Steps to Success: Grant Writing

*Remember: only up to 10% of your time as an AmeriCorps member can be fundraising. Fundraising includes securing donations for: 1) specific program supplies, 2) volunteer support/recognition as it relates to the service activities, 3) expansion of programs delivered by members or 4) service activities provided by members.*

**Step 1. Consider the source for funding, including:**

* State Government/State Agencies
* Foundations
  + Community
  + National
  + Foundations
  + Corporate
  + Special
* Local Businesses
* Community Agencies
* Clubs or Civil Associations
* Professional Associations
* Individuals

Use a resource like The Foundation Center (<http://foundationcenter.org/>) to explore possible grant opportunities.

*Please note that as an AmeriCorps member, you are prohibited from applying to federal grants, including LSTA grants administered by the State Library of Ohio.*

**Step 2. Research and Rationale.** What are the needs that your grant will meet? Who is your target audience for this project? What concrete objectives and activities will this grant fund? Why should your grant be funded over another? Consider creating a team to work on the project together.

Additionally, some grant funders require a partner. Others do not but partners are usually beneficial. With a partner, you can gather more ideas, more resources, more support and more publicity. Generally, partners will also give you a better chance of success and sustainability.

Consider what experience your library and your partners have had implementing this type of project and/or working with the target population.

**Step 3. Write. A grant will typically include the following component parts:**

* **Summary**
  + Clearly and concisely summarize the project.
  + Stick to word count limits, if placed by the funder.
  + If you cannot describe it in one paragraph, you cannot do it in 11 months!
* **Introduction**
  + Describes the library’s qualifications or “credibility”
  + Provides a snapshot of the project
  + Should be understandable to anyone who reads it
* **Problem Statement/Needs Assessment**
* What are your community’s top issues? For example is it unemployment, early literacy, digital divide, new populations, etc?
* Use real, accurate statistics and cite your sources
* Documents the needs to be met or the problem to be solved through their generous support
* Keep it simple and straightforward
* Use active language and short sentences
* **Objectives**
  + Establishes the benefits of funding in measurable terms
  + Focus on results
  + Must include
    - A measure
    - A standard against which to compare that measure
    - A date or timeframe by which the standard should be met
* **Methods/Activities**
  + Describe activities to be undertaken to achieve the desired results
  + Emphasize areas for which you seek their support
  + Cite models of similar programs
  + Inspire confidence in your organization’s abilities and experiences
  + Include a timeline
  + Keep it achievable!
* **Evaluation** 
  + Plan for determining the degree to which the objectives are met
  + Means to improve the project and library services
  + Impact on the targeted population
  + Must correlate to the objective
  + Don’t collect data just to collect data!
* **Budget**
  + Clearly delineate all costs
    - Costs to be met by funder, costs covered by applicant, costs covered by other sources
  + Be realistic – don’t inflate the budget but ask for what you think you will need
  + Follow all funder guidelines!

**Step 4. Revision.** Make sure you proofread your grant. Have another staff person or AmeriCorps Member who’s involved read it over to make sure the following are true:

* The project matches the funders’ goals.
* Project is focused on how this grant will meet the community need.
* Avoid jargon.
* All pages, tables, and graphs numbered.
* Any addendums requested by funder are included.
* Supporting materials carefully chosen.
* Language is clear and concise.

**Step 5. Reflect.**

If you get the grant:

* Thank funder and sign and return all contracts, etc. promptly.
* Don’t deposit the money till you say Thank You.

If you don’t get the grant:

* Don’t take it personally.
* There are a lot of variables at play in funding, do your best and move on.
* Ask the funder if there were things that could have been improved in your proposal.