case that some solicitors understand that commissioned services are not considered ethical and may not explicitly state this compensatory arrangement in the postings. The prevalence of job postings with no listed salary or hourly wage may indicate (in addition to the possibility of the salary being negotiable) the existence of latent, tolerant expectations regarding commissioned services. Future studies

may benefit from distributing anonymous surveys to both national and regional philanthropic agencies of various sizes and budgets to measure and compare these organizations' awareness of the "unethical" nature of commissioned services. Anecdotal, qualitative feedback (quotes, testimonials) could also provide a possibly enlightening examination of the prevalence of this phenomenon and the reasons that commissioned grant development services continue to be an option for some nonprofits.

Conclusion

It is a reality that both the solicitation and the voluntary provision of commissioned grant development services continue to occur, despite current professional efforts to minimize this practice. Possible causes for this phenomenon may include analogues from other professions, fundraising pressures and bid procurement practices. With only 18 "offenders" identified herein, the sample for this study of online grant development job postings did not demonstrate the widespread practice of commissioned grant services with any major statistical significance. However, it could be argued that the existence of any such solicitation is unacceptable. Through the continued visibility of philanthropic fundraising organizations, increased accountability through credentialing and/or licensure and a diligent "activist approach" to upholding the standards of the field, grant development professionals may dissuade their colleagues from engaging in such practices.

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Organizational Development and the Grant Application Process

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GPCI Competencies and Skills 02: Knowledge of organizational development as it pertains to grant seeking

Abstract

In today's economic climate, grants have increasing significance to nonprofit organizations as well as school systems. Of equal importance is the need for such organizations to determine which grant applications are worth pursuing and which are not. Organizational development is an important component of the role of the grant professional as noted in Competency 02 of GPCI Competencies and Skills. The author's organization used two Six Sigma tools as guidelines for developing effective and efficient grant application procedures. This article discusses and defines Six Sigma and two Six Sigma tools: DMAIC (**D**efine **M**easure **A**nalyze **I**mprove **C**ontrol) and SIPOC (**S**uppliers **I**nput **P**rocess **O**utput **C**ustomers). Applied to the grant application process, these concepts further refine and develop the process to meet school district and funding agency needs. Flow charts, graphics, and practical tips presented in this paper assist the reader with applying this information to their own organizations.

Introduction

Knowledge of organizational development as it pertains to grant seeking is Competency 02 of competencies and skills expected of grant professionals (Annarino & Blymiller, 2006). Grant professionals must assist their organizations to develop processes and procedures that efficiently and effectively identify suitable grants for their organization's needs. In today's economic climate, this is an increasingly daunting task. However, the application of a model called "Six Sigma" adopted from the business sector may help grant professionals with objectively and

systematically developing an effective grant application process. This process helps to identify grants suitable for a particular organization and ensures that the grant professional has the necessary time to prepare a successful proposal. A school district applied Six Sigma principles to grant development with positive results. This district provides an example throughout this paper.

Review of the literature

The current economic climate presents budgetary challenges for school districts as well as for other nonprofit organizations. Resulting state budget cuts have a direct impact on education funding. According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (2010), "State education grants to school districts and education programs have also been cut in Alabama, Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Florida, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Nebraska, Nevada, Ohio, Oregon, South Carolina, Utah, and Washington" (p. 12). As a consequence of these budget cuts, school districts reassess their own budgets and make difficult decisions. Often, funding for excellent programs and services "has been compromised over the last several years, making schools progressively more dependent on bringing in additional funds from outside sources and in need of practical strategies to promote sustainability" (Gajda & Tulikangas, 2005, p. vi).

Karsh and Fox (2009) offer that "it's not an overstatement to suggest that grants are more important—and more competitive—than ever" (p. xx). As such, it is crucial to develop and implement a grant application process that maintains the integrity of the mission and vision of the organization, while also meeting the needs of the funding agency. No longer is it optional for educational organizations to pursue grant funding. Instead, "education practitioners have to write grants to support initiatives that make a difference in the lives of children, families, and communities" (Gajda & Tulikangas, 2005, p. vi).

Grant professionals understand that an important consideration when applying for a grant is the ability of the organization to meet the funding agency's expectations as "funders award grants because what the grant recipients plan to do with the money fits in with the funders' own goals, initiatives, and dreams—and with their founder's stated wishes" (Brown & Brown, 2001, p. 5). It is important for grant professionals to "use their knowledge to ensure a match between the applying organization's goals and the funding agencies' mission" (Renninger & Stinson, 2006, p. 26). Grant seekers must remember that "grants are not free money" (Brown & Brown, 2001, p. 5). Further, school districts that seek grant funding "should not apply for grants just to get the money. Schools should apply for grant money to benefit student achievement in some way where a specific need is identified" (Peek, 2010, p. 12).

Each organization has different procedures to determine how grant seekers identify grants that benefit student achievement. This school district uses two Six Sigma tools; DMAIC and SIPOC, to define the grant application process and develop procedures to determine which grants meet the organization's grant funding needs. Applying the Six Sigma approach to the task of completing grant applications makes sense for this organization because "Six Sigma is about making every area of the organization better able to meet the changing needs of customers, markets, and technologies—with benefits for employees, customers, and shareholders" (Pande & Holpp, 2002, p. 3).

Six Sigma and its tools, DMAIC and SIPOC, defined

According to Pande and Holpp (2002), Six Sigma is a business initiative as well as a quality initiative which provides a "smarter way to manage a business or a department" (p. 2). The Six Sigma approach originated at the Motorola Corporation in the mid-1980s. During that time, the company "discovered that products made with high first-pass yield (i.e., those that made it through the production process defect-free) rarely failed in actual use" (Brassard, Finn, Ginn, & Ritter, 2002, p. 6). As a result of this discovery, Motorola began "focusing on creating strategies to reduce defects in its products and in 1988 was among the first group of organizations to win the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award" (2002, p. 6). The Motorola Corporation now holds the trademark for Six Sigma methodology (2002, p. 6).

According to Brassard, *et al.* (2002):

> Sigma is a statistical concept that represents the
> amount of variation present in a process relative to
> customer requirements or specifications. When a
> process operates at the six sigma level, the variation is
> so small that the resulting products and services are
> 99.9997% defect free (p. 1).

Eckes (2003) describes Six Sigma as a "management philosophy" (p. 25). As such, it "requires management's active involvement, not just their support" (p. 25). Another point of view, suggested by Pyzdek and Keller (2010), proposes that Six Sigma is "the application of the scientific method to the design and operation of management systems and business processes which enable employees to deliver the greatest value to customers and owners" (p. 5). Furthermore, it stands as "a smarter way to manage a business or a department. Six Sigma puts the customer first and uses facts and data to drive better solutions" (Pande & Holpp, 2002, p. 2). They go on to say that time has substantiated Six Sigma's longevity as it "didn't spring up overnight. Its background stretches back eighty-plus years, from management science concepts developed in the United

States to Japanese management breakthroughs to "Total Quality" efforts in the 1970s and 1980s" (p. 3).

One of the two Six Sigma tools, DMAIC, provides a problem-solving structure for improving the grant application process.

DMAIC (Define Measure Analyze Improve Control) process steps

These five process steps are the tactics of Six Sigma (Eckes, 2003). Pyzdek and Keller (2010) describe DMAIC as follows:

D   Define the goals of the improvement activity.
M   Measure the existing system.
A   Analyze the system to identify ways to eliminate the gap between the current performance of the system or process and the desired goal.
I   Improve the system.
C   Control the new system. (p. 3)

George, Rowlands, Price, and Maxey (2005) define DMAIC as a "structured problem-solving methodology widely used in business" (p. 1). However, the tenets of DMAIC readily apply to an organization's grant application process. The following describes how DMAIC guides the grant application process in a school district:

- *Defined Goal.* The defined goal is to develop an effective and efficient grant application process that takes both the needs of the funding agency and of the organization into consideration.

- *Measurement.* Following the selection of the defined goal, measurement of the existing process led to seeking feedback from individuals who previously completed the grant application process.

- *Analysis.* Analysis of the existing process occurred by reviewing documents, spreadsheets, and communications with those who have first-hand knowledge of the process. Analysis revealed that certain components of the process required revision to facilitate the improvement phase of this DMAIC.

- *Improvement.* Improvement occurred in response to the feedback collected during the measurement and analysis of the system. This feedback resulted in changes to the forms used in the process and communication of materials. Specifically, a newly developed flow chart now outlines the process for potential grant applicants (see Figure 3).

- *Control.* Internal measures, such as regular communication protocols with customers and internal grant management procedures, now control the system so that it continues to perform well.

SIPOC (Suppliers Input Process Output Customers) flow chart

The second of the Six Sigma tools, SIPOC, provides a diagram used to examine processes, such as the grant application decision-making and application process.

The SIPOC is often displayed as a diagram or flow chart of a process that "lists all suppliers, inputs, outputs, and customers" (Tague, 2005, p. 475). A primary advantage of the SIPOC flow chart is that it "provides a quick, broad view of key elements of a process" (p. 475). When identifying the SIPOC, decide on the particular process for evaluation and improvement—the grant application process (See Figure 1 on the next page). The SIPOC in Figure 1 and the decision matrix in Figure 2 belong to Fort Bend Independent School District (FBISD).

- *Suppliers.* The district's suppliers of grant funding opportunities include foundations, the Texas Education Agency (TEA), and the federal government. Each supplier has its own system for making grant opportunities available. Additionally, each supplier has its own application procedure and deadlines.

- *Inputs.* The inputs in the grant application process include data, campus or department improvement plans, district strategic plan, a decision matrix, a district intent to apply form, and the grant application. The data varies from one application to the next; however, each grant application requires data collection. As part of the process, the grant professional reviews the Campus or Department Improvement Plan (CIP/DIP) and the District Strategic Plan (DSP) in order to determine if the grant opportunity fits with the district's mission and vision. The decision matrix (see Figure 2 on page 46) assists the applicant with making this decision.

- *Process.* The process component of the SIPOC for Grant Applications in this organization is:

  Step 1: Identify grant opportunities.
  Step 2: Consult decision matrix.
  Step 3: Complete the district intent to apply form.
  Step 4: Gather data and write grant.
  Step 5: Submit completed application.

- *Outputs.* The outputs from the grant application process are a completed intent to apply form and the completed grant application.

- *Customers.* For this process, the customers include grant applicants and district administration. These customers require guidance and data, editorial assistance, and consultation.
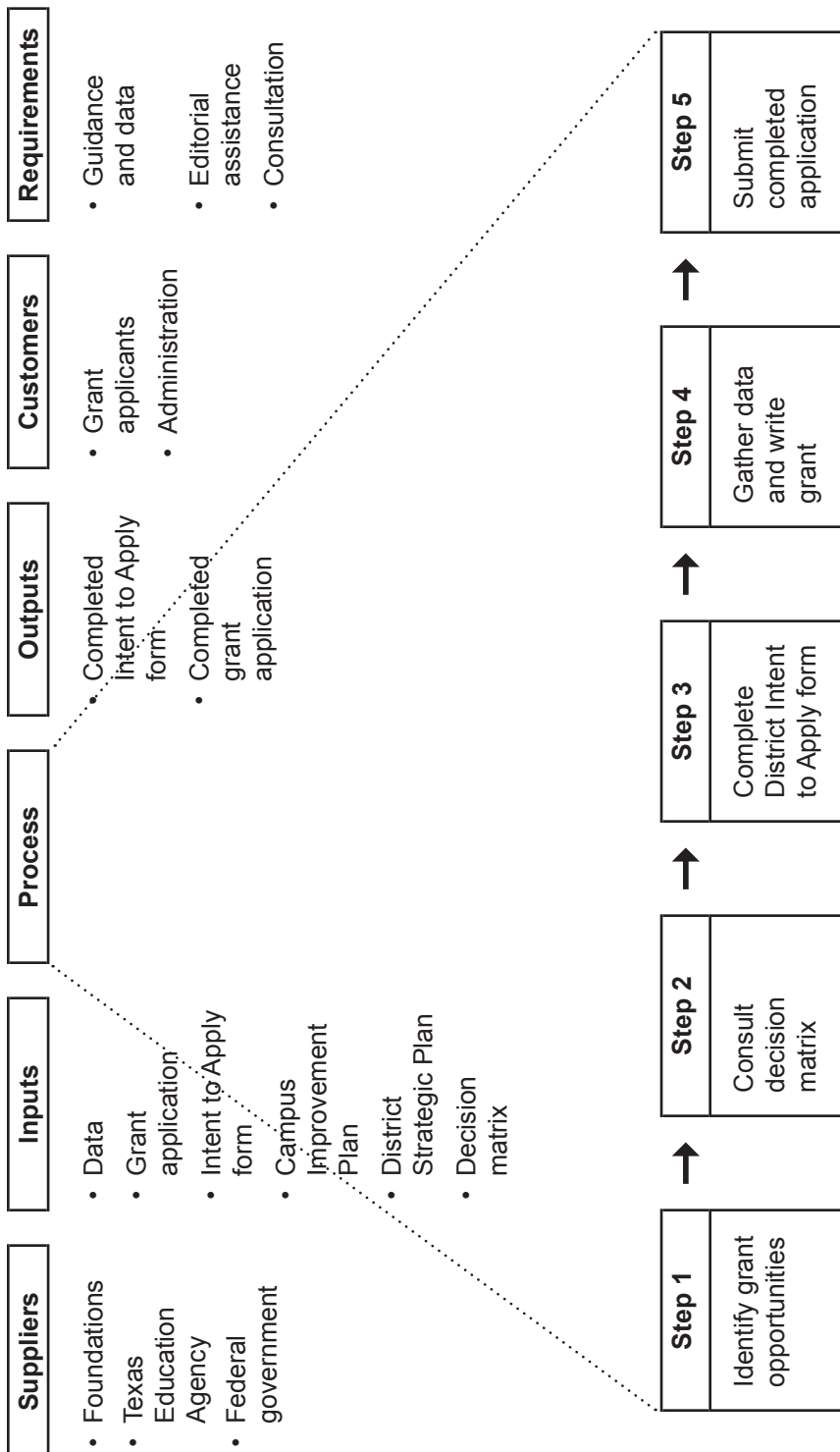
Figure 1. FBISD Grant Application Process SIPOC Diagram

The grant application decision process—the decision matrix

The grant application process begins with identifying potential funding opportunities. One of two basic approaches to searching for grant opportunities—the "push" approach or the "pull" approach—determines the drive behind the application for grants (Miner & Miner, 2008). Miner and Miner describe this dynamic in the following way. With the pull approach, one "must proactively seek the funding information: that is you have to 'pull' the information to you." In the push approach, one allows the "information to come to you; that is, you can let someone else 'push' the information your way" (p.20).

