



Getting Grants In Your Community



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Preface

Friends of Libraries groups and other local service organizations across the country are doing amazing work to help improve their communities. Volunteers give freely of their time and talent to improve the quality of life for others – it’s a wonderful and selfless endeavor.

Despite all the time and talent given, however, volunteer projects are too often limited by the money they are able to raise. Fortunately, civic organizations, foundations, individuals, and many local businesses and corporations are equally generous with their financial contributions to worthy projects and programs.

Bringing volunteers together with the funding that is available is what this resource is all about. When time, effort and money come together for a good cause, changes large and small, simple and profound, important and long lasting happen in communities every day.

John F. Kennedy once said, “I am certain that after the dust of centuries has passed over our cities, we, too, will be remembered not for victories or defeats in battle or in politics, but for our contribution to the human spirit.” Everyday, in every corner of the globe, volunteers are making a contribution to the human spirit through the work that they do. It is my hope that this guide will enable you to extend and expand your efforts.

Introduction

There are many national granting agencies that give millions of dollars a year to worthy organizations. If you are extremely talented, have a unique and far-reaching program as well as a track record in implementing national grants, you may well be able to successfully apply for and win these grants. If, however, you are looking to raise money for an important project that will have a positive impact on your home town, you will probably have the best luck going after local support.

No matter how small your community, it is entirely likely that you can find funding at the local level by making a solid case for your library or your important program. Think your town is too small? Consider Oconto, Nebraska. This town of approximately 400 successfully raised \$190,000 for a new library – much of it was raised locally through grant writing!

Do you live in a city where there is a plethora of groups going to the same agencies and organizations for funding? Do you believe the competition is too sophisticated and strong? You should take heart in knowing that libraries and literacy are among the most compelling causes for grants, and that grants that impact children and students are especially popular among local granting agencies. You can eclipse even the most sophisticated fundraising in town by showing how your grant will benefit everyone in the community or will increase literacy for different segments of your population.

Because there is a wealth of resources at the local level in every community, this toolkit is geared to helping you find that money and bring some of it to your group. That means additional funding to support your good work on behalf of the library or special literacy related projects. This guidebook will help you identify funding sources, write a persuasive case statement for your program, develop a budget, and write a winning grant!

NOTE: For the purpose of making the examples in this guide more concrete, we will be using a “Books for Babies” funding proposal throughout. However, the guidance provided will work for all kinds of proposals and for all types of libraries. As you work through the booklet, focus on the advice for successful grants rather than on the concrete examples themselves. This guidebook contains sample grant proposals for other types of grants as well. You may use anything from these samples that you wish or simply use them as guidelines in creating your own grant proposal.

Finding the Money

Before you write your grant, you will have to do a little homework. This will include:

- + Listing all the possible funding sources in town and finding out what types of projects they tend to support.
- + Finding out how much funding local grantors give each year and how much they typically give to each group.
- + Learning the time of year they give grants.
- + Finding out how each potential grantor likes to be approached (in writing, initial phone call, in person, e.g.).

Once you've determined who (and there may be more than one) will be approached, prioritize these potential grantors according to who you believe will be best able and willing to support your project and then approach them **one at a time**. Unless you are proposing a partnership among several groups or agencies, don't engage in a scatter-shot approach which can end in several entities being interested in your proposal. If you have to select just one grantor, you may create hurt feelings and a loss of credibility with the others which is not a good thing if you hope to go to them again in the future.

Civic Groups

Groups such as the Lions Club, Rotary, Optimist Club, the Junior League, and others exist largely to help improve their local communities. Because of this mission, they often give funding to local groups in need. In order to make a successful application to one or more of these groups, it is important to find out if they will support your type of project. In other words, if their goal is to house the homeless, they might not be likely to give a grant to you unless there is a component in your grant that helps to provide programs and/or education for this population. If their goal is to support local health initiatives, you will have to show (if you can) how your project ties into health. For example, literacy is a health issue. Studies show that the vast majority of those who can't read, or who can't read at a reasonably functional level, end up living in poverty putting a tremendous burden on the health care system and increasing costs of insurance. If your project supports literacy (think, for example, Books for Babies) you must make the case that early childhood literacy will ensure healthy families and success in school in the long run.

Once you've identified local civic organizations or clubs that support initiatives such as the one you have in mind, you will want to identify a contact person within that organization to call. With a simple friendly phone call to the right person, you can find out when the group makes a decision about funding local initiatives, how you should present your case (and when), and how much you might successfully ask for. How to get funding from local civic organizations isn't a closely guarded secret –

these groups *want* to support important programs. Don't guess what kind of grant application will succeed, call and ask!

