JOYAUX
A S S O C I A T E S

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Developing the Best Grant Proposals for Your Organisation / NGO

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Session description

This workshops reviews major issues that you should consider when developing and writing a proposal for funding from foundations, corporations or government.

Topics include: identifying the right prospects for your organisation, incorporating key elements to make your proposal effective, writing the proposal, avoiding common mistakes, and building relationships.

Selected resources (Just a few! Talk with colleagues and search the Internet for more resources.)

The Worldwide Fundraiser's Handbook: A Resource Mobilisation Guide for NGOs and Community Organisations, by Michael Norton, in association with the Resource Alliance, second edition, 2003. In particular, for foundation, government and corporate proposals, see sections 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, and 4.5. See also Resource Alliance website for guides.

Corporate and Foundation Fund Raising, by Eugene Scanlan, Jones & Bartlett Publishers, 1997. www.jbpub.com

Relationship Fundraising, by Ken Burnett, in association with the Resource Alliance, 1992.

Strategic Fund Development: Building Profitable Relationships That Last, by Simone P. Joyaux, ACFRE, Jones & Bartlett Publishers, second edition, 2002. www.simonejoyaux.com

Primarily US / Canadian / North American –centric; but general information, philosophical overview and some resources are useful across diverse borders.

The Chronicle of Philanthropy	www.philanthropy.com
The Nonprofit Quarterly	www.nonprofitquarerly.org
Association of Fundraising Professionals	www.afpnet.org
Center on Philanthropy (Indiana USA)	www.philanthropy.iupui.edu
Canadian Centre for Philanthropy	www.ccp.ca
Charity Village	www.charityvillage.com
Independent Sector	www.independentsector.org

For international work (only a few resources)

Resource Alliance	www.resource-alliance.org
CFRE International	www.cfre.org
Charities Aid Foundation	www.cafonline.org
European Foundation Centre	www.efc.be
Directory of Social Change	www.dsc.org.uk
Foundation Center	www.fdncenter.org
Synergos	www.synergos.org
Civicus	www.civicus.org

Vocabulary (For the purposes of this workshop / seminar. Vocabulary may be different in diverse countries and communities.)

Application: Also called a proposal. Typically developed by an NGO (nonprofit organisation) and submitted to a funding source / grantmaker.

Application guidelines: The guidelines / directions / instructions that a funding source / grantmaker expects applicants to follow when submitting a proposal.

Charitable gift or contribution: Gift of time or money contributed (donated) to an NGO.

Contract: Government agencies may sign a contract with NGOs to provide services to individuals and families that the government wants served. In most jurisdictions, contracts are not the same as grant applications but the application and review process is often similar.

Funder: Refers to a foundation, corporation, government agency, civic group, faith group, or some other form of organisation / group. Does not typically refer to an individual or family.

Funding source: Another word for a funder. Typically a foundation, corporation, government agency, civic group, faith group, or some other form of organisation / group. Does not typically refer to an individual or family.

Grant: Refers to a gift made by a funding source, as defined above. A gift from an individual or family is typically referred to as a gift or donation or contribution.

Grantmaker: Another word for a foundation, corporation, government agency, civic group, faith group, or some other form of organisation / group that makes a grant.

Grantmaking: The process of making grants. Foundations and corporations typically have grantmaking processes.

Grantor: Another word for a funding source.

Grantee: The recipient of a grant.

Philanthropy: Voluntary action for the common good (statement by Robert L. Payton, author and teacher of philanthropy in the USA.)

Proposal: Also called an application or grant application. The document prepared by the applicant organisation / NGO and submitted to the funding source, as a request for a grant.

Workshop Agenda

We will cover the most important elements in the agenda in the workshop. The handouts provide you with greater detail, for your further reflection and later use.

Item	Selected Resources
1. Welcome, introductions and overview	

2. What are the challenges and opportunities?
 	
 a) Availability of foundation, corporate, and government funders
 	
  Similarities / distinctions
 	
 b) Access to information about these funders
 	
 c) Limitations in funding. For example:
 	
  start-up and project funding
 	
  funding for core services / operations
 	
  frequency of grants
 	
  accountability requirements
 	
 d) What are you observing as trends within funding sources?
 	
 e) What do you see as opportunities and challenges?	