Once an organization chooses an approach, it becomes clearer which grants to pursue. In order to focus on appropriate grant opportunities, Peek (2010) suggests that grant professionals identify "the problems and deficiencies in your district and on your campus" (p. 12). As tempting as it may be, it is not prudent to apply for each and every grant that is available. According to Falco and DeWald (2002), the "educational vision is larger than any single grant, yet every grant you write must help in reaching that larger vision" (p. 67). The skilled grant professional recognizes the importance of deciding whether the grant funding opportunity is a true fit with the organization.

One example of a process for grant applications in the organization is the grant application decision matrix (see Figure 2), developed for this school district. It embraces the notion that "the best proposal writers have their hearts in the organization's mission and its outcomes" (Rice, 2010, p. 76). Upon receiving information regarding a potential grant funding opportunity, the grant coordinator asks:

- Does the funding opportunity fit with the DSP?

- Does it fit with the Campus Improvement Plan (for school campuses)?

- Does it fit with the Department Improvement Plan (for district departments—not within a campus)?

The greater the match between the organization's and the funder's missions, the more worthwhile the pursuit of the opportunity becomes. However, fit between the organization and funding agency alone is not enough to determine whether the organization should pursue a grant opportunity. It is also important to ask: does the organization possess the necessary time and resources to prepare a well-researched and well-written grant application? Given a good match between the intentions of the grant maker and the organization, the more time and resources the organization has to implement a grant, the more worthwhile it is to pursue the opportunity.

The grant application decision matrix prompts the prospective grant applicant to ask questions before completing the intent to apply form.

Aligns with District Strategic Plan (DSP), Campus Improvement Plan (CIP), and/or Department Improvement Plan (DIP)	Yes	**CONSULT** (Grant coordinator and/or supervisor) Is it an annual opportunity? Is it a non-competitive grant? Is there an in-kind requirement? If yes, what kind? Monetary, staff?	**COMPLETE DISTRICT GRANT INTENT TO APPLY PROCESS** Find procedure on website Complete paperwork Is there an in-kind requirement? Is it a non-competitive grant?
	No/Unsure	**DO NOT PROCEED** Is it an annual opportunity? Is it a non-competitive grant?	**CONSULT** (Grant coordinator and/or supervisor) Is it available next year? Is it a non-competitive grant? Is there an in-kind requirement?
		Little (fewer than 6 weeks)	*Ample (more than 6 weeks)*
		Availability of District Resources and Time	

Figure 2. Grant Application Decision-making Matrix

Each quadrant has questions to help guide the decision. For example, if a grant appears to be aligned with the DSP and/or CIP/DIP, but limited resources and little time exist to complete the paperwork, have a consultation between the applicant, decision makers and the grant coordinator before applying. Information that would be helpful in this situation includes:

- Is it an annual opportunity?

- Is it a non-competitive grant?

- Is there an in-kind requirement? (If yes, what kind? Monetary, staff?)

If the opportunity occurs annually, and there is limited time before the deadline to apply, one may wish to explore the opportunity the following year. In the case of a non-competitive grant, the applicant must consult

the grant coordinator and supervisor to determine whether greater alignment exists with the DSP or CIP/DIP than originally thought.

The Grant application process—flow chart

Upon evaluating the grant application process at FSBID using SIPOC and DMAIC, the grant coordinator developed the grant application flow chart (Figure 3). It is an important component of the process, because it provides grant seekers within the school district with a concise list of steps to complete the process. Step one is to determine whether or not to pursue a grant opportunity. Once the grant seeker decides to pursue an opportunity, the next step is to complete the intent to apply form. The grant applicant's immediate supervisor then signs the intent to apply form, demonstrating that the supervisor is aware and approves of pursuing the grant. The grant coordinator uses this form to assist in determining whether to submit the full application.
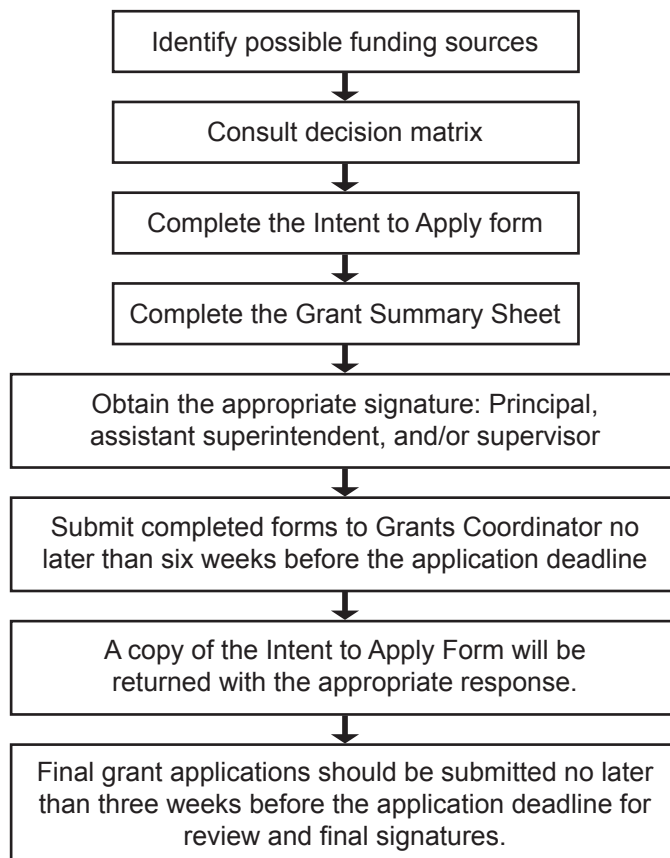
```
┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│     Identify possible funding sources     │
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘
                    │
                    ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│          Consult decision matrix          │
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘
                    │
                    ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│      Complete the Intent to Apply form     │
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘
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                    ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│      Complete the Grant Summary Sheet      │
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘
                    │
                    ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│   Obtain the appropriate signature: Principal, │
│   assistant superintendent, and/or supervisor  │
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘
                    │
                    ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│  Submit completed forms to Grants Coordinator no │
│ later than six weeks before the application deadline │
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘
                    │
                    ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│   A copy of the Intent to Apply Form will be   │
│     returned with the appropriate response.    │
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘
                    │
                    ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│  Final grant applications should be submitted no later │
│  than three weeks before the application deadline for  │
│          review and final signatures.          │
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘
```

Figure 3. Grant Application Process

Conclusion

Applying the Six Sigma approach to the grant process is an excellent fit for this organization and may be an excellent fit for others, because Six Sigma is about improving processes (Pande & Holpp, 2002). In the current economic climate, everyone accepts more and more responsibility, thereby increasing the importance for processes to work effectively and efficiently. Through applying these two tools and the concepts of Six Sigma, this educational organization enhanced its grant application process to meet the needs of all customers.

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Grants Management and Project Management: Partnering to Develop Successful Post-Award Activities

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GPCI Competency 05: Knowledge of post-award grant management practices sufficient to inform effective grant design and development

Abstract

Implementation of any size grant can be daunting. Grant coordinators are sometimes called to be experts in program development, compliance requirements and financial experts. The article introduces the concepts of project management, focusing specifically on the "monitoring and controlling process group" and how a grant development professional can evaluate the progress of post-award activities.

Introduction

In many organizations, grant professionals work closely with project directors and/or principal investigators on post-award activities. This may be due partly to the perception that grant professionals have expertise with project development, work-plans, budgets, and evaluation plans. Whatever the reason, the grant professional may wonder where to begin? After the award is announced, there may be more questions than answers. Project management may answer the question of where to begin. At the same time, project management may provide structure that relieves fear of stepping on the toes of the project director or principal investigator.

Project management

What is project management and how can this management style assist a grant-development professional in conducting post-award activities?

The Project Management Institute (2008) defines project management as the "application of knowledge, skills, tools, and techniques to project activities to meet the project requirements" (p.6).

Project management is conducted through the appropriate application and integration of five process groups: initiating, planning, executing, monitoring and controlling, and closing. Grant professionals are familiar with the pre-work phase of a grant, which includes the initiating and planning process groups of project management. It is common for the project director to manage the executing and closing of a project. Grant professionals may be held responsible for the controlling and monitoring process even though their job description may not state this.

Monitoring and controlling

A grant professional may experience pull in several directions such as multiple grant projects, time constraints and lack of resources, which makes monitoring and controlling a difficult task.

The *Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge* (2008) defines the monitoring and controlling process group as "processes required to track, review, and regulate the process and performance of the project; identify any areas of which changes to the plan are required; initiate the corresponding changes"(p.59). The *Guide* says that the "key benefit of this process group is that project performance is observed and measured regularly and consistently to identify variances from the project management plan" (p.59). By having continuous monitoring and controlling, a project team quickly identifies areas that need attention and is proactive in its response.

The monitoring and controlling process group consists of several activities such as:

- Perform Integrated Change Control
- Verify Scope
- Control Scope
- Control Schedule
- Control Costs
- Perform Quality Control
- Report Performance
- Monitor and Control Risks
- Administer Procurements

These activities will be described below, with respect to grant management activities.

Grants management using activities of the monitoring and controlling process group

Changes are inevitable in post-award work. The monitoring and controlling process group activities facilitate this in the following ways.

- *Integrating Change Control* allows project/grant teams to identify, recommend and submit changes to improve the outcomes of a project. The requested changes are reviewed, approved or disapproved and evaluated on the amount of impact on the grant. This is similar to formative evaluation.

- *Verifying Scope* means that the project/grant team receives acceptance from the funder for the deliverables (services/program). This differs from quality control since quality control focuses on the "correctness" of the deliverables. A grant/project team verifies the scope by working closely with the funder in the implementation phase of the grant. This includes scheduling regular meetings and reviewing progress toward goals.

- *Controlling Scope* is the dual process of monitoring the project and product scope and of managing changes. Examples of controlling scope include regular scheduled meetings, and requesting either oral or written reports on progress to date which outline issues or obstacles and next steps. The grant development professional may use the original grant application objectives and goals as a guide to ensure that work being done meets the requirements of the project.

- *Controlling Schedule* is the dual process of monitoring the status of the project to update progress and managing changes to the schedule baseline. Understanding how changes to the scope of work impact the schedule is important. For example, a facility may want to change the scope of work due to internal changes such as limited resources or personnel change, or external changes such as legislative regulations. These changes may impact the schedule by delaying or accelerating activities listed in the work-plan..

- *Controlling Costs* is always an issue. The project budget provides the grantee a guideline on what services/equipment/product to purchase and the costs. However, changes to the scope of work impact the costs. Again, communication between stakeholders on the changes to the project scope is critical. All stakeholders involved in the project should be aware of scope changes since scope change impacts human capital, time commitments and finances. Adjustments may be needed in the budget to reflect actual costs. For example, does the budget adjustment impact the in-kind contribution or match? Does the budget adjustment impact the work-plan or the evaluation plan? Is an extension necessary?

It is important to understand the funder's requirements on budget changes. The contract or Notice of Grant Award normally communicates budget change requirements. Does the grantor require notification, and if so, is there a preference for email, phone call or written documentation? What are the steps for approval of the changes? Remember to keep all documentation supporting the change for auditing purposes.

- *Performing Quality Control* is the dual process of monitoring and recording results of quality activities to assess performance, and of recommending necessary changes. In the healthcare industry, the quality representative at the facility handles control processes. Ideally, the quality representative is the member of the grant/project team responsible for the quality outcomes of the grant. Databases, software, and other electronic media are used to capture the information. Graphs and charts work well to present complicated data in a clear and concise matter.

- *Reporting Performance* is the process of collecting and distributing performance information including status reports, progress measurements and forecasts. For many grant coordinators, this is the most dreaded task of the post-award process, but status or progress reports are a great opportunity to tell the grant project story. The story of the work done by the project will paint a picture of the grant benefits to the organization or community. Depending on the funder, the status or progress report may be the first documentation received. The reporting documents must be prepared well, communicating a clear, complete and well-organized story.

  The reporting requirements are indicated in either the grant contract or the Notice of Grant Award or similar document. Normally a combination of progress/status and financial reports are due. Throughout the grant period, communicate with finance personnel to describe requirements for meeting required reporting deadlines. This will help finance personnel determine the amount of time to commit to the project. Be sensitive to others' deadlines and timeframes as financial calculations take time to complete.

  It is important that the organization is on time with all reporting. Future funding might rely on the completeness and the timeliness of the reporting package. Ask funders for clarification on grant requirements if there is confusion. Funders want the project they fund to succeed, so open communication is a good practice.

  Lastly, if an organization is subject to a single audit or a program-specific audit, the reporting package plays an important role. The reporting package provides a single source of information that demonstrates the work that has been accomplished, and describes obstacles or delays encountered and if appropriate, measures taken to realign the grant with projected outcomes.

- *Monitoring and controlling risks* is the process of implementing risk response plans, tracking identified risks, monitoring residual risks, identifying new risks, and evaluating risk process effectiveness throughout the project. This process begins at the initiating and planning stages with identifying stakeholders' concerns, and continues throughout post-award. Krane, Rolstadas, & Olson (2010) state that the difference between risk and uncertainty is that "risk is categorized as having an impact, while uncertainty may or may not have a known impact" (p. 82).

    According to Williams (2011), "Risks are normally identified and analyzed in a random, brainstorming fashion. This is often fatal to the success of the project as unexpected risks arise that have not been assessed or planned for and have to be dealt with on an emergency basis rather than prepared for and defended against in a planned and measured manner" (p. 1). Monitoring and controlling risk prevents this random approach by implementing a risk response plan.

