



How to Get a Grant

Here are the fundamentals of grants, from A to Z.

BY TERENCE FERNSLER

Getting Funded: A Complete Guide to Proposal Writing

By Dr. Mary Stewart Hall. 206 pages. Softcover. Continuing Education Publications of Portland State University.

One of the great benefits of this book is that it starts at the beginning—with your project idea. Mary Stewart Hall insists that you come up with project ideas first—not create ideas to meet the needs of funders. Once you know what your project will do and whom it will benefit, then you can seek someone to fund it.

Next, she spends time helping you develop a strategic plan. A good proposal will do more than gain money for your organization. It will also show how well you've done your planning.

To help assess your organization's competence for a program, the book provides a series of questions. Checklists assure that you have the necessary support systems to receive and administer a grant and that your organization fits the funder's criteria. The checklists are long but excellent, and may make the book worthwhile in themselves.

Hall is very explicit about objectives and lists some helpful rules about when to include process objectives. As she points out, clear objectives clarify the entire program. In fact, evaluation cannot be performed without them.

In a crisp, no-nonsense style, Hall lists the major components of a proposal before dwelling on each. She spends time explaining that you must decide if any evaluation is warranted, who will design it, and what its purposes will be. She then gives eight steps to placing an evaluation in a proposal—a very well-done section.

There is a good chapter on how to find prospects. Also provided is a list of questions to ask during your follow-up call to funders.

When creating a budget, first understand what can be done and what cannot, she emphasizes. Are indirect costs

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allowed? Will the entire budget be funded by one source? Next, estimate the costs of each activity. Finally, prepare a budget using this information in an appropriate format.

Hall is careful to include a final step that is often neglected—following up on proposals that are rejected. It's important to find out why your proposal was turned down. This step can lead to re-submission or to moving on. Either way, it will be a valuable learning experience.

The book's real value is that it covers the topic so comprehensively. Also, it discusses both private and public grants in one source—a real benefit to those of us who submit grants to both.

Especially useful is the section on assessing organizational capacity and developing project ideas. Not enough emphasis is given to these concepts in most other books, yet they are essential parts of getting a grant. You can't write a proposal effectively if your organization isn't capable of putting your idea into practice. This may be painful for some organizations to absorb, but it should be required reading for all. ■

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Q It's Time to Realign Your Fundraising Strategies

For dramatic fundraising results, match your strategies to demographic trends, advises Judith Nichols in *Transforming Fundraising* (608-274-9777). For example:

- Work first with your best prospects—those who are already part of your “family.”
- Focus on *after-marketing*—keeping donors you already have—rather than acquiring new donors.
- Remember the 70/20/10 rule: Spend 70% of your effort renewing and upgrading current donors, 20% on finding prospects similar to your current donors, and

10% on “wild cards.”

- Concentrate your best fundraising methods on your best prospects.
- Pay more attention to the middle of the donor pyramid.
- Stop thinking of major donors as one-time givers. Instead, ask them more often for larger gifts.
- Focus on times of significant change in people’s lives—empty-nesting, remarrying, retiring, and grandparenting—when they’re often ready to give more. □

Q Sneak Preview of the New Millennium

Look for ways you can turn trends into opportunities for your organization. Here's what to expect, according to Young & Rubicam Inc.'s Brand Futures Group (<http://www.brandfutures.com>) and *Communication Briefings* (www.briefings.com):

- Ever-more-sophisticated ways of monitoring people's behavior will create a backlash. People will demand confidentiality and respect for their privacy.
- Caller ID units will become so common that people will screen telemarketers out of business.
- Malls around the U.S. are dying and will continue to do so, being replaced with a new breed of community that includes stores, restaurants, offices, conference centers, and a common area where people can relax.
- Internet ads will be a waste of money because software—available now—will filter out Web ads that visitors don't specifically ask to see.
- People will have even less time to spare. So speed, convenience, simplified choices, and streamlined responses will be at the top of their lists.
- Europeans, who have thus far lagged behind the U.S. in Internet use, are catching up at a rapid pace. Germans will lead, with an expected online population of 30 million by 2004, up from 10.4 million today.
- People's loyalty will go to organizations that treat them as individuals, adapting to their changing habits and needs. □

Q Convert Your Values into Results

The only way for nonprofits to receive the full benefit of successful programs is to build high-performance organizations, capable of creating sustained, effective impact. Drawing on techniques used by successful managers in both businesses and nonprofits, *High Performance Nonprofit Organizations* outlines the processes that are needed.

Benchmarking, for example, is a process that bridges the gap between great ideas and great performance. It guarantees that you're “asking the right questions.” Such processes can help you convert your organization's values into results. For more information, contact John Wiley & Sons, 605 Third Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10158, 212-850-6336. □

Q Community Foundations Flourish

The number of community foundations in the U.S. has doubled in the past 10 years, thanks in part to the ability of foundations to use donations wisely within the community. Assets of the 545 U.S. community foundations exceed \$21 billion, according to the Council on Foundations (<http://www.pj.org/foundations/community0817.cfm>). □



■ Surveys Document Surge in Volunteering

Several recent surveys testify to a leap in volunteering. Independent Sector's "Giving & Volunteering in the United States" (www.IndependentSector.org) finds the following:

- 56% of adults aged 18 or over volunteered in 1998—the largest-ever recorded level of volunteering and a 13.7% increase over previous figures.
- An estimated 109 million people volunteered 19.9 billion hours in 1998.
- The volunteer workforce represents the equivalent of over 9 million full-time employees at a value of \$225 billion.
- 90% of individuals volunteer when asked.
- Volunteers make larger financial contributions than those who don't volunteer. Contributing households

with a volunteer give over 2-1/2 times more than those without a volunteer.

A survey of CEOs of Fortune 500 companies, conducted by Mark R. Fisher Public Relations & Fundraising (248-888-5020) reveals:

- 93% of CEOs encourage their executives to volunteer on nonprofit boards and consider those who do more valuable to the company.
- 95% of CEOs lead by example, personally volunteering for at least one nonprofit; 80% are on five or more nonprofit boards.
- Nearly 60% say that their executives' involvement on a nonprofit board is beneficial to the company's bottom line. ■

■ Nonprofit Fringe Benefits Surveyed

A new survey reports on fringe benefits and working conditions in nonprofit organizations. The 819-page report details information from 1,438 nonprofits on hours, flextime, vacation, insurance, retirement, and other benefit practices. *Fringe Benefits & Working Conditions in Nonprofit Organizations* is available from Abbott, Langer & Associates, 548 First Street, Crete, Illinois 60417, 708-672-4200. ■

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■ Small Charities Increasing

Smaller charities are growing in popularity, the Newhouse News Service reports. Only one-sixth of the 700,000 U.S. charities registered with the IRS have revenues over \$100,000. Many individuals are forming charities because they find it the best way to promote their cause. For more information, see:

<http://www.cleveland.com/business/news/fmchari.ssf>. ■