Development Speed Dating Session: Foundation and Government Funding

Foundation Funding Tips

1. Make sure both your organization AND project fit the foundation’s mission and guidelines: for example—a foundation that funds summer camps in Atlanta, GA metro but your organization is in California.
2. Make searching for grants a part of your routine – recommend 2-3 times per week, sign up for newsletters.
3. Put any grants you think you may want to apply for on your calendar – you can always take them off the calendar but you don’t want to be caught off guard with 2 days to write something you read about months ago, or realize you missed a grant because it was too far off to think about it when you initially found it.
4. Follow all directions – proposals will often be tossed without review if a required document is missing. If you have questions, don’t be afraid to contact the funder.
5. It will always take longer than you think it will! This is not meant to be a negative statement, but rather to encourage you to be prepared. There’s often an unexpected document that must be located or a narrative that takes more time than expected.

Governmental Funding Tips:

1. Make sure there is a clear statement of need in the opening narrative. Write the statement of need then give it to someone who doesn’t know anything about your project and ask them to summarize. If they can accurately describe what you hope to do, then you are likely in good shape. If they don’t get it, the field and panel reviewers probably will not either.
2. A Successful application for funding will meet an important need in the community. Your grant should provide community based solutions. Letters of support are one way to prove support. If you are creating a new program for a particular population you should have community buy-in, feedback, and a letter of support for the project.
3. Nicely package your application. Federal grant requests typically ask for a lot of information. When applying make sure that your budget requests match your narrative, that you have identified the right updated resumes to submit, and your timelines are clear.
4. Think of the big picture. If your project is a small part of a bigger effort be sure to indicate this. Some applicants do not clarify this and it can become very confusing for the reviewers.
5. Spend some time thinking through what you are measuring, who is going to measure it, and how you will define success. As a panel reviewer I have heard this concern stated time and again. Some panelists will discount the application if there are not clear goals, and a clear plan on who is going to measure them.

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