    There is a certain amount/level of risk in every grant; therefore, it is important to consider an organization's risk threshold and how the organization manages risk beyond this threshold. A tool utilized to assist the organization in managing risk is a risk register. The risk register tracks and documents ways to lessen or reduce the amount of risk. Another benefit of the risk register is that it is helpful as a tool for defining best practices. Reducing risk on one grant may also work for future post-award activities.

- *Administering Procurements* is the process of managing vendor relationships, monitoring contract performance and making changes or corrections as needed. Managing the relationship with the vendor assists in receiving equipment/product in a timely matter and with accurate billing, leading to a long-term business relationship.

    There are a number of software programs that assist in monitoring procurement activities such as Grants Administrator® 6.0 distributed by Dyna-Quest Technologies, Inc. The software is easy to use and provides excellent reports. Another option for managing products/equipment purchasing is to use Microsoft Excel or to carve out the responsibility for purchasing to finance or accounting personnel. However, the grant professional must stay abreast of changes/obstacles, so that all appropriate stakeholders receive communication and avoid "surprises."

Conclusion

Typically, grant professionals wear many hats and post-award can be new ground to cover. However, there are tools available to support both the least and most experienced grant manager as they travel through uncharted waters. The monitoring and controlling process group tool

of project management is one example of a tool to be utilized to ensure success in post-award activities.

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A Grant Support Office Within an Academic Medical Center: A Model for Facilitating Competitive Proposals

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GPCI Competency 04: Knowledge of how to craft, construct, and submit an effective grant application

GPCI Competency 09: Ability to write a convincing case for funding

Abstract

The Research Support Core (RSC) is a voluntary proposal and manuscript support service at Wake Forest University Health Sciences (WFUHS). The Core offers searches for funding, text editing, interpreting reviewers' comments, advice on budget creation, and biostatistical guidance (from the Design and Analysis Unit, an allied unit). These services are free of charge to the WFUHS research community, because the institution supports the RSC through the Dean's Office. The great majority of grant applicants at WFUHS submit to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), but the Core also assists faculty and trainees with proposals to many other agencies. This paper describes the rationale for the RSC's origin, its services, and how such a resource can address four key challenges of the current funding environment: time pressures on proposal writers, increased competitiveness for external funds, major reductions in proposal length from the NIH and other agencies, and greater need for external support of research due to institutional budget cuts. A shared proposal-support core like the RSC might be effective in other settings, for example, a consortium of nonprofit organizations.

Introduction

In the early 2000s, leaders at Wake Forest University Health Sciences (WFUHS) realized that, despite increasing pressure on faculty to obtain external funding for research, these faculty members lacked uniform access to assistance in submitting grant applications. At the same time, the funding environment became increasingly competitive. In addition, administrative and regulatory requirements continue to place a growing burden on investigators' time (Rockwell, 2009; Wimsatt, Trice, & Langley, 2009). With support from the Women's Health Center of Excellence and the WFUHS Office of Research, the Research Support Core (RSC) began in 2002 as a pilot project (Klein, Foley, Legault, Manuel, & Shumaker, 2006). Institutional leaders considered this pilot phase, focused on facilitating grant applications in women's health research, highly successful as a result of WFUHS's winning two significant NIH grants that saved the university $1.6 million. As a result, in 2004, the RSC expanded to an institution-wide resource and moved to its current home in the Office of Research.

The Office of Research carries many responsibilities. The Grants and Contracts section provides institutional approval of proposals, submits electronic applications to agencies and oversees post-award activities, but the RSC's central mission is to increase the competitiveness of grant applications from WFUHS. The RSC also offers manuscript editing and presents frequent workshops on proposal and manuscript writing. This paper focuses on the proposal-related services of the RSC. All of these services are free of charge to the nearly 1100 faculty members at WFUHS and postdoctoral fellows and graduate students. Importantly, use of the Core is voluntary, unlike all other sections of the Office of Research. An underlying tenet of the Core is that it does not duplicate services in individual departments (such as budgetary assistance). Instead it augments support and provides assistance that is unavailable elsewhere in the institution.

This paper also describes challenges for proposal writers and how a model like the RSC addresses them. The final sections discuss the limitations of this model and possible improvements for the future.

Realities that can hamper proposal submissions

At WFUHS, a number of scenarios present challenges to submitting grant applications:

- While many departments have their own personnel who can help prepare proposals, some do not.
- Some departments are new to conducting research or are not research-focused, so adding staff to support proposal preparation is not cost-effective for them.

- Since many proposals may have similar deadlines, a support person within a given department may be overwhelmed.

- Budget cutbacks may reduce support staff and increase the urgency of submitting grant applications at the same time.

In each case, the RSC provides assistance as needed, analogous to hiring temporary or project-specific personnel but at no cost to the requestor, and it offers the benefit of known expertise and familiarity with sponsor and institutional procedures.

Customized portfolio of services

Investigators request RSC assistance either through personal contact or the "Request for Assistance" form, which has a link on the RSC web site and resides behind the institutional firewall. Both in-person and web-based modes provide good opportunities to ask about needs. For example, if an individual uses the form to request assistance locating funding sources, the Core staff also offers to meet in person to answer questions or brainstorm. Proposal writers can also request editorial suggestions on drafts as well as assistance with basic statistical calculations or budget preparation. The online form also allows users to state deadlines, to add a link to the funding agency's call for proposals and to make other comments. The specific examples of Core services provide clear guidance for faculty who are new to proposal writing or to WFUHS. It also gives users an opportunity to express specific needs, making it more likely the Core can meet those needs (if not through the RSC, perhaps elsewhere at WFUHS). Finally, for most situations, the client and the Core staff negotiate a unique timeline for each project, rather than a standard RSC deadline based on the agency's deadline. To date, the RSC has met all requests for assistance.

Table 1 shows the RSC's proposal-related activity over the past four years:

Table 1. Research Core Support: Proposal Assistance by Fiscal Year (FY)

Assistance	FY06-07	FY07-08*	FY08-09	FY09-10
Number of proposals assisted	114	227	153	180
Total costs requested	$82,325,311	$165,336,103	$72,725,472	$125,354,666
Total costs awarded	$3,957,972	$13,355,383	$12,880,348	$21,356,261

Design and Analysis Unit (statistical assistance) begun.

The RSC's emphases change over time in response to faculty needs. Here are two examples:

New needs in resubmissions

With the increased difficulty of obtaining funding, resubmissions are a recent area of emphasis. If requested, the Core can assemble an internal committee of seasoned proposal writers to help investigators draft responses to the reviewers' critiques. Interpreting and responding to these critiques often requires multiple rewrites of the critically important response section. Furthermore, when the RSC also edits the overall text, applicants receive important feedback on whether they addressed all the criticisms convincingly. One example of how the RSC serves its clients is that it created a new workshop to educate WFUHS investigators on the recent extensive changes in NIH applications and reviews, with particular attention to resubmissions. The content focuses on concrete ways to address the most commonly encountered challenges.

Coordinating cross-departmental projects

Multidisciplinary projects are increasingly in vogue with funders, but submission of applications that cross traditional departments can be difficult without central staff to coordinate planning and assembly. For example, applications for new construction, renovation or purchase of major equipment may be a high institutional priority. These types of applications require a large amount of effort, but they may allow only weeks to assemble a proposal before the deadline. All of these factors may stretch staff in any one department beyond their limits. One role the Core fills at WFUHS is to be the central work force for such large projects (if requested), either coordinating efforts among different individuals or completing specific tasks as part of a team. This approach facilitates the collection of accurate institutional information, creates efficiencies, and allows the writers more freedom to craft the application. When the Core became an institutional resource in 2004, institutional leaders cited, as convincing evidence of its value, the Core's key role in two successful NIH applications for infrastructure improvements of over $1.6 million. These awards represent tangible savings to the institution and a sizeable return on its investment in the RSC.

The Core as an institutional resource

On average, the Core works on about 15 percent of all grant applications submitted by WFUHS investigators each year. This selectivity permits development of ongoing personal relationships with proposal writers. It also means the Core remains "lean and mean" (there is only one full-time staffer; a pool of statisticians receives partial salary support).

The RSC often works with "repeat customers" as they resubmit previous grant applications, write proposals for new projects or submit manuscripts describing their results. This means the RSC can become part of the investigator's team for each project, which strengthens the Core's ability to contribute meaningfully. These faculty members then recommend the Core to colleagues (especially new ones), a process facilitated to some degree by the moderate size of WFUHS. The ability to work on proposals or manuscripts from any part of WFUHS is an important source of professional growth and increases the RSC's knowledge base regarding different funding agencies and different topics.

A resource like the RSC is a tangible example of how the research environment helps support investigators and distinguishes WFUHS from other institutions. Thus, investigators often note the RSC as an educational and training resource, especially in training grant applications. Reviewers of these proposals often mention the Core as a specific asset. One department, which is systematically increasing its research focus and uses the RSC frequently, believes the RSC is a positive tool for faculty recruitment. As a result, the department chair includes a Core member in its on-site interviews of prospective faculty researchers.

Evaluation of services

RSC users evaluate the services they receive. The Principal Investigator receives an auto email generated through the RSC online database one month after project completion, with a link to complete a brief online form. Respondents to the survey are anonymous, to encourage completion of the form and candid answers. Non-responders then receive one reminder email after a week, to encourage responses. Core users from mid-December 2007 to mid-June 2010 provided a total of 217 evaluations for 550 projects in the RSC database (response rate of 39%).

Core users rank the assistance they received from 1 to 5, with 1 being "very helpful" and 5 being "not at all helpful." Table 2 summarizes the most frequent scores (1 or 2) for the three main types of proposal assistance (excluding biostatistical assistance) and overall value. Note

Table 2. Evaluation of RSC Services

Proposal Assistance Received	Score of 1 or 2	
	Number of Evaluations	%
Editing (n=114)	103	90
Budget Formulation (n=54)	44	81
Hypothesis Development (n=35)	26	74
Overall Value (n=69)	58	84

that types of assistance differed in frequency (that is, numbers of responses). Also, responses are for individual projects, so there are multiple responses from some individuals.

Respondents also answer "yes" or "no" to a few questions to assess "customer satisfaction". The responses appear in Table 3.

Table 3. Customer Satisfaction

Satisfaction with RSC	Answered "Yes"	%
Would use the RSC again	216	99.5
Would refer a colleague to the RSC	213	98.2
Received timely assistance	212	97.8

Finally, the form has a "Feedback" section, where respondents can write additional comments. Of the 217 evaluations, 61 (28%) included further comments. Only one was negative. Respondents included highly positive statements about individual RSC members and about the Core as a whole. Others had suggestions for marketing the RSC, or topics on which the RSC could provide instruction (most thereafter adopted). These data, while limited, suggest that Core users regard it as a valuable institutional resource.

New ways to show value

The reasons the RSC's value remains strong revolve around four challenges:

- *Time management.* A faculty member may realize that he or she lacks sufficient time to craft a successful proposal alone, so assembling a team that includes the RSC makes sense. Time pressure is especially intense for physician-researchers, who may see more patients than ever but also are committed to their research projects. Similar time pressures also exist for staff at nonprofit organizations that depend on grants for programmatic support and continuation.

- *Increased competitiveness for external funds.* Those whose proposals used to be funded, but are no longer competitive, may realize they need to improve.

- *New "rules of the game."* The shorter proposals now required by many funders call for increased succinctness without loss of key concepts. Even the most seasoned proposal writers find this balance difficult to achieve.

- *Greater need for external support of research due to institutional budget cuts.* Some academic faculty and staff of nonprofit organizations write more proposals than ever, or perhaps now must write proposals for the first time.

If all who write proposals face these challenges to a greater or lesser degree, it follows that a central grant-support resource would be more cost-effective than establishing multiple mini-cores. It also makes sense that not everyone has the same challenges in proposal writing. Thus, to be effective, a central resource should be flexible enough to meet the different needs of those individuals. To be perceived as a good return on investment, such a central resource must be knowledgeable, creative, reliable, timely, and always willing to help (Klein, 2010). Placing the Core in the Office of Research gives it credibility and visibility compared to a less central resource and maximizes the number of potential users. Selecting personnel in the Core carefully, both for their skills and for their "customer service" attitudes, also enhances its reputation.

A regular environmental scan, to assess how needs may change over time, is a wise plan. In the case of the RSC, the assessment showed that few faculty requested budget assistance. At the same time, the overall Office of Research had unmet staffing needs. As a result, the RSC discontinued in-depth budget assistance in spring 2011, but the same staff person can answer budget-related questions as part of her current grant-administrator duties.

Barriers to using the RSC

Some academics believe they are expert in communicating their research, and the importance of continuing it, in grant applications. This opinion persists despite the fact that writing is rarely part of pre-medical, medical or graduate school curricula. They may also think that the help they need with grant applications could only come from other scientists, not a medical editor and writer. Of course, some people have a natural flair for writing and genuinely may not need assistance in effectively communicating their ideas. These two groups of individuals, those who think they do not need help, and those who truly do not, are unlikely to seek out the RSC. However, experience suggests that once individuals see how working with a grant professional improves their proposals, they become enthusiastic supporters.

Some researchers at WFUHS may have misperceptions regarding the cost, availability, or time frame for Core assistance. Occasionally an investigator comments (after submitting an application) that he or she did not seek out the RSC beforehand, because by the time the draft was ready, it was too close to the deadline. Investigators sometimes assume the RSC is too busy to help them, unaware that the Core has never turned away a request for assistance. So the need remains for marketing the Core's services, clarifying availability, and emphasizing that services are free. Thus, the many grant- and manuscript-related workshops offered by RSC staff serve two purposes – educating researchers and their staff, and raising awareness among attendees about the Core's services for future projects.

Limitations of the model

In response to an article in the *Journal of Women's Health* (Klein, Foley, Legault, Manuel, & Shumaker, 2006), several readers asked about financial backing for the Core. Core services are part of the WFUHS research infrastructure, supported through philanthropy, overhead costs awarded in grants or other institutional sources of funding. To make a resource like the Core available to everyone who needs it, the institution must make a long-term financial commitment. A fee-for-service model erects barriers for those who most need the RSC's services. Fortunately, institutional leaders agree, but such support could be impossible in a smaller organization.

