

GRANTWRITING roundup

MASTER GRANT STRATEGY TIPS

When being introduced to intriguing people, I have always had a soft spot for the unapologetic ones. Recently it occurred to me that this extends to grants as well. I recall being impressed by one grant that I was reviewing on a panel for a large foundation with a project that challenged and yet charmed us, provoked, puzzled and in the end, left us feeling confident in awarding a grant.

Later, my fellow panelists and I got into a lively discussion about just what made this particular artist, this proposal, this project so...well, the word that comes to mind is - inevitable.

It occurred to me then that there were no good reasons to turn it down. Not one.

That caught my attention.

I began studying the architecture of this proposal to see if I could coax the secret of success from its framework.

Was it well written? Yes.

Was the budget well written? Yes.

Were the goals clear? Yes.

Yet there was something more. Actually, something less.

The artist had not only crushed the criteria, she had obliterated any possible objections, she removed all doubt about her ability to successfully do her project well leaving us with just one thing.

Confidence.

And with that she gracefully landed in that rarified place on the top of the ranking sheet because she realized the basic psychology of how this funder thinks. And perhaps more importantly, she developed a focused strategy to understand everything this funder wants and desperately needs to fund.

The reality she recognized is based on these 3 beliefs:

People fund people.

Money follows passion.

*Being the best artist is not the same as
being the best candidate for a grant.*

OK, how can you make all this work for you?

**Here are 9 questions
to help you gain valuable knowledge and insight
to find the best funder for you:**

1. Does my mission align with my funder's?

This is the most important question for you to answer. When your missions are in perfect alignment you can become much more than an applicant. You can position yourself as a partner, a colleague or in some situations, a co-conspirator. The success of your proposal and the prospect of continued funding is directly related to how well your missions sync.

2. Do we serve the same audiences?

Whether that audience is you or the people you serve, it is critical that there is alignment here. Many funders consider their grantees as partners in doing the work that fulfills their mission - and yours.

3. Are their grantees my peers and role models?

Do you remember walking into the schoolyard for the very first time? You eventually found the kids who became your friends and your place in that world. Check out who this funder has already given grants to and see if they are your peers or people you admire. This is a snapshot of who & what they value in a grantee. Does this look like you?

4. Have they funded projects similar to mine?

Let me be clear: I mean projects that are similar to yours in outcomes and goals. You want to have a unique impact on people by doing a project that you and only you can accomplish. Are the results of other funded projects focused on the same goals as your project? If so, you are in the right place.

5. Are they active in my area?

This is an opportunity for you to actually see the projects they fund, to attend their events and eventually meet the people you need to meet.

6. Are there already projects like mine in my area?

There are many ways to think about this. You certainly don't want to do the same thing as someone else. At the same time, projects similar to yours suggests an interest or need that is being funded. Look at what is already being funded and see who else is funding it.

7. Why is this funder important to me?

Think about why this funder is key to your success. Some funders like to see your progression of growth. For example, small grass roots to mid size to larger national grants. Other funders can leverage other funders. Determine the reason for your choice.

8. Who could be other funders for my project?

This is important information you can get by answering the above questions. You can also do some crowdfunding research on Kickstarter or Indiegogo to see what kind of individual donor fan base you can build for your project. Think about building a diverse funding base of foundations, individuals, local businesses, & sponsors.

9. What does my funder lack?

Funders have missions, goals & objectives. They look to you, the applicant, to help fulfill them. Recognizing what their specific needs are in creating your project is a powerful & strategic way to boost their confidence in you and your unique impact upon your shared audience.

*By answering these questions,
you will deeply understand your funder's mindset
which will reveal everything you need to know about
how to position yourself
as the very best candidate for a grant.*