Grant Writing 101

Grant Services provided
through the Arkansas Municipal League

LEGACY
CONSULTING

Today's Agenda

Introduction of grant services provided by *Legacy Consulting a*nd the
Arkansas Municipal League (AML)

Why do grants matter?

- Community Planning in Advance

- Types of Grants

- Grant Research & Set-up

- Grant Writing Mechanics

- Politics of Grants

- Grant Management

Who is Legacy Consulting?

- Strategy Firm
- Community Development Projects
- Historic Preservation
- Economic Development Projects
- Business Consulting
- Public Relations
- Lobbying, procurement, & government relations
- Our Founder is a former Mayor & a small town boy with a passion for local community development.
- He discovered the importance of grants when he became the Mayor of De Queen in 1999 and realized that the city's finances did not match its needs or his vision!

Legacy Consulting Services available to AML Members:

FREE:
- A consultation about your community & its needs.
- A full overview report of recommendations
- Alerts & notices on grant opportunities
- Regional Grant Workshops

Unlimited off site assistance with:
- Grant applications
- Community projects
- Best practice research
- Community needs assessment & blueprints
- Ongoing consultations available

Legacy Consulting's Services

Additional Services:

- Conduct & Create a formal Needs Assessment
- Develop community blueprint
- Conduct retreats, seminars, planning sessions
- Complete grant applications
- Conduct grant seminars (open to community)
- Community Project Analysis
- Ongoing Community Development Relationship

Basic Stages for the Grant Process:

- Community Planning

- Grant Research & Preparation

- Grant Writing

- Grant Management

Advanced Community Planning

Advanced Community Planning

- Planning does matter
- Community planning is the right thing to do for many reasons but one of the greatest benefits is the increased success in pursuing grants.
- All truth is scalable so the principles will work at any level—department, small city, large city.
- Failing to truly be prepared for grant writing through advanced community planning is the number one reason grants fail.

THREE PHASES:
- Conduct a Community Needs Assessment
- Develop a Community Blueprint
- Implement & Manage

Advanced Community Planning

<u>Community Needs Assessment:</u>

- Conduct and record a formal inventory of your needs (*community, economy & municipal*)
- Thoroughly review your strengths and weaknesses
- Consider this like a general check-up
- Assess every area—do not be myopic!
- Economic, Healthcare, law enforcement, municipal services, fire protection, financial health, infrastructure, culture, education, etc.

Advanced Community Planning

<u>Community Needs Assessment:</u>

- A needs assessment should be thorough in scope and honest in findings.
- This requires you to use multiple tools:
- Public Meetings
- Inventory review
- Surveys, Polls, Focus Groups
- Interviews of ALL key players
- Comparison studies of similar cities
- Market study
- Publish your findings in a proper and well written documents

Advanced Community Planning

Create A Community Blueprint

- Once you've thoroughly assessed your needs, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, challenges then you must engage in a deliberate process for formulating a strategy to meet each need.
- You are unable to move forward to your destination if you do not know where you currently are and where you want to go.
- *If you have no real destination, any road you take will do.*
- If you don't know where you are then you cannot navigate to your destination.
- **Key Ingredients:**
- Vision—the desired future state (where we are and where we want to go)
- Strategy—the broad means by which the vision or goal is to be realized
- Process—the distinct steps required to execute the strategy
- Values—the guiding principles that inform human action and choices.
- People—the core resource through which achievement is pursued; people bring skill and motivation.

11

Advanced Community Planning

Create A Community Blueprint

- Your vision is designed to articulate the envisioned future of your community.
- The rest of the blueprint identifies the priorities, methods, timeframes and collaborative partners involved in achieving the vision.
- Establish clear goals and ideal timeframes.
- Your blueprint should clearly identify what is required to achieve the established goals.
- Includes baselines

12

Advanced Community Planning

Create A Community Blueprint

- The blueprint should also contain clearly measurable benchmarks and identify evaluative tools that will be used to measure success.
- The blueprint should be broken into phases where necessary.
- The blueprint is firm but fluid and amendable as appropriate changes are necessary.
- It should be published as a formal document.

13

Finding & Identifying the Right Grant

14

Grant Research

- Preparation is worthless if you never find the correct grant.
- It is like having a tank of gasoline with no car or visa versa!
- Use services such as: www.thegrantbook.com and https://www.nlc.org/about-nlc-grant-access
- Sign up for Email Alerts with agencies that fit your needs assessment.
- Attend agency meetings on projects & programs
- Set up Google news alerts
- Pay attention to grants others have received
- Attend Grant Writing Workshops
- Stay in touch with us at Legacy Consulting

15

Sources of Grants

- Federal Grants
- State Grants
- Foundations
  - $10 million or Less/$10 million or more
  - National, State, and Local
- Corporations
  - Mission
  - Causes
  - Regional Interest
  - Public Relations

16

Matching

- Some grants do require a match.