3. Review key steps to identify prospective funders. a) Identify prospective funding sources by using the Internet, library resources, referrals, etc. Also look at the public donor lists of organisations / NGOs similar to yours. b) Examine the mission and programs of funding sources. Examine their application guidelines and restrictions. Read what the funders write about themselves, for example, their newsletters, annual reports, grantee lists, and so forth. c) Test the funder's application guidelines and restrictions by comparing to the grantee list and the description of grants made. d) Contact grantees of the funder. Many grantees will speak with you and share their insights and experience with the funder. e) Make every effort to convene a meeting (via telephone or in person or via the Internet) with the funder to speak personally and test your various theories. f) With all this information in hand, determine if it is appropriate to submit a proposal.	What resources do you use to research funding sources? Which resources do you find most useful and why? What is the difference between the various types of funding sources? Have you been able to speak personally with a funder prior to submitting a proposal? What was your experience? Have you spoken with other NGOs about grants they have received? What was your experience?

4. Review key steps in the proposal development process. In summary, the steps are:	*The Worldwide Fundraiser's Handbook: A Resource Mobilisation Guide for NGOs and Community Organisations*, by Michael Norton
a) Design the program or project.	
Don't invent a program or project in order to seek money!	
b) Review feasibility of the project / program and determine financial need.	
c) Prepare the plan, which should also explain the value of the program / project. (In fundraising, this may be called the case for support or case statement.)	*Corporate and Foundation Fund Raising*, by Eugene Scanlan, Jones & Bartlett Publishers
d) Identify the right funding match.	
Use a multi-level search process to identify the appropriate prospective funders.	
e) Develop proposal.	See detailed summary of steps in handout on page 5 – 6.
f) Submit proposal.	
If awarded, do the job well. Evaluate process and results and report to the funding source.	
If you do not receive the grant award, ask why. Ask graciously. This is your learning opportunity.	
g) Cultivate relationships through ongoing strategies.	
h) Begin again.	
5. Suggestions to make your proposal writing stronger.	See handout on page 7.
6. Your proposal content.	See sample proposal outline on pages 8 – 9.
a) First, follow the funder's application guidelines.	Examine application guidelines from various sources to help you think about how to create plans and proposals.
b) If the funder doesn't have a specific outline, create your own outline for the proposal narrative.	
c) Make sure you understand the proposal evaluation criteria used by the funder.	
d) Ask the funder to critique your proposal after the application process / decision is finished.	

Developing the Best Proposal for your Organisation / NGO
Detailed steps for you to follow

1. **Design your project or program.**
   a. Design the project or program following good planning steps.
   b. Analyse the financing. If you need support beyond revenue generation, then consider fundraising (soliciting contributions from individuals, foundations, corporations, or government.)
   c. Do you have a gap between your operating costs and revenues? Do you need support for a capital project? Are you starting a new project or initiative that needs funding?

2. **Prepare to fundraise.**
   a. Clearly articulate your mission and vision – for your organisation and for the particular project / program.
   b. Make sure that the program or project fits in with your organisation's mission and vision.
   c. Remember: Vision attracts gifts and grants. Do not invent a program or project in order to seek gifts and grants.

3. **Remember the basic principles of fund development** (fundraising and fund development are often used interchangeably).
   a. It's not what you're selling, it's what I'm buying that counts.
   b. People give to people – stories and facts about real people in need – not data or statistics.
   c. No one cares about your organisation's need. Funding sources care about the people that you benefit. It is not about your organisation, it's about the people you serve.
   d. Consider this: Asking for a gift (solicitation) is effective when the right person / organisation asks the right prospect (funding source including individuals, foundations, corporations, etc.) at the right time for the right project at the right amount in the right way (for example, personally asking an individual face-to-face; developing a proposal for a funder; writing a letter and sending it to individuals and families.)

4. **What types of funding sources might respond to proposals? Is there any difference in the approach?**
   a. Foundations (community, corporate, family or individual trusts)
   b. Government (grant or contract)
   c. Civic organisations / Faith groups

5. **Current happenings and attitudes in your community**
   a. Define your community. Is your community a region of your country or a town in your province? Is your community a region of the world or a type of organisation or industry?
   b. Be familiar with what is happening in your community – because that may affect the interests of your prospective funding sources.
      > What are the issues? What is your community's civic capacity? Which organisations (NGOs) are seen as critical problem solvers and leaders?
   c. How does your organisation fit into the community? Are you sufficiently relevant to the community?

