

Winning Grants

A How-To-Do-It Manual for Librarians®

Third Edition

Stephanie K. Gerding

Foreword by Patricia "Patty" Wong

ALA
Neal-Schuman
CHICAGO 2024

available at alastore.ala.org

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ISBN: 979-8-89255-567-8 (paper)

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Gerding, Stephanie K., author. | MacKellar, Pamela H. Winning grants

Title: Winning grants / Stephanie K. Gerding ; foreword by Patricia “Patty” Wong.

Description: Third edition. | Chicago : ALA Neal-Schuman, 2024. | Series: A how-to-do-it manual for librarians | Includes bibliographical references and index. | Summary: “Winning Grants is a comprehensive and approachable guide for anyone interested in grant work and in writing proposals to fund all types and sizes of library programs and projects, in all kinds of libraries, serving diverse communities”—Provided by publisher.

Identifiers: LCCN 2024000974 | ISBN 9798892555678 (paperback)

Subjects: LCSH: Proposal writing in library science—United States—Handbooks, manuals, etc. | Proposal writing for grants—United States—Handbooks, manuals, etc. | Library fund raising—United States—Handbooks, manuals, etc. | Proposal writing in library science—United States—Case studies.

Classification: LCC Z683.2.U6 M33 2024 | DDC 025.1/1—dc23/eng/20240109

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2024000974>

Cover design by Kimberly Hudgins. Images © Adobe Stock, Inc. Text composed in Minion Pro and Interstate typefaces.

Ⓢ This paper meets the requirements of ANSI/NISO Z39.48-1992 (Permanence of Paper).

Printed in the United States of America

28 27 26 25 24 5 4 3 2 1

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[www.stephaniegerding.com/
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Foreword

Welcome! You may be new to the grant-making world, or perhaps you have written a few grants. You may be looking for a specific title dedicated to a successful approach to writing and winning grants. You have come to the right place!

It is my honor to write the foreword for the third edition of *Winning Grants*. Stephanie Gerding is an exceptional grant writer, with experience in securing funding for a wide range of projects as well as support for libraries and information centers. I have used *Winning Grants* as the primary textbook in my class on grant writing and alternative funding for LIS education since its initial publication in 2015. It is easy to read and understand and comprehensive; many students use it and retain it in their collection as a reference tool for future work in grant writing.

The focus of *Winning Grants* is just that—the steps and tips to securing grants—and its greatest strength is the approach on supporting libraries. It is easily the best title available on this subject. The book includes many examples of successful grants so readers get an idea of thinking about grant writing as both science and art—the ingredients needed and the persuasive language to appeal to grant makers. Gerding reviews the grant cycle and thoroughly examines each step and the various techniques to use. Readers from all backgrounds will appreciate the progressive writing style, and it is a perfect guide to seeking grant funding!

Winning Grants is also chock-full of insight and advice, and Gerding's very natural writing style encourages even the most novice grant writer. However, this title is not just for beginners; I would recommend it to anyone seeking grants for libraries, information centers, and similar institutions. You can use *Winning Grants* to write a targeted grant for dedicated funding for a specific purpose or when seeking a grant from a corporate, private, or community foundation. Grant writing can be difficult to decipher; the glossary of frequently used terms will help navigate funder criteria. Funders require different kinds of data, goals and objectives, evaluation and outcomes, budget entries, and planning documents. Gerding provides examples and forms that you can shape to your needs to provide the required information in a way so funders can make their best decisions. The forms are also available online so you can share them with colleagues and edit them as needed.

As an experienced grant writer and former program officer for a municipal grant maker, I appreciate the section on partnerships and collaborations. Funders are seeking innovative and creative ways of serving people. Incorporating the talents of a partner and demonstrating their value in providing a critical service to the community served by the grant can leverage the evaluation of your proposal in an increasingly grant

competitive environment. Gerding brings all of the tools necessary to complete any type of grant and enhances your ability to be successful with insights and advice sprinkled throughout the work.

Libraries of all types will find themselves coming back to *Winning Grants* as a play-book for their own grant design and writing for success. Grant writing enables libraries and their staff to diversify their funding. It is a skill set that can assist anyone in showcasing the good work of their institution. Libraries will be able to more easily request funding and tell the stories of how they impact lives with *Winning Grants*. Good luck with your diversified funding work. *Winning Grants* is a critical investment in the financial future of your organization.

—PATRICIA “PATTY” WONG

Patricia “Patty” Wong has been city librarian for Santa Clara City Library since October 2021 and part-time faculty for the iSchool at San José State University since 2004. She served as ALA president from 2021 to 2022.

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Preface

This book is born from a love for libraries and a deep commitment to empowering library grant writers with the unwavering belief that they can succeed, regardless of their level of experience or the size of their library. In an ever-evolving world, libraries hold a unique and invaluable position at the heart of their communities as dynamic hubs of knowledge and culture. I'm endlessly grateful for everyone supporting the work of libraries and library workers—the true superheroes, the stalwarts of books, learning, democracy, and intellectual freedom.