Some institutions do have resources that resemble the RSC, but they differ in several important ways: 1) they are available only to certain departments (Derish, Maa, Ascher, & Harris, 2007); 2) they use a fee-for-service model to recoup costs; 3) they refer faculty to outside contractors, whom investigators must pay (if necessary, from their own pockets); or 4) they cite as resources individuals within their institution, usually faculty members with multiple other responsibilities who are not grant professionals. All these arrangements limit accessibility and can lead to unacceptable response times (a non-starter in the deadline-oriented grants world). Quality of assistance is also a potential issue in these situations.

One limitation of any model like the RSC is inability to demonstrate causal effectiveness. That is, one cannot say that a proposal submitted with RSC assistance is more likely to be funded than another proposal at WFUHS, because it is impossible to do a controlled experiment in which all variables other than Core use would be the same. The litmus test is whether Core users found value in the interaction, either because the reviewers mentioned the Core favorably, the Core alerted them to the funding opportunity, or they received guidance otherwise unavailable – and advice they can use in the future, even if the current application did not succeed.

Aspects for future improvement

It is difficult to quantify factors such as increasing an investigator's knowledge of, and confidence in, his or her grant-development skills. Nevertheless doing so may be of enormous value to that investigator. This is an important reason the Core offers educational opportunities among its services, and that users provide evaluations to assess the Core's services. However, with the current system, there is no real-time way to address any concerns, since users provide evaluations 30 days after project completion. Furthermore, respondents are anonymous, precluding individual follow-ups. Although budget constraints are a

factor, expanding database functionality would allow better feedback mechanisms and more effective quality improvement.

The RSC provides editorial assistance with manuscripts as well as grant applications. Grant applications receive priority, for several reasons: 1) proposal-related requests are more frequent than manuscript-related requests; 2) proposal deadlines are firm, and manuscript deadlines usually are flexible; and 3) grants can bring funding to WFUHS, and thus they create or continue jobs and make possible important scientific discoveries. While Core users accept this prioritization, it may be an issue in the future if authors find turnaround times for manuscripts unacceptably slow because of the Core's emphasis on proposals.

Conclusion

The Research Support Core is an unusual resource among academic medical centers: a flexible, multi-faceted, and voluntary resource for proposal and manuscript assistance that is free of charge to the research community at WFUHS. The RSC fills gaps in the WFUHS institutional research infrastructure in an efficient and cost-effective manner. The extent to which the Core can become part of the investigator's team during the application planning and preparation process increases its value. The Core's services grew since its inception in 2002, responding to specific needs of investigators and changes in the expectations of grant makers. A shared grant-support core akin to the RSC might be effective in other settings, for example, in a consortium of nonprofit organizations. This idea would be an intriguing addition to the coalition models described by Harney (2009). The Core may be a model for other organizations seeking to provide, in a central, flexible, and professional source, strategic and cost-effective assistance to grant seekers.

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Resource List

Wake Forest University Health Sciences

Office of Research, Research Support Core

http://www.wfubmc.edu/OR/Research-Support-Core.htm

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How Critical is Training?: Impact of a Semester-long Proposal Writing Course on Obtaining Grant Funding

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GPCI Competency 04: Knowledge of how to craft, construct and submit an effective grant application

Abstract

Several years ago, there was an emerging need for intensive, in-depth training related to developing grant submissions at the Warner School of Education at the University of Rochester, one of the country's top-tier research universities. Educators and doctoral students needed an introduction to the world of grants to fund everything from dissertation research to educational supplies, yet there was little affordable in-depth training in the area. Therefore, a semester-long course, EDU 447: Grant writing and other funding strategies for educators, was introduced in the fall of 2007 to meet this growing need. The class was designed to be small, intensive and workshop-oriented, with personal attention from two instructors: one a career grant professional and the other a well-funded dean of the school of education. The course has been offered every fall since 2007 with favorable results – the students who complete the course and apply for grants obtain funding at a higher-than-average rate. Of 29 students who took the course from 2007 to 2009, 22 responded to brief surveys about their funding experiences to date, with 11 students indicating they applied for funding. Nine of the 11 applicants successfully received funding for either their first or second grant request, and seven of these successful applicants received more than one grant. Grant awardees attribute their successes to a number of factors, but almost all agree that EDU 447 provided the tools to put them on the right path, either through the information provided or the assignments that challenged

them to hone their craft. These positive outcomes offer evidence for the importance of semester-long courses in grant development and proposal writing as a way to provide formal instruction in grantsmanship.

Introduction

The development of proposal writing skills and prowess is often simply expected when busy nonprofit administrators are thrust into a position with a grant-seeking component. The same is true for doctoral students, who will become new faculty members instantly expected to begin netting coveted grant dollars. How many grant professionals have been catapulted into a position with the hope they would be able to prepare successful grant proposals and bring in thousands (or even millions) of dollars without any formal training? Yet, proposal writing is a very special form of technical writing that is quite different from the academic writing taught in college and graduate school. It is a type of writing that can take months to learn and years to master. Without proper training, it can be a trial-and-error process riddled with rejection and frustration. Week-long seminars or workshop sessions can certainly begin to demystify the process, but longer-term training might be even more effective.

As harried administrators and program managers add grant development to their already brimming job descriptions, proposal writing courses and workshops (of all lengths) are increasingly popular (O'Neal, 2008). Across the board, with 85% of all submitted grant proposals being rejected, training becomes a tool to provide an edge for dejected funding applicants (Delserone, Kelly, & Kempf, 2010). Not only is grant development training of vital importance in securing grant funds, but so is gaining knowledge in proper budgeting procedures, learning how to navigate funding sources, and matching them to potential projects (Kleinfelder, Price, & Dake, 2003; Delserone *et al.,* 2010; Boyer & Cockriel, 1998).

New faculty (among other professionals) almost universally expect to write and submit grant proposals, and many academics believe part of their graduate studies should include some form of grant training; in fact, some claim that grant development should be a required course in doctoral programs and an elective in master's degree programs (Klienfelder *et al.,* 2003). If doctoral students receive formal grant training, they have the tools to dive into the grant submission foray as new faculty members (or even before), achieving more funding success sooner than their non-trained peers (Cole, 2006; Reynolds *et al.,* 1998). Indeed, earning grant awards early in a faculty member's career often leads to other benefits, such as an increase in academic publishing and a higher likelihood of receiving promotions and tenure (Kraus, 2007).

Impact on future grant funding

Some studies of semester-long courses with a grant-development focus or core component exist, but few detail the impact of the course on future grant-seeking success. In charting a one-credit university grant development course, Wark (2008) notes the relative lack of literature on teaching grant development to students (though many colleges and universities now offer coursework) and concludes that competent proposal writing requires more than one course of study. While most grant professionals would likely acknowledge the validity of that statement, it should be noted that Dr. Wark's course was only one credit, and cannot therefore be compared to a more intensive three-credit graduate course. Regardless, she declares the course a success based on evaluations at the end, but provides no other indicators of success (Wark, 2008).

Blair, Cline, and Bowen (2007) used a National Science Foundation-style peer-review model to teach grant development to undergraduate biology students, stating that students found the course helpful and several then successfully secured funding. Griffith, Hart, and Goodling (2006) taught grant development as part of a program evaluation course, because they found that formal coursework on the subject is often limited or non-existent. They discovered that knowledge increased throughout the semester, and students believed the course would make them more marketable for various fields. In addition to abstract knowledge acquisition, participation in a semester-long project provided actual grant development experience during each stage of the process (including proposal submission), which would benefit students beyond the course in unanticipated ways, including enhancing their attractiveness to prospective employers (Griffith *et al.,* 2006).

Reynolds *et al.* (1998) provide a model for teaching grant development via a small (12-15 students), workshop-oriented, ongoing two-year course for postdoctoral psychiatry clinical-research fellows. The intensive nature of this course appears to pay off: 16 of 30 course participants received external research grant funding within a year of graduating from the program. Further, eight of the nine most recent graduates secured academic positions, with five of the nine securing prestigious extramural grant awards (Reynolds *et al.,* 1998).

Emphasizing the lack of grant development courses for graduate students, Eissenberg (2003) created a course focusing on the National Institutes of Health (NIH) National Research Services Award (F31) for psychology students. Of the 16 students in his course, six submitted their proposals at the end of the semester, and even though the NIH posted an F31 success rate of only 54.2% for 2001 (200 of the 369 F31 proposals were funded), astoundingly all six applications by Eissenberg's students were funded by NIH (Eissenberg, 2003). Thus, encouraging students to engage in the entire grant preparation and submission process

throughout the semester appears to better equip them for future grant success than focusing on certain elements of the process and abandoning the effort entirely when the course ends.

Of the limited literature available, it appears longer-term, more intensive training increases the likelihood of receiving grant funding.

Course description for EDU 447: Grant writing and other funding strategies for educators

Readings

There is no textbook for this course, but the Miner & Miner books (*Proposal Planning & Writing* and *Models*) are recommended with optional chapter readings throughout the semester. Instead, with the authors' permission, the students read a collection of funded proposals with samples representing submissions to federal, state (New York), fellowship and foundation funding sources. Students consistently remark how helpful it is to read actual funded proposals.

Course content

The difficulty in planning for a semester-long grant development course is to fill the semester with more than simply learning how to search for funding sources and writing a grant proposal. There is so much more to the process than rote searching, a process students often find dull, and preparing a grant proposal for a selected funding source. There is an art to the grant development process that requires much more thought and preparation; and before writing a grant proposal, one must first develop a fundable project.

Finding funding sources

The grant development process includes navigating the multitude of funding opportunities available. However, students lose interest quickly when spending too much time on this topic. Therefore, in EDU 447, funding sources are a subtopic during a portion of each class (approximately 30 minutes) for the first six weeks of the semester: a broad overview in the first week, followed by federal sources, state sources, foundations (national and local), fellowships and other funding sources (such as corporate, professional associations or internal funding opportunities). Students receive a description of the funding process in each category, along with examples of sources. They then move through the method of searching within a particular category through internet demonstrations, viewing helpful websites that guide them through the process. Each week they bring a funding opportunity of interest from

the prior week's presentation to discuss as a class. By the time they are ready to begin working on their grant proposal projects, they have independently searched a variety of funding sources and websites and identified the opportunity they want to pursue without becoming too frustrated or bored with the process.

Developing a fundable project

Many students come to the first day of class with only a vague outline of a project for which they would like to seek grant funding. Their ideas come in many shapes and sizes, and many are for worthy causes. An undergraduate student wants to establish a resource center on campus for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and questioning students; a graduate student seeks funding to start a veterans' outreach program to provide college support; a student affairs employee hopes to start a study-abroad scholarship program for minority students; the list is long. But, these students often have no idea where to go from there. They do not know how big the program should be, where it will be housed, the amount of funding necessary to get it off the ground, or how they will sustain the program once their initial seed money ends. Students need guidance in developing and refining their ideas into fundable projects – and they thought the hardest part was going to be writing the grant proposal!

Evaluating an Opportunity tool

Two useful tools developed for EDU 447 help students flesh out their ideas and develop them into grant-worthy projects. The first is the *Evaluating an Opportunity* tool, a questionnaire designed to force students to think about the long-term consequences and benefits of pursuing grant funding for a particular project. This tool is based on the potential of "sinking the boat" or "missing the boat," essentially giving up other opportunities or valuable resources to pursue grant funding that might have a long-term negative effect (such as spending 50 hours preparing a grant proposal with poor odds of winning an award, to the exclusion of other potentially more important work). While this tool is useful for program administrators down the line, students invariably brush past any negative implications and find their projects "of tremendous benefit" to the organization, believing the agency must pursue the grant opportunity right this very minute.

Internal Project Description tool

The second tool is the *Internal Project Description* tool (IPD), which is a core assignment early in the semester. The IPD is an informal writing tool designed to encourage students to dump all of their thoughts and

ideas about their chosen project into a loosely organized document without worrying about format or style. Questions mimic the traditional layout of a grant proposal, encouraging students to articulate a rationale (no citations necessary at this point, unless they want to include them), project goals, a work plan for achieving their goals, the resources needed to carry out the project successfully (rough budget) and how they plan to evaluate and/or sustain the project. The last question involves potential funding sources, which they should have already identified through weekly funding searches. While there is often some resistance, particularly to identifying an evaluation plan or project sustainability at this stage, students must include something for each section (even if only a sentence or two). This is a pivotal portion of the course, where students begin to take ownership of their projects, becoming invested in the proposal development process. Class discussions become more lively. Student engagement and motivation appear to increase as students gain confidence in their ability to locate potential funding sources, identify a project, and develop it into something fundable. This is the tool that students indicate they use the most when they consider pursuing grants after the course ends, as it helps them to articulate their ideas, think them through and identify the necessary information to successfully apply for funding. It is also an excellent way to share thoughts and ideas with colleagues and potential collaborators.

Promoting reflection

Because reflection is a crucial component of skill acquisition (Griffith *et al.,* 2006), students keep journals throughout the semester, recording tidbits of information from class or advice from the instructor and their peers that is particularly meaningful. This *Tips & Insights* assignment is turned in at the end of the semester. The first few pages list the various "tips" they accumulated, followed by a brief narrative summing up their experience in the course and what they will take with them in terms of knowledge or experience ("insights"). From the perspective of the instructor, this assignment is an enjoyable way to conclude the course, as it charts the evolution of the students' skill development and their frustrations along the way.

Writing the grant proposal

Once students identify a potential funding source and craft their IPD, they move on to the *Grant Proposal* assignment. This is exactly as it sounds, where students prepare a complete proposal (with any required supporting documents) according to the published guidelines provided by the funding source. Grades depend upon how thoroughly the student adheres to the funding guidelines, completeness of the application and how well it is written. If students do well on this assignment, and the

projects progress smoothly throughout the semester (i.e., they identify strong potential funding sources, they have the ability or permission to apply for the funds, and they develop strong proposals), they often submit completed grant proposals at the end of the semester.

The students

Initiated in the fall of 2007 by the graduate school of education, EDU 447 has been held four times thus far, serving a total of 43 students (10 in 2007; 7 in 2008; 12 in 2009; and 14 in 2010). The graduate school of education prepares master's and doctoral level educators, including teachers, counselors and educational leaders. In addition, select undergraduate students from the university who participate in a five-year entrepreneurial program may sometimes register, because they bring a specific project with a grant-funding component, to develop throughout their fifth year. Generally, the course has an even mix of master's and doctoral students, with one or two fifth-year undergraduates. Students who take EDU 447 usually have little to no formal grant development or proposal writing experience. Advanced doctoral students and faculty who have grant development experience can choose a separate workshop series.

