


GRANT WRITING 101

The road to your ideas taking flight



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Building Mighty Communities




- Todd Mandel, Principal
- 14 years of grant-writing experience
- Grew Couleccap's housing rehabilitation work from a \$300,000/year operation to a \$2,000,000/year operation
- Served six years on the Federal Home Loan Bank Community Investment Advisory Council overseeing \$23 million in grants annually
- Grew economic programming from \$15,000/year to \$100,000+/year
- Assisted VCMS with securing funding for the 54656 podcast

<http://mightycommunities.com>

<www.facebook.com/mightycommunities>


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What's Your Idea?

- Find a partner you don't know. In pairs, discuss your idea and what you think you might need to make it happen
- Who wants to share?
- Grants almost always go to 501(c)(3) non-profits. Sometimes can go to individuals. Rarely go to for-profit businesses.
 - For-profits usually need non-profit partner

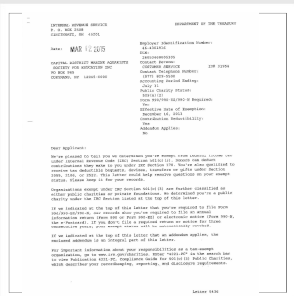
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What's the most important?

- What do you think is the most important?
 - Your Story / Idea?
 - Following the grant application rules?
- Discuss
- It's a trick question: they are EQUAL


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Getting Started

- First Steps
- Establish a "Documents File"
 - Locate your organization's 501(c)(3) letter from the IRS
 - Don't have it? You can request an affirmation letter from the IRS.
 - <https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/exempt-organizations-affirmation-letters>

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Getting Started

- More basic information to gather:
 - List of Board of Directors with affiliations
 - Annual operating budget
 - Non-discrimination policy. Don't have one? Have your board pass one (see sample handout)
 - By-laws
 - Articles of Incorporation
 - Don't have them? You can get a certified copy from the Wisconsin Dept of Financial Institutions
 - Certificate of Status (formerly Certificate of Good Standing)
 - Certificates and Articles can be obtained at https://www.wisconsin.gov/corporations/files/cert-program_inst.htm
 - Cost for each is \$10.00.

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The Unmet Need

- Grants are ultimately about solving an unmet need
- You need data to prove the need
 - HUD datasets
 - Census datasets
 - Unemployment data
 - Policy Map (<https://www.policymap.com/maps>)
 - Data specific to your need
 - Needs to be from a reputable source

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The Plan

- The Narrative
 - A powerful story
 - Start with Why
 - https://www.ted.com/talks/simon_sinek_how_great_leaders_inspire_action?language=en
- Who: Your Team
 - Backgrounds and relevant experience
- Where: Geographic service area
- When: Timeline.
- Partners: Find partners at the start, not at application time.
 - Money partners
 - Resource partners
 - Feel-good partners
- What:
 - Objectives with measurable outcomes
 - Methodology to reach the outcomes

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Exercise

- Take your Awesome Idea Sheet
- Set two relevant and attainable goals
- Fill in your team and some relevant experiences
- Identify potential partners
- Identify where this work will take place
- Identify a timeline. Does this timeline work with your goals?

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Make a Budget

- Don't overthink the budget
- Are you getting paid? Who is getting paid? Benefits? Fiscal sponsor?
- The bigger the grant, the more detailed to budget... to a point
- Things commonly overlooked:
 - Rent: office space, program space, etc.
 - Utilities
 - Communications: Do you need internet? Phone? PO Box?
 - Supplies vs. Equipment
 - Legal

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Budgeting

- Make sure your budget timeline matches your grant timeline and your goals timeline
- Matching Funds: Directly spent or contributed to the project. Federal funds cannot match other federal funds unless specifically designated.
 - Cash. Example: Vernon County contributed \$2,000 to your project.
 - In-Kind. Example: Organic Valley provides office space, valued at \$1,500 for a year, to the project.
- Leveraging funds: Funds spent indirectly on the project.
 - Federal funds from another source spent on your federally funded project
 - Example: Federal grant specifies that construction costs cannot be used as matching dollars. However, someone builds a \$300,000 shelter house for your project; that house would be reportable as leveraging. It can't be reported as match because the grant rules specifically say construction costs are a disallowed use.
- More details available in the OMB Uniform Guidance (2014)
 - Aka the OMB "Supercircular"

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Talk to Partners & People

- Meet with potential partners in advance of a grant opportunity
- Get them excited
- Talk about potential support, partnerships, and contributions
- The time to start talking is **not** when a grant opportunity is first released! The short timelines don't allow true relationship building!