The revisions in this latest edition result from several years of dedicated effort through which I honed my instructional methods for grant writing, aiming to offer the most effective and reader-friendly guidance. My experience in teaching grant skills to diverse audiences, ranging from graduate students at three library schools to beginners at rural libraries, led to the development of several new processes and resources. Through this book, my objective is clear: to support libraries by sharing best practices, streamlined strategies, and proven methodologies that can be adapted to each unique community's needs. I wrote this book for all the aspiring library grant writers as well as the seasoned library grant winners—everyone who is passionate about ensuring libraries remain vibrant cornerstones in our communities.

Adapting to Challenges

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the closure of library buildings, reduced operating hours, and changes in service delivery models affected library funding sources. Many municipalities faced economic challenges, leading to belt-tightening measures that impacted library budgets. Also, fundraising efforts and community events, often important sources of revenue for libraries, were limited or canceled due to social distancing measures and restrictions on public gatherings.

In the face of these challenges, libraries worldwide persevered and devised innovative strategies to adapt to new demands and to maintain essential services that communities relied on more than ever before. They sought alternative funding opportunities, applied for grants, and explored creative solutions to stretch their budgets and support their communities. Limited and stressed staff with strained resources continued to serve their patrons with resilience and resourcefulness while prioritizing public health and safety. Libraries demonstrated their adaptability and commitment to their

communities, leveraging technology and innovative approaches to ensure continued access to information and connection.

There was an increased awareness of the vital role that libraries play in supporting their communities as vital information hubs and community centers. As a result, numerous philanthropic foundations, grant-making organizations, and government agencies established emergency relief funds or allocated funds specifically for libraries and their community efforts. They recognized the importance of sustaining library operations and ensuring equitable access to information and resources.

Millions of dollars in grant funding, specifically aimed at supporting libraries, became available. The American Library Association (ALA) received the largest unrestricted grants in its history and allocated more than \$10 million to school, public, and academic libraries. These applications were often simplified, with billions of grant funds streaming in from federal sources. In addition to COVID-related grants, libraries also had access to various ongoing grant programs that continued to provide funding for community initiatives, educational programs, and technology upgrades.

Value of Preparedness

However, it was crucial for libraries to be prepared to apply for these grants. Libraries that were ready for grant work, even with limited staff and resources, could identify specific community needs, rapidly plan responsive programs or services, and align proposals with the funding priorities of grant providers. Many libraries leveraged grants to support their communities and enhance services in response to challenging circumstances. Grants provided an avenue for libraries to adapt, explore new ideas, implement technology, expand digital access, and develop virtual programs to meet the changing needs of their communities.

Emerging from years of navigating the pandemic, libraries are confronting additional daunting challenges: an upsurge in digital misinformation coupled with the urgent issue of book banning. These obstacles pose a significant threat to the missions of providing open access to diverse ideas and safeguarding intellectual freedom. Amid our current world of information overload, libraries have the responsibility of being trusted sources of accurate information while countering the spread of false content. Censorship and book banning efforts curtail intellectual freedom and restrict access to a wide spectrum of ideas. Libraries continue expanding vital community services despite pandemic ramifications, even in some instances where there is declining voter and political support for library funding and targeting by extremists and book banners.

The Power of Grants

To address these challenges, libraries require proactive strategies, adaptability, and innovative approaches. Within this context, grant work plays a pivotal role in empowering libraries with the necessary planning approaches, resources, community engagement, and advocacy efforts. By securing grants, libraries can bolster their resilience, expand their influence, and continue to be a trusted resource for credible information, intellectual freedom, and community empowerment.

Grants can fund activities such as community outreach programs that address intellectual freedom, professional development opportunities for library staff, initiatives that celebrate diverse voices and stories, plans to modernize facilities, and efforts to foster an inclusive and welcoming environment for all library users. Grants provide the financial backing needed to develop programs and services that meet shifting community needs and emerging challenges, strengthening community support and enhancing the library's overall impact.

As such, although grant funding is an essential supplemental revenue stream, the benefits of engaging in grant work extend beyond a boost to the library budget. Grant writing is a critical skill that can positively impact a library's ability to fulfill its mission, meet identified community needs, build strong community partnerships, establish new connections, and increase the sustainability of the library itself. Winning a grant is a great accomplishment, and people want to be associated with successful operations. Even small grants can be worth the effort, as they may be easier to obtain and may better fit the scope and intent of a library project. A small grant can test innovative services or expand programming to underserved populations, and frequently it paves the way for further opportunities. Many library staff members discover that one successful grant leads to others and increases community support and local funding.

