

GETTING STARTED

ALL THE THINGS YOU WISH YOU KNEW BEFORE APPLYING...

A WORKSHOP FOR THE SOUTHEASTERN CONNECTICUT CULTURAL COALITION FUNDING BOOSTER PROGRAM



2 WHAT ARE TOP CHALLENGES FOR NONPROFIT'S TODAY?

According to Council of Nonprofits: Challenges continue to be...

1. Limited resources; More to do, less \$\$, staff/capacity available to do it.
2. Increased demands on nonprofits, stemming from increased needs in communities.
3. More competition! Mission and programs need to be relevant. Every board member and volunteer needs to be an active, vocal advocate for mission to affect real change.

3

WAYS TO INCREASE FINANCIAL RESOURCES CONTRIBUTED INCOME – GRANTS VS. DONATIONS

GRANTS

- Having history of successful grant funding is “Stamp of approval” for individual donors. Means you have been vetted and deemed worthy!
- Can provide much larger funds than the typical donation. Average grant award \$3-5K for local foundations.
- Can be a more dependable income source compared to donations, but takes a lot of staff time.

**** Donor-Advised Funds – What are they??****

DONATIONS

- Showing income from individual donations shows foundations you’re doing everything possible to fundraise/build relationships and promote mission.
- Typically unrestricted income, use it to pay staff/keep the lights on, or as matching funds for a grant request.
- Less paperwork, but don’t be fooled... if you want to keep, and grow, your donors you need to have multiple “touches” (contacts) throughout the year.

4


HOW TO INCREASE FINANCIAL RESOURCES EARNED INCOME SOURCES

- Program Registration Fees/Ticket Fees
- Tuitions
- Member Fees – Members are NOT Donors, make sure you understand the difference!
- **Special Events – More on this...**
- Merchandise or Other Sales

5

SPECIAL EVENTS HOW TO MAKE SURE IT'S SUCCESSFUL

You need to raise \$\$ so the board says... “Let’s have a fundraiser!”

- ** What are event goals – are we raising \$\$, or expanding awareness. A good event does both!
 - ** Be Realistic with size, fundraising goal, capacity of your organization.
 - ** Be unique, make it something your constituency will be interested in attending!
 - ** Be Prepared to put in the time. Don’t be fooled... fundraisers are A LOT of work. If your part-time staff is planning an event, they’re not running programs or applying for grants.
 - ** Make it a staple. If you find a good formula for a manageable event, do it annually. The success rate increases over time.
 - ** Get as much donated as possible BUT be respectful of local businesses and artists! Don’t assume you’ll get everything for free. You have to be prepared to dish-out some money.
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6

WHAT ARE FUNDERS/DONORS LOOKING FOR?? RELEVANCE!

- **A Connection/Relationship** – Donors/funders today have little interest in giving \$\$ without connection to mission.
- **Are you relevant??** Is your organization/mission relevant? Do you try hard to stay connected and make your programs meaningful to the people in your community? Do you adapt?
- **Partnerships/Collaboration** – If you're not collaborating, you're not relevant. Expanding the impact of your programs, sharing resources, thinking "outside the box" is what all donors and grantors want to see.
- **Fiscal Responsibility** – (NP Finance Fund – Top Indicators of NP Financial Health) Donors/Funders do their homework. Does the majority of income go back to mission/programs? CharityWatch rates nonprofits that spend at least 75% of income on mission efficient. Rule of thumb, no more than 30% on admin/salaries.
- **Diversity, Inclusiveness, Equity** – READI Framework (Relevance, Equity, Access, Diversity, Inclusiveness) of the State Office of the Arts just as an example. Thoughtful approaches to addressing each.




7

WHY DO WE NEED TO THINK “OUTSIDE THE BOX”

Program Growth = Increased Impact of Mission & Increased Capacity

- **Why do we need to think “Outside the Box”** – Because it keeps programs/organizations relevant, deepens program impact, expands audiences, creates new collaborations, and makes organizations more attractive to funders and donors.
- Tip: You can’t operate the same programs every year, to the same audiences, and expect to grow. Instead, create program templates that work then modify themes to speak to different audiences/current events/or nurtures new partnerships.
- What are potential benefits or risks of cross-sector collaboration?
- From a funding standpoint how can it be beneficial to collaborate across sectors?