6. **Be familiar with grantmaking trends in your marketplace.**
   a. Where do most gifts / grants come from in your community / your country?
   b. Keep the following in mind:
      > Rarely does long-term stability come from government or foundations
      > Often foundations give start-up (also called "seed") money.
      > Foundations often change their own strategic priorities and hence their grantmaking areas change,
   c. Never invent projects / programs so that your organisation can pursue grants.
   d. Beware of matching requirements, reporting requirements, and contract specifications.
   e. Always follow grantmaking guidelines / application procedures from funding sources.

7. **Identify potential funding sources.**
   a. Conduct research: In order to understand the motivations of funders and determine the appropriateness of submitting a proposal
      > Examine funder application guidelines and restrictions. Pay attention to explicit and implicit restrictions.
      > Examine the grants the funder has made previously.
      > Read the funder's own publications to better understand interests and to see their vocabulary.

8. **Determine if it is appropriate to submit a proposal – consider the risk of inappropriate submissions.**
   a. Use good research techniques.
   b. Conduct a personal dialogue with the funding source if possible. Purpose of this dialogue: Listen to them. Don't just talk about your organisation.
      > Can you get a personal interview? If yes, who goes to the meeting?
      > Structuring the conversation and providing resource materials

9. **Building relationships – be part of civic capacity, not just a grant recipient.**
   a. Provide information outside the grant application process – but be careful. Do not overburden the funder with too much information.
   b. Identify personal contacts within the grantmaking process – but be careful. Do not alienate a key person by circumventing the formal application process.
   c. Position your organisation as a resource to funding sources. You want to be seen as a community problem solver / a contributor to civic capacity. Don't be just another organisation seeking funds.
   d. Attend presentations and workshops where funding source are. Be visible and ask questions.
   e. Report on activities once a grant has been awarded.
   f. And sometimes, provide an update on activities even if a grant has not been awarded – but only if the funder wants to hear from you.

10. **Write the proposal (See detail on next pages.)**

11. **Wait for the answer.**
    a. Provide updated information and informing the funder of any significant changes
    b. Follow up with acknowledgement and public recognition (if appropriate to the funder).

12. **Respond to funding source response**
    a. Refusal: Ask why
    b. Too much funding: turning back grants
    c. Not enough funding: modifying the project or refusing the grant
    d. Acknowledgment and recognition
    e. Applying again: Whether funded or not

13. **Grant compliance: accountability and reporting**

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Joyaux' Guidelines for Proposal Writing

1. Remember: Funding sources may well talk to each other. Funding sources tell each other about applicants. Be careful what stories they tell about your organisation and your applications.

2. Ensure appropriate match between applicant and funding source and the project and funding source.

3. Use your internal project plan and budget to develop application proposal.

4. Follow funding source instructions. (There is no good excuse for violating their guidelines.)

5. Use your research information.

    Use information from the funding source – the website, annual reports and – if possible – personal dialogue with the funding source.

    Use information from other applicants, both successful and not successful. Talk with them.

    Use language from the funding source publications and statements.

6. Think carefully about the format of your proposal even if the funding source is not clear in its instructions / guidelines. For example: Avoid extravagant packaging. Make sure that everything you submit can be easily copied for distribution to the reviewers.

7. Make sure that your budget is realistic. Don't inflate your costs. It's bad business and the funder may realise that you are inflating costs; that makes you look unprofessional.

8. Avoid extensive specificity and detail that may compromise the flexibility you need when you implement your project / program.

9. Write well. See some of the suggestions from *Love Thy Reader* at www.aherncomm.com (Also available at www.simonejoyaux.com.) Not all of *Love Thy Reader* is applicable but most of it is! For example:

    a. Write "at the 8th grade level" so it doesn't take too much work to read. (8th grade level refers to 8 years of schooling starting as a child. Write simply so it is easy to understand.)

    b. Don't hide the important information. (For example, important information belongs at the start of the paragraph, not in the middle or at the end.)

    c. Avoid long paragraphs. Also avoid compound sentences when possible. Aim for 16 to 20 words or less per sentence. Vary sentence and paragraph length so reading isn't boring.

    d. Don't use technical vocabulary unless absolutely necessary. Make sure there is no easier way to say it. Don't use a technical term unless at least 95% of your readers will understand it.

    e. Substantiate what you say. Do not make unsubstantiated claims. Provide supporting evidence / facts.

    f. Don't use sexist, racist, homophobic or culturally biased language. There is no excuse. As the world becomes more and more global, sensitivity and inclusion are critical.

