

# ***Blue Ribbon Business***

**Business Management and Leadership Topics for the Horse Industry**



## **HORSE ASSOCIATION DEVELOPMENT**

### ***Grantsmanship: Looking for Funding in All the Right Places***

**Y**ou've seen the ads. You know, the ones that say, "Let the government finance your small business" or some other project or acquisition. They make it sound like the money is just growing on a tree somewhere, waiting for YOU to come along to pick it. In fact, millions of dollars are available in the form of grants. But what these ads don't tell you is that it is a highly competitive process (for example, \$300,000 is available from one source; 60 proposals are received requesting a total of \$1.3 million), that your goals and the grant maker's goals must be the same, and that there is a correct procedure and format for applying for a grant.

#### **Understanding the grant system**

Primarily foundations, corporations, government, and civic and religious groups provide grants. This is money made available by these entities usually to solve a problem. By providing the funds, and opening the proposal application process to non-profits, these entities are effectively contracting with the non-profit as the means to the solution. The emphasis here is on the fact that the grant makers are looking to solve problems, not necessarily to make the non-profit successful. That may come as one by-product of the process, but it is not the focus. It's interesting to note that sometimes grant makers may be looking to help solve problems that they may have in some way created.

From the non-profits side, grant proposals are written for a variety of purposes. Obviously, the primary goal is to secure funding for an idea. Often proposals are written to make a case, test an idea, or get things started. It can be a method for non-profits to make grant making entities aware of problems that exist or that are emerging. Although an initial grant may not be funded, the awareness has been created, and subsequent requests may meet with greater success.

#### **Proposal Fundamentals**

Three key elements for securing funding are:

- 1) Proposal - Once you've determined that you are seeking assistance in providing a program, a service, educational materials, or need help with your non-profit operating costs, you'll need to write a proposal detailing your request. Proposal writing starts with research and planning. Become a super-sleuth to locate all the possible sources for assistance. Remember that your proposals will be written for EACH grant maker. You won't simply produce one proposal and send it to several grant makers – you will tailor each proposal to the grant maker's guidelines for proposal submission. If you mass-produce one grant, you may find your request has been mass-rejected. In addition to research, get on the phone and talk to the donor before you write your proposal. You will begin to establish a relationship if you don't already have one. And although it doesn't mean that you have a higher chance of receiving the grant, it does demonstrate professionalism and may increase the odds in your favor.
- 2) Concept and Cost – Write your proposal in simple language, because it will need to communicate your ideas without you there. Several different people may read it, and they all must be able to understand it. You will need to demonstrate what the problem is, why it is a problem, how you plan to solve it, and what the cost will be. Remember, you are selling the solution, program, service that you are seeking funding for, NOT your horse non-profit.
- 3) Credibility – Your horse non-profit will need to demonstrate that you are a suitable and stable (no pun intended) solution to the problem you have detailed in your proposal. Your connection to the grant maker may be influential here.

These three elements will all be part of the process, but the influence that one element has may vary in comparison to the other two depending on where you're seeking assistance. Typically, government funding puts more emphasis on the proposal.

Foundations may be more interested in the concept involved. Organizations may place more weight on your connection with them.

### Grant Sources

How do you find out where to locate grant money? Research is the key. Investigate sources on the internet, in your library, in your local newspaper, through publications geared towards philanthropy, and by personal inquiry. The following list gives an idea of what types of grant requests some entities fund, and where to look to find out more.

*\*Community Foundations* – May provide funding for 3 years. New programs often need a solid 3-year period to get securely off the ground, so this type of funding is particularly helpful in that instance. For example, therapeutic riding programs would require this as a minimum for a “start-up” phase.

*\*Private Foundations* – Usually provide short-term funding that is more project based. Perhaps your horse association is thinking of running a seminar or conference. This is a project-based example.

*\*Community and Private Foundations* can be researched at the library in The Foundation Directory. The 2001 edition of The Directory contains information on the 10,000 largest grant-making foundations in the United States. To give some idea of the value that this resource has, it is indexed in several ways including geographically, by type of support, and by subject. Other sources include The Foundation News; The Chronicle of Philanthropy; corporate annual reports, board members, and employees; the business press; and Taft Corporate Reporter.

*\*Federal, State, and Local Government* – Look for grant criteria in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance, Federal Register, Commerce Business Daily, Bidder's List (state level), and legal notices in papers. Many state horse councils have received funding for promotion and marketing initiatives, educational brochures and programs, economic impact studies, and trail development and improvement projects through government funding.

*\*Religious* – Not as much is documented about these grants. Primary source will be through a member of the congregation.

*\*Civic/Service Organizations* – Provide “one shot” funding for things such as equipment, and individual rooms (like hospital rooms). These sources can be discovered through your local newspaper, librarian, and organization member. Applicable examples include: a therapeutic mounting ramp for a non-profit therapeutic riding program; or your non-profit rescue group needs to add on stalls or a run-in shed.

*\*Individual* – This type of “grant” is simply when someone gives you money that doesn't have to be paid back. Perhaps they really believe in you, perhaps an idea you have – whatever the reason, they give you money outright.

### Proposal Format

If your grant maker does not have detailed criteria of their own, your proposal should ensure a complete picture for your highest chances of success. You might note that the format parallels that of a business plan, which is how for-profit ventures seek funding. Based on the following format, your proposal will be about 10 pages long, not including the summary, appendix and budget.

I - Summary - Presents a full overview of your proposal.

II - Introduction – Builds the case for why your horse non-profit should be the one to do this job.

III – Statement of Conditions – Identifies the problem and target population of the proposal.

IV – Goals & Objectives – Indicates the outcome when the problem is solved, and the objectives required to reach the outcome.

V – Methodology – Describes your plan, the tasks involved, personnel, timeline, and budget.

VI – Evaluation – Indicates how you know you are accomplishing your project, both during and after the project.

VII – Budget – Accounts for both cash and non-cash resources.

VIII – Appendix – Adds to your horse non-profits credibility. Listing of Board of Directors, letter of tax-exempt status, and your previous years Income and Expense statement or annual report are examples.

### And if at first you don't succeed.....

Ask yourself these questions:

- ~ Did I approach the correct grant makers?
- ~ Did I call to investigate their grant making interests, and whether or not what they were interested in matched what I am doing?
- ~ Did I demonstrate that my horse non-profit is a sound organization and the best choice for the job?
- ~ Did my summary make the case clear, our approach clear, and the cost clear?
- ~ Did I demonstrate why the problem is a problem, why the current solutions aren't appropriate, and that the problem is a fixable problem?

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