GROUP EXERCISE: Turn to your neighbor. Introduce yourself and briefly explain your mission/what you do. Come up with a collaboration - program/event concept that is innovative and will benefit both.



8

FOOD FOR THOUGHT... WHAT ARE YOUR MISSED OPPORTUNITIES TO BUILD RELATIONSHIPS??

- Do you ask for donations multiple ways (mailed letters, website “button”, FB, eblasts)?
- Do you evaluate your programs and ask for input from your constituency?
- Do you communicate your successes and struggles to your members/donors/grantors throughout the year.
- Do you invite your members/donors/grantors to programs or meetings so they feel personal connection/ownership? Or... are you only reaching out to ask for \$\$?
- Do you say “thank you” often and sincerely?



9

AMERICAN DISABILITIES ACT EXAMPLE OF MISSING AN OPPORTUNITY

ADA is a Civil Rights law that protects a defined class of people to give “equal opportunity”. The law covers physical & mental impairment that limits activities of daily living (includes Cancer).

***** This will be required for organizations receiving state/federal funding in next few years. *****

Some easy ways to be more accessible:

- Make sure your website can be read by “text to speech” software for blind.
- Have “accessibility” page or short video on your website explaining exactly how your facility is accessible and how it is NOT (don’t be afraid to be honest).
- Ask someone who is disabled to walk through your program/facility and give you pointers/ideas on how to make things more accessible.



10

IS YOUR ORGANIZATION READY FOR GRANTS?

1. A clearly defined mission statement that is *relevant*.
2. An **outline of your programming**, with descriptions, goals, and a budget for each. Does not have to be fancy, but the information needs to exist.
3. Do you have a **short or long range plan** in place? Again, does not have to be fancy but DOES have to involve all stakeholders, and give some direction to where the organization is going and why.
4. **Financial Statements** – Do you have an operating budget that is board approved? Are the expenses and income sources clear? **TRANSPARENCY IS KEY!**
5. **Board of Directors** – Do you have a board that operates according to your bylaws? Are they giving time, talent, and \$\$?
6. **Capacity** – Do you have the capacity to manage the grant money and reporting if it's awarded?

Grants are competitive at every level. Having these in place puts your organization in a stronger position, AND gives you essential copy/verbiage to write grant proposals.



FINALLY... LET'S GET TO GRANTS WHERE TO FIND THEM??

- Utilize free services, SECT Website, Bank Foundation Directories, libraries, CT Department of Economic & Community Development, all have listings. Subscription services can be expensive.
- Be selective. Blanket “Letters of Inquiry/Introduction” yield VERY little fruit.
- If you’ve never received a grant before start small and local. A Sponsorship from a local bank (also contributed income). Area banks with sponsorships and grants: BOA, Charter Oak, Dime Bank, Chelsea Groton, and many more.
- Do Your Research Before You Call – Funding Priorities Line-up? (CHECK) Guidelines are relevant to our program/org? (CHECK) Read through the FAQ’s on the website? (CHECK)
- Make the Call! – The Grant/Office Manager is not your enemy. Chat-up them up. Explain your mission, program idea – be passionate about what you do/impact.

GENERAL RULES OF GRANT WRITING

1. The technical writer vs. the emotional writer – BE BOTH! Data drives points home, emotions help us connect more with the vision/mission.
2. **ANSWER THE QUESTION!** Repeat the question, or provide headers to make sure you're answering everything. Multi-Pronged Questions are very common... What did I miss!!
3. Use their words right back at them!! Read the funding priorities, what words do they use? Repeat key words. Be careful not to be too long-winded.
4. Just like in dating... Confidence is a good thing! As long as it's mixed with a touch of humility.
5. Do not show a picture of desperation, foundations rarely want to be the saviors of a sinking ship. Rather, they want to see how important their dollars are in providing an essential need.
6. Character/Word Limits – UGGHHH Character Limits... Unless noted they are always WITH spaces.
**** Write first, cut/edit later. ****
7. Presentation Matters! The easier you make it for the review to read the better your chances.

