

(1) WHAT ARE GRANTS?

In much the same way that private parties benefit via access to capital gained through various financial ventures (i.e., by convincing interested investors to supply the money required to bring a particular business model to profitability in return for a share of the profit), public and private non-profit organizations benefit via access to grant funding gained through various philanthropic ventures (i.e., by convincing interested stakeholders to supply the money required to bring a particular charitable or educational project model to bear on a particular problem/need). In this way, potential grantees can be seen as the not for profit equivalent of business entrepreneurs.

While there is a wide variety of grants available to educational faculty and institutions, cultural, non-profit, government and non-governmental individuals and organizations, all grants have one thing in common: they involve distribution of funds provided to support a specific grantee project(s), as approved by the grantor via the application process. Perhaps most appealing, grants typically do not have to be repaid (although often they require some sort of matching commitment).

Grant projects typically involve the implementation of specific components that are designed to tackle specific problems. In order to secure the grant, the potential grantee must work to explicate their particular strategy for accomplishing that task. That is, the potential grantee is tasked to simultaneously develop and demonstrate how their proposed program presents innovative solutions to particular problems, as well as methods designed to achieve those objectives in reasonable time and at reasonable cost. This is typically accomplished via the grant proposal.

For educators and scientists in particular, grants are indispensable resources because the work they perform does not always provide the capital return required to sustain that work. Recognizing, however, that educators and scientists, among others, provide services vital to the success of larger social and political objectives, grants of many kinds are made available to fund that work.

(2) WHAT KINDS OF GRANTS ARE AVAILABLE?

Grants come in all shapes and sizes and from many sources. While some are oriented to a specific goal or objective, others are designed to address broader goals by tackling multiple objectives, sometimes over a period several years. Grants can be for as little as \$50 to supplement a conference or lecture or field trip to as much as \$200 million or more to support construction or program implementation on a wider scale. However, the amount of grant funding is typically appropriate to the specific task at hand and almost all grantors expect and require that potential grantees seek a reasonable amount as required to perform the work, as outlined in the grant request.

Almost all grant proposal writing begins with a Request For Proposals, or RFP. This document is the source of all administrative information that the potential grantee will need to complete the proposal document. It typically contains all of the information required to develop a grant in accordance with the guidelines and priorities established by the grantor organization. Essential information to be found in the RFP includes such information as: grantor agency, program description, grantee eligibility, program priorities, proposal instructions and the ever important due date. The RFP is critical to the grant writing process and so a thorough review of that document is always the best place to start.

For our purposes, there are several types of grants available:

Federal Grants: Federal grants, those offered by various agencies of the US government, are available to support a wide range of programs, institutions and individuals at home and overseas. These grants are coordinated and offered directly by the various federal agencies and are usually under the direct supervision of the agency secretary appointed by the President. While Congress reserves the fiscal authority in appropriating funds requested by a particular executive administration, the design of programs is almost always handled at the agency level. It is important to note here that the various agencies can make grants to a wide variety of potential grantees and not just those typically associated with that particular agency. In other words, if you are looking for a grant to support a particular program initiative at a school or university you do not necessarily have to limit your search to the US Department of Education. In fact, there are numerous and perhaps more relevant opportunities available at other agencies to support your program (e.g., NSF, USDA, NASA, DoD, etc.).

State Grants: State grants are conceptually similar to federal grants with one main exception: the state government typically develops and implements them. In that regard, familiarity with the federal grants process is useful for understanding a particular state's grant programs. Moreover, because state grants are typically broken down according to the formal divisions of state government, knowledge of the state agencies, as well as their role in that state, is essential to understanding and predicting the availability (and appropriateness) of applying for a particular state grant.

Community Grants: Community grants are typically intended to benefit a particular community groups, schools or communities sectors. They are typically developed in order to facilitate outreach and encourage partnership and sharing of program resources locally. Community grants almost always require some kind of matching commitment and substantial buy in from all sectors of the participating community. Local charities, civic organizations and wealthy community members who wish to give something back to the community in which they live are usually the best source for community grants. While there are a wide variety of community grants with different purposes, they are generally smaller grants intended to respond directly to priorities established by the community for the community.

Foundation Grants: Given the wide variety of private and public foundation grantmaking organizations in the United States, it is difficult to summarize here the impact of foundation grants. Suffice it to say, private and public foundation grants in the US are at the core of American philanthropy – an enterprise once unique to the United States. In return for the special privileges afforded to a US tax-exempt foundation, such foundations are required to seek approval for their charitable objectives from the US Treasury (IRS) and must expend their tax-exempt funds in accordance with IRS-approved regulations and procedures. These foundations are commonly referred to as 501(c)(3) organizations because that is the section of the Internal Revenue Code under which all public and private (non-religious) charitable organizations are registered. Examples of US 501(c)(3) charitable foundations include the Carnegie Foundation, Ford Foundation, Pew Charitable Trusts, Hewlett Packard Foundation, Coca Cola Foundation, Alu Like, Inc, University of Hawai'i Foundation, Hawai'i Community Foundation, among many many others.

(3) HOW/WHERE TO FIND GRANTS?

