

Grants Writing 101



Michelle A. Alexander is currently serving as the 2019 CASE Chair of the Federal Funding Task Force (FFTF). She has been a member of the Task Force for more than 12 years and was the FFTF Vice Chair in 2015 and 2016 and the Chair since 2017. Ms. Alexander joined Vernon College in 2006 as Director of Institutional Advancement. Subsequently she was appointed as Executive Director of the Vernon College Foundation. With more than 30 years' experience in Advancement, she has worked at two- and four-year institutions in the areas of Federal, State, and private grants, donor services, prospect research, capital campaigns, annual giving, and individual and major giving. Under her leadership, Vernon College has raised over of \$7.5 million in private philanthropic dollars since 2006. In 2014 the College was the recipient of an Educational Fundraising Award for Overall Improvement from the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE). Recently, she served as part of several grant writing teams that resulted in a Department of Education \$2.3 million Title III Strengthening Institutions Grant and a USDA \$500,000 grant from the Agricultural Marketing Service. Michelle is a Past President of the TACCF and was an active member of the Council for Resource Development from 2006 through July 2016 when the organization closed. She served as a member of the 2010 Conference Committee; several board committees; and Co-Chair of the Federal Funding Task Force for 2015 and 2016. Michelle has also been active with CASE over the years, including Board and Conference positions in Districts IV and V.



Mary Ann Amelang, CFRE, M.A. just recently retired from her position as Vice President for Institutional Advancement and Executive Director of COM Foundation. Mary Ann has 28 years of experience in resource development, the last 20 of which have been at community colleges. She returned to College of the Mainland in September of 2013 after seven years at Lee College in Baytown Texas as Executive Director of Institutional Advancement. She had previously served as Executive Director of Resource Development at College of the Mainland from 1999 to 2006. She holds a Masters degree in Humanities from the University of Houston Clear Lake and a BA in English from the University of Houston. In her years at her two community colleges, she has increased donations, developed new programs, and tripled the number of students assisted by the Foundation, while also bringing in major federal, state and private foundation grants, including the first grant awarded to a community college by the Kresge Foundation. Over the past 17 years, Mary Ann has presented resource development and grant writing workshops on a regional and national basis.

Grant Writing 101

TACCF Annual Conference

February 14, 2019

Presented by Mary Ann Amelang, CFRE &

Michelle A. Alexander

Director of Institutional Advancement & Executive Director

Vernon College Foundation

Getting Started

Funding Source Match Game

Review your college's Mission, Academic Master Plan and Strategic Goals

Research the potential Funding Organization's

Philosophy

Mission

Strategic Goals

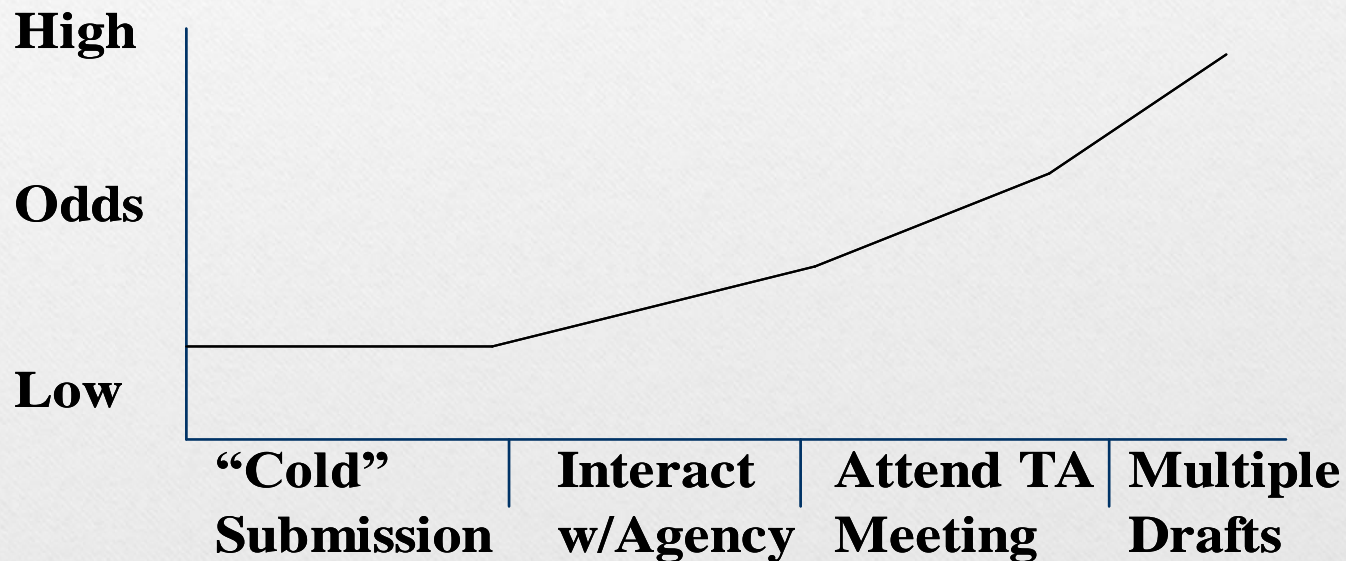
Funding Sources

- Public vs. Private – see handout
- The Match Game Continued
 - Does your program match the interests and priorities of the funding source?
 - Does the funding you need match the customary size of a grant from the funder?
 - Does the funder have a targeted geographical area?

