

**WEBINAR:
GRANTS RESEARCH AND PROSPECTING
TERRY GUNNELL, PRESENTER**

As I was putting the presentation together I was trying to stay within the time frame. You know grant research and prospecting is something you can put together in five minutes or talk a whole day about. What my goal is to give you a quick overview and then some tools that you can use in the process.

If I can take a step back and share with you a little bit about what my philosophy on this is, it will possibly sound a bit high minded, I think there are fundamentally, in this realm, two different approaches really, one is grant writing and the other is grant seeking.

Grant writing is, more or less, responsibly responding to NOFAs and RFPs from agencies with whom you already have a relationship or that you already have a good bit of information about or who is already matched through the interest and needs of your agency. And that's a perfectly valid and reasonable approach for agencies that have those kinds of long standing existing relationships. But there also many agencies, particularly smaller agencies and particularly start up agencies that need to be actively engaged in grant seeking, which I define as more or less casting a broad net to learn more about new funders and to learn how you can match your interest up with theirs in pursuit of grant funding.

One could be defined as a slightly bit more passive approach, the other a more activist approach. And what I'm really going to talk to you a little bit about today is how you go about grant seeking, and that's why I used deliberately the phrase Grants Research and Prospecting because, to some extent, almost like the picture of the gold miner sitting over their slew trying to mine out gold.

These are just generally some broad questions you want to really kind of jot down, and I find for me that it's actually very helpful if I actually write these things and do notes on them. And the questions that you ask yourself in this case are; who's really going to fund you, there predicated on whose interest match yours.

Twenty years ago most grant seekers or grant writers fundamentally approached their potential donors with the mind set of; you should give me money because I am going to do good. That is certainly true and certainly has value, but the thing to remember is that now there are so many more people who are grant seekers and grant writers that the numbers of applications being received, even in small foundations, vastly exceed their ability to fund those applications. What many folks are still missing is that critical step of thinking through how to match your interest up with the funders; and perhaps as important, how to identify what the funders real interests are.

Really, the first big broad question is who would be interested in you, who would be interested in your organization? And strategically, you want to think about geographic location, you want to think about fields of interest, you want to think about what Corporations do business in your area, to look at Corporate foundations, or Corporate direct giving programs and just begin to sketch out a list for yourself on that. And I recognize that this is much easier in urbanized areas and wealthier states but it's also

not impossible in small rural states. Candidly, I did most of my fundraising in Alabama, you know, the third poorest state in the country. If we can do it in Alabama, virtually any state can do it; you just have to think strategically about it.

Next question is who would fund organizations like yours? Not all foundations are interested in all kinds of agencies, some are interested in larger agencies, and some are interested in grassroots agencies. Some are now, particularly with some of the new start up foundations on the west coast that were started with dot com money, some agencies now are only interested in organizations that are engaged in social entrepreneurship. So, who would fund someone like you, again, this match making and grid development.

The third question you would really want to ask yourself is what you would say if you had the opportunity to talk to the funder that day. Could you say with some degree of specificity, just what you would ask them for? I know that sounds like I'm getting ahead of myself on that, but you really want to have somewhat of an idea of what your real need is as you do this research process. And again, I say this almost jokingly, but again, I'm still surprised at people who use this approach, it has to be beyond lending money for my program, it has to stretch substantially beyond that and it really does need to transcend. You know, I need your money because I'm going to do good with it, recognizing there are fifteen people right behind you who are also going to do good with it.

These are very preliminary questions you want to start thinking through. Also, moving onto the next slide, just to give you a sense about what the funders are going to be looking for, I know, for many of you, I am preaching to the choir. But it is important to think through some of this as you tend to pursue your match. First off, who is interested in your issue, who will fund programs focused on children and youth, who will fund, for instance, one of the Corporations strategic priorities right now, is focused on children of incarcerated parents. Do you have a sense about what some of your key funders or potential funders ongoing and current strategic funding priorities are, and do they match up with yours?