Students usually bring a project idea to the first day of class, prepared for the intensive, workshop nature of the course. It is too soon to evaluate the 2010 group's funding success; however the group completed course evaluations. Fourteen students took the course last fall, and nine indicated they planned to submit the proposals they prepared throughout the semester.

Evaluating course effectiveness

To gauge the effectiveness of the course, two types of student feedback were examined. These included course evaluations completed at the end of the semester, and email surveys sent to students later.

Course evaluations

The responses from anonymous course evaluations distributed on the last day of class are consistent for all four years: eight questions relate to the readings and written assignments, course instructor performance and classroom dialogue, with a five-point scale from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree." Students then evaluate the workload and method of student evaluation (grading). Last, and most importantly, they answer a series of four open-ended questions relating to what they learned from the course and the instructor, and they suggest improvements.

The feedback in the first year was mixed, as the two course instructors (dean of education and career grant professional) worked out a teaching rhythm and piloted different assignments. It became exponentially more positive once the course framework was established. Sample comments from evaluations include: "this was not merely a course, but an experience"; "one of the most useful courses I have ever taken"; "good application of theory to practice"; "learned how to write with confidence"; "I grew in ways I hadn't anticipated."

While positive overall, these evaluations influenced scaling back reading assignments, eliminating some of the weekly "busy work" and incorporating opportunities for peer review. The peer review piece became instrumental in the past two years, when students began to partner (due to even numbers both years) according to topic or research interest, to read each other's work, and to provide helpful feedback for revisions. Students also emphasized that their workload was greater than in other courses, which is a consistent theme in the course evaluations of EDU 447 each year. However, Griffith *et al.* (2006) acknowledge that more time is required for a "skills-based course" like this, but they assert that "the benefits are substantial to both the student and the community."

Survey

A brief survey went to all students of EDU 447 (2007-2010), but responses from the 2010 cohort are not in the totals in Tables 1 and 2 below. Therefore, the 29 students from 2007-2009 received a survey with five questions via email relating to how many grant proposals they submitted since EDU 447 ended, how many were successful, and funding amounts. Providing funding sources was optional, and responses would be confidential. Providing copies of successful proposals was not part of the survey process.

The response to the initial surveys was very positive; 22 out of 29 students responded. Most of the 22 respondents agreed to provide follow-up information as needed, but only six actually responded to follow-up requests by email. Of the 22 respondents, exactly half (11) indicated they applied for grant funding at some point since the course ended (they were not asked for specific dates). Of the 11 who applied for grant funding, nine (81%) succeeded. The two unsuccessful applicants submitted one proposal each and elected not to submit follow-up proposals when those were rejected.

Several of the nine successful applicants submitted more than one proposal since the course ended, with mixed results. Overall, the earlier cohorts submitted more proposals than later cohorts, likely because they had more time. Two of the nine successful applicants submitted only one proposal each, which were subsequently funded. Another two of the nine successful applicants submitted two proposals apiece (one received both

grants, and the other received one grant of two). Five students submitted more than three proposals each; two of the five submitted four proposals each and received two grants. The remaining three successful applicants are quite active in pursuing grant opportunities; one set upon a new career path as a grant professional, another used numerous grants to fund a small business initiative and a third used grants to establish and build a number of community programs.

Table 1 provides the number of students surveyed each year, along with their application and subsequent funding rates. Table 2 examines only those students who applied for funding, the number of submissions and funding levels received. While fall 2010 was the largest class (14), the course concluded too recently to include funding rates of students, though at least two have already submitted proposals.

Table 1.   Funding success rates of EDU 447 students 2007-2009 (n=29)

Year	Total # students	Have not applied for funding	Applied for funding	Received Funding	No response or cannot locate
2007	10	4	4	4	2
2008	7	2	4	3	1
2009	12	5	3	2	4
Total # surveyed	29	11	11	9	7

Table 2.   Funding patterns of students who have applied for funding (n=11)

Year	Students who have applied for funding	1 proposal submitted (# students)	Funding received (# students)	Multiple submissions (# students)	Funding received (# students)	Less than $5,000 received total (# students)	More than $5,000 received total (# students)
2007	4	0	n/a	4	4	n/a	4
2008	4	2	1	2	2	n/a	3
2009	3	2	1	1	1	1	1
Total	11	4	2	7	7	1	8

Conclusion and looking ahead

The literature establishes the benefits of grant-development training, and EDU 447 is an effective course in teaching novice proposal writers the skills needed to prepare winning grant proposals, often with the very first application. Clearly, semester-long training in grant development is beneficial and gives students an edge in seeking funds, increasing their funding rates substantially. While approximately half of the students who participated in this project applied for grant funds within three years of taking EDU 447, 81% (nine of 11) successfully secured funds with the first or second application. Without a comparable control group, it is difficult to determine what the funding rates of untrained students would be in relation to those who completed the course, but it is likely that submission rates of untrained students would be much lower.

Regardless, an 81% success rate is significant in examining funding rates of the general population. Future project extensions could include tracking students longitudinally to determine the long-term impact of learning this skill on finding a job and subsequent employment activities (whether it changes their career trajectories or simply allows them to incorporate some form of technical writing in their future positions). Even without considering funding rates, EDU 447 is an intensive course designed to teach basic grant development skills and increase comfort with the funding process, a goal which it achieves according to student feedback and course evaluations. The topics and tools used in this course are replicable in any educational setting with similar projected outcomes. It would be interesting to pilot courses of different lengths with varying intensities to determine the optimal amount of grant training leading to the highest possible rate of funding success. Any educational organization would be well-served by offering such a course, better preparing its students or employees to navigate the complicated and sometimes overwhelming process of seeking and securing external funding.

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Biographical Information

Anne Sisk, Grant Researcher and Writer, University of Rochester, has been writing successful grant proposals for more than seven years, beginning in the nonprofit human services sector, moving into municipal

grant development, and finally into educational grant preparation. As a freelance grant professional, she secured more than $2 million for municipal clients since 2006. As the Grant Researcher and Writer for the School of Education at the University of Rochester, she assists faculty in securing millions in research and institutional grants. Since the fall of 2007, Sisk has taught EDU 447: Grant writing and other funding strategies for educators, initially co-designing and co-teaching with the dean of the school from 2007-2009. She is the facilitator or co-facilitator of several workshops on grant development for faculty and university personnel and is regularly an invited guest speaker in university graduate courses. A graduate of Hamilton College with a Master's from Drexel University, Sisk advocated for semester-long coursework in grant development and proposal writing since her informal introduction to the subject almost a decade ago. Contact Anne at: asisk@warner.rochester.edu

Teaching Grantsmanship in a Nonprofit Leadership Class

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GPCI Competency 07: Knowledge of practices and services that raise the level of professionalism of grant developers

Abstract

Proposal-writing skills are critical for employees in a wide range of organizations, particularly in challenging economic times which demand diverse funding sources. This paper describes an innovative and multifaceted approach to teaching proposal writing to students enrolled in a nonprofit leadership course at a large, metropolitan university. The approach included a hands-on, field component in nonprofit organizations, in-depth organizational analyses involving interviews with nonprofit leaders, guest speakers including a grant professional and a foundation officer, grantsmanship textbooks loaned to all students for the semester, and review of students' completed proposals by a grant professional and the course instructor. Students presented their proposals to the class at the end of the semester and voted for the best presentations and proposal ideas. A celebration occurred at the end of the semester involving students and nonprofit partners. The service aspect of this course is part of the university's service learning faculty fellowship program. Additionally, in collaboration with students, during the semester the instructor modeled the application preparation process by writing and submitting a winning grant proposal to the university for funds to enhance the course. The paper adds to the existing literature on teaching grantsmanship to college students through experiential learning. It describes the various strategies used to introduce students to grant proposal writing and discusses challenges and lessons learned.

Introduction

Obtaining grant funding is critical for nonprofit organizations, and nonprofit leaders need more training in order to be successful proposal writers. In a survey of several hundred nonprofit administrators, fundraising and proposal preparation were identified most frequently as areas in which respondents believe they need additional training (Dolan, 2002). One option for providing this training is through university-based nonprofit leadership education programs.

While the nonprofit sector is large and growing (Cryer, 2008), nonprofit leadership education is a field relatively new to higher education (Garvey, 2009). The demand for such education continues to exceed supply (Garvey, 2009). Furthermore, nearly four out of five nonprofit leaders surveyed by the Nonprofit Leadership Alliance (2011) suggested that additional experience-based learning opportunities would enhance the professional development of future nonprofit leaders.

Limited scholarly literature exists on teaching real-world proposal writing skills in the context of nonprofit leadership education. This paper begins to fill that void by describing an innovative and multifaceted approach to teaching proposal preparation to students in a college course on nonprofit leadership.

Teaching grant proposal writing

Most of the literature on teaching grantsmanship to college students identified in this review focuses on service learning and other community-based learning activities. Several authors describe partnerships in which college students prepare grant proposals for nonprofit organizations as a way to develop proposal writing skills. Undergraduate and graduate students representing a wide range of disciplines take these courses.

For example, Griffith, Hart, and Goodling (2006) describe the use of service learning to teach proposal writing skills to master's level students enrolled in a course on program evaluation. Cook (2008) provides a description of a service learning partnership in which undergraduate human development and family studies students in the United States, participating in a senior capstone course, developed a grant proposal for a nonprofit organization in South Africa. Mennen (2006) writes about the use of proposal writing in a service learning initiative with undergraduate students in an advanced writing course. MacTavish *et al.* (2006) discuss application preparation as one of several experiential learning strategies for undergraduate students in human services. Finally, Addams, Woodbury, Allred, and Addams (2010) explain the use of persuasive solicitation letter writing assignments with students in business communication courses on behalf of nonprofit organizations.

Some of the literature on teaching grant proposal writing to college students focuses on courses that help students to prepare research-based grant proposals. Blair, Kline, and Bowen (2007) describe the use of a student peer-review process to help undergraduate biology majors develop the skills necessary to prepare grant proposals for biology research. Similarly, Eissenberg (2003) describes a proposal-writing seminar developed for graduate students in psychology to give them the tools to prepare grant proposals for potential submission to the National Institutes for Health.

 Some papers focus specifically on partnerships with nonprofit organizations in the context of nonprofit leadership. For example, Katsioloudes and Arsenault (2001) explain their use of service learning in an undergraduate nonprofit leadership course for seniors to develop analyses of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) of nonprofit organizations. Miller-Millesen and Mould (2004) describe a project-based learning initiative involving undergraduate and graduate students in the provision of technical assistance to nonprofit organizations in Kyrgyzstan. Bright, Bright, and Haley (2007) describe a technical assistance program for local nonprofit organizations implemented by faculty and graduate students. None of these articles focuses explicitly on grantsmanship skill development although Bright *et al.* (2007) note that their efforts to assist one organization with its strategic planning initiative resulted in the organization's receiving a $50,000 grant.

Each of the works cited above is primarily descriptive in nature. Authors suggest that the chosen methodologies enhanced their courses; and student learning in proposal writing and related skills provided tangible benefits to partnering organizations. Some data support these claims; however, they warrant more formal research.

This literature review does not identify any articles specifically addressing teaching proposal writing skills in the context of nonprofit leadership education. This paper begins to fill an apparent gap in the existing scholarly literature by describing an innovative approach to teaching grant proposal writing in a nonprofit leadership course. The strategies used in this course build upon and extend those identified in this literature review.

The course

Fundamentals of Leadership in the Nonprofit Sector is a course offered through Towson University's Department of Family Studies and Community Development. It is a core course for students engaged in the Leadership in the Nonprofit Sector track, one of four track options for students majoring in family studies. It is a combined undergraduate and graduate course with additional requirements for graduate students.

The goals of the course are for students to understand the size, scope, history and diversity of the nonprofit sector; to appreciate the functions and operations of nonprofit organizations; and to learn about the roles and responsibilities of nonprofit leaders. The course surveys a wide range of issues pertinent to nonprofit leadership such as development and management of financial resources, human resources, and programs; planning and evaluation; and branding, marketing, community outreach, and public relations.

Proposal writing is a major assignment for this course, because it is an important skill for nonprofit leaders, and because writing a grant proposal requires understanding multiple aspects of nonprofit leadership. The instructor used the course as the focus of a service learning faculty fellowship in the 2008-2009 academic year. With the support of this fellowship, she used several strategies in spring 2009 to teach application preparation skills to students and to strengthen their knowledge of nonprofit organizations through hands-on experiences with nonprofit organizations. Nineteen students completed the course, including one graduate student.

Students chose nonprofit organizations as the focus of their service learning and proposal writing for this course. They reviewed several resources to identify nonprofit organizations. Online resources included the membership directory of the Maryland Association of Nonprofit Organizations, and the university's and the department's lists of community partners. Students selected and worked with a wide range of nonprofit organizations with interests as diverse as pregnancy, domestic violence, disabilities, seniors, arts and sports.

Students spent a minimum of eight hours onsite volunteering for the selected organization and/or shadowing a leader. Students' service hours included doing work that helped them gain an understanding and appreciation of the mission and activities of the organization. For example, one student helped out at a Goodwill store and another helped with set-up and clean-up before and after services at her church. A third student spent a full day shadowing the director of a small youth leadership organization. Students wrote service plans and reflection reports to document and reflect upon their overall experiences with the agencies.

Students held one face-to-face interview with the executive director or another person in a leadership capacity to gather information for preparing an extensive organizational analysis. They used interviews, observations, and information gleaned from the organizations' websites and publications to prepare their organizational analyses, due approximately mid-semester. Students reviewed other materials as well, such as the organizations' annual reports, budgets, organizational charts, and program brochures. Their analyses included information on the history, mission, vision and values of the organization, its organizational structure, staffing and leadership; its financial management and

resource development; and its programs, governance and community participation. Papers included an analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the organization (SWOT analysis) as in Katsioloudes and Arsenault (2001). Based upon the SWOT analysis, students included in their papers a series of recommendations for strengthening the organization.

