



Fast Fundraising Facts & Other Essentials

So Much Information—So Little Space—The Grant Writer’s Dilemma

The cover article this month is submitted by Maddie Zeigler, a grant consultant. Learn more about Maddie at the end of the article.

You’ve done your homework and found a funder that appears to be a good match. That is, they fund in your geographic area, they fund organizations and programs similar to yours, and they fund at the level your project requires. Now you’re ready to start writing, but where to begin? The guidelines state that the first step in the application process is submitting a Letter of Inquiry, which should be a maximum of three pages in length.

So, how do you convince a funder that your program deserves consideration in only three pages? Your first thought might be to use a size 6 font, but you realize that’s not possible. Don’t despair, it is a doable task! **The first and foremost thing to keep in mind is the general mantra for grant writing: to be concise and clear.** Begin by introducing your organization (mission and whom you serve), state that you’re requesting funds for a particular project, and tie your project to the interests and priorities of the funder.

Next, you might **state the need or problem your project addresses**, and possibly include key statistics to provide support and credibility. End this paragraph with a brief and clear statement of how your project will address the need or problem that you stated.

Now you’re ready to **describe your plan.** Include your goals/objectives, followed by a brief description of your activities and timeline. Continue by pointing out why your organization is suited to carry out the project, highlighting your qualifications (experience and resources). Indicate if this is a model program that can be replicated.

Specify the amount you’re requesting through this LOI and the total amount of the project (if different). Close by thanking the potential funder for considering your proposal and provide name and contact information. Be sure to include any attachments requested by the funder, such as your organization’s fact sheet, IRS determination letter, budget, or other financial information.

Before submitting the letter and required attachments, **reread and revise** and ask someone else (preferably unfamiliar with the project) to read the letter for clarity. Be sure that you have reviewed and checked off all requirements listed by the potential funder.

Some funders base their funding decisions on the Letter of Inquiry and others use it to determine who will be invited to submit a full proposal. Either way, make your LOI as compelling and convincing as possible. Some ideas for personalizing your LOI are to incorporate client quotes or provide short “testimonials” as indented text. Another tip is to use the same language as your funder. For example, if their literature includes phrases such as “needs of underprivileged children” and “emotional and physical well-being of low-income children,” use the same phrases when describing your program and services. Finally, don’t be afraid to invite the funder to become a partner in “helping to improve the lives of children in YOUR CITY whose lives are filled with turmoil through no fault of their own” or whatever your area of service might be.

About the Contributor

Maddie Zeigler is a grant consultant specializing in developing federal and foundation proposals. Her clients benefit from her 16 years of experience in proposal development, program development, and conducting grant writing workshops. She provide services such as: Comprehensive funding searches, Grant proposal writing, Critiquing and editing grant proposal drafts, Training/Mentoring staff in grant development, Grant budget development, and Evaluation logic model development. Her experiences in grant reviewing, grant development, and grant administration give her a well-rounded perspective as a grant professional.

If you’d like to receive Maddie’s “Tips for New Grant Writers” or “List of Documents to Keep in Your Attachment File,” you may contact her at grantwriterz@msn.com or 505-385-9637.

Effects of Sarbanes-Oxley Act on Nonprofits

You have probably heard about the Sarbanes-Oxley Act and its effect on for profit corporations. But did you know that certain parts of the Act relate to your nonprofit?

In a report published in late 2003, **BoardSource** and the **Independent Sector** recommend that nonprofits voluntarily incorporate certain provisions of the Act that make good governance sense.

- 1) **Insider Transactions and Conflicts of Interest.** Nonprofit organizations should not provide personal loans to directors or executives. If loans are provided, all terms should be disclosed and approved by the Board.
- 2) **Certified Financial Statements.** The CEO and CFO and Board of Directors of a nonprofit should review the Form 990 or 990-PF before it is submitted to the IRS to ensure that it is accurate, complete and filed on time.
- 3) **Independent and Competent Audit Committee.** All nonprofits that conduct outside audits should have separate audit and finance committees.

While the majority of the provisions in the Act apply only to publicly traded corporations, the following provisions are applicable to all corporations (nonprofit and for profit).

- 1) **Whistle Blower Protection.** Nonprofits should develop, adopt and disclose a formal process to deal with complaints and prevent retaliation. Nonprofit leaders must investigate employee complaints and correct any problems or explain why corrections are not necessary.
- 2) **Document Destruction.** Nonprofits should have a written, mandatory document retention and periodic destruction policy, which includes guidelines for electronic files and voicemail. If an official investigation is underway or even suspected, nonprofit management must avoid any document purging in order to avoid criminal obstruction.

Learn more about the Sarbanes-Oxley Act. A good article is found at www.wiggin.com/pubs/articles_abstract.asp?ID=10124712162004. Another source is www.bdo.com/about/publications/industry/np_apr_03/article1.asp.

Other Grant Writing Dos and Don'ts

A recent dialogue on CharityChannel.com revealed the following Dos and Don'ts from Jane Savitt Tennen, Director, NYU George H. Heyman Center for Philanthropy and Fundraising. Jane notes that these points apply to private-sector individuals and foundations, not government and not marketing-based corporate giving.

"If you're doing the relationship thing right, it's possible to get a grant with a terrible proposal. If you're not doing it right, a proposal written by Shakespeare or Hemingway wouldn't get you funded.