13 HOW TO BE BOTH THE TECHNICAL WRITER & EMOTIONAL WRITER

STANDARD QUESTION: *WHAT NEED WILL PROJECT ADDRESS?*


- **Tell a story.** Introduce the argument, outline the issue, connect it to the larger world of your community, elicit emotion, and drive it home with data. It should flow!
- **Keep the voice.** Don't "lift" data directly from the web if feels forced. Are you genuinely considering the audience? Is it a reliable resource?

Example:

The future of our economy rests on building a workforce of innovative, creative thinkers. In the past few years a light has been shed on the gender imbalance in STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) careers with only 28% of women occupying jobs in these areas -- a large quantity of this number reflects women in life science jobs/nursing (Reference). Schools and businesses have been making a push for women to take-on these traditionally male occupied careers which require great confidence, innovative thinking, and creativity. With over 85% of (ORG) enrollment representing young women ages 5-18, we are in a unique position to impact this population -- and we have! *{Next paragraph brings in the emotion, outlines HOW they are addressing this with their program, and why funding is needed.}*

14

CFECT – ENVIRONMENTAL GRANT FUNDING PRIORITIES ALL YOUR KEY WORDS ARE IN HERE...


- **Preserve & protect** environmentally significant lands, waterways and wildlife habitats
 - For the benefit not only of the **ecosystem, but for the health, livelihood and enjoyment of local residents;**
 - **Engage youth** in educational environmental activities in natural settings, to help them become good stewards of the environment
 - Make **positive connections** between people's **mental/physical health**, and their **exposure to the natural world.**
 - These grants must be for the benefit of the residents of the 42 towns in our region. **(OPEN TO ALL)**
 - Priority given to grants that: are **collaborative, regional** in scope, **promote systems change**, rooted in **evidence-based approaches**, **serve lower-income communities**, include **measurable outcomes**, affect **positive change over the long term.**
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15

SHOWING CONFIDENCE, IT'S OK TO BRAG A LITTLE *EXAMPLE*

Question: Brief overview of your organization & mission. 150 words

(ORG) is a 19-year-old community arts center with a mission to provide a nurturing environment for artistic creativity and development through educational fine arts programs and events, for all ages. This mission is evident from the moment you enter, from our abundant art store, open studio's, display of local art by students and seasoned artists, one-of-a-kind sculpture wall, and expansive selection of supplies/equipment. (ORG) classes, summer camps, workshops, and community partnerships make us a hub for town activity, with offerings for all ages, incomes, and abilities, in over 20 artforms. Everything about (ORG) nurtures an atmosphere of inclusiveness, acceptance, spontaneity, and creativity, allowing our students to let their artistic ability shine-- and it works!! Just this year 2 of our students WON the National Ceramics Competition, over 1,100 pieces were entered, only 100 win, making (ORG) an official award-winning studio!



16

ANSWERING THE MULTI-PRONGED QUESTION

QUESTION: Provide detailed info about how activities will address the stated need and intended impact. Include the # of individuals served and # of hours participants will be involved. If the request is for project support, note whether this is a new or existing program. If existing, how long has it been in operation. (300 Word Max)

The Need: (Emotion!)

The Impact: (DATA!)

Project Details: (Don't be general) This NEW "project" will run for 8-weeks, two-hours per session, for 16 total contact hours. The "project" directly serves our 100 members and indirectly serves the community at large through....marketing/culminating event etc....

Steer clear of generalized statements, project "concepts" and outlines.



THE “MEAT” QUESTION OUTLINE YOUR PROGRAM DETAILS

- Is reader able to understand the project clearly? Remember, they know nothing about you and your work!
- Do you elicit excitement so that readers genuinely want to see the project realized.
- Don't be general!! Don't provide a program CONCEPT, provide a program OUTLINE answer the who/what/when/where (Dates, times, how many will participate etc....)
- Don't save the best for last! Make points up-front. Readers get overwhelmed. By the last paragraph they can be skimming if you haven't grabbed their attention.



HOW WILL YOU EVALUATE?? OUTCOMES QUESTIONS

- **Some sample questions...**
 - **Describe anticipated results during and after the funding period.**
 - **How will the success of this initiative be defined and measured?**
 - **Which tools will you use to evaluate the project?**
 - **Describe the benefits expected from this program or activity.**

Keep it simple! Readers can tell when you're "throwing in the kitchen sink" or over-committing to do evaluation that you do not have the capacity to do. Make sure you can complete the evaluation -- they'll ask for the data in final report!