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Find an Opportunity

- Four major categories of grants:
- Local/Regional Foundation
- State/National/Interest Area Foundation
- Local/State Government
- Federal Government

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Local / Regional Foundations

Smaller dollar amount & Community-focused
Connections are important

Virouqua Area Foundation
<http://www.virouquaareafoundation.org/>

Community Foundation of Southwest Wisconsin.
Aggregated source of many small community-focused funds
<https://www.cfsww.org/grants/open-grant-applications/>

La Crosse Community Foundation
<https://www.lacrosscf.org/>

Educational Foundations
Directly support district programming
Likely need to partner with the district or a school

Southwest Minnesota Foundation

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Funds to Improve the High School Principal Pipeline in Massachusetts
The Barr Foundations Education program seeks to dramatically increase teacher and leader capacity in order to support and sustain high-quality personalized high schools that put success within reach of all students across Massachusetts.

Grants Encourage the Protection of Nevada's Wildlife Habitat
The Dream Tags Charitable Fund, administered by the Community Foundation of Western Nevada, encourages nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, and government agencies throughout Nevada to engage state residents in wildlife conservation.

Support for Local Football Fields in NFL Markets
The NFL Foundation Grassroots Program, administered by the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) and funded by the National Football League Foundation, provides support for nonprofit neighborhood-based organizations and middle or high schools to improve the quality, safety, and accessibility of local football fields.

Programs to Improve the Health of South Carolinians Funded
The BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina Foundation is committed to improving the health outcomes for current and future generations of South Carolinians.

State/National/Interest Area Foundations

- Larger competitive area
- Often tied to specific geography
 - Places where corporations have a footprint
 - Very specific interest areas
- Often have large, favored non-profits
 - Minimizes the contracts
 - Tend to invest in critical-need areas / maximize impact
- Connections are important
 - Often need an invitation to apply

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Local / State Government

Local / County Government

- Strict geographic restriction (assignment of funds)
- Limited funding
- Is it federal, but run through a local office?
- If so, all the federal rules come along with it
- Understand the source: TIF, Federal pass-through, tribal, etc

State Government

- Very interest focused
 - Tourism, Small Business Development
 - Brownfields
 - Job Training
 - Run by the departments that oversee the interest area

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Federal Opportunities
Opportunities from the U.S. Government

Support Available to Address Opioids in Tribal Communities
The Tribal Opioid Response Grants program aims to address the opioid crisis in tribal communities by increasing access to culturally appropriate and evidence-based treatment, including medication-assisted treatment.

Creative Placemaking Efforts Funded
Our Town is a creative placemaking grants program that supports projects that integrate arts, culture, and design activities into efforts to strengthen communities by advancing local economic, physical, or social outcomes.

Federal Government

- Typically very specific
- Can be found via the Federal Register
- Complex and demanding
- Typically large \$\$ amounts
- Usually need to prove capacity to manage
 - Self-capacity
 - Partner with someone
 - Hire a consultant
- Highly competitive
- Often data-dependent to determine need

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10 Ways to Handcuff Your Grant Application


- Not allowing time to write**
 - Proposals submitted three or more days before the deadline have a 37% greater chance of funding. Missing a deadline means disqualification.
- Not paying attention to instructions**
 - 50% of federal grant applications are eliminated because directions are not followed
- Poor Writing**
 - Avoid acronyms, watch grammar, and use spellcheck.
- Failure to edit**
 - Have a professional read over your entire proposal. Use a grant writer at a partner agency or hire an independent grant writer.
- Lack of data to prove the need**
- Lack of experience in the field**
- Lack of experience in grants management**
 - Partner with an experienced non-profit or hire a consultant.
- Limited number of partners**
- Lack of match. Usually need firm commitment letters.**
- No realistic plan for sustainability.**

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A Few Words on Sustainability

- Funders today want to see programs that project "sustainability"
- If your effort is a one-off effort, say that
- If you see your effort continuing past the funding end date; how do you plan to do that?
 - The plan should not involve coming back to the same funder for constant infusions.
 - How will you address the need without your funder someday?
- Some Sustainability Strategies
 - Make your effort a "proof of concept" that you can then shop to other funders.
 - Use funder money as "seed capital" for some type of social entrepreneurship (selling something to make money).
 - Use grant to discover how much you can charge for service as a form of revenue.
 - "Hiring your way into sustainability" is not popular with funders

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Final Wrap Up

- Lots of opportunities, but also lots of competition!
- Multiple ways to get a grant done:
 - Do it yourself
 - Partner with another agency
 - Hire a grant writer
- A few tips on hiring a grant writer:
 - **Never** hire one that works on receiving a percentage of the grant funding.
 - Ask to see their work portfolio
 - Ask up-front to understand their pricing
 - Insist on a written contract and written delegations of work / responsibility
- You may need to apply a few times to get the grant you want. Persevere!
- If it's worth doing, it's worth doing right!

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