

Tricks, Tips, and Words of Wisdom:
Making Your Capacity-Building Grant
Proposal Shine

Spartanburg County Foundation
July 2014 Grant Training Sessions

What Does a Funder Want?

- **Relevance:** Understand funding priorities and make sure your program fits.
- **Clarity:** Know what you are doing and why.
- **Strategy:** Connect your work to your organization's ability to fulfill its mission and further the community's goals.
- **Brevity:** Keep it short and sweet. (Those word counts are your friend!)

What Does “Capacity-Building” Mean?

- A strategic investment in your organization’s ability to do its work better and in a sustainable manner (“performance and impact”).
- Enables your organization to reach more people, raise/earn more money, function more efficiently, etc.
- The best capacity-building project will become self-supporting, meaning that a one-time investment will leverage future dollars.

The RFP is Your Roadmap!

- Logical progression of story-telling and case-making!
- Think about opportunities to “personalize” your narrative. A few good spots in the RFP:
 - Describe the capacity-building project and *why it is needed.*
 - Outcomes- *What is your measure of success?*
 - How will the capacity that the project produces be *sustained?*

Tip #1: Make Your Case

- A capacity-building grant is designed to increase your organization's ability to meet the *community's* need.
- Don't forget to explain how your work addresses at least one of the four Leading Indicators for Social Environment from the Spartanburg Community Indicators Project (Family Income, Teen Pregnancy, Family Structure, Violent and Non-Violent Crime).

Tip #2: Paint a Picture of the Future

- Articulate what will be different after your capacity-building project and why that is important (meeting a gap in service, connecting to more donors, etc.).
- Be realistic about your outcomes: \$10,000 can make a big difference, but it can't change the world!

Tip #3: Leverage the Power of Collaboration

- Think about the organizations that you could work with and enlist them to add additional heft to your narrative.
- Use a well-placed quote instead of a simple statement of fact. Someone else's words can powerfully express how much this capacity-building project can grow your impact.

Tip #4: Work with Good People

- Capacity-building often needs outside consultants to give fresh insight and expertise on the challenges and opportunities your organization is facing.
- Ask for recommendations from organizations and community leaders whom you trust and whose work you admire.

Tip #5: Budget Smart

- Don't wing it! Work from a cost-per-person model that is realistic for items like supplies, etc.
- Conduct an internal time audit so that you understand how your staff time is being spent on each of your programs—this helps to justify salary allocations for the capacity-building project.
- Include supportable in-kind income and expense as appropriate. This helps show the value of partnerships (i.e. if you will be getting some pro bono assistance, calculate the market rate and put it in the budget!)
- For indirect costs, a good rule of thumb is 10% of total project costs (i.e. \$2,500 on a \$25,000 project).

Closing Thoughts

- Follow directions. Share your passion clearly and succinctly.
- Proofread! Then have someone else proofread!
- You can write the best proposal in the world—and still get turned down. Don't take it personally or assume you did something wrong. Try to get feedback if possible. It will help your case next time.

Good Luck!

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