

# FUNDED



GRANTS OFFICE

## GRANTS OFFICE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

volume 1, issue 1

**Introducing Grants Office's re-designed monthly newsletter!**

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## Building Long-Term Grantseeking Strategies: PLANNING, PATIENCE, AND PERSEVERANCE

By Vince Siragusa, Grants Development Consultant

As many of us know, the release of a grant program's guidance document usually occurs roughly six weeks before the grant's application deadline date. In the event that a current deadline is missed, common practice indicates that a would-be applicant should be targeting a submission to the next available offering. Don't approach this "down time" with idle hands—understand that there is always important work to be done with the next submission in mind.

As many schools, municipalities, and non-profits can attest, having a month or so to respond to a solicitation is a very short window for all the work that goes into a grant proposal. Quality projects and applications can take months to fully develop and articulate. Additionally, there is a direct correlation between the amount of preparation done before a grant program opens up and the funding success rate of that grant proposal. Do what you can today, in order to secure the longest runway possible for a future submission.

Standard grant-seeking practice includes the avoidance of making assumptions. Assuming that an existing grant component will always be applicable threatens to put the project in a difficult position if variables do change. That said, a successful grant-seeking strategy is often built upon some level of anticipation. With the understanding that a specific grant program will often have similar a deadline date, project priorities, and areas of focus as that seen with its predecessor, you can rely on the existing guidance document to clue you into the nuances of the program. It may be advantageous to review various grant components like narrative length, eligibility requirements, necessary partnerships, and eligible expenses beforehand so there are fewer unknowns down the line.

In all cases, a would-be applicant should be working on developing potential collaborations, beginning to formulate the project on paper, and working with vendors to develop a bill of

materials and corresponding budget. All of this work will lessen the application burden that will be present when the program does open up. Feel comforted to know there is always something to be done that will help the eventual application. Applicants who are rushing around at the eleventh hour to get the project in order will often threaten their proposal's success because of a lack of front-end preparation and planning.

### GRANTS OFFICE PROVIDES FREE INFORMATIONAL WEBSITES TO HELP TRACK TODAY'S TOP GRANTS.

*If you're just beginning your grantseeking process, visit [www.grantsoffice.info](http://www.grantsoffice.info) to learn about the top grants for your projects and organization!*

While general underpinnings are typically consistent, changes to grant programs do occur. If a current grant offering is just slightly different than its predecessor, pay special attention to those modifications. For many programs, it's inevitable that public comments will be considered, experts will weigh in with their opinions, new threats and priorities with surface, and federal and state appropriation amounts will change. It's often these types of factors that play a role in a programmatic shift from one year to the next.

Grant makers are constantly fine-tuning their product and, if modifications exist, rest assured that those changes are deliberate. For example, if a program mentions a specific priority for this year or additional preference for those who partner with a non-profit organization, recognize this information as the grantor "tipping their hand" on what may carry additional weight in the funding process. In the competitive grant world, any leg up on the competition may tip the scales in your favor. Focus your application on responding to these new program areas as the grant reviewer will likely be doing the same.

## New Media & Grants

### ACCESSING THE RIGHT INFORMATION AT THE RIGHT TIME

BY SUSANNAH MAYHALL, HELPDESK ADMINISTRATOR

The progression of the Information Age has fundamentally altered the ways in which people interact, affecting all areas of our lives. From communicating with friends and colleagues on platforms like Facebook and LinkedIn to keeping up with global news (and our favorite celebrities) via feeds such as Twitter and Digg, the world in which we live has become increasingly digital, connected, and immediate.

The grants world has also been affected by this fundamental shift. With the launch of Grants.gov in 2003, billions of dollars' worth of federal grant opportunities were made available to the public from one centralized location. Many state granting agencies and local foundations also have a home on the internet, making grant details, applications, award lists, and administration requirements available online. In many cases, these changes have served to simplify and streamline the grant application and administration process, as well as to inform a much larger audience of available funding opportunities.