Local Businesses

While it may be true that small “mom and pop” operations won't be able to give a lot of money to any cause, they may be able to assist with start-up projects – if not through gifts of money, often through gifts of time, talent or materials.

To determine which local businesses might be interested and able to support your project, check around to see what other initiatives in town have been supported by local businesses. Simply paying attention will help you here. Local businesses will want plenty of publicity surrounding their gifts so they often will promote their largesse in their advertisements. Also pay attention to the materials published by other non-profits in town. The local symphony, playhouse, and/or museum often depend on local contributions. Check out the programs that they publish – they will “thank” those people and businesses who have contributed. When you enter the local museum, zoo, or theater, look for “giving walls or plaques” that identify donors and take notes.

It may be that the project for which you are seeking funds has a natural partner. A literacy program might be especially appealing to a local bookstore or newspaper whereas a grant for computer updates at the library might be well received by the local software and computer store. Getting funds from local businesses can be a little harder than from larger corporations with offices in town or from civic groups but if you can convince a local business that you will provide plenty of publicity about their gift to you, they may decide that giving your group a grant is a great way to generate new customers!

Local Corporations

Big box stores are surely a mixed-blessing. Almost all communities – large and small – have some sort of big box store within their region if not in town itself. These and other national corporations very often have a local presence. It might be a best selling cola's bottling plant, a car dealership, a department store, or a national real-estate company. Almost all large, national corporations have a “foundation” arm. These companies usually give money for both national initiatives and smaller amounts for local projects.

Before you write a grant to a local corporation, you will want to check out their history of corporate giving. A search on the Internet will help you. You will probably have to go to the homepage of the corporate headquarters but if you can find their “foundation” page you will find a lot of good information that will help you decide whether or not your project and this company make a good match.

Another way to see where big corporations are spending local money is to check the area store's bulletin board. Most companies will display information about

community groups and projects that they have supported. Once you have determined that a corporation might be interested in supporting projects like yours, you will then want to talk to the local manager.

Make a phone call to set up an appointment with the manager. In order to get the ear of the manager, you must be prepared to convince him or her that you wish to discuss a project that you believe will be beneficial to both of you. Managers of local franchises of larger corporations are very often busy and will happily brush you off with either a very small donation (under \$100) or ask you to “mail in” your request. Be persistent and ask for just 15 minutes of his or her time because to get enough money to fund a new project, you will have to really sell it and in person is always the best way.

If you were able to find good information on the corporation’s website about the types of projects they typically fund, you will probably want to write your grant ahead of time so that you can deliver it in person as you discuss with the manager why what you are asking for is so important. Because national businesses with local outlets are very interested in being seen as “good neighbors” and as part of the community (as opposed to being nothing more than a part of corporate America) your grant will want to emphasize what’s in it for them.

Community Foundations

Most communities or counties have a local foundation. Local foundations work by acting as a centralized resource for those who wish to leave money for community projects. Foundations are typically a collection of bequests staffed by those who manage the money and work with community boards for determining how the available money will be spent each year. Because community foundations are usually geared toward supporting local projects, they can be an excellent resource for Friends groups and libraries.

Before you send a grant proposal to the community foundation, it is wise to make a phone call and talk to either the director or a member of the staff who is involved with making local grants. Ask the foundation staff member:

- + What types of grants are typically given.
- + How much money is given in a typical grant award.
- + What the format is for submitting a grant.
- + When the deadline is for submitting grants in a given year.
- + Whether you can get a copy of their recent annual report and a copy of a successful grant application.

The annual report will give you a good overview of the types of activities and grants the foundation supported in the previous year. If you are asking for a sizable amount, it would be worth your time to call one of the winning applicants and find out about their grant and why they feel they were successful with their application to the foundation. If the foundation was willing to give you a copy of a previous successful

grant application, it will provide you with some winning language to use as a guide and a format that might help you in submitting your own grant.

Community foundations are typically “professional” organizations in that they usually have paid staff and exist solely for receiving gifts and distributing these gifts through grants. Therefore, you will want to ensure that your grant is very polished and professional looking as well. Later, we will discuss the look and content of successful grants in “Putting It All Together” page 15. In addition, this guidebook has a grant template you can use to ensure that your grant is well organized, complete, and professional looking.

Individual Donors

Whether you call them “gifts” or “grants” you might be surprised by the largesse of many of the wealthier individuals in your community. Very often people of means are highly motivated to give back to their community. They are looking for ways to leave a legacy, to improve the town they live in and love, or simply give back because they have so much. Individual donors can be excellent resources for “start up” funding or matching funds if you are able to get a grant that requires a match.