- Cash
  - Non Federal/State (local only)
  - Federal/State Allowed

- In Kind
  - Labor
  - Land
  - Time
  - Resources
  - Volunteers
  - Etc…

Types of Grants for Municipalities

- Community Programs (Americorp, etc)
- Recycling Grants (Chippers and Solid Waste)
- Fire Trucks, Equipment
- Community Facilities
- AHEC Program—healthcare programs
- Park Renovations (Existing Park)
- Historic Preservation
- Civil War Battlefield Preservation

- COPS Grants
- Library, Museums
- Economic Development (study, facilities, recruitment, incentives, CBDG)
- Tourism
- Transportation Enhancements
- Housing
- Business Empowerment & Enterprise
- Water/Wastewater, Drainage—Engineering, flooding,
- Etc….

Setting Up for Grants

Getting Set-up to Receive Grants

- Register at www.grants.gov
- Acquire a D-U-N-S number (Dun & Bradstreet) www.fedgov.dnb.com
- Register with the federal program entitled, The System for Award Management (SAM) www.sam.gov
  - All applicants for federal assistance must update it every year
- Determine your jurisdiction's feature ID number assigned by the Geographic Names Information System (GNIS) http://geonames.usgs.gov
- Become familiar with www.grants.gov & the federal register http://www.archives.gov/federal_register

Getting Set-up to Receive Grants

Simple helpful steps:

- Set your office up properly
- Establish a clear and functional filing process
- Use color coding or other clearly organized
- Note due date and priority on each grant folder
- Organize all due diligence documents in a central location:
- EIN, Census data (http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/index.html)
- Market studies, needs assessment, blueprint, engineered projects, architectural designs, budgets, financial statements, Photos of physical plant and community. Revenue impacts and expenditures by department, maps, Résumé for program directors

Getting Set-up to Receive Grants

- Use your blueprint to develop a project brief sheet for each identified need.
- These become very helpful for working with council members, other members of the administration, and department heads.
- This should include:
  - Brief description of the project
  - Purpose
  - Necessary Budget (implementation & continuation)
  - Available funds
  - Supporting documentation
  - Success stories from similar cities, communities or departments who have implemented this idea.

Writing the Grant

Grant Writing Mechanics

- Do your homework
- Read entity's mission statement, program goals, etc.
- Review list of previously successfully funded projects
- Review previously successful applications
- Talk with agencies previously funded
- Build a relationship inside the organization
- Prepare yourself a timeline, set dates for all involved & an early submission date.
- Use a standard format if not specified—if so follow it precisely.

Grant Writing Mechanics

- Request for Proposals (RFP)—read it closely and take note of every detail & instruction to determine if you are eligible, if it is a good fit, to measure the likelihood of success and to discover key data.
- Letter of Intent—if required follow RFP instructions, address it properly and keep it short & simple.
- Prepare a brief sheet of the specific grant.
  - Name of the funding agency
  - Brief description of what they fund
  - Amount of funds available and the average amount funded
  - Match requirement information
  - Other eligibility requirements
  - Number of projects to be funded
  - Specific need identified that would be met by grant
  - Your recommendation to pursue or not

25

Grant Writing Mechanics

Key Items in a Grant include:
- Overview or Summary (optional)
- Vision Statement
  - The dream
- Narrative
  - Organization History, Need Assessment, Project Objectives
  - Operation Implementation Plan
    - Project activities, Work plan, Management plan, Project continuation, Approach
- Evaluation Process
  - Process Measures, Outcomes of Project
- Key Personnel
- Budget
  - Actual, Summary, Justification, Other Funding Available
- Organizational Commitment
- Bibliography
- Definitions

26

Grant Writing Mechanics

TIPS:

- Take note how the rfp & application guidelines are written & key words used. Follow suit.
- Number your pages (if written)
- Use charts, graphics, quantifiable data where appropriate.
- Avoid general assumptions (race, ethnicity, gender, etc)
- Know your concept.
- Explain collaborative relationships.
- Build broad support.
- Properly use soft data (antidotal, emotional, compelling) v. hard data (statistics, facts, figures)