However, along with the democratization of information comes a variety of inherent problems such as inconsistency, outdated details and documents, and a simply overwhelming quantity of information. Although great strides have been made to make grant information available to the public, the quality and quantity of information varies greatly from agency to agency, state to state, and website to website. Another likely effect of the increasing

accessibility of grant information is an increasing rate of competitiveness among would-be grantees. Particularly in these economic times, when the needs of nonprofits have skyrocketed, a simpler, digitalized grantseeking process has likely contributed to the rising competitiveness across all levels of grant opportunities, from wide-reaching federal grants all the way down to small, locally-focused foundations.

Taking these factors into consideration, how can your organization make the most of the new media forms at work in the grants landscape? One crucial step is to be certain that the information you find is reliable and current. While search engines like Google and Yahoo can make finding information fast and easy, they can also bring up a plethora of misleading and inaccurate websites. Always strive to educate yourself as much as possible about the source of your information, and stick to websites that have .gov or .org domain names. You also want to be careful that the information you gather is verified on official government agency or foundation websites. While third-party articles and databases can be useful tools, any provided information should be linked to an official announcement.

Another step you can take to maximize your grantseeking efficiency is to get involved in new media outlets such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and other networking and communications platforms. Many government agencies and foundations provide up-to-the-minute news and press releases via these and other communication vehicles, and signing up can help keep your organization up to speed on the latest grants news. Another useful tool is a Real Simple Syndication (commonly referred to as RSS) feed. Signing up for RSS feeds from relevant government agencies and foundations will help ensure that you stay informed of the most current grant programs, deadlines, and other useful information.

New media outlets and devices can become vital tools to aid you in your grantseeking efforts. By approaching the available information with a careful yet aggressive attitude, you can increase your organization's chances of grantseeking success and make the most of the funding opportunities available to you.

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# REDUCING DEFICITS, SUSTAINING GRANTS:

## THE OUTLOOK FOR FUNDING IN THE AGE OF DEFICITS

BY CHRISTOPHER HAIGHT, GRANTS DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANT

It has been two years of high price-tag legislation, including the Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP), American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA), and the upcoming debate over the extension of the 2001 and 2003 tax cuts. Given these kinds of historic legislation, Americans are experiencing something of a national sticker shock and demands for deficit reduction continue to grow. All of this is hardly auspicious news from the vantage point of grantseekers. However, a closer look at some of the key fiscal reforms likely to occur reveals a grant landscape still intact and largely off the radar for severe cuts:

**1. Entitlement Reform.** Few, if any, conversations on addressing the national

debt can avoid the topics of the Big 3 in American Entitlements: Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security. The rapid rise in healthcare costs is the predominant factor contributing to the malaise in public expenditures, making reform of the first two programs especially vital. Reform of these programs will involve systems of direct payments and incentives to providers and individuals, not grants. Popular grant programs related to healthcare, such as those for implementation of Electronic Health Records or other health information technology fall outside this purview. In fact, laws like the ARRA or ACA actually authorized and funded new grant programs such as comparative effectiveness research or school-based health centers.

**2. Tax Expenditures.** Tax expenditures are

how the government effectively spends money by forsaking its claim to tax revenue. Instead of collecting what is owed, a variety of tax provisions allow individuals, organizations, and businesses to avoid paying necessary dues. One of the biggest tax expenditures is the current exemption of employer-sponsored health insurance, which makes it less costly for businesses to provide more in health benefits relative to monetary compensation because they can avoid payroll tax. The ACA levies a new tax on high-value plans beginning in 2018. Future tax reform will likely replicate this strategy, focusing on the revenue side of the equation rather than purely cutting programs (grants included).

**3. Defense Spending.** At over \$700 billion each year, defense spending is the largest single discretionary spending item in the Federal Budget. Even U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates has advocated a series of cuts that would leave the country better off financially while still supporting a ready and able military. Most of these cuts, however, would involve weapons systems or artillery/equipment with defense contractors, which differ from the kinds of grant opportunities most in the grant field seek.

**Approx.  
Deficit  
for  
FY2011:  
\$1.34  
trillion**





**4. New Legislation.** With the U.S. House of Representatives now in Republican control and a diminished majority in the Senate, the opportunity for high-profile legislation is considerably smaller. One place where Republicans and the Democratic administration could find common ground is education or possibly a pared-back energy bill. Either one of these policies is rich with opportunities for new or reformed grant programs. The Obama administration's Blueprint for Education Reform reveals the President's preferences in a host of new or continued grant programs. Recently, scholars from the Brookings Institution of Heritage Foundation published a bipartisan plan for national energy policy including a call for doubling of research and development dollars afforded to alternative energy.