The other thing is; is the funder going to give in, your geographic area? And I will give you a good example on this, when I was at UAB, one particular researcher who was very very focused on nutrition research and the Arthur Daniels Midland Foundation who is the largest funder of nutrition research in the United States. And he was desperate to get a grant from the Arthur Daniels Midland and pestered the steel out of me to do it. It took about 2 years of trying but really, it came down to basically that Arthur Daniels Midland could not and would not fund us because they don't have a plant in Alabama. But I went through the process, under a little bit of pressure, knowing that it probably wasn't going to work out. The point is I wasted a lot of time pursuing a foundation that was never going to fund us anyway; and it was just because of their stated geographic interest.

The other thing you want to think through, again, this comes back to what the funders interest are, are they interested in the constituency you serve? For instance, Ann Casey is focused on children and youth, their primary interest would be a good match for a gerontology program, think about that.

The other thing they're going to be looking for, and there is a lot of discussion right now in the philanthropic community about it's impact, basically funders really are looking for new and creative programs. They're not necessarily interested in helping agencies do

more of the same, or do the same thing they've been doing for twenty years. You have to think through what is unique about your program, what makes it unique, locally perhaps, what makes it unique nationally and what is the uniqueness of your agency that would make them be more interested in you. The thing you want to keep in mind about this is that foundations are private entities and they have their own boards to report to. And the staffs at the foundations or private giving entities want to be able to tell great new stories to their board, about the great new projects their funding. They don't want to have to tell the stories about paying the lights in Peoria. Again, as I say that I recognize there's a whole separate discussion about what foundations should be doing. We know what they should be doing, but in reality they not and that is beyond our control now. Over drinks, I can talk forever about what I think about that particular approach of foundations, but we do have to accept it and recognize what they want and need, and will fund creative programming so you have to understand your approach has to come from that angle.

The other thing that they're looking for are a realistic goal. Particularly some of the VISTA applications we receive, and particularly from inexperienced organizations, we see totally unrealistic goals. The VISTA's are going to reverse global warming working in Pinetop, and we know that's not going to happen. We do want to see something that we know everybody's going to be happy with at the end of the year because you would do something and can show it.

The other thing they're be looking for is, can your organization handle the money they give you, can you document it properly, can you account for it, will it actually really make a difference. These are the kinds of things you know I can talk subsequently about. I was mentioning to Joyce, a component of this piece I don't have time to go into today, is understanding how to read the foundation, particularly small local foundation's tax returns so you understand a little better about what their interested in and who their interested in. There is also a very particular science to how you craft your first contact with the funder. That's something a lot of people ignore, at the end of the call I will give you my e-mail address so if any of you would like more information about that or want to talk about it I will be happy to visit with you.

The other thing funders are really going to want to see ultimately is that you have a clear picture about how you're going to fund the project in the long term. It's not just, we're going to be seeking grants, it's some kind of evidence you thought through what your organization will look like when their money is over, when their money is spent, what the plan will look like, what the program will look like.

Even though it's last on my list here, it's not least, what funders really look for now is collaboration of agencies. Ten years ago, many organizations could get large national foundation grants by being a single applicant but now everybody wants to see that programs consist of multiple people working together doing different pieces of the activity. They actually look to see that it's a genuine collaboration, which means in fact that some of the budget is spread around.

When I worked at the University that was hard for the faculty to understand they actually had to give up some budget money to support collaboration. People do want to see, its evidence not only of broad program planning, but it's also evidence of potential sustainability.

Any questions about that, am I making sense, am I talking too fast, is my accent too heavy? Do you want me to sing Karaoke? Is anybody alive? Conference calls are so hard because you can't get that facial feedback. I promise I am getting to some tools in just a second, but I will not go into this individually. On the screen is what you need to know about funders. This is a primer or broad overview about the kinds of data and the kinds of information you need to have. Let's presume that you past the bar of, you know, you went through your checklist and you've identified 3 or 4, 5 or 6 folks, 5 or 6 potential funding bodies and this is kind of the checklist you want to know, information you want to know. Some people use prospect research forms, some people create their own, I keep all this stuff in my little black notebook, but if you are interested in a pretty good sample of a prospect research form, go to the www.foundationcenter.org. They've got some great tools there, and I have the link for you on the next slide. These are the particular things you want to know, in this context about funders, that I think is most important. Obviously, their name, you are going to want to know their priorities, and your eligibility to do the match up. As I was saying earlier, it makes no sense to spend a lot of time approaching somebody that you're not going to get funding from because you're not in their interest area; you're not in their geographic area, and so forth.