10. Submit more than one application for the same activity due to the likelihood of refusal.

11. Plan in advance for what you will do if you actually receive more grants than you need.

12. Plan in advance what you will do if you receive some money but not enough to do the program or project.

Sample Proposal Content

The cover letter in a proposal

a) One page: And everything in the cover letter needs to be in the proposal itself.
b) Brief statement of:
   community problem or opportunity that your program or project proposes to address;
   description of proposed solution (program or project);
   statement of your organisation's ability to do the work;
   request for funds.

Your proposal should answer the questions below

This is Joyaux' preferred outline for the content of your proposal. However, remember to follow the application guidelines. This may not be the outline requested by the funding source!

Keep in mind the following: Explain the *why* of what you will do and *what* the results will be – not what you do and how you do it.
   How your project or program will affect the community.
   What you propose to do for the benefit of whom and when.
   How the community (and those served) will benefit and why.

1. **Introduction and context**
   a) Why do you want to carry out this proposed project? Who is your audience? What need / problem / opportunity are you addressing? How did you determine the need for this project?
   b) How does this proposed project fit in with your organisation's values, mission and direction? Briefly summarize your organisation's scope of service, management and governance, and financing.
   c) How does this proposed project fit in with the funder's values, mission and direction?
   d) How does this proposed project reflect emerging issues, innovative strategies, sound research, or proven models?

2. **Action plan**
   a) What are the goals and objectives of the proposed project and how will you achieve them? Describe your major strategies, specific activities that you will undertake, and the timeline you will follow.
   b) Who will help carry out the proposed project and what is their expertise? Include background and relevant qualifications of volunteers and professional staff, or those you plan to recruit if this project is funded.
   c) How will you recruit participants for the proposed project? How many people will be served or directly affected by the proposed project? Describe the people who will benefit from the proposed project.
   d) How does your proposed project differ from, complement, or otherwise relate to similar efforts in the community? Be as specific as possible.

3. Outcomes and evaluation
    a) Who will participate in the design, implementation and evaluation of the proposed project?
    b) What is your process for ongoing feedback during project implementation, and how will you use that to enhance your project?
    c) What measurable outcomes/results do you anticipate given your stated goals and objectives?
    d) How will you effectively measure these outcomes/results?
    e) How will you use all evaluation results?

4. Other support
    a) How do you plan to finance this proposed project now? What is the role of the funder to whom you are applying compared to other funders? What other funders are participating?
    b) How do you plan to finance this proposed project in the future?
    c) To what extent does this proposed project collaborate with other organisations, agencies or projects? How will the cooperative effort work and what are the roles?

5. Budget and narrative explanation
    a) Prepare a realistic and accurate budget – for the organisation and the project / program. Remember that if you are funded, you will have to provide the financial results, compared to budget, as part of your report. (income and expense) for the organisation and the project as a subset of the organisation.
    b) Include administrative and management expenses within the project, as part of the project or program. (Often these costs are called overhead or indirect costs.)
    c) Describe overall organisation financing.
    d) Describe overall financing for the program or project.
    e) Ask for the grant and describe its role in overall financing.
    f) Describe the timeline for funding.
    g) Describe future financing for this program or project.

6. Attachments
    a) Remember - these may not actually be photocopied and distributed to all proposal reviewers.
    b) As appropriate (or requested), you might include the following:
    c) Biographies of key project or program staff. (This might be done briefly as part of the proposal also.)
    d) Testimonials
        Endorsement letters (Use judiciously. These are too often meaningless.)
        Articles written about your organisation by a third party.
        Testimonial quotations might also be appropriate to include in your proposal narrative.
    e) Appropriate NGO / nonprofit documentation as required by the funder.
    f) Financial report as requested by the funding source.
    g) List of board of directors and any relevant advisory groups