Improving your odds

How to Improve Your Odds of Receiving a Grant

(Joan Suchorski, AVP, Santa Fe CC, 2000)



Typical Grant Components

- Abstract – *concise summary of project*
- History/Background – *answers where?*
- Need or Gap to be addressed – *why?*
- Goals/Objectives – *what will be accomplished?*
- Plan of Operation – *answers how?*
- Timeline – *answers when?*
- Personnel – *answers who?*
- Evaluation – *answers how well?*

Other typical components

- Applicant and Community Support – *answers do we have partners such as four-year institutions, community organizations, and/ or other community colleges and what will be their contributions?*
- Sustainability – *answers for how long?*
- Budget and Justification – *answers how much and why?*

History/Background

Include both the College and Foundation:

- Mission
- Service Area Information (rural, urban, multiple counties, population, etc.)
- Demographics of the student population.
- Overview of core programs and goals.

Grant Readiness

- Is your college or Foundation ready to write a grant?
- Is there some degree of knowledge and skills in program development within your organization?
- Is the proposed project in line with the college's mission, strategic plan, academic plan and current priorities?

Are You Ready?

- Does your college have the infrastructure to support a project, including matching funds, grant accounting and compliance capabilities, office space, etc. if needed?
- Do you have the time and resources to develop the project and write the proposal?

The Need is the Driver

- What is the gap or problem to be addressed?
- Answers the question *why?*
- Provides the motivating rationale for your project's existence.
- Positions your project in a larger context.

Identify Need or Gap

- Focus on your college's & your foundation's priorities as you identify a gap (in student services, in learning, in programs, in industry, or in the community)
- Identify a project that will address the gap, but requires that you seek outside funding.

Words of Wisdom #1

*Start with a quantifiable
institutional gap and a good project to address
the gap, not a*

Request for Proposal (RFP).

Need

- What will happen if the need or gap is not addressed?
- Do not assume “reviewer knowledge” of the need.
- Focus on the funding source’s priorities as well as your college’s.

Words of Wisdom #2

It is not always about our how “needy” our students are.

Why isn't always about your students?

- Many funding sources are often interested in the bigger picture.
- Describing your student population as low income, diverse, and first generation works the Lumina Foundation, but not for NSF.
- **READ** the RFP or guidelines. Do not automatically launch into how “needy” your students are.

For instance, NSF is looking for . . .

- Evidence that your project contributes to or fills a gap in knowledge or learning, especially in the STEM fields.
- The impact must extend beyond your campus and your region.
- Real world applications are important, but what gap will the project fill in the academic world?

What a need statement is NOT

- The need or the problem is **not** the lack of a solution.
- Avoid circular reasoning at all costs!
- With circular reasoning, you end up where you started, with no mention of what the real problem or gap is.

Circular Reasoning Example

- Need statement: Texas City and the surrounding communities lack facilities for the performing arts.
- Outcome: Complete construction of a performing arts center.
- Methodology and activities: Design and build a performing arts center.
- Evaluation: Was the performing arts center built?

How to determine if your reasoning is circular

- You end up where you started (e.g. with the construction of a performing arts center).
- If you start your need statement with “The lack of” (the lack of tutors, lack of equipment for the nursing lab, etc.) you have entered the circle.
- There is no mention of the true need. The focus is on what the college or your foundation **does not have**.

Circular Reasoning Activity

Here is a need statement using circular reasoning:

Southwest Community College lacks scholarships for 2nd year nursing students.

Which is the better need statement for SW Community College?

1. Because SW Community College 2nd year nursing students normally take 8 hours per semester, they do not qualify for traditional scholarships that require students enroll in a minimum of 9 hours.
2. Over 60% of the 167 nursing students enrolled at SW Community are low income and in need of scholarships.

Need Statements to Improve

Lakes Community College is the only community college in the region without a simulation mannequin for its nursing lab.

Which is the better need statement for Lakes CC?

1. Lakes Community College nursing students consistently score 10% lower on clinicals than the nursing students in other associate degree nursing programs in the state.
2. Nurses who graduate from Lakes CC are more likely to injure or kill a patient when they start working in a hospital due to the lack of enough patient simulators.

One more need statement

Midline Community College students need a
childcare facility on campus.

Which statement is better for Midline CC?

1. In a recent survey of students who withdrew from Midline CC, nearly 45% cited unreliable child care as their primary reason for dropping out.
2. Within a 10 mile radius of Midline College, there is only one child care center that provides services during the evening.