DISCUSSION: What are some simple evaluation techniques?



THE MONEY QUESTIONS

- **Some sample questions...**
 - **How would you secure the remaining funds or modify this program or project if a partial award were approved.**
 - **What other steps have you taken to raise funds for this activity or program?**
 - **What alternative plans have you made in the event that you do not receive the full amount requested?**

Remember... Confidence is a good thing! As long as it's mixed with a touch of humility.

Example: "X program can not operate without these needed funds, but "ORG" has successfully raised funds for programming for 10 years and we're committed to securing what is needed. If funds are not received the program will be postpone until funds are identified."



ADDITIONAL MATERIALS – PROJECT BUDGET REVIEW BUDGET TEMPLATE

- Separate income into Contributed vs. Earned vs. In-kind
- Project Budgets should show a real picture of program expenses - including all administrative and overhead costs, but you don't necessarily charge these to the grant.
- Are your line items clear or is a lot of different expenses mixed into one category.
- Limit “miscellaneous” income or expenses. What are these incomes and expenses? Find or create a relevant line item.
- Dealing with matching grants. Can you use in-kind? Where are the matching funds coming from?
- Typically you “zero-out” program budgets. Operating Budgets SHOULD show surplus! Surplus/Cash Reserve shows responsible financial management - ability to manage debt, plan for future.

21


PACKAGING & AFTER THOUGHTS

- Formatting matters!! Make sure fonts/sizes, spacing is consistent, spelling/grammar etc....
- Always have another set of eyes look it over for inconsistencies. Sometimes you're too close to the program/grant to see the errors.
- If anything is left unclear, include a cover letter clarifying. It's OK if they call with questions... That means they're being thoughtful.
- All attachments included??
- Was Grant Awarded – YES! Great, don't forget to acknowledge foundation on website and in all marketing, invite them to relevant events. Don't forget about reporting! Keep the relationship positive.
- Didn't receive funding... What now? Call. Are there comments? Scoring Rubrics? Any information that could help improve for next time. Still invite them to events/keep them informed!

THE “WHAT IF’S”

- What happens if...
 - The program changes...
 - You don't identify the other funding needed...
 - A key partner backs-out...
 - The project doesn't achieve any of the stated objectives...

**Call them!! Be honest. They DO NOT want to give money back. Can typically be flexible.
Don't make this a habit – says you're unreliable.**



COMMENTS FROM GRANT REVIEWERS

- Wanted to hear more about how they were measuring outcomes.
- Not a clear articulation of how this project fits the guidelines.
- Appreciate the data and numbers, but the narrative needs more humanity to it – the emotion gets lost in it.
- The project would benefit if it's rooted in the community. Where's the collaboration?
- Would like to know more about promotional plans.
- More thought into how you will effectively evaluate the impact of your event.

COMMENTS FROM GRANT REVIEWERS

- Needs more information/thought about how this aligns with the funding priorities.
- There is no real connection to the audience. The program only goes skin-deep.
- The budget does not correspond to the narrative.
- The program is operating outside the timeline for the grant funding period.
- I don't see how this program is connected to their mission?
- This is a wonderful program and I can see the authors deep emotional connection, but the narrative questions are simply not answered.

**** BE A REVIEWER! That's the best way to improve your own applications. ****



INFORMATION SOURCES

DON'T RECREATE THE WHEEL – THE DATA IS THERE!

- Southeastern CT Cultural Coalition: culturesect.org
- CT Nonprofit Alliance: ctnonprofitalliance.org
- CT Department of Economic & Community Development: portal.ct.gov/DECD
- CT Arts Alliance: ctartsalliance.org/
- NEA/NEH/IMLS: National Endowment for Arts, NE for Humanities, Inst. Museum & Library Services
- Americans for the Arts
- CT Office of the Arts: cultureandtourism.org
- Council of Nonprofits: councilofnonprofits.org/
- CT Humanities: cthumanities.org/
- Reading: Nonprofit Quarterly, Chronicle of Philanthropy, CT Mirror