The proposal comes about 65% of the way through the cultivation/application process. There should be few surprises for the reader, therefore, in the written document.

A proposal is not a manual or directory. It is, in essence, a sales piece whose purpose is to get a meeting

with or a site visit by the funder. Don't lie or mislead, but don't give the funder a reason to say no before s/he's even seen the program in action.

Don't promise what your organization cannot deliver. If you cannot deliver what the funder wants to fund, don't apply for the grant.

Every budget tells a story. Be sure yours tells the story you mean it to tell.

Be sure in the budget (and your own thinking/planning) to account for indirect costs, even if they aren't part of your dollar ask."

I would add one final tip. I recommend that you begin the grant process by calling the grantor in advance of the proposal to establish what exactly the funder is looking for to determine whether you should even put pen to paper!

Internet Resources For Nonprofits

A great magazine you might want to subscribe to is Fundraising Success. I have enjoyed their practical approach to every day fundraising issues. Visit their site at

www.fundraisingsuccessmag.com.



In light of Sarbanes-Oxley, you might want to develop a Code of Ethics for your organization. The Illinois Institute of Technology Center for the Study of Ethics in the Professions can give you

some guidelines and examples at ethics.iit.edu/codes/.

Remember, if you are not devoting at least one hour every week to Internet research, you are leaving money and opportunity on the table!

Lots of the sites I've found are hot linked from my web site. Of course, from time to time, organizations and sites disappear, so if you find a broken link on the site, please send me an email (jean@jblockinc.com) and let me know. Thanks!

TWO GREAT BOOKS AVAILABLE NOW:

THE ABCs OF BUILDING BETTER BOARDS and FAST FUNDRAISING FACTS FOR FAME & FORTUNE

Now you can add two great books to your agency library. **The ABCs of Building Better Boards** is just what you need to improve your Board's potential. It includes ideas for recruitment, retention and recognition and has some great forms for you to copy and use.

Learn how to deal with unproductive Board members and how to better define the roles of staff and Board. There is a chapter on financial and fiduciary facts, one on simple parliamentary procedure and much, much more.

Discover how Board Job Descriptions and annual Commitment Letters will dramatically improve your Board's effectiveness. See how a truly effective Nominating Committee will lead to a better Board.

Get good ideas for more efficient Board management and administration, including how to set up and manage effective committees.

It's only \$24.95 plus shipping and handling. Take advantage of a volume discount of up to 20% and give this book to all new Board members as part of their orientation.

The 3rd edition of **Fast Fundraising Facts for Fame & Fortune** is full of ideas to improve your fundraising, including how to ask effectively, special events essentials, the Board's role in fundraising and new ideas for fundraising.

Help volunteers get over the fear of asking for money and in-kind resources for your organization. Learn how marketing principles will make fundraising easier.

Learn about **Jean's Ten Rules for Fundraising Success** and apply them to your organization immediately. This book puts the **FUN** into **FUND**raising and gives good examples and ideas that really work, rather than using hard to follow formulas and theories.

It's only \$24.95 plus shipping and handling. Take advantage of a volume discount of up to 20% and give this book to all new Board members as part of their orientation.

Or buy both books for only \$45.00 plus shipping and handling.

Order at www.jblockinc.com

HOW CAN I HELP YOU? TAKE THIS QUICKIE QUIZ

Q: Is your Board of Directors functioning at its highest level?

Q: How successful is your current fundraising?

Q: Do volunteers need help asking for money and in-kind resources?

Q: Does your organization have a dynamic strategic plan?

Q: Are you having fun?

**Please give me a call if you want to turn any
NO into a YES.**

I can help with:

- turning your Board into a dynamic group of volunteers,
- facilitating a strategic planning session,
- analyzing your current fundraising and suggesting some new ideas, and
- training volunteers and staff in becoming more effective fundraisers.

"You certainly shifted my paradigm. After hearing you last Friday, it is the first time in 11 years as an ED that I was excited about fund development. And you got my Board members to that point as well."

Kay Hopper

RDC for Children, Richardson, TX

"Your seminar in Dallas was the best I ever attended. You are wise and hilarious."

Mary Jo Dorn

Catholic Charities of Dallas

"Jean conducted an extremely well organized and productive [Board] retreat, one that I can say with confidence that our members count as the finest ever conducted for us. Jean's follow-up report was in-depth and meaty, and both Board and staff have referred to it time and again. The knowledge of boardsmanship the members took with them has made a remarkable difference in their levels of commitment and support."

Eileen Cook

Casa Esperanza, Albuquerque, NM

"Jean Block is a powerhouse in the nonprofit world. You don't move about these circles long before her name is prominent in the conversation. Her commitment to training, fundraising, motivating, and cultivation is unsurpassed. To say she is an influence is to miss the point. You don't know Jean, you experience her! She is a force unlike any other I have ever met."

Randy Gleason

UNM Children's Hospital

"Your training was invaluable to me. I dreaded doing this because I couldn't even sell someone a candy bar in the past but I was inspired by your advice to try. I raised about \$377,000!"

Joan Shepack

Keystone Botanical Garden, El Paso, TX

"I attended the Corporate Sponsorship Workshop - WOW! You were amazing! What an OPPORTUNITY for me! Your presentation style was EXCELLENT. By far the best workshop I've been to in a long time (content and style both!)."

Vicki Kopplin

Epilepsy Foundation of Minnesota