The next thing I think you really want to know is their giving history, because you want to know what kinds of grants they give, what the amounts are, what the programs they fund look like. There are many reasons you want to know this, not the least of which is, you want to know what their giving history and their giving pattern is to get a clear idea about what your request can be. Again, the old school style of approaching grants was; I remember hearing somebody call a grant, "the King Tuts Tomb". Just put in there everything you want and just let it fall out. But the reality is the best way to build a long-term collegial relationship with a new funding partner is to give them budgets that exactly match what your program need is. I made it a point in the last 5 or 6 years in Birmingham dealing with local foundations, that I would very directly say this budget is absolutely spot-on, within a hundred dollars and we need the full amount requested. I developed enough credibility and support with them over the years; they knew my budgets were exactly what they needed to be. I didn't get into that situation of having to overestimate by 20,000 dollars because I knew they were going to cut 20,000. You actually want to use your knowledge that you develop about these funders as a tool for maximizing the amount of money you get from them. That is with what their funding levels and cycle is.

Another thing, I think is important to know in advance, is what their matching requirements are. Because you want to have a clear sense of what it's going to cost you to get this grant. I have had the pleasure, for years, of serving on several non-profit boards and I could always tell the new board members because their solution to every financial issue was, "let's just get some grants". I'm sure you've all experienced that as well, but the reality is, it costs a lot of money to get grants, particularly for those of us involved in federal grants, you know it costs a lot of money to get them and keep them. In the matching requirement, you want to know that so you can know if you can afford it, you actually can end up losing money on grants, as you know. I had an interesting call last year, from a friend at a smaller non-profit agency in Birmingham who asked me if I knew someone who would give her a grant to implement a grant that she had already gotten.

What had happened was, one of her staff people had developed a budget so poorly they expended the full grant amount in the first three months and they were then legally obligated to complete the grant with no money to do it. They ended up actually having to do staff reductions to get the money in hand, that's kind of thinking through.

Now, I will actually get you into some tools you can use. This foundation center is the one that I recommend most. I also, let me quickly say to, I know that ACKCO has some searchable databases on their website that are very good. They have a very extensive searchable database and that's a good place to start as well, and I know many people have used their site so I won't point you to that.

The Foundation Center is a great tool, particularly if you're a newer grant seeker or if you only find grant writing in response to an RFP. The Foundation Center www.fdncenter.org gives you a lot of tools for research and it gives you a bunch of great primers for grant writing projects and gives you a bunch of sample documents like Gantt charts and so forth and so on. The caveat to the foundation center is that it has a free site and it has a subscription site and the subscription site is absolutely marvelous. It's the best grant search tool that I have ever used, but it is relatively expensive. Does ACKCO have a subscription site? Many people do. Another thing, if you live nearby a public library, ok, Joyce pointed that ACKCO does, is it a multi-user? Susan just mentioned it is not a multi-user but ACKCO can help you do the search because they do have the password and I can help you with that as well. I will talk more about that at the end. I encourage you to take a look at it and you can join personally, at the basic level on the search document for, I believe, 19.95 a month, and if not, for an annual subscription. If you just want to play around with it, it might be worth joining for a month to give you a sense about the power of the search tools. It totally transcends the kind of blind research you can do, just with Google. Just look at it if you can.

A free service that you can use to do foundations searches and 990 searches is Guide Star, www.guidestar.org, many of you are probably very familiar with that as well, and you can search particularly your local foundations. The caveat to Guide star is that it is really cumbersome you have to search based on foundation budgets and giving levels and it also doesn't include Corporate Foundations, which is the problem with Guide Star. But I find for quick look up it's actually very, very helpful. Just as an assign for those of you in the non-profit community, one of the things I love about Guide Star is that, sometimes late at night, if I'm bored and want to know what my friends are making in the non-profit world, I go look up their 990 so I can see what their salaries are. That's a little fun activity as a sideline. Again, like I said, I can't see faces, but I hope everybody was smiling at that one because it was meant as a joke.