Purpose and Audience

Winning Grants is a comprehensive and approachable guide for anyone interested in grant work and in writing proposals to fund all types and sizes of library programs and projects, in all kinds of libraries, serving diverse communities. Library grant work is demystified and made accessible with expert valuable advice that can immediately be put into practice. The book offers an easy-to-follow, step-by-step Grant Process Cycle and nine success stories from grant-winning libraries across the country to serve as a source of inspiration and motivation.

Sixteen customizable worksheets, checklists, and examples simplify the steps to success, making complex concepts easy to grasp and apply. My favorite resource is the Grant Project Planning Worksheet, essential for streamlining strategic project planning and for effectively communicating the project's value to partners, team members, and eventually potential funders. In this updated edition, you will find over 100 library grant programs and practical insights on how to navigate the abundance of online information to identify legitimate funding sources and grant opportunities.

From the intricacies of proposal writing and finding the right funders to the essential elements of planning, needs assessment, project management, cultivating partnerships, and effective evaluation, this book will help keep you current and refine your grant skills. More important, it's designed to instill the confidence you need to succeed in winning grants.

My Background

As a library grant writer, educator, and author of three previous grant books and more than forty grant/fundraising articles published in professional library journals, I share

insights that are tried and trusted. With over two decades of experience working with libraries, cultural institutions, nonprofits, and government entities, including public, academic, school, special, and state library agencies, I've had the privilege of witnessing the transformative impact that strategic approaches and well-planned grant work can have. My journey has encompassed a wide array of roles in organizations both large and small, and each experience has contributed to the unique blend of expertise you'll find in these pages.

I am grateful to be a sought-out library grant expert who has extensive experience in all aspects of library grant work, whether as an applicant, a funder, a reviewer, a project manager, an evaluator, or a consultant. I've successfully written, reviewed, and managed grants. My expertise is backed by successful grant acquisitions from government and private sources. As an accomplished survey and focus group methodologist, I've conducted multiple needs assessment studies and grant evaluations for a wide range of clients, including nonprofit organizations, universities, COSLA (Chief Officers of State Library Agencies), library consortia, and state libraries.

Small and rural libraries hold a special place in my heart, and I've been a part of numerous initiatives that have paved the way for them to thrive. Over the years, I've engaged in long-term projects with national library organizations that allowed me to contribute to the broader library community, including the Public Library Association's Planning for Results, Turning the Page 2.0, Project Outcome, and Dynamic Planning Institute; WebJunction's Rural Library Sustainability Project and Spanish Language Outreach initiatives; and the Urban Libraries Council's Edge Initiative. From managing statewide training programs at two state libraries to being a certified trainer for the Public Library Association (PLA), my experiences have offered unique insights into the diverse landscape of libraries and nonprofits.

My time-tested methods are the result of years of not only doing the work but also training thousands of others to succeed through grant workshops, webinars, online courses, and in-person training sessions. I have conducted grant training and curriculum development for more than 100 learning events for small and large library organizations, including ALA, PLA, Infopeople, Internet Librarian, regional systems, state libraries, and TechSoup for Libraries. My step-by-step approaches are easy to understand and have been fine-tuned, making complex concepts accessible to all. From graduate-level grant courses to beginner workshops for all types of libraries, I incorporate what I learn so that the content and processes have been refined with hands-on, real-world examples.

I have had a very engaging career, having been a continuing education consultant and lead grant reviewer of Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grants, state grants, and scholarships at the Arizona State Library and the New Mexico State Library. I was a public access computer trainer at the very start of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's U.S. Library Program, where I later reviewed grants and served as an advisor. My experiences, both humbling and exhilarating, have brought me face-to-face with the realities, challenges, and triumphs of grant work in the library world.

The driving force behind this book is the conviction that libraries have the power to be trusted resources and dependable anchors in their communities, leaving a lasting, positive mark on their patrons and neighborhoods. This vision underpins every chapter, every lesson, and every strategy presented here. I've seen firsthand how the right strategies and methodologies can transform libraries, making them even more effective in serving their communities.

When I first started conducting grant training, many libraries did not have strategic plans in place. I would stand before hundreds of conference attendees and make a simple request: “Raise your hand if your library has a strategic plan.” In those early days, only a handful would respond with raised hands. Fast-forward to the present, and the scene has dramatically shifted. Now when I make this request, the response is overwhelming—most attendees proudly affirm that their libraries indeed have strategic plans. However, the challenge lies in ensuring that all staff members actively utilize and engage with these plans.

One memorable experience involved assisting a librarian who was taking her first steps into the realm of grant work. She encountered a common obstacle: struggling to generate grant project ideas. In her moment of uncertainty, I offered a simple yet transformative piece of advice: “Review your library’s strategic plan.” She did just that, exploring the strategic plan of the branch library where she worked. Overwhelmed by the depth of information and clarity it provided, she reached out to me with sheer amazement and asked if she was cheating. I reassured her that, in fact, what she had was a well-designed project plan, perfectly aligned with the library’s strategic goals and ready to adapt for a grant opportunity. I gave her my Grant Project Planning Worksheet, and armed with this powerful tool, she confidently approached her library director, making a compelling case for the grant project she envisioned.

