



# WINNING GRANTS!

## When Grant Writing = Grant Winning

When I am presenting at conferences on team grant writing strategies or when I am meeting with a room full of non-profit board members, I often get asked the same question... ***What does it really take to win grant proposals?***

According to the U.S. Government and The Foundation Center, there are over \$544 billion dollars up for grabs each and every year from thousands of sources. (To put that number into perspective, its about what the U.S. Government spends on Social Security in a year — and about \$40 billion more than what's spent on Medicare and Medicaid!)

The number one secret to winning grants is to establish a system for your success. When it comes to grant funding, it's an unfortunate yet true reality that oftentimes the *third time is the charm*. Many organizations give up on grants following a few declinations, yet they are often halfway there after the first decline and that is when you have the opportunity to build and foster relationships with the granting entity with professionals from your organization that are able to speak intelligently about your agency's programming.

One of the greatest mistakes a grant team can make is not tapping the knowledge of grant management officers. Federal agencies and family foundations alike assign managers for each competition/RFP. This person knows what makes grants competitive and can give us the answers and the advice we need, so we should always be trying to establish discourse with the grant managers. This may not always be possible when dealing with foundations. If, after we have written a letter of inquiry or intent, and the foundation has responded, we should always try reaching out to the point of contact and inviting them to a facility tour or an upcoming event.

When it is all said and done, funders are attracted to organizations that have dynamic people on their team. To them, dynamic staff members = dynamic programming. Developing and sustaining relationships are the key to winning grants. Find folks on your staff that are natural extroverts and who enjoy telling your agency's success stories.

Then go out and begin building relationships, one donut and coffee meeting at a time!

-Grace-Anne Alfiero, MFA