Another good tool is the Chronicle of Philanthropy at www.philanthropy.com . Philanthropy.com does offer a searchable database of all the new grants that have been listed in the Chronicle of Philanthropy since 1995, I believe. The reason this has value is that you can search on the foundations and you can also search on agencies. One of the things I always would do when I was at UNB and other agencies is that I would search on grants through schools just like ours and I would use that as a basis to cultivate relationships with their funders. That's one of the particular advantages of the Chronicle.

If you're not already getting the Federal Register's daily digest, I suggest you go to this website www.access.gpo.gov and sign up for the daily digest. And what this is, is it

delivers the table of contents of the Federal Register to your inbox everyday and you can use that as a vehicle for scanning and for knowing what new federal grants are available. You'll quickly learn how to do it very time efficiently because you know what agency your after to receive money from, and you'll start to scan the table looking for those agencies names in association with the word notices.

Another good search tool is the grants.gov site www.grants.gov and I won't go into a great amount of detail about that because my time is running out, but it's worth visiting. I included some of these major Foundation websites on here, just because I basically, over the years, have created my own list of favorites.

www.rwjf.org www.aecf.org www.kff.org www.wkkf.org The Foundations that I know I've gotten funding from in the past and I know are interested in the causes I'm interested in and I make a habit of, I have them booked in my favorites, and I make a habit of hitting them regularly to see what's changed. Almost all these folks have e-mail distribution list, where they send out their newsletters or their annual reports. The ones that are important to me, I do get on their mailing list so I get printed copies of special publications and I get their newsletters. Particularly, www.kff.org is the Kaiser Family Foundation, they have some really, really good e-mail newsletters that are published everyday on a wide range of subjects and that is a good way to keep up with what Kaisers' interests are.

Just over the years, and you'll do the same, I've developed federal agencies I want to keep an eye on, I want to watch what they're funding. HUD www.hud.gov actually is the largest funder, believe it or not, at the School of Public Health we had 4 HUD grants that were focused on Public Health Outreach and housing communities. And we also had a number of Department of Justice grants focused on gun violence as a Public Health problem. The reason I am saying that is that sometimes you don't automatically think that agency will fund something that may or may not necessarily look like it matches their name.

The Department of Agriculture www.usda.gov right now is one of the largest funders of rural broadband development because of getting broadband to farmers.

After you do the snapshot of potential folks who may be interested in you, look at all the Corporations who do business in your area, who serve your area and just write them down. Then go to their website and search on foundations or grants or something that will get you to where their giving programming is and start keeping that compiled and putting them in your prospect list. These are just websites I use regularly, I'm sure you'll have your own. www.ed.gov www.cns.gov www.hhs.gov Corporate websites, www.walmart.com , search on foundations or grants.

In closing, I just wanted to share with you, and this is not totally related to what we are talking about, but nevertheless it is important. These are the top ten reasons why grant applications are declined and the linkage to what I have been talking about. The thing I find so fascinating is that you have to get to number nine before you get to one that is not within the control of the grant seeker. Number nine is, of all of these, the only good answer you could get when you submitted, and that is, they just did not have enough money to fund you. Every other one and I should hasten to add, that this list was developed by the Council on Foundations, through surveying foundation program officers, and they did it about three years ago. Everything on this list besides page nine was an indication that the person submitting for the grant, the grant seeker did their job

poorly. The number one on the list is that the grant doesn't match the funders' priorities, which means there are a lot of people out there submitting grants who were never going to get funded no matter what.