Embrace the Opportunities

I aim to demystify the intimidating world of grant work and empower library supporters to create successful proposals and secure new sources of grant funding. In today’s changing landscape, it is more important than ever for those working in libraries to gain grant skills and seamlessly integrate them into their daily responsibilities. Libraries are not just spaces but vibrant, essential resources for everyone they serve. By leveraging external funding, libraries can continue to be trusted, dependable anchors in their communities, fostering informed, engaged, and resilient societies with a lasting positive impact on their patrons and neighborhoods.

Through this book, I hope the grants process will be an enjoyable adventure. You will discover a step-by-step approach, a wealth of practical advice, and successful examples to guide you. It’s essential to understand that the journey of grant work is not merely about securing funding; it’s about enhancing the quality and overall impact of library services and programs. I like to say that it’s about the people, not the money, not the stuff.

Visit my *Library Grants* blog (librarygrants.blogspot.com) for new library grant opportunities and my website (www.stephaniegerding.com/webextras) for worksheets, checklists, and forms you can use. With these efficient grant success methods, you have all the necessary tools to create a well-written proposal based on a worthwhile and well-planned project that will benefit your community. There will be nothing holding you back, no reason to hesitate.

I hope you will discover, as I have, that grant work is truly empowering and fulfilling. Embrace the opportunities that lie ahead, and I am confident that you will find great joy and fulfillment in your grant work.

Best wishes on your grant-seeking journey, and most important, have fun along the way!

Introduction

Winning Grants is unique from other grant books with its distinct focus on libraries and on the use of strategic planning and goal setting as the foundation of successful grant work. By embracing the principles of this book, grant work becomes more straightforward and efforts are directly aligned with the library's broader mission, vision, and the genuine needs of the community served. Practical examples illustrate these concepts in real-world scenarios, allowing readers to easily comprehend and relate to the content, whether they are new to grant writing or seeking to enhance their skills.

The material is arranged in three parts. Part I, "The Grant Process Cycle," features six chapters that cover the five phases of the Grant Process Cycle. Easy-to-follow examples demonstrate successful grant practices. Part II, "Library Grant Success Stories," features nine real-life success stories that demonstrate the process in practice and provide motivational tips from library staff of all types and sizes of libraries around the country. Part III, "Worksheets, Checklists, and Forms," contains sixteen valuable resources, also available online (www.stephaniegerding.com/webextras). Designed to simplify and streamline the grant process, these tools will help readers immediately begin leveling up their grant work.

Part I, "The Grant Process Cycle," begins with chapter 1, "Understanding the Grant Process." This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the grant cycle and offers valuable insights for understanding and navigating the process. It emphasizes the importance of making a commitment to careful planning, accountability, and focusing on community needs. This chapter concludes with the top ten tips for grant success, setting a strong foundation for the subsequent chapters.

Chapter 2, "Plan for Success," covers the basic aspects of strategic planning and demonstrates why it is essential to have a strategic plan and identified community needs in place before beginning grant work. This chapter delves into the collaborative power of grant teams and partnerships for resolving community needs and increasing community support. The significance of strategic planning is highlighted, as it not only saves time but also serves as a key for grant success. The chapter covers the process of community needs assessments and crafting compelling needs statements. It also explores the development of a one-page strategic plan to streamline vision into action and includes a practical example.

Chapter 3, "Design Winning Grant Projects," covers one of the most creative and enjoyable parts of the process—developing the grant project. By developing worthwhile projects that implement the library's strategic plan and solve community needs, grant writers demonstrate to funders why the project deserves support. This chapter details all of the essential steps in the grant planning process. This includes developing project

ideas, goals, outcomes, objectives, activities/action steps, timelines, budgets, and evaluation plans. The provided worksheets are invaluable resources when writing a grant proposal. The chapter offers thorough coverage of outcome-based evaluation (OBE) and logic models to effectively measure the impact of grant projects. The chapter ends with an example grant project plan to provide practical insights into the process.

Chapter 4, “Research Funders and Grant Opportunities,” explores how to find the ideal grant opportunity for a potential project. It covers the different types of funding sources, including government and private options, and provides valuable insights into where to discover grants for libraries. It includes resources summarized in part III’s Winning Grants Sources and Resources Handout and a comprehensive list of more than 100 grant programs for libraries. This edition introduces a decision matrix in this chapter to aid in assessing organizations whose purposes most closely match the project’s goals and selecting the most suitable match. Included in this chapter are tips to optimize grant research, from effective keyword searches to identifying potential funders. A practical section on recording and organizing research findings helps with tracking deadlines while maintaining a comprehensive overview of potential funders. Additionally, the chapter provides guidance on staying informed about grant announcements to avoid missing valuable opportunities.