Words of Wisdom #3

Don't tell grant reviewers what you lack or what you need, tell them about the problem, and why this problem prevents the college from the getting the job done.

One good (or bad) thing leads to
another

**If your need is not quantifiable,
your objectives and your evaluation will be weak.**

To write a good need statement:

Form a compelling, quantifiable statement of need.

Document the urgency of addressing the problem or need.

Last but not least, remember—it is not a need just because you “don’t have it.”

Goals and Objectives

**What is the difference between a goal
and an objective?**

Goals and Objectives

- Goals are conceptual and abstract -- a view of the end result of the project.
- Objectives are tangible, concrete, specific, measurable, achievable and have a time dimension.
- There should be only one or two major goals per project.
- No more than three objectives per goal.

A Goal & an Objective

- Goal:

Improve retention of nursing students.

- Objective:

By fall 2011, increase the retention rates of first year nursing students from 35% to 40% (fall to fall).

Activity

- Write a need statement based on a real need at your college (work as a group).
- Write one goal
- Write one quantifiable objective

Plan of Operation

- ▶ Visualize entire project as “operational,” and describe how a participant would “flow through” the program or service.
- ▶ Start with objectives, then explain the activities that must take place to achieve the objectives.
- ▶ Discuss staff responsibilities and timeframes.
- ▶ Describe management plan here.

Timeline

- Sometimes included in the “Plan of Operation” and is often represented in chart form.
- A graphic representation of your plan of operation.

Key Personnel

- Often grant guidelines ask for resumes and/or job descriptions of staff who will oversee and support the project.
- All bios or resumes should be in the same format and no longer than one page.
- Some funding sources look closely at qualifications of project staff and how those qualifications match project focus.

What are grant reviewers looking for?

- Collaborative efforts with multiple community partners to maximize the use of grant funds.
- Partners that commit cash to reduce the amount of grant funding needed.
- Partners that contribute personnel, space, equipment, supplies, and other valuable items to reduce the amount of grant funding needed.

Budget

- Budget should be developed before the narrative.
- Include a budget narrative or justification if allowable.
- Budget items must be reasonable and appropriate to the objectives.
- Make sure to include match if required (in-kind or cash).
- Include indirect cost rate if allowable.
- Budget should be reviewed by an accountant

Evaluation

Evaluation is the process of asking—and answering these questions:

- What did you do?
- How well did you do it?
- What did you achieve?
- What is the impact on your students and the college?

Evaluation – Formative and Summative

Formative – begins during project development and continues throughout the life of the project. Assesses ongoing project activities.

Summative – Assesses a mature project's success in reaching its stated goals (sometimes referred to as the outcome evaluation)

“When the cook tastes the soup, that’s formative; when the guests taste the soup, that’s summative.”

Abstract

- Summary of the problem to be solved, statement of the objectives; procedures and methods to be used to accomplish the objectives; description of evaluation design; and how much the project will cost
- Normally only one page
- Might be the only page read by reviewers; so it could be your first and perhaps only impression!
- When should it be written?

Common Grant Writing Traps

- Running out of time
- ~~Computer or internet failure~~
- Not following the RFP or guidelines in formatting your proposal (such as number of pages, headings, spacing).
- Not answering all the questions and not providing all the documentation requested.
- Not getting the information needed from faculty, staff and partners in a timely manner.
- Not getting required approvals and signatures

Tips

- Divide and conquer! Don't try to do it all yourself!
Find an outsider to read drafts.
- Include a graphic or chart in each major narrative section to break up text.
- Create back up of your files on CD or flash drive and take it home with you every day.
- The 4-Rs – Review, Reword, Rewrite and Revise.

Tips

- Nearly all grants can now be submitted electronically.
- Many Texas granting agencies still require hard copies: TWC, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, etc.
- Kresge, Houston Endowment, and other private foundations now require electronic submissions.
- Most all federal agencies go through grants.gov.
- When making a submission on-line, keep in mind that the site slows down as the deadline nears – submit early and be aware of time zones.

Grants and Sources for Scholarship Support

- NSF Scholarships for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
- Greater Texas Foundation
- Lumina Foundation
- Department of Ed TRIO SSS Program (includes an endowment component)
- Seek local foundations in your area.

Support for Capital Campaigns and other projects

- The Kresge Foundation
- The Meadows Foundation
- The Ford Foundation
- Houston Endowment
- Corporate Foundations in your area
- Local Foundations in your area

Deadlines and Submission

- ▶ Plan on TWO days minimum for overnight delivery
– things can and do go wrong.
- ▶ Postmark date and delivery dates **ARE NOT ONE IN THE SAME!** Be aware of time zones!
- ▶ On-line submission -- **START EARLY** – Go on the site as soon as you decide to write the grant. On-line submission sites get slower and slower as the deadline approaches! All federal agencies are going to grants.gov.

Now that you know the pieces of the puzzle . . .

Start Writing!



QUESTIONS?

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