During the second half of the semester, students developed grant proposals based upon their organizational analyses. Specifically, students selected one of their recommendations and used it as the basis of their grant proposal. Students were creative in their ideas for what was needed and their proposals reflected their imaginative thinking and unique perspectives. For example, one student wrote a proposal to build a playground on the site of a shelter for victims of domestic violence. She viewed the playground as a needed resource for children living at the shelter. Another student developed a grant proposal to provide mental health services for residents of a nursing home.

For the assignment, students used a modified version of the Association of Baltimore Area Grantmakers' (2011) Common Grant Application format. Students identified and used scholarly literature to support their proposals. The deadline for the proposals was toward the end of the semester. The instructor and the grant development professional reviewed them.

At the end of the semester, students gave oral presentations to the class that included a brief summary of the organizational analysis and of the project proposal. Students' presentations included use of PowerPoint and handouts. Students then nominated one another for four winning categories: best overall presentation, best visuals, best speaker and best proposal idea.

To lay the groundwork for this assignment, the instructor provided the students with explicit guidelines for how to identify nonprofit organizations, approach nonprofit leaders, conduct interviews of them and appropriately follow up with and thank them, gather data from nonprofit organizations, and develop organizational analyses and grant proposals. Several guest speakers spoke to the class over the course of the semester. The executive director of a small nonprofit organization and a program director within a larger nonprofit organization gave broad overviews of their organizations. A foundation program officer gave a talk specifically about how foundations function and make funding decisions. Students had time in class to ask questions and problem-solve together about any challenges they faced in identifying or working with nonprofit organizations.

Serendipitous enhancements to course

During the semester, an internal funding opportunity became available to support existing service learning courses. The instructor informed the

class about this opportunity, and together they generated ideas about ways that the course could be enhanced. The instructor developed a grant proposal based upon student input and received funds for three purposes: to engage the assistance of a grant professional in the course, to provide additional training on the application preparation process and offer students supplementary feedback on their grant proposals; to purchase a class set of books on grant development for student use; and to enhance the end-of-semester reflection and celebration event.

The grant professional gave two guest lectures on grant preparation, read all students' grant proposals, and gave students individualized feedback. The two presentations were videotaped for use in future classes. The first lecture gave a general overview of sources of funds, types of grants, what information to include in grant proposals, and some of the reasons that grant proposals fail. When judging the proposals, the grant professional used a rubric he developed for providing feedback to students on their proposals. He evaluated each section of the proposal (organizational background, project description, description of need, evaluation process and budget). Then he assessed the overall format, gave an evaluation of the quality of the proposal and gave his perspective on the fundability of the proposal. He agreed to make himself available to students as they were preparing their grant proposals. Several students emailed him with questions, and he provided valuable and timely feedback. For example, one student, whose proposal focused on extracurricular sports for high school students, requested feedback from the grant professional on whether it made more sense to request funds to purchase a bus or to simply rent a bus when needed, given the frequency with which the bus would be used and the expense of maintenance. Other students requested feedback on early drafts of their proposals.

In the final presentation to the class, the grant professional gave general feedback and talked about the grant management process as well as how to research and identify foundations.

The text purchased with grant funds is *The Foundation Center's Guide to Proposal Writing, 5th Edition* (Geever, 2007). Purchasing a class set allowed students enrolled in the course to borrow copies for the duration of the semester.

A culminating reflection event occurred at the end of the semester to honor nonprofit partners. This special session of class was open to department faculty, the university's service learning fellows and the service learning subcommittee, and to the community partners that worked with the class over the semester. The class, three department faculty, four faculty and staff from the service learning subcommittee and five community partners attended the event. Two students gave grant proposal presentations. Students who earned the most votes from their peers in each of the award category areas received certificates as did all nonprofit representatives in attendance.

Benefits, challenges and lessons learned

When students submitted their grant proposals, they also provided feedback on what they learned through the proposal writing experience. In one student's words, "[I've learned] a new way of thinking and writing." Students identified specific aspects of grantwriting they mastered, such as identifying the need and preparing an evaluation. Some students noted that it is difficult to write a grant proposal and that is takes a lot of time.

When asked what they liked most about their grant proposals, students noted that they liked their grant ideas and the creative aspects of the grant proposal. Some noted that they liked learning about the organizations or the population served. Some students mentioned that they enjoyed doing the background research required for the proposal. Students also noted that it felt real to them; they wrote that they liked "having the opportunity to do something [they] may do in the future" and "the thought that the program could actually happen."

This was a demanding course for students. The course required them to exercise professional behavior, written and oral communication skills and critical thinking skills, all important skills in nonprofit leadership (Katioloudes & Arsenault, 2001). Students experienced the level of workload as high compared with other courses, as did the Master's level students in Griffith *et al.* (2006).

Students identified many challenges they experienced in writing their grant proposals. Some mentioned that it was difficult for them to prepare the budget section of the proposal. For example, one student wrote that it was challenging, "simply finding data to estimate cost" and another struggled with "knowing the budget [of the organization] since it was unavailable to me." Students also noted that "making [the] budget work and seem realistic" was difficult, as was "not knowing what's too much or expensive." Some students wrote that they did not know how to begin or what to write or they did not think they had enough to say and thought their proposals were not long enough.

Given its demands, a course such as this might be better experienced as a senior capstone course, as described in some of the scholarly literature (Cook, 2008; MacTavish *et al.,* 2006) or as an honors course. Alternatively, there may be ways to reduce the workload by dividing the course into two, with the organizational analysis occurring in a prerequisite course. A benefit of this approach would be the possibility to provide multiple complete drafts of the proposal over the course of the semester so that the final piece would be more polished. Another possibility is for students to develop their analyses and proposals in teams rather than individually. Griffith *et al.* (2006) suggest that group projects might be particularly appropriate in rural areas where fewer nonprofit organizations may be available; however, group projects may also be useful for allowing students to share the workload and to learn from and support one another.

Ideas for the future

For this course, students had the choice to share their final grant proposals with their partnering organizations. In the future one option is to make that a requirement of the course. Another appropriate next step would be for student grantwriters to shadow or to develop proposals in direct partnership with grant professionals within nonprofit organizations. Another model is for nonprofit organizations in need of proposal-writing assistance to request the support of students in a service-learning capacity through the course. Possible benefits of this model are that students would not need to identify partnering organizations on their own, and they would be able to respond to real needs. On the other hand, students might have less choice in selecting their organizations, and they would have to follow the organizations' directives for the grant proposal rather than pursuing their own ideas from their organizational analyses.

It is important to note that this paper does not focus on the differentiation between service learning and other types of experiential learning. There is vast literature on service learning and other experiential learning approaches available for additional information. While the course described here benefitted from service-learning resources, some may argue that it lacked enough actual service to qualify as a service learning course. In "The Service Matrix," de Montmollin and Hendricks (2006) propose a matrix of service alternatives which vary in value to the community and degree of formal learning. Based on their model, this course might be more appropriately described as community-based learning, because there is a high level of formal learning for students with relatively low value to the community. Some of the ideas described above would help to move the course toward a higher level of service.

Conclusion

Grantsmanship skills are critical for nonprofit leaders and should be an integral component of nonprofit leadership education. A promising method for teaching proposal writing is through real-world experiential learning opportunities with nonprofit community partners. The approach described in this paper includes multiple strategies. Further assessment could be done to determine which components are essential versus which strategies may be desirable but not essential. Each element of proposal writing instruction and support was valuable for student learning and instructors are encouraged to consider adoption of these strategies, in full or in part.

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The Grant Lab Experiment: Creating a Grant Writing Laboratory

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GPCI Competency 01: Knowledge of how to research, identify, and match funding resources to meet specific needs

GPCI Competency 02: Knowledge of organizational development as it pertains to grant seeking

GPCI Competency 03: Knowledge of strategies for effective program and project design and development.

GPCI Competency 04: Knowledge of how to craft, construct, and submit an effective grant application.

GPCI Competency 05: Knowledge of post-award grant management practices sufficient to inform effective grant design and development.

GPCI Competency 08: Knowledge of methods and strategies that cultivate and maintain relationships between fund-seeking and recipient organizations and funders

Abstract

The future of grant seeking in many organizations requires that grant professionals find ways to help their organizations' members create successful proposals by offering training and support services that have true impact. An organizational commitment to increasing sponsored funding attained by organization members requires a combination of technology, training and proposal development resources. At Nova Southeastern University (NSU) in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, the creation of the Grant Writing Laboratory met this challenge. The Grant Writing Laboratory is a service provider in NSU's main library where faculty and staff can access proposal

development services specifically focused on obtaining funding for research grants. The NSU Grant Writing Laboratory (Grant Lab) facilitates grant training, collaborating, funding searches, grant planning, budgeting, project planning, proposal development, and proposal formatting and packaging. The Grant Lab is in a central location, equipped with technology and staff to support grant seeking efforts. Both first-time grant seekers and seasoned grant getters utilize the services offered. To date over 700 clients have attended training workshops or Grant Lab events, and the Grant Writing Manager has consulted on over 185 grant opportunities.

Introduction

Organizations of all kinds face the looming specter of escalating costs and fiscal pressure. Colleges and universities across the nation experience increasing pressure to win grant funding to help offset the decrease in government support for higher education (Wimsatt, Trice, & Langley, 2009; Porter, 2003). Grant seeking is statistically unlikely to be successful for the majority of applicants (Porter, 2003). For example, the National Institutes of Health, a federal agency that is the source of much of the research funding awarded to colleges and universities, received almost 46,000 new research proposals in 2010 and funded only 21 percent of those (*NIH Data Book*, 2009). Grant professionals, employed by organizations with seemingly insatiable appetites for grant funding, look for new ways to increase sponsored funding. The future of grant seeking in many organizations requires that grant professionals find ways to help their colleagues create successful proposals by offering training and support services that have true impact (Boyer & Cockriel, 1997). An organizational commitment to increase sponsored funding requires a combination of technology, training, and proposal development resources. At Nova Southeastern University in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, this challenge led to creation of a Grant Writing Laboratory.

Background

In January 2008, Nova Southeastern University (NSU) opened its Office of Research and Technology Transfer (RTT), an administrative department tasked with increasing research at NSU and with facilitating the commercialization of inventions (technology transfer). NSU had, for many years, enjoyed a strong reputation as a teaching university and now wanted to expand its research capability. This meant, among other things, winning more research funding.

Establishing a more productive mode of grant seeking was a complex endeavor for several reasons:

- *Recession.* The economic downturn made grant seeking more competitive because of an increased number of grant seekers, a reduced number of opportunities and increased institutional needs.

- *Reality.* Many grant professionals have the responsibility to assist with grants but actually end up doing the bulk of the work on proposals.

- *Responsiveness.* In an organizational environment where many faculty or staff try their hands at grantsmanship for the first time, there may be significant gaps in knowledge that must be addressed. In response to the demand for funding dollars, there is a need to provide training and support for grant basics:
  - Where to find funding?
  - What is fundable?
  - How is proposal writing different from other types of writing; proposal components?
  - How long does it take to complete the grant process, including the internal processes unique to the institution?
  - What to do with a rejection or partial funding award?
  - How to establish the kinds of collaborations that are requested by funders?

For NSU, as for many organizations, the solution lies in getting organization members—the faculty, the program managers, the project supervisors, the department directors or anyone designated as the "grant liaison"— to develop the skills and have the support they need to create their own grant applications. The concept that someone other than the grant professional can assume responsibility for some tasks in the grant process is a radical one for many organizations. Grant seeking is not a skill that most people have, and so this evolution in thinking requires an investment in training and support. Alternative solutions used by some organizations are not feasible for many others: hiring more grant professionals, using grant consultants or decreasing the number of grant applications are not options that management in many organizations will consider. For those organizations, a solution lies in using the human resources at hand. Grant professionals need to look to the people in their organizations to take up some of the grant load, and not only to shoulder more of the work, but to do it well and successfully.

The concept

The idea of a Grant Writing Laboratory (Grant Lab) was partially conceived by NSU Vice President of Research and Technology Transfer (RTT), Gary Margules, ScD, as an innovative way to provide faculty and staff with the support, training and motivation to increase grant-seeking

and improve likelihood of funding (Margules, Silverman, & Sterry, 2008). His idea originated in knowledge of engineering methodology and revolved around providing the right environment for stakeholders from different areas of expertise to meet, brainstorm, research solutions, develop plans and implement them. These activities are not unlike the process that grant professionals follow when planning a new grant project. In fact, the grant training and support services offered in the Grant Lab result in teaching clients many of the same competencies and skills that grant professionals use every day.

The Grant Lab opened in June 2009, in a 500-square-foot room in the Alvin Sherman Library, the university's main library, located centrally on the main campus. The room has technology, furnishings and functionality to create an environment that will accommodate numerous activities and foster creativity. One staff person, the Grant Writing Manager, refines, creates, institutionalizes and manages the Grant Lab and works with the Vice President of RTT to accomplish the Grant Lab's goals. The university has the advantage of excellent support from an existing Office of Grants and Contracts that manages pre- and post-award grant administration tasks seamlessly. Without a suitable infrastructure such as this, the concept of a Grant Lab might not work well.

The NSU Grant Writing Laboratory is a focal point for grant creation at NSU. The services offered in the Grant Lab aim to attract a primary target audience of faculty, although a small percentage of Grant Lab clients are university staff members. Grant Lab services include brainstorming, project planning, help with funding searches, grant process planning, proposal editing, long-term grant planning for career development and various training classes and grant resources, all offered as an enticement to clients to utilize the facility. In fact, it is not a hard sell.

Most universities have an expectation that faculty will attain sponsored funding, typically for research projects. A 2005 study conducted by the Federal Demonstration Partnership surveyed over 6,000 faculty members on issues having to do with federally funded grant research (Wimsatt *et al.,* 2009). The responses revealed that faculty viewed grant development to be the most onerous task in the grant acquisition process and that the lack of understanding of and training in grantsmanship were barriers to faculty grant seeking (Wimsatt, et al., 2009). The almost immediate demand for services in the Grant Lab demonstrated that faculty who had experience with grant proposal rejection or who were new to grant-seeking welcomed a support service to improve their results.