Chapter 5, “Create the Winning Proposal,” integrates all the existing planning, research, and project design into the actual writing of the grant proposal. Many applications request the same basic structure and elements—cover letter, table of contents, proposal summary or abstract, organizational overview, needs statement, project description, timeline, budget, evaluation, and appendix. This chapter explains these components and provides planning and proposal templates to enable easy adaptation, modification, and replication of content for not just one grant but multiple grants, saving time and effort. This chapter covers the types of application, how proposals are reviewed, and how to deconstruct complex grant applications. Writing tips address how to effectively tell the story of a grant project. There are checklists and guidance to create a comprehensive and compelling proposal, along with tips for effective communication with funders and grant proposal submission.

Chapter 6, “Implement, Evaluate, and Continue,” offers insights into the post-submission phase of a grant proposal, regardless of whether it was accepted or rejected. Repeating the grant cycle is easier as experience with the grant process grows, and this chapter includes strategies to avoid common pitfalls and how to learn from previous efforts. Detailed discussion of five essential grant project management elements and a project charter template will help with grant project implementation, meeting funder requirements, and customary grant reporting. This chapter includes ways to improve grant skills through professional development and other collaborative opportunities. Keeping plans and proposal components current is essential to being prepared for the next grant opportunity that comes along.

Part II, “Library Grant Success Stories,” includes inspiring stories from nine grant-winning libraries. These real-life examples help readers envision innovative and successful grant projects and gain tips and practical advice from librarians who have effectively completed the grant process. This selection of best practices from libraries of all types and sizes from around the country offers a chance to see how award-winning programs have been developed, funded, and implemented while providing a comprehensive view of the grant process.

Part III, “Worksheets, Checklists, and Forms,” contains sixteen valuable resources, available in both Microsoft Word and PDF formats at www.stephaniegerding.com/webextras, that can be customized and shared with grant teams to stay on track and organized throughout the Grant Process Cycle. With these versatile and carefully crafted tools, readers will be well prepared to develop winning grant proposals. These practical resources cover every aspect of the grant process, from initial planning to proposal submission, offering clarity and structure for grant success. Whether readers are new to grant writing or a seasoned pro, these resources guide them in aligning project ideas with library missions and community needs, making grant writing experiences efficient and effective.

Two highlights include a Grant Project Planning Worksheet, essential for streamlining strategic project planning and for effectively communicating the project’s value to partners, team members, and eventually potential funders. The other is the Winning Grants Sources and Resources Handout, a concise guide that compiles a diverse range of government, private, and local library grant sources and invaluable resources into a true time-saver for finding library grant funding. Seven new tools have been added to this edition. A Data and Statistics Handout helps with finding reliable data to substantiate identified community needs. A Needs Statement Worksheet provides a five-step method to craft a compelling needs statement. There is also a focus on outcome-based evaluation and measuring impact using a Logic Model Worksheet. The included Grant Opportunity Decision Matrix aids in selecting the most suitable grant opportunity. A Grant Application Deconstruction Worksheet helps with gathering all the necessary information for complex applications to create an organized approach for submitting a competitive proposal. A Project Charter Worksheet has been added to help with grant project implementation, meeting funder requirements, and customary grant reporting.

Let these tools be the foundation of your successful grant journey.

1. Key Commitments for Winning Grants Checklist
2. Grant Partnership Agreement Worksheet
3. Data and Statistics Handout
4. Needs Statement Worksheet
5. Library Planning Checklist
6. Grant Project Planning Worksheet
7. Logic Model Worksheet
8. Grant Opportunity Decision Matrix
9. Grant Application Deconstruction Worksheet
10. Funder Summary Worksheet
11. Winning Grants Sources and Resources Handout
12. Grant Proposal Worksheet
13. Sample Cover Letter and Proposal
14. Questions for Funders Checklist
15. Grant Proposal Submission Checklist
16. Project Charter Worksheet

Following part III, there is a glossary of useful library grant terms as well as a bibliography listing resources mentioned in the book and additional recommended readings.

Part I

The Grant Process Cycle

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Understanding the Grant Process

This comprehensive guide to library grant work covers every stage of the grant process, providing practical advice and tools essential for success. The role of strategic planning is pivotal to align grant efforts with community needs while streamlining efforts. Cultivating meaningful partnerships and assembling effective grant teams are of utmost importance throughout the grant process. This resource helps you craft compelling needs statements and design transformative projects, from initial idea to tangible results. It provides insights into researching funders, navigating a wealth of library grant opportunities, and optimizing research efforts. Demystifying proposal writing, it covers various application types, key components, and effective communication with funders. This book provides invaluable insights for crafting persuasive proposals and using the power of storytelling. Finally, it offers guidance on project implementation, evaluation, and maintaining a successful grant cycle. Whether you're new to grant writing or seeking to enhance your skills, this resource is an invaluable companion to securing vital funding for your library.