In some instances, deficit-reducing strategies may actually lead to an expansion of grant programs. For example,

the Obama administration is seeking to transform the way Head Start dollars are awarded. Obama has proposed forcing the lowest-performing Head Start recipients to compete with others for federal grant dollars each year. New York Governor-elect Andrew Cuomo (D) has also expressed interest in shifting towards greater use of competitive grant competitions as overall funding is restricted.

In December, the bipartisan National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform established by President Obama will release its official recommendations for achieving a balanced budget by 2015. These recommendations will set the foundation for how legislators and policymakers address deficits in the coming years - likely by addressing the key drivers of deficit-growth, and not the federal grant programs that sustain critical infrastructure, research, and services.

## ASK ABOUT OUR GRANTWRITING SERVICES:

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***In the past 12 months, Grants Office has assisted clients in securing over \$122 million!***

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## WE HERE AT THE GRANTS OFFICE KNOW HOW COMPLICATED FINDING GRANT FUNDING CAN BE.

*As an experienced and reputable grants research and proposal development team, we would never promise our clients easy money. However, we can help streamline the process and provide the experience, time, and dedicated resources that your organization might be lacking.*

*We have seen many clients reap the benefits of working with us to pursue grant support for their projects—in the past twelve months, Grants Office has helped a wide variety of public sector and nonprofit clients raise over \$122 million to fund projects ranging from innovative school reform to drug and gang resistance programs to health care technology implementation.*

*If you're ready to amplify your grantseeking efforts and find the funding to support your organization's projects, contact us today for more information on how Grants Office can work with you to make grant funding a reality. Email us at [info@grantsoffice.com](mailto:info@grantsoffice.com) or call 585-473-1430.*



## Ready, Set, Write! AVOIDING COMMON PITFALLS AND MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR GRANTWRITING EXPERIENCE

BY MEAGHAN PROVOST, GRAND DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANT

Even after a priority funding opportunity is identified and an organization is beginning down the grantwriting road, there are still pitfalls and roadblocks on what seems like a simple linear path. Employing a grantwriter that is not on organizational staff and might not be familiar with the intricacies of the project is a method of grantwriting that can present its own unique challenges to the grantseeking process. Grantwriting engagements involve both give and take—there is a necessary level of exchange of information and expectations from both the client and the grantwriter. Successful engagements often involve executive and editing support from those outside of the immediate grantwriting and client staff, and the grant development phase can become an arduous process for everyone if expectations are not clear. Collaborative involvement between a client and a professional grantwriter can result in the development of a superior proposal, and many common pitfalls of such an engagement can be avoided if all involved parties understand and commit to their roles in the grantwriting process. While there is no silver bullet for a successful process, there are steps that can be taken to ensure a smoother grantwriting engagement and a stronger grant proposal.

Dan Casion, Manager of Grants Development and Administration at Grants Office, said his number one tip for employing an outside grantwriter for a project is to "establish open and honest lines of communication."

"The first point of not giving the grantwriter the whole scope, withholding information, or sugarcoating feedback on a draft," he says, "can result in the project grinding to a halt."

To avoid derailing a project with an outside grantseeker, it's important to formulate as many details as possible on a project, including timelines, budget, and project leaders; it is equally important to understand that those details must have some degree of flexibility in order to create a narrative that responds to the funding priorities of a particular program.

### **1. Develop a grantwriting calendar.**

Many grant opportunities do not provide a long timeframe in which to develop program documents. Typically, federal grants allow between 30 and 60 days from the release of an RFP or NOFA and the deadline for program documents. While it might seem like a long time to develop a narrative and gather information, it's critical to be on top of program requirements, registration, and needed information throughout the process in

### **Grants Program Spotlight: Talent Search Program**

*The Talent Search program identifies and assists individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds who have the potential to succeed in higher education. The program provides academic, career, and financial counseling to its participants and encourages them to graduate from high school and continue on to and complete their postsecondary education. The program publicizes the availability of financial aid and assist participant with the postsecondary application process.*