You and your group may well know a number of the “high profile” individuals in your community who are wealthy and generous. There are others you probably don’t know about who are equally generous but, perhaps, a little less “high profile.” A good way to find out who is making gifts in the community is to gather up the written programs from the performing arts venues in your town or city – the community theater, the opera, the symphony, for example. These cultural and civic organizations usually thank their donors in their programs. Not only that, but typically the donors are stratified by level of giving so you’ll know who the more generous and able contributors are. Compare these lists with each other and with your list of “known” contributors and you will have an excellent resource for potential donors to your project.

Going to a wealthy individual for funding of a special project can be a little intimidating. However, if you have a wonderful idea that will benefit your community and you cannot find resources elsewhere, don’t hesitate. Using the same basic format as a written grant, you can put together a proposal that is designed to persuade an individual about the worthiness of your project. And don’t forget, you’re asking for the worthy project, not for yourself.

If you do decide to approach an individual(s) for funding, you will want to call him or her first and be prepared to give them a brief overview of what you hope to accomplish. If there is someone in your group or connected to your group who knows a potential donor, ask that person to make the initial phone call for you. Let the potential donor know that based on their prior gifts to the community, you believe that this is something that they will want to be a part of. Ask if you can come to visit or take them to lunch to discuss your plans. It can be difficult to make a “cold call” but it’s done all the time in fundraising. Also know that if this is a person who has

surfaced on one or more of your donor lists, he or she is accustomed to being approached to help support worthy projects.

If your potential donor declines to meet with you, ask if you can send a copy of your proposal (grant) and if he or she would be willing to receive a follow-up call to discuss it. It's likely you may have to call a number of potential donors before you get one who is willing to meet with you but don't be discouraged, many community pilot projects get started this way.

Once you have the opportunity to meet with a potential donor, be prepared with the written proposal, be ready to answer questions, and be open to a donor's suggesting modifications in your plans. Be sure that this donor knows that you are willing to publicize his or her involvement to the degree they wish. Many donors like to stay as anonymous as possible (to ward off an onslaught of future requests from others). Other donors will be pleased to have the project named for them (The Bill Smith Computer Lab) for example, and still others would appreciate a press release or an article in the newsletter.

The Cover Letter

The cover letter you send with your proposal may well be the most important item in your grant application. The cover letter is your introduction to the grantors – it will either engage them or not. A powerful cover letter that succinctly and enthusiastically describes your project, explains the need and impact of your project, briefly tells about your organization and shows why yours is the perfect organization to accomplish the goals of the project will predispose the grantor in your favor from the beginning. It will also be important to state why the grantor will *want* to fund your project – it's in line with their mission, it will give them high profile by aligning them with an important project, for example. Getting a grant creates a partnership between you and the grantor so you should be clear about what's in it for them.

Always address the cover letter to a person. "To Whom it May Concern" or "Dear Sir/Madam" will not do. As recommended earlier in this guidebook, you should make an exploratory phone call to any potential donor before submitting a grant. That's the time to get the name and address of the person who is responsible for giving grants and funds to community organizations.

The cover letter should ideally be only one page (two at the most – and no cheating with a 9 point font!). A brief cover letter will be read right away. A long cover letter will be set aside for later . . . often, later never comes. Of course if you are in a competitive grant situation where others are applying for the same grant money and

the granting period has a deadline, all grants and cover letters will be read. Nevertheless, a short, concise and powerful cover letter always packs the most punch and will get your actual proposal a more serious read.

So, can you really state your case, give background on your organization, show why you (above all others) should be funded, and demonstrate what's in it for the grantor all in one or two pages? You can! This guidebook includes several cover letter samples that will help inspire you. You are free to use anything included in the sample cover letters for your own purposes.

The Proposal

This is, essentially, the executive summary for your grant. Here you will state exactly what you would like to do. The proposal does not need to be any more than a paragraph or two depending on the complexity of your proposed project. For example, if you are looking for funds to implement a Books for Babies program in your community, you will start by explaining how or what a Books for Babies program entails. You will also want to say that you will provide a kit to each new mother in the hospital that includes a book for the new baby, information on the importance of reading to babies and on how to do it, as well as library information for creating a life-long reading habit. You should also tell the potential grantors how many families will be impacted through this program as determined by the number of births each year in your community, and how long you want the program to run.

