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The “How To” Grants Manual

Successful Grantseeking
Techniques for Obtaining
Public and Private Grants

Fourth Edition

David G. Bauer



S E R I E S O N H I G H E R E D U C A T I O N

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by
David G. Bauer



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The rare Arabian Oryx is believed to have inspired the myth of the unicorn. This desert antelope became virtually extinct in the early 1960s. At that time, several groups of international conservationists arranged to have nine animals sent to the Phoenix Zoo to be the nucleus of a captive breeding herd. Today, the Oryx population is over 1,000, and over 500 have been returned to the Middle East.

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P R E F A C E

It is an honor to provide you with the fourth edition of *The “How To” Grants Manual*. There have been many changes in grantmaking since the third edition of this manual was released. The challenges that grantseekers face are daunting. The fiercely competitive environment coupled with rapidly changing advances in technology force the successful grantseeker to keep current. Therefore, this edition incorporates the techniques and strategies I developed over the past 30 years with the newest changes in grantmaking and the latest grant-related technological advances. While those of you who are familiar with other editions of this book will find that many of the basic constructs remain the same, even the tried and proven strategies that have been retained in this edition have been augmented with current examples.

Since the third edition was released, I have had the opportunity to instruct 10,000 more grantseekers, who have provided me with feedback on techniques that work and information on how they have adapted certain techniques to further assure their success. The information I have gleaned from them and my work with major nonprofit organizations has allowed me to try new techniques and discover what works and what doesn't. All of this and more has been incorporated into this book.

The “How To” Grants Manual will increase your knowledge of the grants marketplace and show you how to locate and secure grant funds. It also outlines a systematic approach for organizing proposal efforts that will save you hours of precious time and increase your monetary return by thousands of dollars. By applying the techniques presented in this book, you will increase your success rate while projecting a more professional image to funding sources.

The arrangement of this book follows the recommended grantseeking pattern. Part 1, "Getting Ready to Seek Grant Support for Your Organization," will show you how to view your proposal from the perspective of the potential grantor. Part 2, "Government Funding Sources," is devoted to understanding the federal grants process and includes strategies for improving the quality of your federal proposal. Part 3, "Private Funding Sources," takes a comprehensive look at the foundation and corporate grants marketplace. Part 3 assists the grantseeker in researching and selecting private funding sources and preparing a letter proposal to a foundation or corporation. The focus in both parts 2 and 3 is on how to select prospective grantors and increase your chances of success through pre-proposal contact. You will learn how to create a tailored approach designed to meet the grantor's needs as well as those of your organization.

No matter what your level of grantseeking expertise, this book will help promote *your* system for grants success. While this manual does not come with a guarantee, surveys of its users consistently demonstrate success rates of 70 to 80 percent.

A software package entitled *Grant Winner* is available to help you organize the grantseeking techniques outlined in this manual. (For ordering information, see the list of resources available from Bauer Associates at the end of the book.)

If you are involved in evaluating and improving your organization's grants effort, you will find the book *Administering Grants, Contracts, and Funds—Evaluating and Improving Your Grants System* (Phoenix: American Council on Education/Oryx Press, second edition, 2000) particularly helpful. If you are interested in learning more about the grantseeking process, you may find the videotape training program *Winning Grants 2* useful. If you are interested in instructing others in grantseeking, you may find the videotape training program *How to Teach Grantseeking to Others* invaluable. (See the Bauer Associates ordering information at the end of the book for both of these resources.)

Special thanks must be given to the American Council on Education, the SUNY Institute of Technology, the University of Rochester School of Medicine, Department of Pediatrics, and the University of Alabama, Birmingham, School of Education and Center for Educational Accountability for providing me with opportunities to develop many of the techniques shared in this manual.

INTRODUCTION

Why seek grants? Your immediate response may be—for the money. However, research and my experiences have repeatedly demonstrated that money is not the prime motivator for grantseekers. Take the 78-year-old retired scientist working diligently on a proposal to fund a program to get young girls interested in pursuing his much-loved profession. Is money his motivation? Definitely not. He will not receive remuneration for his efforts, and yet he still devotes his time and energy to the task. Or what about our society's countless volunteers? What motivates them? Could it simply be that they value the contributions that a grant-funded project or research provides? And finally, consider the over 654,000 501(c)3 nonprofit organizations that utilize the grants mechanism to provide benefits to our world that reach far beyond any one person's gain of money.

As long as there are needs and interests that require more support than nonprofit organizations can provide through their normal allocation processes, there will be a demand for grant funds. And as long as there are wealthy individuals and profitable companies looking for ways to impart their values and demonstrate their concerns, as well as governments willing to fund scientific research and efforts to find new and better solutions to social problems, there will be grantseekers.

For many faculty members at universities and research centers, grantseeking is a necessity. The ability to attract grant funding is a requirement for their continued appointment and tenure. Many faculty members, however, continue seeking grants even after they have secured their position. Why? They pursue grant funding for many of the same reasons that those of you in nonacademic fields do, and it's not for money!