Grant Writing Mechanics

TIPS:

- Demonstrate previous success & management skills/experience.
- Ensure some aspects are negotiable (not all or nothing)
- Think of alternative methods and demonstrate why your approach is superior.
- Always keep agency & program goals in mind.
- Don't exaggerate or beg
- Avoid too much jargon
- Reference respected journals/organizations aligned with the agency
- If not approved get score sheets & comments

Grant Writing Mechanics

- Don't procrastinate
- Check your comprehension, grammar, spelling, use of language & format.
- Get your application checked/proofed.
- Pay attention to how the grant is scored and write accordingly!
- Demonstrate passion but back it up.
- Stay relevant.
- Clearly identify the need.

Grant Writing Mechanics

- Must demonstrate a true need—this identifies the entire purpose of the application.
- Explain consequence of not addressing the need.
- Demonstrate why the need cannot be met without help.
- Identify target clientele.
- Verify it. (use your needs assessment!)
- Clearly answer all grant questions

Grant Writing Mechanics

- Offer a professional solution—well conceived, thought out & with a tested hypothesis.
- This is not just a sales pitch.
- Solution must have goals & objectives.
- Goal—an outcome.
- Objective—clear measurable (decrease, increase, etc)
- Be specific in these & show they are attainable
- Show a competent staff

Grant Writing Mechanics

- Use timelines, priorities, and show how each objective addresses specific issues of need.
- Sequential steps and phases are helpful.
- Be creative and add your flavor but do not feel pressured to reinvent the wheel.
- Ask the agency to review a draft

Grant Writing Mechanics

Budget Tips:

- Make certain the budget supports each section, component & implementation plan
- Be realistic
- Pad it but wisely
- Be reasonable in scope (10k will not solve world hunger!)
- Check your figures thoroughly & repeatedly
- Tie each part of budget to implementation plan (goals & objectives)
- Note cost benefit/ratio
- Avoid normal operating expenses
- Be cautious on furniture/equipment
- Use industry norms on salaries
- Be clear on budget timeframes
- Pay attention to allowable/non-allowable expenses
- Model other successful projects

Grant Writing Mechanics

Evaluation:

- This can be the section that sets you apart for the win!
- Design your evaluation to reflect that success is a result of the project—not another outside factor.
- Have a clear evaluation plan.
- Questionnaires & interviews, benchmarks, goals, objectives, test, score sheets are all good tools.
- Utilize an "independent" evaluator.
- It will help you write a better grant.
- It should cover both outcome & implementation.
- Describe methods & explain tools.
- Show how it will improve the program.

Grant Writing Mechanics

Why do proposals fail?

- It does not follow directions. Not following the guidelines or leaving out a required document will almost always automatically disqualify your application from even being considered.
- Poor or sloppy appearance.
- Poor spelling and / or grammar.
- An organization fails to demonstrate experience in similar projects or a reasonable ability to administer and implement the program.
- Project outcomes are unclear or immeasurable.
- Method of implementation will not achieve anticipated goal.
- Dishonesty

Grant Writing Mechanics

- Evaluation strategy is weak.
- Math errors in budget section.
- Lack of appropriate experience for key personnel.
- Need or problem to be addressed not clearly identified.
- Lack of appropriate commitment from organization in matching funds, resources or manpower.
- Failure to demonstrate how the program would continue beyond the timeframe of the grant.
- Missing the application deadline.
- Failing to sign a required form.
- Lack of clear and appropriate proof and back up for the plan.

Grant Politics & Administration

Politics of Grants

- Be aware of political realities and context.
- Build & Work broad political relationships.
- This is not limited to elected officials.
- Be aware of internal agency politics.
- Find an advocate for your request.
- Networking & Communication.
- Take Advantage of Public Information.
- Use your legislator. They want success in their district!
- Who Gets the Credit?

Administering the Grant: Once you get it!

- Document Progress!
- Communicate with agency before, during and after the grant!
- Recognize your strengths & weaknesses.
- Think and track like Accountants.
- Under Promise and Over Deliver.
- Track the Agency's Agenda and let your reporting reflect it.

- Avoid any "Brother-in-law" deals.
- Proper Accounting Procedures – Checks & Balances.
- Separate Accounts.
- Read all the outlined procedures & guidelines and follow them closely.
- List all the requirements and commitments made.
- Failure is not always bad.
- Give Credit To Everyone!
- When in Doubt, Ask!

39

Question & Answer Session

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www.arml.org/services/league-programs/program-details/?title=grants-service