The Need

Talking about the need for the program or project you are proposing is your real chance to sell it to the grantors. If you are submitting a Books for Babies proposal, you will want to talk about the importance of early childhood literacy. Make a strong persuasive case. For example, you could start with powerful and perhaps even shocking statement such as:

According to the America Reads Challenge, children who enter kindergarten without a book-rich environment enter far behind children who have books in their homes. Sadly, too many never catch up.¹

Starting with the general need can be very effective but quickly you will want to show how it is affecting your community. You could then follow an opening line such as the one above with:

In Smithville too many children will be starting school with a terrible handicap. Thirty-two percent of our children live in poverty and studies show that families in poverty read less and do less well in school.² While we may not be able to solve the problem of poverty in our town in the near future, we *can* help these and other children enter school on an equal footing with those who come from more enriched backgrounds.

Once you've shown the need for your project you must then show why your proposal will have an impact. In the Books for Babies scenario, you can reiterate the fact that children with a book rich background are much more likely to succeed in school and your proposal will get them started right away. (Note that now you have switched to a positive outcome vs. the negative Impact that a lack of reading can have as stated in your first few paragraphs.)

Restate the immediate impact of your proposal – getting the first book in the new parent's hand, accompanying material that will help the parent understand the importance of reading, providing material that will tell him or her how to read to an infant and, perhaps, other material on the first developmental stages in children (what parents can expect in the first six months, for example), and *importantly* how this program will be sustained long term.

In the Books for Babies scenario, you will want to highlight the role the baby's first library card will play. Perhaps there will be a follow-up book when the new parents bring their baby into the library. You can promise to include information about the library along with a statement that the children's librarian is waiting for the baby's first visit to the library so he or she can provide the parents with even more books for their baby – for free!

The potential sponsor will almost always want to be reassured that your proposal will have both immediate and long term impact – be sure to show them how it will.

¹ http://www.ed.gov/inits/americanreads/families_raising.html

² <http://www.ets.org/research/dload/Unevenstart.pdf>, esp. pp 11-13.
An Uneven Start: Indicators of Inequality in School Readiness, by Richard J. Coley, March 2002

Implementation

It's important to describe how the program will work. This will justify some of the items in your budget proposal as well as increase the confidence that this program will be successful. Though you will want to talk about implementation, you do not need to go into significant detail. In fact, the grant will usually be more successful if it is both comprehensive and brief. As discussed earlier with the cover letter, a strong concise grant that does not go on for pages and pages will get more attention more quickly.

In describing how the grant will be implemented, you might want to use a "bulleted" approach. For example:

- ◆ Kits will be obtained or developed that include a new, age-appropriate board book for the baby, information on the importance of reading to babies, information on how to read to the baby, and information on the local library.
- ◆ The hospital maternity ward will participate in this program by delivering kits to new mothers and spend a moment or two reinforcing the importance of reading to children.
- ◆ Working with the hospital maternity ward, the Friends of Anytown Library will take kits to the hospital on a regular basis as supplies begin to run low.
- ◆ The Anytown Friends will establish evaluation measures and work with the hospital in collection and assessing the feedback. See "Evaluation" below.
- ◆ The Anytown Friends will write a final report that includes evaluation and assessment of the program's success.

In the "implementation" portion of the proposal, you should let the grantors know how they will be recognized for their involvement. If your funding comes from a business or civic group, they may wish to have their logo on the kit bag (discreetly placed, not superceding your own or the library's logo) or if the bags come pre-printed, they may wish to have their logo placed on an item inside the bag – maybe on a bookmark. If it is a foundation, the only recognition required or desired may be a press release sent to the local newspaper as well as in your newsletter. So, the following bullets may also be included:

- ◆ The Anytown Friends will work with grantors [fill in name of the company, group, foundation, agency, etc. from whom you are seeking funding] to place their logo on the kit bag or on a bookmark inside the bag.
- ◆ The Anytown Friends will submit a press release with photos to the local paper announcing the grant and crediting the funding source [fill in name of the company, group, foundation, agency, etc. from whom you are seeking funding].
- ◆ The Anytown Friends will include a press release with photos in their newsletter and crediting the grantors [fill in name of the company, group, foundation, agency, etc. from whom you are seeking funding].

Evaluation

This is an important component for your own future projects as well as information that many granting agencies will want. Determine how you are going to evaluate the success of your program. In the Books for Babies example, will it be by number of kits distributed? The feedback you get from parents? If so, what will that feedback be? Will you be sending them a postcard asking them about the materials they received? Will you be getting anecdotal feedback via the maternity ward staff? Will you be making calls to a random sample of new parents who received kits to ask them if they are reading to their babies and if the kit made a difference? Will you be counting the number of new parents who come in to the library with the mock “Baby’s First Library Card” to redeem for the real thing? All of these? Be specific and let the potential grantor know when and how you will be evaluating the program. Promise them that you will send them a final report – and be sure to follow up!