Core competencies

Organizational Commitment. The Grant Writing Laboratory offers a broad range of instruction in core competencies. The support provided for

faculty and staff is the right combination of qualified staff, convenient location, state-of-the-art technology (even the movable furniture is designed for creativity) and established methods to increase success in the grant seeking process for clients. NSU's administration at the highest levels (deans, provost, president and chancellor) supports the Grant Lab concept, showing the university's commitment to support faculty and staff. Conversely, this concept fulfills and exceeds faculty and staff expectations of grant support. A survey of faculty at eight state colleges in New Jersey concluded that when faculty see the university's administration committing resources to providing support for grant seeking, they feel encouraged and more motivated to seek grants (Monahan, 1993).

Grant Process Support. The clients of the Grant Lab come at all stages of the grant process. A typical client might contact the grant writing manager for a consult before a proposal is written. At this point in the process, an evaluation determines if that client needs advice or training on grant strategy, project planning, explanation of NSU's internal grant process, or proposal development. The Grant Writing Manager establishes a productive working relationship with clients spanning their long-term grant strategies and multiple proposals.

Proposal Development Services. The Grant Writing Manager does not write grant proposals for clients. To do so would create an enormous bottleneck in a large organization and cripple the functionality of the Grant Lab concept. Rather, clients who need help writing receive assistance in various ways, not the least of which is a robust training schedule that includes proposal writing topics. Workshops address specific proposal components like needs statements, goals & objectives, budget justifications, and writing tips for targeting specific funders or for writing specific types of proposals, such as research proposals.

In addition, the Grant Writing Manager has funder-specific "tool kits" for use by clients to help with the writing process. These tool kits include funder-specific application templates, organizational boilerplate (text that describes the organization and can be re-used in new applications with little or no revision) , collections of the latest information available on crafting winning applications, feedback from agency reviewers and proposal samples. In addition, the Grant Writing Manager facilitates contact between funder program officers and clients to help them verify the appropriateness of their projects in terms of the agency's funding priorities and to open communication about various aspects of the application process.

Clients learn about the university's grant process and submission requirements and then receive a suggested timeline for meeting both internal and external deadlines. While there is no hard and fast rule for when proposals must be received for review, the Grant Writing Manager

maintains contact with clients during their proposal development processes and works with them to adhere to the suggested timeline. Clients who cannot return their draft (or revisions of the draft) to the Grant Writing Manager in a timely manner receive assistance to the greatest extent possible until the grant deadline. As part of the review process, proposals are carefully checked to guarantee that the applicant followed application instructions, met all proposal review criteria and achieved an appropriate level of procedural detail. Above all, this review ensures that the application succeeds in making a compelling case for funding.

Collaborations. One area greatly impacted by the Grant Lab is facilitation of collaborations. The existence of the Grant Lab, along with its staff and programming, provide a focal point for research at NSU and for bridge-building among the various colleges and centers. It is the ultimate matchmaking service in a very big university, where before there was no formal mechanism for making grant-related connections. It is not unusual for the Grant Writing Manager, during a client consult, to suggest collaboration opportunities with faculty from other NSU colleges or community partners who may have similar interests or who might be embarking on a related project. This is especially helpful to faculty who are new to grant-seeking and may lack the experience or contacts to initiate such collaborations. Similarly, the Grant Lab serves as a contact point for external collaborators (the university has many community partners) to explore possible collaborations.

Goals

The Grant Writing Laboratory's operational goals are numerous, and include:

- Make the NSU community aware of the existence of the Grant Writing Laboratory and the services offered there.
- Seek faculty who are new to grant-seeking and provide them with training on grantsmanship and NSU's grant process.
- Support faculty who actively seek grants with all Grant Lab services.
- Bring speakers from outside the university to inform and inspire faculty on research and grant-seeking.
- Utilize the Grant Lab physical space for meetings, strategic planning, departmental retreats, events, trainings, and grant consults.
- Expand virtual Grant Lab services on the NSU website to reach a wider audience of faculty.

Situation analysis

Strengths. Among the strengths of the Grant Lab is its location, which is perceived as neutral territory. Universities, like many other organizations where there are functional separations in structure, often have colleges or centers that operate fairly independently. Having a central resource not associated with any college avoids the appearance of any intra-organizational bias.

The room itself is well-designed with state-of-the-art technology. The staff, the Grant Writing Manager, is one of approximately 400 certified grant professionals in the United States. The training programs offered by the Grant Lab are well-attended and on occasion fill completely. The Grant Lab maintains a bank of funder-specific grant tool-kits, grant templates, and samples to help clients with proposal development.

Weaknesses. One limiting factor of the current situation in the Grant Lab stems from budget constraints rooted in the global recession. The popularity of these support services challenges the single staff member to accommodate all the requests for grant assistance. Another important factor to consider is the effect of economy on the amount of grant funding available. The primary funder for grants addressed through the Grant Lab is the federal government. An economic downturn generally results in greater need on the part of applicants and fewer dollars available for awards. The resulting increase in competition for grant dollars means it is more difficult for grant seekers to demonstrate success, although the need to improve the quality of grant applications in order to be competitive may ultimately drive business to the Grant Lab.

Opportunities. There are many opportunities for the Grant Lab. Many of NSU's 16 colleges are hiring new faculty, and some of them are research faculty (without teaching loads that would prohibit them from pursuing research grant funding). A new organizational emphasis on faculty involvement in research increased the number of inquiries the Grant Lab receives from faculty about training. In addition to live training events, the grant trainings are now also available to faculty on the university's online learning site. Future plans for the Grant Lab include expansion of virtual resources to increase outreach and improve responsiveness to client needs.

Threats. The threats to acquiring grant funding and to continued operation of the Grant Lab include external forces that increase competition for grant funding and also internal budget constraints that hinder the ability of the Grant Lab to keep pace with the demands of its clients. There are also attitudinal barriers; the increased competition for grant funding intimidates some faculty, whether they previously received funding or not. Grant Lab customers, highly educated and professional educators, may not wish to seek help with the writing process. Since

grant-seeking is a competitive endeavor, some faculty choose not to participate in the competition to avoid giving a great deal of time and effort to a project that may never be funded. Finally, significant teaching loads, administrative obligations, clinic duties and other tasks all serve as obstacles to faculty participation in grant related activities.

Figure 1 shows the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis for the Grant Lab.

Strengths	**Weaknesses**
• Certified grant professional staff • Neutral physical location • Well-equipped with technology • Room design • High client satisfaction • Robust training program • Grant toolkits/templates/samples	• Economic impact on available grant funding • Budget constraints • Single staff member
Opportunities	**Threats**
• Many new faculty are being hired • Grant training is in demand • Happy customers = repeat business • Virtual Grant Lab services	• Budget constraints • Increased competition for funding • Attitudinal barriers • Other faculty job obligations

Figure 1. SWOT Analysis

Target market

The target market for the Grant Writing Laboratory is the NSU faculty (Ross, 2010). NSU employs 678 full-time faculty (Nova Southeastern University, 2009), and according to the annual report by the Office of Grants and Contracts, 175 proposals were submitted to external funders in Fiscal Year 2010 (Office of Research and Technology Transfer, 2010). There is no way to measure how many faculty started the grant-seeking process and gave up prior to submission, nor is it known how many faculty desire to undertake some type of grant-funded project but do not due to some obstacle they encounter. What is known is that cultivating research at NSU is a priority for the NSU administration. To a large extent, research relies on grant funding, and that is hard to

obtain! Major universities that have robust grant programs have a strong support system for their faculty (the NSU Grant Writing Laboratory is a novel approach). Some faculty are beginning their careers and have little grant-seeking experience; others have success applying for grants but feel overwhelmed with their teaching/clinic/work load and would benefit from assistance with proposals. A survey of faculty at another research university revealed that 51 percent of respondents received training in grant development during their graduate studies and still were unsuccessful at pursuing grants (Boyer & Cockriel, 2001). This research demonstrates that even an audience that has some exposure to the principles of grantsmanship can benefit from additional training, consultation and support.

Customer relationship management

A strong customer relationship management system is a means to creating a customer-centric operation and, as such, is the foundation for both the marketing and operational strategy (Marshall & Johnston, 2010). The core principles of relationship management are integral to the Grant Writing Laboratory Marketing Plan (2010), which focuses services on the customer's needs. Often, this manifests in typical Grant Lab services that become highly customized.

For example, presentations to faculty at the College of Medicine include information on opportunities at National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the strategic research career development achieved through grant acquisition. Different funders interest faculty at the Mailman Segal Center for Human Development, who may prefer to hear about grants from the Department of Education and sponsorship and clinical trial opportunities available to them as a training facility for early childhood education. During individual grant consults, clients receive information targeted to their areas of interest. The Grant Writing Manager keeps an Excel spreadsheet of clients and tracks which grant opportunities they consider, what project ideas they seek funding for, and other relevant information such as collaboration needs. The Grant Writing Manager uses the information collected in this spreadsheet to notify clients about new funding opportunities and upcoming submission cycles.

Customer relationship management helps to steer Grant Lab business strategy for the future. Monitoring business metrics, like number of client encounters, number and types of funding opportunities, frequency of requests for assistance on resubmissions, proposal success data, and workshop and client surveys, all provide useful data to improve service to Grant Lab customers. For example, after the first year of Grant Lab operations, review of client statistics showed a high percentage of requests for assistance on proposals to the NIH. In response to this information, the Grant Lab developed new workshops addressing specific

NIH proposal development techniques, and the Grant Writing Manager created toolkits for clients to give them templates and samples of the common elements of NIH grants. One very successful workshop resulted from requests on client surveys for more grant mentorship from NIH-funded colleagues. The Grant Writing Manager collaborated with faculty development professionals at NSU's Health Professions Division to create an NIH-themed seminar featuring faculty presenters who shared their advice on writing NIH proposals.

Keeping the customer at the center of daily operations gives high customer satisfaction and drives more traffic to the Grant Lab by creating buzz and word-of-mouth recommendations. All these factors resulted in steady growth in the number of clients served and a high level of client satisfaction (as evidenced on client surveys) since the Lab opened for business in June 2009. Numerous outside organizations interested in replicating this model seek information and advice from the Grant Lab.

Conclusions

The Grant Lab experiment at NSU is a successful one and continues to grow and evolve to better meet the needs of faculty pursing funding opportunities. These successes pave the way for offering more virtual Grant Lab services to increase the outreach of the training activities and tools available to clients. To date more than 700 clients have attended training workshops or Grant Lab events and the Grant Writing Manager has consulted on more than 185 grant opportunities. The support provided for faculty is the right combination of the qualified staff, convenient location, state-of-the-art technology and established methods to increase success in the grant-seeking process for clients. Both first-time grant seekers and seasoned grant winners use the services, and other organizations are starting to replicate the Grant Lab concept within their own infrastructures.

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Issues in Teaching and Learning About Grants

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GPCI Competency 02: Knowledge of organizational development as it pertains to grant seeking

GPCI Competency 04: Knowledge of how to craft, construct, and submit an effective grant application

GPCI Competency 07: Knowledge of practices and services that raise the level of professionalism of grant professionals

Abstract

To provide a context for teaching and learning about grants, this article describes nearly two decades of seminars, 14 years of online courses, ten years of a 10-credit college certification program, a mentoring program and student successes totaling more than $1.2 billion in grant funding in two-and-a-half years. The content acquisition, skill development and post-education success of more than 2,000 learners compose the analysis. Teacher issues include types of delivery formats, alignment strategies with competencies from the Grant Professionals Certification Institute (GPCI), textbook selection, significance of technology, curriculum development and lesson planning, product development and peer reviews. Learner issues include templates and modeling, work-based learning including paid internships, and evaluations of knowledge and skill mastery. This article includes three suggestions for setting up an internship program. As with anthropological inquiry, this paper helps define the field of grant education by identifying issues in teaching and learning about grants. In doing so, teachers may expand upon 19 years of teaching and learning research to develop

more effective and engaging in-person and virtual courses that help learners be more successful in their grant professional careers. Learners may gain insights that empower them to expand their options for acquiring grant knowledge and skill mastery and to become successful teachers of tomorrow.

Introduction

Individuals frequently enter into the grant profession by default (Wells, 2011, p. 1), by accident (Ziegler, 2010, p. 1), or through the back door (Annarino, 2010, p. 1). "Learning by doing" and "trial by fire" are commonplace experiences for many beginning grant professionals.

As grant professionals progress, increase their success and figure out what works, they may reach a point in their careers when they have an opportunity to share their expertise with others. This may take place in formal settings like classrooms, conferences and structured educational gatherings. It also may take place in more informal environments like phone calls or emails for advice, team meetings, and one-on-one conversations with interested learners.

Much like professionals thrown into grant writing, grant educators often share knowledge and build learner skills with little formal education around teacher and learner issues. Moreover, since they, themselves, might have little formal training when starting in the grant profession, grant educators frequently lack class-based learning models from which to draw when they begin to teach (Johncock, 2003, p. viii).

To contribute to the field in the area of grant education, this paper presents key issues inherent in teaching and learning about grants in formal settings such as classes, seminars, mentoring and even online classes and webinars. Nineteen years of teaching experience provides a context for discussing and defining issues in teaching and learning.

Background

In 1993, the Community Services division of Truckee Meadows Community College decided to serve the community by offering a one-evening seminar in grant development in Reno, Nevada. Forty-five individuals registered for that first class. From 1993 until 2001, 16 seminars served over 320 learners.

Materials for early classes came from sample proposals that were successful; a compilation of library and book resources; a list of Nevada foundations; sample requests for proposals (RFPs); sample reviewer evaluation forms; samples of key sections of proposals such as the agency introduction, problem statement and methods; and an anthology

of collected works by Shellow and Stella (1989). As the Internet gained popularity and relevant resources became available online, the list grew to include website addresses and online resources.

Three-hour seminars only touched the surface of grant knowledge. In 1997, Nevada faculty designed a 12-week, basics online course that included aspects missing in shorter seminars. New components included multiple examples of proposals that follow one application format (rather than two or more formats that confused new learners); critiques of proposals utilizing a standardized format; and a peer review process.