A corollary to this is that in the same study, the Council on Foundations learned that over a third of all the grant proposals submitted each year are denied or excluded because they failed to make their priorities or follow the guidelines. Over a third, my lesson from that always, was no matter what my program concept was, no matter what my writing was, if I matched my interest up with the right funder, if I followed their guidelines, I was ahead of 34 percent of the people in the same pool. Which just boggles my mind in that context, just by following the rules, and coloring in between the lines, you're ahead of 34 percent of the people. I keep this list stuck up on my little bulletin board all the time because it is a reminder to me; every time I sit down to think about funding, just what you can do wrong. So I included it because I think it's a pretty useful tool.

1. The organization does not meet the funders' priorities.
2. The organization is not located in the funder's geographic area of funding.
3. The proposal does not follow the funders prescribed format.
4. The proposal is poorly written or difficult to understand.
5. The proposed budget and grant request is not within the funders funding range.
6. The proposal fails to present a clear picture of the capacity of the applicant to implement the project.
7. The proposal's budget is unrealistic and/or inflated.
8. Unrealistic goals, and/or objectives, and/or timelines.
9. The funder has reached their maximum allocation amount.
10. Insufficient proof the program is sustainable beyond grant funding.

I jotted down your names and your agencies, I actually really do like doing this kind of research stuff, and it's a real interesting challenge for me. If any of you are interested and you want to send me an email to tgunnell@cns.gov I'll take about fifteen or twenty minutes and do a quick search for you to see what might be out there and who might be funding what you're doing. But if you could give me some bullet points or key words about what your project is or what your project is going to do. I need kind of a succinct, you know, a 50-word elevator speech about what it is. I can't promise I'm going to get it back to you by the week-end, but over the next two or three weeks I'll do them one at a time as I have time and send it back to you and you can see where you might be able to take it from there.

Any questions?

Part of the reason I am here with the Corporation, is one, I love the Corporation. I have been a big fan of the Corporations since 94 and I love the concept of National Service but also I wanted, after years and years of being a grant seeker, I wanted to see what it was like to be a grant maker. The interesting thing I'm finding is that it is equally hard. I am not sure I expected the extent to which it was going to be as mentally difficult as it is. What I am learning though too, I know this is going to sound self-justifying, but I'm learning that I was right on my approach in many many contexts. And that I can tell very quickly the people who call and who talk with me or even some of our current grantees who haven't bothered to learn anything about our agency and what our interests are. And haven't done any thought about how their agency matches up to ours, and you have to bear in mind with any funder you're probably going to get about 10 or 15 minutes of

their time to learn from them. And it's really glaringly apparent that I am talking to inexperienced non-thoughtful people, when their calling me to ask a question they could have found out on the internet. So, they are wasting the time with me where they could be having more substantial conversations about what it is that we really could do together.

I have to spend the precious 15 minutes explaining about the Corporation, or telling them the ins and outs of VISTA when, in fact, they could have learned that on the internet. We could spend 15 minutes talking about creating innovative VISTA projects. You really do want to approach the research piece and the relationship development piece as the opportunity to forage a long-term partnership. That bears the responsibility on your side of really thoroughly knowing the funder and having done some concrete thinking about what a viable project looks like that matches up with both of your interests.

Kathie and I were talking earlier this week, a couple of slides and I will shut up, about one of our current funders who still can't spell her name properly. So when you deal with a foundation, make sure you spell their name properly. It's very obvious to me when somebody calls and talks about AmeriCorps. I had one of our writers at UAB, at one point we had seven grants from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the program manager sent me a letter that he was sending to them, and he was calling them the Robert Woods Johnson Foundation. These are little minor things, but their things you got to pay attention to.

One other thing and I will shut up, just an example of how this kind of stuff is massively important, I submitted a grant to the UPS Foundation for an agency I volunteered with about 5 or 6 years ago and I developed a great relationship with the program officer. I called her the day before I was sending the grant in and I said yeah I'm sending it tomorrow. And she said; well make sure you don't send it by FedEx and I can honestly say it hadn't occurred to me and I probably would've but that saved me getting my UPS Foundation Grant round filed. Okay, I will quit telling my stories now, for those of you in the south you know it's impossible for a southerner not to start telling stories. Any questions, and then I'll turn the phone back over to Joyce to get back on the agenda.

No questions, ACKCO is paying me a dollar a question, laughter. Thank you, thanks everyone!