Qualifications

Your grant proposal should include a statement about your group - why your group is qualified to implement the grant and a list of the key individuals who will be involved in the grant’s implementation and their qualifications if applicable. For example, if you have a volunteer design your materials and he or she is a professional graphic artist their qualifications should be included. This section will give the potential donor an idea about just who you are. The following should be included:

- + A brief description of what Friends of Libraries do (including the important fact that you are a volunteer group that gives time and money to support the library).
- + Your mission statement.
- + The fact that you are a 501(c)(3) organization if that’s the case.
- + The amount of money you donated to the library last year.
- + Any previous special projects that your group successfully implemented.

In addition to the list of key volunteers for the project, be sure to indicate which person is the contact person for the grant. Include the phone number, email address, fax number and address of your contact! This should, of course, should go without saying but sometimes it doesn’t so it’s a good reminder.

Budget

It's important to set a realistic budget for your project. Be sure you identify all your direct costs (including, if applicable, such things as postage, mailers, and stationary) as well as the more obvious costs such as program materials, new equipment, contract professional fees, or - as in the Books for Babies example - the cost of kits.

Do your homework and do not to overestimate your costs. While it is prudent and acceptable to build in a small amount to cover administrative overhead and unexpected contingencies, a potential grantor will look askance at a proposal that appears to have a lot of fat.

By the same token, don't underestimate your costs hoping that a lower budget will improve your chances of getting a grant. You don't want to have to go back to your grantors or dip into your own limited funds if you come up short. And remember Murphy's Law, your project is far more likely to come in over budget than under.

You will no doubt be contributing in-kind services of some sort to the project. This may include such things as developing and sending press releases, coordinating your project with other agencies, making phone calls, writing letters, providing space for programs, etc. In the Books for Babies scenario, you will be coordinating with the hospital and the library staff, you will be ordering supplies and stuffing kits (either because you are developing them from scratch or because you are inserting library and sponsor materials into pre-made kits), you will be delivering kits on a regular basis, and you will be developing public relations materials and, perhaps, events in coordination with the project.

All of the work you do to implement the project has value and it should be quantified in the budget as in-kind support to show potential grantors that they are getting added value with their funding of direct costs. It's not important that in-kind support matches the direct support you are seeking, it doesn't even have to be a significant match, the important thing is to show that you will be adding significant value to the grant and project by the donation of your time, facilities, expertise, etc.

Putting It All Together

It is important that the grant is professional – both in content and in form. You are asking for a potential sponsor to trust you to use their funds wisely and well. If your proposal doesn't look polished, if it includes typos or leaves out important information, you are likely to be turned down for funding. Be sure that you have several people go over your proposal so that it is well edited and comprehensive. Also, consider putting your proposal in presentation folder with the title of your proposal on the cover.

Finally, if there are any supporting materials that will help “show” the potential sponsor more about the project or your group, you should send them along with your proposal. For example, if you have a sample Books for Babies kit, it could well strengthen your request. Consider, also, sending a recent newsletter from your organization and perhaps newspaper coverage of other successful projects you've been involved with.

As a reminder, here is a suggested list of what to include in your grant proposal:

- + Title page with the name of your grant. It can be catchy such as “Every Child a Success,” or very simple and direct such as “Books for Babies.”
- + Cover Letter.
- + A brief description of what you are proposing.
- + Information about why your project is needed; what “problem” will it solve? What contribution will it make?
- + A description about how the grant will be implemented.
- + Information on how you will evaluate the project's success.
- + Qualifications of your group and the key individuals involved in the project's implementation.
- + The project budget.

USING THIS GUIDEBOOK

This guidebook includes three sample grant proposals based on the advice and instructions provided above. Many grantors will require that you fill in their own grant forms for proposals but just as often, you'll be asked to send in a proposal without any standard template available.

The samples proposals included cover all the areas that need to be addressed in an initial proposal and provide a useable template when no other is available. You may use anything from these samples that you wish or simply use them as guidelines. The sample grants and the blank template are in Microsoft Word format. You may cut and paste from the sample grants into the blank template or simply edit within the original sample grant.

Be sure to fully edit your final cover letter and grant to be certain you have changed all generic information provided in the sample.

Don't be surprised if, once submitted, the grantors ask for additional information or modifications. Very often, getting grants requires negotiation between you and the potential donor.

Included on the accompanying CD:

A Donor's Bill of Rights

Sample Sponsorship Policy

Three Sample Grant Applications with Cover Letters

A Fill in the Blank Grant Template