IN THIS CHAPTER

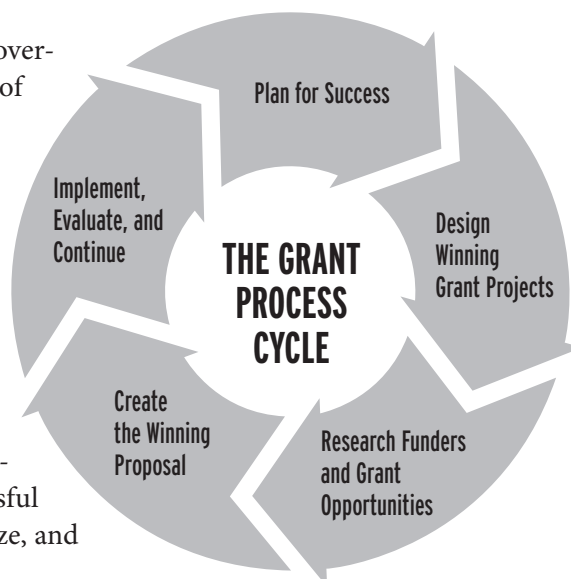
- ✓ Overview of the Grant Process Cycle
- ✓ Key Commitments for Winning Grants
- ✓ Tips for Grant Success

Overview of the Grant Process Cycle

The grant process is organized into five easy-to-understand phases. By visualizing the process in distinct sections or phases, it is considerably easier to understand and approach this type of work.

Applying for a grant may initially appear daunting or even overwhelming. Certainly, there is work involved, but with the help of this book, you will know the necessary steps and find that success is within your reach. Grant work can be approached with ease and efficiency, allowing you to maintain a balanced workload while seeking funding opportunities. You will realize that grant work is a continuous process that unfolds in phases over time and encompasses various activities you may already be engaged in. By following this process, you will be well prepared with the necessary information and resources when the time comes to apply for a grant.

Those in the library world are often pleasantly surprised to discover that they possess many of the skills necessary for successful grant work, such as the ability to research, synthesize, summarize, and



package information. We have a commitment to community outreach, assessing needs, and providing responsive, caring, creative environments for our communities. Furthermore, there is a cooperative and collaborative professional attitude that sets libraries apart. By effectively communicating your passion for your work and the impact it has on the communities you serve within the context of a grant proposal, you are sure to secure grant funding.

In this book, a *grant project* refers to any library project, program, or service being proposed for external funding. Other resources may define *grant project* differently or use the terms *project grant* or *grant program*. For our purposes, grant projects can take various forms, including equipment projects, capital projects, planning or implementation projects, research projects, model or demonstration projects, or projects addressing specific activities, programming, or operating expenses. They can be designed for children, adults, teens, or other primary audiences.

Notice that the Grant Process Cycle consists of five phases, with three occurring before the grant proposal is written (Plan for Success, Design Winning Grant Projects, and Research Funders and Grant Opportunities). While it's common for new grant writers to dive into proposals without prior planning or research, a more effective approach involves starting by assessing current priorities and understanding community needs. Next, explore project ideas before moving on to research funders and respond to opportunities. This method ultimately saves time and increases success rates. Planning is, in fact, the quickest route to securing grant funding.

Phase 1: Plan for Success

The Grant Process Cycle emphasizes planning as the foundation for successful grant proposals and effective project development. Strategic plans and needs assessments are the biggest shortcuts to winning grants. It is essential to identify and prioritize the compelling issues in the community served and determine what makes the library's efforts meaningful and important to develop grant project ideas and demonstrate need in grant proposals. A strategic plan provides the framework needed for the grant process to be effective, aligning grant-seeking efforts with the library's mission, goals, and priorities. Meaningful projects can be developed to achieve the plan's goals and address identified needs, support community engagement, and enhance library services in a purposeful and effective manner. A plan answers many of the questions that are found in the requests for proposals (RFPs) that funders rely on to determine their grant awards. A strategic plan demonstrates organization, dependability, and responsibility to funders. During this stage, it's important to create grant teams and build partnerships, as collaborative efforts lead to greater impact through the sharing of skills, responsibilities, and resources.

Phase 2: Design Winning Grant Projects

Every grant project should be a worthwhile solution to a compelling community need identified in the planning process. Developing grant projects is often one of the most enjoyable and creative aspects of grant work. Planning and prioritizing before beginning

to write a grant application will ensure the grant project is designed to meet real community needs and supports the organization's mission and strategic plans. Project planning includes developing goals, objectives, outcomes, timelines, budgets, and evaluation plans. These are all elements of a grant proposal as well. Projects serve as the implementation arm of the strategic plan and should be designed before researching funders and grant opportunities. Funders give priority to projects aligned with community needs and proposals that clearly convey project significance and relevance.

