If you’re like most non-profit leaders, your answer is probably a resounding YES! Winning more grants means helping more people, transforming more lives, and creating more organizational success. 

This book outlines a simple plan for you and your team to follow, even with busy schedules and limited time.

How does your team find and connect with more grant makers?
Relationship Marketing is all the rage, and Grant Writing is ALL about relationships.

However, if your communication within your team is unfocused and your message is loosely thrown together, you might as well let a giraffe type your grants.

What to do instead?
There is a replicate-able formula to winning grants, and it is very similar to a plant’s lifecycle.

The ultimate goal is a strong, healthy sustaining tree. For most folks, the main goal with grant writing is to create a long-term, healthy revenue stream that supports your organizations’ mission and vision.

It starts with a seed. The plant sprouts and grows with each consecutive year, all the while building a super strong root system. The root system is the footing of your Grant Writing Plan.
Everyone on Staff, especially your Executive Team, should stay alert and aware, grant opportunities are all around us! You might be surprised, but there are just as many grant opportunities in one’s personal life, as there are in your professional life.

Grant opportunities come from all types of places - churches, community events, friendships, local companies, schools and family members.

Being keenly aware of your world is like discovering fertile soil under your feet that can help support future growth.
The materials that go into a grant application... well... that is like setting the garden to foster the seed’s growth.

Consider environmental factors: like the right kind of soil, the right amount of sunlight, the right amount of water, and don’t forget the fertilizer! Seeds need help sprouting and subsequently growing to their full potential.

Nurturing a grant and your relationship with the Granting Foundation and the Grant Fund Manager is setting the environment for grant success. If you have the opportunity to communicate with them, jump on it.

At the very least put your best materials together. This is your opportunity to make a wonderful first impression and just as important, a good lasting impression.
When someone on your Executive Team hears about a potential grant, the seed is planted.

It may come from a word-of-mouth reference. It may come from researching and finding RFPs (request for proposals) that matches your agency’s mission.

Whatever the source, your entire team should be notified. Start a list of all deadlines and document requirements for the grant.

Give yourself plenty of time to create materials; it is a best practice to have a grant plan already assembled.
Within a few business days, let’s say two business days, a conversation with your entire executive team should take place. Get everyone together around a work table, over the phone or through video conferencing.

Assign responsibilities for assembling the list of items needed for the grant. Record all actions needed for completion of the grant process, including deadlines!

This grant organization is critical. Itemizing the needs and elements that are required is just the first part. You also must have full agreement among all parties involved with the team.
An important aspect of researching the grant is the due diligence. This includes listening. Really listen.

If you have the chance to speak with a member of the Granting Foundation, go for it! Then, really listen to what they say!

Most people can tell when you’re in the company of someone who is truly interested. That impression helps you bond and build rapport.

It creates an opportunity for the Grant Fund Manager to gain deeper insight about you and your agency’s mission.
Your grant writing goal is to sincerely and authentically connect. Yes -it’s on paper, or digitally submitted, but it is your time to SHINE. It is your time to captivate your grant panel audience with a great story!

Say what you mean, and definitely say it the way you’d speak it. Use your organizations’ clear voice. (If your organization has undergone an official messaging and branding campaign, make sure you weave that language into your grant story.) The Grant Fund Manager will recognize your authentic voice. Let your passion show!

Have the Executive Team member, or Grant Writer who is responsible for the grant, gather all the materials for the submission.

You may be just a sprout at this point, but remember in your heart you are a mighty tree!
After the grant has been submitted, communication with the Grant Fund Manager should continue. Periodically update them with news and highlights of your agency. This is where relationship building will make all the difference.

On the occasion your agency is not awarded funding, this will provide you the ability to ask for respectful clarification. Fostering mutual discovery provides insight and increased awareness. A big win/win!

Keep it up! Continual communication about milestones and benchmarks reached by your organization should be communicated on a regular basis. These can be posted via emails, Facebook, Twitter, text messages, or phone calls. However, keen attention should be paid to the specific communication preferences of the Grant Fund Manager.

This is the maturing of the relationship. Like the maturing of a tree.
Whether the team wins or not, your nurturing work is not done.

Invite a continuation of communication with the Grant Fund Manager. Even if you didn’t win, if you feel you have a good fit with the foundation, keep on communicating! It often takes two and three grant cycles to be awarded funding from a new grant source.

Ask for a meeting over coffee, or a meeting in the Foundation’s office, but, the best way to tell your story is to advocate for a site visit at your organization’s headquarters.
After you have been awarded a grant remember to ask the Grant Fund Manager the following...

- Are you happy with our level of communication?
- Are you happy with the data that is being provided?
- Is there anything else you would like to know?
- Ask them for feedback!

Then LISTEN!

Your partnership is working together here! The bond is growing, just like our sprout’s root system.
If we look back to the process presented we can summarize it in the following way:

**RELATIONSHIP BUILDING**
+ **Communication**
+ **Teamwork**
+ **More Communication** = **A Successful TEAM Grant Writing Plan**
About Your Author…

My Name is Grace-Anne Alfiero.

Considered an expert in the non-profit (tax exempt) industry, Grace-Anne Alfiero is the author of several e-Books, manuals, webinars and podcasts and has produced, directed and written movies for many clients including the Department of Education.

Alfiero presents regularly on Digital Storytelling, Smart Phone Photography, Social Media Messaging, iPad Cinematography, and Team Approaches to Grant Writing. As a grant writer, Grace-Anne has been awarded over 9 million dollars in funding for her diverse portfolio of clients including a medical clinic, a food pantry, several agencies providing educational and/or advocacy programming, a science museum and workforce development agencies.
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