When it comes to grants in the 21st century, the Internet is your best friend! Almost every grantmaking organization is currently using the web to deliver information on the availability, eligibility, timing, etc., for their grants. In many cases, grantees are even accepting applications over the Internet. In part because US law requires that all grants (federal, private and state) be

provided on an objective and nondiscriminatory basis, most foundations and government agencies have capitalized on the web as a medium for publication of grants information that helps to make all eligible potential grantees aware of the grant opportunity. The key to finding your grant is to become familiar with the appropriate grant information publications and to consult that posting regularly.

Federal Grants: All federal US Government grants are published in the US Federal Register, a publication issued by the US Government Printing Office (www.gpo.gov). Select individual federal grants are published daily in the federal register, often between 45-60 days prior to the application due date. It is therefore important to scan the register at least every two weeks or so to be sure that you will find what you are looking for. The only sure way to be sure to catch everything is to scan the register every day. However, the only sure way to be prepared to submit a proposal within the 60-day window provided in the RFP is to anticipate its publication – and start planning early.

Because federal grants are typically available to support substantial projects and because they are typically available to a wide range of community organizations, the application process is extremely competitive. It is therefore critical to become aware of the kinds of federal grants available as early as possible in order to begin the planning process long before the RFP is published. In fact, it typically takes an organization like a public college from three to six months to adequately prepare for proposal submission.

State Grants: Because states vary in their approach to grantmaking, there are several alternative methods for finding grants in different states. Because most states require that local companies (including charities) register with the Secretary of State, that is a good point for starting your grant search. There are also numerous public and private publications available that list the grants available in your state. In Hawai'i you can begin your search at www.hawaii.gov.

Community Grants: Often community grantmakers require substantial collaboration and matching funds with the general strategy of encouraging the stakeholders throughout the community to take part in the project. To that end, community grants often involve extensive networking among various grantmaking organizations and community groups. In Hawai'i, one of the best known and most effective community grantmaking organizations is the Hawai'i Community Foundation (www.hcf-hawaii.org). There is also a publication entitled *Directory on Charitable Trusts and Foundations* available from Helping Hands Hawai'i (a new volume is due out soon) that can be very useful in researching local grant opportunities.

Foundation Grants: I would venture to say that all US foundation grants are currently listed on the web. Because nearly every US foundation maintains a website regarding their operations in effort to maintain compliance with IRS regulations regarding the distribution of their tax-exempt funds, it is safe to assume that you can locate and investigate all foundation grants directly via the Internet. In most cases, employing a web-based search engine will also help you get started.

(4) FIVE STEPS TO WRITING SUCCESSFUL GRANTS

It is important to note that the primary goal in writing a grant should be to get the funding required to execute a specific program or project. It should never be the goal of writing a grant just to get money. Because it is typically much harder to successfully implement a grant than it is to write a winning grant proposal, it becomes imperative that the proposal accurately describe the program for which the grantee seeks support. In that regard, it is important to be sure that the proposal contains the basic elements of a workable project in order to dramatically improve the impact of the funds used to support that project.

Writing a successful grant requires five basic steps:

(1) Read the RFP carefully; get to know the program metrics (categories of activities and limitations); gain an overall understanding of the program requirements and priorities; research the grantor; know the deadline;

(2) Conceptualize the program; collaborate with your partners; decide/listen to what the project participants want to do and take notes to draw from when writing the proposal (step 4); decide on management structure; ground the project appropriately;

(3) Contact the grantor personnel assigned to the grant and develop a rapport with that person(s); let them know what kind of project you have in mind and why you think it fits their grant program; seek answers to technical questions that demonstrate insight into their grant program; get them to know who you are and what you are doing in order to increase the odds that they will recall your project during the selection process;

(4) Draft the proposal; work to marry the objectives specified by the potential grantee participants with the funding priorities of the grantor; write early and give your team time to look over the grant; because it is harder to implement a grant than it is to design and propose, make sure your grant is realistic and performance based; make sure you develop a budget that is accurate and sufficient (but within the suggested guidelines); and,

(5) Edit and rewrite; good writing requires rewriting; the majority of losing proposals are written at the last minute leaving the proposal team little or no time for revision; make sure your final budget is appropriate to your program, as proposed; edit for grammar and syntax (this can be done at the very end and will help you wind down from the writing side of the project).

Do not forget to submit your proposal. Consult the RFP one last time to make sure your submission answers all the questions, contains all the required sections and includes all of the appropriate forms and signatures. If you are submitting manually, it is a good idea to get proof of that mailing. If you are submitting electronically, try to obtain some valid proof of submission that is acceptable to the grantor. Always keep a hard copy for your files.

Finally, because it often takes a few months to hear news regarding a particular award, take some time to disseminate the proposal, thank your collaborators and partners and make final preparations to receive the grant. Because there is a chance you may not win all the grants for which you submit, remember to maintain good working relationships with all the project partners to help ensure that the team is ready to submit should additional opportunity present itself. At the very minimum, the work you put into preparing the grant proposal will prove invaluable in preparing subsequent projects and proposals.

Good luck!