Phase 3: Research Funders and Grant Opportunities

Once you have a project designed, you are ready to find grants to secure the necessary funding. Grant funding can provide the financial means to execute a project effectively, expand its scope, and maximize its impact on the library and the community it serves. This phase involves locating viable library funding sources, such as foundations, government agencies, and local philanthropic organizations dedicated to supporting library initiatives. Selecting the right grant necessitates knowing what a funder is interested in supporting and how closely the funder's mission matches the purpose of your project. This step of the cycle is often a straightforward one in the library world, as it involves something we are experienced at doing—research.

Phase 4: Create the Winning Proposal

At this stage in the grant cycle, most of the planning and research work is completed, and producing a winning proposal involves refining project plans to meet the specific requirements and priorities of potential funders. Focus on creating a clear, professional proposal that incorporates needs assessments, a well-planned project, and an evaluation strategy. Craft a compelling narrative conveying the project's impact on beneficiaries, balancing data-driven evidence with emotional appeal. It is important to understand how proposals are reviewed and how to effectively communicate with funders. By emphasizing the necessity and potential outcomes of your grant project, you can effectively convince funders of its significance and alignment with their mission.

Phase 5: Implement, Evaluate, and Continue

During the final phase of the Grant Process Cycle, you receive notification of whether the grant has been awarded. Once the project secures funding, the important first steps are to celebrate this achievement with your grant team and nurture relationships with partners and funders. This phase involves project implementation, evaluating success, and fulfilling grant report requirements. Project management, such as team building, planning, resource management, and open and transparent communication with stakeholders, remains vital throughout the process to accomplish project objectives, manage resources, and keep documentation in order.

Grant work is an ongoing process, so the cycle should be repeated, using the knowledge gained along the way. Debriefing and reviewing allows you to be better prepared

for future grant successes. Pursue professional development opportunities related to grants for ongoing learning and exploration of new opportunities.

Key Commitments for Winning Grants

This book provides a strong foundation for understanding the grant process, but your library grant success relies on making necessary commitments. Commitment is vital at every step of the process: planning, partnering, researching, project development, writing, implementation, and evaluation. Engage library leadership and staff to foster genuine commitment and support in this team effort.

Most grants will have benefits, but also obligations, and in some cases specific constraints or drawbacks need to be considered. The funds gained must be worth the required efforts and resources. These resources include the staff time spent planning a project and writing a proposal, implementing and evaluating the grant project, and communicating with everyone involved. Matching funds and partnerships may be required, materials and building space may be needed, and there may be an impact if existing activities need to be scaled down while focus is on a new project. Depending on the type of organization, applying for a grant may include working with other departments or meeting requirements set by local authorities, systems, or departments. This is especially true in university settings, so make certain you understand any local stipulations that could affect your grant work.

Although there are a lot of considerations to weigh, there is also more to gain from grants than just the boost to a budget. Grants play a pivotal role in enhancing community services by addressing identified needs, encouraging collaboration and community connections, and bolstering the sustainability of the library. Grant work helps develop planning skills, cultivates effective project development and management, contributes to capacity building, increases visibility, and promotes continuous improvement and innovation. Winning a grant is a significant achievement and can be helpful for advocacy efforts as people want to support successful community institutions.

The library must be able to commit to accountability, effective communication, meeting community needs, planning, partnerships, evaluation, sustainability, and following grant guidelines. The Key Commitments for Winning Grants Checklist (see figure 1.1) will help determine if your organization is ready and able to make the commitments for doing grant work. This checklist is also available in part III and online (www.stephaniegerding.com/webextras).

The Grant Process Cycle is ongoing, which means the commitments continue as well. Some commitments should be made before the library decides to pursue grant funding. Others cannot be made until the grant project is designed and the appropriate grant opportunity is selected.

Grant work may seem daunting with this long list of commitments, but rest assured, it's a process that becomes easier with experience. Once you've completed the Grant Process Cycle for the first time, you may realize you have achieved more than expected. By following the guidelines in this book, you can increase community support, discover new partners and collaboration opportunities, and potentially witness an increase in the library's local budget and usage. Embrace the opportunities ahead and you'll see how grant work can positively impact your library and its community.

FIGURE 1.1

KEY COMMITMENTS FOR WINNING GRANTS CHECKLIST

To ensure a smooth grant process and increase the chances of submitting a successful proposal, consider whether your library can commit to the following:

ACCOUNTABILITY

- Ensure alignment with the library's mission and vision.
- Secure support from library leadership.
- Allocate necessary resources for project success.
- Uphold commitments and maintain financial transparency.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

- Craft a clear, concise, and honest proposal that clearly conveys goals and objectives.
- Request the funding you genuinely need to achieve the goals.
- Keep all stakeholders well informed about the grant and its progress.