*Eligible applicants include institutions of higher education (IHEs), public and private agencies and organizations including community-based organizations with experience in serving disadvantaged youth, combinations of such institutions, agencies and organizations, and as appropriate to the purposes of the program, secondary schools.*

*The Administration has requested \$853.1 million for the Federal TRIO Programs for FY 2011, of which they intend to use an estimated \$142.1 million for the TS Program. Awards will range from \$230,000 - \$702,000. Cost sharing and/or matching is not required.*

*The deadline to submit an application is **December 28, 2010.***



order to ensure successful submission. For this reason, development of a grantwriting calendar is a must. Represent critical steps in the process, and develop agreed-upon deadlines for each step. This will ensure that the project stays on task throughout the process, and that documents are forwarded as needed. Include a list of all proposal requirements, and their due dates for information needs.

## 2. Be clear about each individual's role and expectations in the process.

Grantwriters represent a unique role in this engagement, and can function as managers of the process as well as technical writers. It's important to be aware of the requirements for an opportunity, whether they be financial documentation, letters of support, notification of a federal entity, and the like. A grantwriter, to ensure

his or her product is responsive, needs to be aware of all program requirements, not just narrative structure. It's also important to keep track of the narrative document itself—simple things like naming consecutive drafts in the file extension and asking that the edits follow suit can go a long way in ensuring that all the recommendations are built into the final draft. For editing, seek outside editing or a mock review of the final draft.

## 3. Clarify, clarify, clarify.

For clients, it's important that the expectations are clear—it will make the process simpler and more manageable if accountability is established early.

Questions to consider include: how many rounds of editing does the client expect, and what are the milestones associated with the process? It's also important that

the client be aware of what documentation is expected, and what the submission process may be. For many federal opportunities, registration with multiple government entities is required—whether this is the Grants.gov system, the Grant Management System associated with OJP programs, HRSA, eRA commons, and the like.

For grantwriters, taking extensive notes or recording proposal development sessions with the client, whether they are on the phone or in person, is essential to ensure that all program requirements are met. These notes can also ensure that the client is not asked for duplicate information, making the engagement that much smoother.

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- Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Special Solicitation for Law Enforcement (Ohio)**  
Ohio Department of Public Safety, Office of Criminal Justice Services  
Added: 11/08/2010
- Officer Safety Research and Technology Development for Criminal Justice Applications**  
U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), National Institute of Justice (NIJ)  
Added: 11/08/2010
- Chronic Renal Disease (New Jersey)**  
New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services  
Added: 11/08/2010
- Innovative Bioavailability Assays to Assess the Effectiveness of Contaminated Sediment Remediation (R01)**  
National Institutes of Health (NIH), National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS)  
Added: 11/08/2010
- Small Business Development Centers (SBDC) - Small Business Jobs Act Programs**  
Small Business Administration (SBA)  
Added: 11/05/2010

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## UPCOMING EVENTS & INFORMATION

### Grants Office November Webcasts

- November 16, 2010: 2011 Higher Education Funding Forecast
- November 30, 2010: Fire Prevention & Safety Grants

### Grants Office December Webcasts

- December 9, 2010: Securing Schools and Funding: REMS and COPS SOS (*Sponsored by Cisco*)
- December 23, 2010: Dept of Homeland Security Grants (*Sponsored by Cisco*)

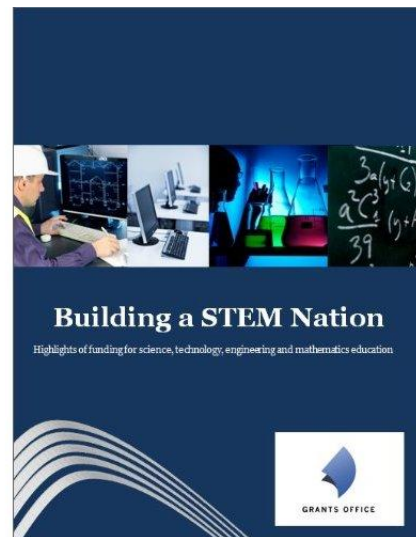
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Each of our .info sites, such as the one featured above, will also include links to our relevant webcasts.

### NEW! GRANTS OFFICE OVERVIEW OF STEM-FOCUSED GRANTS AND PROJECTS



Interested in learning more about grants and implementing a better Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) education at your school?

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