Writing Grant Proposals with the Funder in Mind. Is Your Organization a Good Buy?

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The old days

- Need statement – justification for why your organization exists

- Mission – what your organization does or what it’s all about

- Goals – what an organization hopes to achieve over a given period of time

- Objectives – numbers that quantify your goals

Nonprofit Works Inc.
The old days

Getting money used to be more about . . .

- What you do - education, crime prevention, job training, health care
- Your history - “We’re the oldest shelter in the city. . .”
- Who’s on your board - brokers between the organization and funder
- Has a funder given in the past? - “It’s easier to just keep giving.”
“Hey, what the heck is this stuff?”

- Reports
- Logic models
- Feasibility studies and business plans
- Tracking and evaluation

“I thought it’s just about doing good work?”
Think of yourself as the funder

How do you decide who to give to?
Today’s funder

Foundations, Corporations, United Way, City, County, etc.

- Staff turnover - the folks you used to know are gone
- Different ways of thinking - new models
- Funders are more responsive than ever to their customers and constituents
A new way of thinking

The business method

- Funders are investors who are shopping for outcomes

- Profits (business) = Outcomes (organizations)
A new way of thinking

It’s a buy

- Think in terms of your organization selling outcomes (results)

- To the funder, it’s a buy. And they want to know, “Is it a good buy?”

- This is the same way you think. You want your money to make a difference, and you want to know how.
Trends

*Private funding is becoming more like federal, state and local grants*

- Competitive and formula based, where the organization that does it the best gets the money
Grant writing

It’s still about . . .

- Need statement, mission, history, goals, board
- Methods- sound models based upon your or others’ success
Grant writing

But it’s also about . . .

- Outcomes
- Measurement, tracking, follow up
- Evaluation
- Cost per outcome
- Cost benefit data
Outcomes

- Start with the end in mind and be realistic

- What it takes to achieve your outcomes should be reflected in your methods and “inputs” - budget, staff, participants, supplies, etc.
Measurement, tracking and follow-up

- Must be meaningful, not something your organization does just to please funders

- The data you collect must measure your outcomes. Think in terms of indicators – pieces of information that you measure your outcomes.

- Make the most of technology, i.e., databases and spreadsheets
Evaluation

- How do you know if you’re doing a good job?
- Do you report it?
- Do you apply evaluation to improve your organization?
Cost per outcome

- Divide the cost of the inputs ($) by an outcome unit to calculate cost per outcome figure.

- For example:

- An organization describes one of its outcomes as educating persons 18 years and older about how to become an organ donor.

- If it requires $2,400 to educate 100 persons, then the cost per outcome is $24.

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\frac{2,400}{100 \text{ persons}} = 24
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Cost-benefit data

- Compare *cost per outcome* figures to the *benefits* that are produced by attaining your outcomes *or* to the cost of some alternative, i.e., doing nothing or the status quo.
The bottom line

- This is what businesses go through to determine if they’re doing a good job (making a profit).

- This is what investors examine to determine if they want to invest in a project.

- Your organization will start to think of itself as a business that produces meaningful outcomes = better planning, consistency and coordination.

- It’s harder to do at first, but more rewarding in the long run.
Is your organization a good buy?

- An example

- Questions?