MEETING COMMUNITY NEEDS

- Identify and thoroughly understand the specific needs of the community.
- Utilize data and real-life stories to illustrate these needs effectively in the proposal.
- Develop a grant project that focuses on solutions to meet these community needs.

PLANNING

- Align the project with the library's strategic plan, if applicable.
- Create a comprehensive project plan, including goals, objectives, activities, deadlines, and resource management.
- Establish a realistic budget for the project.
- Implement effective methods for tracking tasks and contacts.

PARTNERSHIPS

- Cultivate strong relationships with grant funders.
- Develop strategic collaborations to leverage resources, share expertise, and support the project.
- Identify community groups that share the library's vision and goals to approach as potential partners.
- Involve community members in focus groups and planning sessions.

EVALUATION

- Clearly define what success looks like for the project.
- Develop an evaluation plan and logic model to determine if the project has met its goals.
- Identify the impact and outcomes the project aims to achieve.

SUSTAINABILITY

- Consider the long-term sustainability of the project beyond the grant period.
- Plan for the continued existence of positions if new staff members are hired.

Tips for Grant Success

Adapt these tips to your specific circumstances and grant application requirements. Libraries do change lives, and we need to make sure that funders and supporters know that libraries positively impact communities.

1. Focus on the People

The most important thing to remember is that grant work is about people, not things. The goal is not purely to acquire money or resources. Funders want to help people, not buy things. They are interested in supporting projects that make a positive impact on people's lives. Prioritize community members and their needs in your grant proposals.

2. Plan Ahead

Strategic planning is the foundation for successful grant work. Aligning grant proposals with the library's mission and goals not only demonstrates to funders that you have a well-thought-out approach but also addresses a common gap in many proposals. Funders often receive proposals brimming with excellent ideas but lacking practical plans, strategies for implementation, and clear goals and objectives. This is where project planning comes into play. Through comprehensive project planning, you showcase the library's capability not only to envision projects but also to implement them effectively—turning ideas into impactful realities. Careful planning is key, and it's also essential to have a project in mind before beginning grant research.

3. Meet Community Needs

The heart of effective grant work is understanding and addressing community needs. Conduct thorough needs assessments to identify specific issues, as funders look for projects that tackle compelling problems. Your grant projects should be more than just good ideas; they should make a tangible difference in your community. Be sure to involve primary audiences in project planning to genuinely meet their needs.

4. Develop Community Relationships

Building strong relationships within your community is essential. Explore local community organizations that share similar goals, and actively engage with potential partners, funders, and donors. Networking is key; spread the word about library funding priorities and discuss potential grant projects with various stakeholders. By being visible and involved in the community the library serves, you will find valuable contacts and local funding opportunities.

5. Partner and Collaborate

Partnerships are often a requirement for grants and are a powerful asset in the world of grants. Seek partners who share common goals and responsibilities, as working together allows leveraging of resources and expertise. Whether it's public agencies, businesses, or service groups, collaborating can add credibility to your proposal and increase your project's impact. Remember that relationships with funders are a type of partnership, too, so nurture those connections.

6. Measure Impact

Your grant project should be designed to provide specific solutions that address identified community needs. Integrating evaluation into your planning is crucial, as it demonstrates the project's impact to both funders and the community. Develop measurable goals, track progress, and report incremental achievements to demonstrate accountability and provide evidence of the project's effectiveness.

7. Ask for What Is Needed

When creating the grant project and budget, make sure to request all necessary resources for the project. It's essential to be realistic and ask for what you genuinely need rather than compromising on essential elements. Funders appreciate well-planned projects that accurately reflect the requirements to achieve the desired outcomes. Clearly communicate how the requested funds will be used and how they contribute to project success.

8. Combine Data and Emotion

Crafting compelling grant proposals involves a delicate balance between data and emotion. Although factual data is crucial, decisions to fund projects are often emotionally driven. Share stories of individuals who will benefit from your project to evoke empathy and engagement. At the same time, ensure that your project aligns with the funder's mission and priorities, making it clear how their support will contribute to their philanthropic goals.

9. Pay Attention to Details

Attention to detail is paramount throughout the grant process. Start by following the guidelines provided by the grant application and meeting all deadlines. Present your proposal in a clear and organized manner, adhering to the same format and headings as the application. Even small mistakes or inaccuracies can indicate carelessness, so strive for accuracy and thoroughness in every aspect of your grant work.

10. Stay Positive and Persistent

Grant writing requires a positive and persistent approach. Convey a message of hope and inspiration in your applications. Show gratitude to the funder and acknowledge the support of your team. Celebrate successes and provide recognition where it's due. Maintain a positive attitude, even in the face of challenges, and persist in your grant writing efforts. Remember that learning from each experience and adapting your strategies can lead to greater success in securing funding for your library.

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