Do grantseekers get paid extra to write proposals? While a few may, most nonprofit organizations (including universities and research centers) do not pay their staff extra for writing proposals. In fact, they do not even provide release time or reduced work loads to help individuals who are seeking grants. In actuality, the legal and ethical requirements that govern grantseeking do not allow proposal developers or consultants to be paid for efforts or costs incurred before the grant award date and the idea of paying a grant writer a percentage of the awarded grant is out of the question. Why individuals pursue grant funding is not a mystery. The quest for a grant in the nonprofit world is equivalent to efforts in the for-profit world that are associated with superior performances and super achievers. In fact, findings in studies on motivation and achievement in the for-profit world are similar to those documented in a study by Sharol Jacobson and Mary Elizabeth O'Brien on the satisfying and stressful experiences of first-time federal grantees.¹ Some of the satisfying experiences reported by the respondents in this study included

- praise and personal recognition
- satisfaction from working with a research team
- satisfaction from immersion in research
- satisfaction from commitment of subjects
- salary, space, travel, and equipment
- speaking opportunities
- opportunity to review proposals
- familiarity with federal agency personnel
- recognition in university publications
- increased awareness of research among students and colleagues
- increased responsiveness from campus research officials

Grantseekers want and deserve recognition and support from their organizations and peers for dedicating their spare time and extra efforts to the pursuit of grant funding. While payment for successful grantseeking may be illegal and unethical, recognition and appreciation are acceptable anytime. In fact, after reading and applying the techniques described in *The "How To" Grants Manual*, you may want to look further into how your organization can employ the latest management techniques to build a grant system that promotes superior performance. Suggested reading includes *Administering Grants, Contracts, and Funds—Evaluating and Improving Your Grants System* (Phoenix: American Council on Education/Oryx Press, second edition, 2000).

The "How To" Grants Manual contains many suggestions to help you integrate grantseeking into your busy professional life. Initially, you may think that some of the suggestions will direct you away from that special project that brought you to the grants marketplace, but this is not the case. All of the

suggestions are aimed at helping you develop a wider perspective from which to view your project so that you can increase your chances for funding.

To those individuals and organizations who have made this world a better place through the use of the grants mechanism, I thank you. To you, the grantseeker who is trying to improve our collective lot, I applaud your efforts and dedicate this book to providing you with the best techniques I know for locating funds while using your time most efficiently.

REFERENCE

1. Sharol F. Jacobsen and Mary Elizabeth O'Brien, "Satisfying and Stressful Experiences of First-Time Federal Grantees," *IMAGE: Journal of Nursing Scholarship* 24, no. 1 (Spring 1992): 45-49.

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PART ONE

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Getting Ready to Seek Grant Support for Your Organization

CHAPTER 1

Setting Yourself Up for Grants Success

Developing a Proactive Grants System

What is reactive grantseeking? When a grantseeker develops a grant proposal first and then searches for a possible grantor to submit it to, he or she is engaging in reactive grantseeking. Another example of reactive grantseeking is when a grantseeker locates or is presented with a potential grantor by a superior then scrambles to create an appropriate proposal before a looming deadline. The time constraint forces the grantseeker into a *reactive* mode that precludes being able to develop insight into the hidden agenda of the grantor, does not allow for pre-proposal contact, and makes it virtually impossible to prepare a proposal that is tailored to the grantor. Because of these factors, reactive grantseeking is fraught with rejection, as well as negative attitudes. To avoid these problems, grantseeking should be viewed as a quest to develop a relationship with a grantor who values the same outcomes that your proposal suggests, not as an opportunity to locate funding for what *you* want to do.

The ability to submit proposals electronically over the Internet has further enhanced the propensity to employ reactive grantseeking. Now, the hastily prepared, last-minute proposal can be transmitted at the very last minute. In this instance, the use of technology may actually result in a decrease in the quality of the proposal.

In contrast, proactive grantseeking is based on researching prospective grantors in order to match their grant interests with your projects and ideas. In many cases, reactive grantseekers and proactive grantseekers invest the same

amount of time developing their proposals. What is different is *when* and *how* they invest their time and how these variables influence their success rate. Proactive grantseekers put in small amounts of time *throughout* the grantseeking process. The analogy to the age-old story of the rabbit and the turtle applies here. The reactive grantseeker (rabbit) makes a Herculean attempt at developing a proposal, racing against time (and the deadline), only to lose to the proactive grantseeker (turtle) who has been plodding along the grants trail using an energy-efficient and ultimately successful strategy.

The first step in taking a proactive approach to grantseeking is for you to extricate yourself from the notion that your proposal's approach is the only one (or at least the best) way to move ahead. In reality, there are many approaches that could result in the changes your proposal suggests. By neglecting to develop several approaches to discuss with the potential grantor during pre-proposal contact, grantseekers limit their ability to uncover any preferences or hidden agendas that the grantor may have. Those grantseekers who have fixed ideas about their projects and exactly how they will be carried out miss the opportunity to learn what the grantor is really looking for. In addition, their proposals often suffer from a narrow viewpoint, focusing on what the grantseeker wants instead of the needs of the prospective grantor. This myopic approach can be contrasted with the equally ill-fated general approach. General proposals are designed to fit any possible grantor's guidelines. Whether myopic or general, proposals resulting from these approaches are easily recognizable because of a preponderance of statements beginning with "We want," "We need," and so on.

Unfortunately, this self-focus has been aided by the use of computers for researching grantors. In many cases the overzealous and self-focused grantseeker will secure printouts of all the grantors who have funded projects even remotely related to theirs and then send the same proposal to every grantor on the list. What these grantseekers overlook is that the "shotgun" approach results in high rates of rejection and negative positioning with funding sources.

Whenever your proposals (or those of your nonprofit organization) result in failure, you risk positioning your organization in a negative manner. Of course, grantseeking will always result in a certain percentage of rejection. That is bound to happen. But how much rejection can you, the grantseeker, and your organization afford before the very appearance of your name on a proposal elicits a negative reaction from grantors? What is the success rate you need to achieve to avoid negative positioning? Anything less than a 50 percent success rate could result in negative positioning. A 70 or 80 percent failure rate could not possibly create a positive image for your organization.

Embracing a proactive approach to grantseeking means starting the process early. This in itself, enables the grantseeker to employ quality assurance techniques to increase success and avoid negative positioning. A proactive