In 2001, a college-wide curriculum committee designed and approved a 10-credit college grant certification program. Class-based learning included two semester-long courses: basics and refining skills, as well as one-day seminars focusing on specialized topics like writing objectives, project management, and funding research. Learners could take either in-person or virtual classes to fulfill basic level requirements.

Adapting work-based learning concepts highlighted by the School-to-Work Opportunities Act (GovTrack.us, 1994), the program included paid internships as well as independent studies where students could get credit for completing well-structured learning plans. For example, one learner created a learning plan to identify grant resources on the Internet. She attended a workshop on the subject offered by the Foundation Center, conducted research, and wrote a paper about her experience and the online resources she discovered. She disseminated her findings with learners and published an ebook for others to download online (Bumula, 2006).

In 2001-2003, the principal investigator researched, authored, piloted and published a textbook for beginning learners summarizing patterns in grant research and writing tips from 80 authors (Johncock, 2003). Through May 2004, 316 students attended 25 courses in Nevada colleges. Students and online buyers purchased 890 textbooks during the same period.

One indicator of learner success is the amount of grants awarded to learners. In tracking the first two-and-a-half years of the college grant development certification program, learners reported receiving more than $1.2 billion in grant funding.

In 2008, Nevada faculty piloted an online grant-mentoring program. This attracted attendees from across the US and Canada. Weekly teleconferences covered a variety of timely topics while protégés completed structured courses online and participated in work-based paid internships upon successful completion of core courses.

Teaching issues

Throughout 19 years of grant education and training, Nevada faculty considered seven key teaching issues important for grant educators and

trainers. This section includes these teaching issues: delivery formats, alignment strategies of curriculum with national standards, textbook selection, significance of technology, curriculum development and lesson planning, product development and peer reviews.

Delivery formats

Two common delivery types are in-person and virtual. In-person education includes one-on-one tutorials or mentoring, seminars, classes, study groups, conference sessions, and workshops. Virtual education offers synchronous (two-way) programs such as teleseminars, webinars and discussion forums and asynchronous (one-way) programs like videos, books, audios, and articles.

Online virtual programs are ideal when learners are geographically dispersed, interested in germinating ideas over time, resource-conscious, interested in convenience, environmentally conscious (Pianesi, & Lenzo, 2011, p. 2) and interested in learning timely content more quickly.

According to Brown, Issacs and the World Café (2005), "the setup of most (online) meetings actually subverts collaborative efforts by focusing on deadening one-way presentations"(p. 68). Unfortunately, many online seminars and virtual meetings are PowerPoint slide shows that presenters merely read aloud. This presents a unique opportunity for grant educators to receive training in and deliver more participatory and engaging webinars that are not boring. The participatory aspect alone can set them apart from the competition.

Alignment with GPC Competencies

Courses on grants can be taught without specific competencies in mind, as the Nevada faculty did from 1993 to 2001. In 2001, the faculty identified skills that were approved by a college curriculum committee. The faculty noted that having specific criteria made improving course content and conducting student evaluations easier. In addition, this was helpful for providing a more complete educational experience.

In 2007, GPCI offered its first independently validated "generalist test" designed to measure mastery and experience (GPCI, 2011). The exam has two sections: multiple choice and writing. The multiple choice part has 150 questions and is worth 80% of total exam score. The writing prompt is worth 20% of the total exam score.

Like most grant education programs, Nevada faculty had no independently validated examination available until GPCI developed one (GPCI, 2011). Faculty created a matrix spreadsheet to visually align learning objectives in all its courses with GPCI competences. The spreadsheet indexes and cross-references GPCI competencies and sub-competencies with all grant education courses, lesson plans and assignments. In this

way, learners assess their skills from the start, identify strengths and weaknesses, and check in periodically to see their progress through classes and programs while preparing to pass the GPCI exam.

Textbook selection

Nevada faculty reviewed grant-related development books from 80 different authors (Johncock, 2001). From this critique, they selected three textbooks for use in basics and refining skills courses: *Program Planning and Proposal Writing* (Kiritz, 1980), *Program Planning and Writing* (Miner & Miner, 2008), and *The How-To Grants Manual: Successful Techniques for Obtaining Public and Private Grants* (Bauer, 1999). They added a fourth after the review.

   The Kiritz (1980) booklet is a primary proposal template for the basic course. In 49 pages, it clearly and concisely introduces key sections of many proposals: agency introduction, statement of need or problem, objectives, methods, evaluation, future or other necessary funding and budget.

   The Miner and Miner (2008) text provides an effective template for shorter letter proposals 1-4 pages in length. This book is unique because it presents one format using many different examples. Multiple funder formats require proposal writers to customize and adjust their writing. Nevada faculty noticed that it is easy to overwhelm beginning learners when they see multiple formats. By providing one format with multiple examples, Miner and Miner alleviated this confusion.

   The Bauer (1999) textbook is unique in that a set of supplemental instructional videos reinforce the text. It addresses multiple learning styles. It is the primary text and instructional videos for the college's refining skills course.

   From the review of 80 authors, the principal investigator authored a fourth supplemental textbook entitled *Dream-Making to Billions: Grant Writing Tips from the Experts.* It summarizes best practices in grant development. It simplifies the grant development process into four simple steps: develop your idea, research funders, customize your proposal and respond to the decision (Johncock, 2003).

> As a grants manager and writer, I found the shortest book to train interns in our summer internship program was *Dream-Making to Billions: Grant Writing Tips from the Experts.* They peruse it in an hour or two and use it as a guide to begin funder prospecting and later for drafting proposals. Most of our undergraduate interns completed at least one proposal with an agency team within a month. Several of them wrote exceptional proposals that we were able to submit with only minimal editing (Heroff, 2011, p. 1.).

Significance of technology

Two primary technology considerations in grant education are funder research and distance education. Targeted funder research has changed significantly in the last 19 years. For example, print directories paved the way for FC Search, a searchable database on CD-ROM (Foundation Center, 2000). Today, grant seekers find even greater amounts of grant-maker information online.

A well-known example of an online database and application portal for federal grants is Grants.gov. Regarding foundation grants, in a 2010 survey of GPA members, Butler (2010, p. 11) shares that 151 respondents out of 188 replied that they use Foundation Directory Online (Foundation Center, 2011) or GrantStation (GrantStation, 2011) as their primary online database.

A second major area of grant development education impacted by technology is online or distance education. In 1997, few, if any, online courses existed in the entire University and Community College System of Nevada. Nevada faculty created a simple online course. Students received instructions and resources on assignment pages and emailed their assignments to the professor. To date, 167 learners have taken this low-tech, low-budget, basics online course.

Teleseminars and webinars are rapidly changing the landscape of grant education online. Engaging seminars by computer and by phone provide unique opportunities for grant educators to develop and deliver timely training directly to learners. The cost savings in travel alone make this type of delivery highly desirable.

Curriculum development and lesson planning

Curriculum development and effective program and project design that often go into effective proposals are indeed similar. According to the Wisconsin Instructional Design System, a curriculum "delineates the who, what, when, and how of a learning experience" (Neill, & Mashburn, 1997, p. 460). Likewise, according to Kiritz (1980), a useful program outcome in a grant application should "tell who is going to be doing what, when, how much (and) how we will measure it" (p. 20).

Four curriculum questions for teachers to ask are: Who are the learners? What is the most important content or knowledge for learners to master? When will learners be required to use the knowledge? and How will learning take place?

A learning plan is a written plan that links target core skills, such as those developed by GPCI (GPCI, 2011), with learning activities and performance assessment. A lesson plan is a "written instructional delivery plan that links teaching methodologies/strategies to the learning plan" (Neill & Mashburn, 1997, p. 461). For instance, a 15-minute learning plan on writing a summary sentence for the beginning of a letter

proposal instructs teachers to show on the screen and read aloud an example of an effective summary sentence (2 minutes); facilitate small group discussions of elements like unique agency claims and benefits to funders (7 minutes); and guide learners in applying their responses to a summary sentence template and discuss results (6 minutes).

Learning activities are also vital to making webinars more engaging. Instead of lecturing and showing boring slides, try airing a national TV special on grant scams during a discussion on ethics, interviewing a specialist in logic models, conducting a poll on the number of grants each attendee has received in a presentation to a general audience (to measure potential eligibility to take the GPC exam), or holding breakout rooms where learners in small groups discuss case studies or scenarios (Pianesi & Johncock, 2011, p. 1).

Product development

With recent advancements in technology, the Internet and ecommerce, grant educators bring products to market more quickly and less expensively than any time in the past. While writing and publishing books once required lengthy periods of time and large financial outlays, now authors self-publish, use "book on demand" printers for low-volume runs, and sell ebooks online.

Products add credibility, provide another platform for teaching and learning, and may even generate additional income. If writing a book sounds too daunting, grant educators may share checklists, forms and unique processes they have created to save time. For example, a keyword checklist for funder research, a mileage log and a time-sheet template have been three popular supplemental learning tools for many years. In fact, Nevada faculty require all learners and interns to turn in time sheets using this template. Since a top audit problem for grants is lack of adequate documentation of work performed, completing time sheets prepares learners for post-award management.

Peer reviews

Bauer (1999) advises, "you will improve your proposal and significantly increase your chances for success by asking several colleagues … to voluntarily role-play the review team that will ultimately pass judgment on your proposal" (p. 50). Likewise, Nevada faculty observed that learner peer reviewers, when adequately trained, could identify up to 90 percent of typical edit problems often seen in first drafts, such as unsupported assumptions, passive voice, jargon, personal pronouns and contractions.

Adopting a mock review process, teachers' roles shift from editors of format and technical errors to stylistic coaches and witnesses of improvement from first to final drafts. For example, last semester one student demonstrated a 50-point improvement, bettering her proposal

score from 43 on the first draft to 93 on the final draft, after taking into consideration targeted feedback from reviewers.

Reynolds *et al.* (1998) also believe in the power of peer reviews. They developed a course on "writing grant applications for postdoctoral clinical-research fellows" (p. 190). They use peer-review processes "modeled after a National Institutes of Health study section" (p. 190).

The authors conclude that by teaching grantwriting skills in a supportive peer environment, providing peer review of proposals and sharpening expectations of mentors, it may be possible to reduce the time between the end of fellowship and the receipt of the first extramural grant (p. 190).

Learning issues

Throughout 19 years of grant education and training, Nevada faculty considered three key learning-related issues. This section includes these three: templates and modeling, work-based learning, and evaluations of knowledge and skill mastery.

Templates and modeling

A main advantage of templates is that they guide learners to the most important aspects of proposals quickly and easily. The two most popular templates used by Nevada faculty are the *Program Planning and Proposal Writing* (Kiritz, 1980) and *Program Planning and Writing* (Miner & Miner, 2008).

Nevada faculty note that learners using templates write a successful letter proposal more quickly after mastering a template than those who learned without one. Most beginning learners appreciate having a degree of structure, multiple examples of that structure and a pattern they can model quickly and apply easily. Stated in another way, 100% of 80 authors surveyed "agree on one point, namely that all proposals should be customized, or tailored, to the specifications of the funder" (Johncock, 2003, p. 5). Beginning learners with little or no grant experience customize proposals more efficiently and easily when they have a template to model and master, rather than trying to write from scratch.

Work-based learning

On-the-job training is an underutilized aspect of many grant education programs. Paid internships are a great way for nonprofit agencies to hire learners at a substantial discount while providing interns a supervised, structured, hands-on, work-based learning experience, supervised by an experienced grant professional. These are great opportunities for learners to apply what they are learning in the classroom.

To set up an internship program, here are three suggestions. First, develop a signed learning-plan template that includes job responsibilities as well as duties and timelines for intern, supervisor and agency contact. This serves as a document to evaluate intern performance. Second, require payment for services up front. Nevada faculty had one agency that took an intern's work, submitted the proposal, and never paid the intern. Third, hold monthly meetings with all interns. These are great opportunities to share experiences and challenges.

Evaluations of knowledge and skill mastery

Two common forms of learner evaluations are self-assessments and ratings by others, such as peer reviews. Examples of self-based evaluations include: pre-course surveys that connect learning to past experiences; inventory interest levels on proposed topics and existing skill sets; number of proposals submitted; post-class evaluations of faculty; intern readiness; and skill assessments of strengths and weaknesses.

Examples of evaluations by others are: peer reviews of mock proposals; funder reviews of actual proposals; comparison of proposal drafts (i.e., comparison of pre-review drafts and final drafts); success rates; increased amount of funding received; passing the GPCI exam; and mentor assessment of performance.

How teachers and learners best evaluate the learning experience largely depends on their goals and research questions. For example, teachers with the goal of improving learner success may find it helpful to create a process in which learners report back on proposals submitted, as well as approvals, rejections and specific ways in which classes helped them succeed. Learners with the goal to pass the GPCI exam might benefit from a self-assessment of strengths and weaknesses related to competencies tested by the exam as well as from going over scores on various sections of a mock exam.

Conclusion

Many grant professionals receive little formal grant education when they start. Likewise, many grant educators receive little, if any, formal training before they begin teaching.

This paper helps define the field of grant education by identifying eight issues in teaching and three issues around learning about grants. By providing the context of 19 years of grant education research, this paper argues for more engaging, in-person and virtual courses that increase learner success and result in more effective and efficient learning opportunities. It challenges teachers to develop relevant and useful products and align curriculum with national standards.

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Phil Johncock, MA, MMs, the Grant Professor, has been an author and educator for over 30 years. He has a 93% grant success rate. Phil created the first online course for Nevada colleges in 1997 and designed a 10-credit college grant writing certification program in 2001. He authored 12 books, many with best-selling authors like Jack Canfield and Dr. Gay Hendricks. Currently, Phil is Interim Executive Director of the Alliance for Nevada Nonprofits (ANN), where he created an entrepreneurial, sustainable and virtual business model. He has authored more than 80 e-zine (online) articles for grant or nonprofit professionals with tens of thousands of yearly readers. He teaches online classes for the College of Southern Nevada and 4Grants.Net and is editor of the Grant Writing Newsletter at GrantWritingNewsletter.com. Phil founded the GPC Exam Prep Course Online at GrantCertification.com and co-founded the Webinar Facilitator Certification program at WebinarFacilitatorCertification.com. Contact Phil at 4Grants.Net@gmail.com.