

Tip Sheet: Developing Grant Proposal Partnerships

Strong partnerships are key to developing successful grant proposals. They can boost your organization's credibility, expand your capacity to deliver services, and amplify your overall impact. Funders tend to favor projects that demonstrate collaboration, shared resources, and broad community support. A few practical strategies can help you build and sustain effective partnerships that strengthen your proposal and outcomes.

Tip 1: Nurture Partner Networks

- **Engage potential partners consistently—ideally, well before any specific grant deadline.** Ongoing relationship building ensures you have the right partners ready to collaborate and a clear understanding of each partner's strengths and potential contributions. Since some grants have short turnaround times, it's essential to maintain active connections with potential partners year-round. Focus on building relationships rooted in shared goals and mutual benefit, rather than waiting for a specific funding opportunity to arise.

Tip 2: Align Missions, Values, and Funding Priorities

- **Identify partners whose missions, values, and target populations align with both yours and the specific grant opportunity.** Ensure that each partnership makes strategic sense for achieving the particular goals and outcomes outlined in the grant, and that partners can help address the specific challenges or gaps you're targeting with this funding.
- **Finding partners with funding priorities that match the grant's focus can significantly strengthen your proposal.** These partners are more likely to be genuinely invested in this particular project's success and can help demonstrate a unified and strategic vision that directly addresses the funder's priorities.

Tip 3: Clearly Define Partner Roles

- **Clarify the specific responsibilities, contributions, and expectations of each partner for this particular grant project.** This demonstrates to funders that you have a well-coordinated collaboration with clearly defined accountability, showing that the partnership is strategically organized and built on a mutual understanding of the project's requirements.
- **Highlight each partner's unique strengths and how their specific contributions enhance this project's goals.** Clearly defining roles allows you to showcase their distinct expertise, resources, or community connections—demonstrating to funders how each partnership adds strategic value and directly strengthens your ability to achieve the grant's objectives.
- **Consider developing a Partnership Agreement or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that outlines these roles and supports project accountability.** This document should also address data collection, sharing, and reporting requirements specific to the

grant, ensuring all partners understand their obligations for meeting the funder's evaluation and reporting expectations.

Tip 4: Maintain and Encourage Open Communication

- **Establish clear and consistent communication channels with all partners throughout the proposal development process.** Transparency is essential for successful collaboration on grant projects. Keep partners informed about project timelines, deliverables, meeting schedules, and decision-making processes specific to this grant opportunity. If a partner is responsible for particular tasks—such as drafting proposal sections, providing letters of support, or signing MOUs—ensure they understand exactly what is required, the quality expectations, and deadlines.
- **Sustain communication beyond the grant proposal submission.** Keep partners informed about submission confirmations, award decisions, implementation timelines, and next steps regardless of funding outcomes. This ongoing transparency builds trust and maintains the relationships you've cultivated, positioning your network for future collaborative opportunities and demonstrating that you value partnerships as long-term strategic assets rather than just proposal requirements.

Tip 5: Demonstrate Community Support

- **Secure detailed letters of support from each partner that specifically address the grant opportunity.** These letters should demonstrate that your project addresses real community needs and is backed by established credible relationships. Strong letters of support show funders that your project represents a genuine collaborative effort with credible organizations working together to address clearly identified gaps that align with the grant's priorities.
- **Document and quantify each partner's specific contributions to this project.** Clearly outline what each partner will provide—such as in-kind support, dedicated staff time, shared data access, facility use, or complementary programming. Include estimated dollar values where possible to demonstrate the leveraged investment. This documentation not only strengthens your proposal's budget narrative but also establishes clear expectations for partner accountability and supports accurate progress reporting throughout the grant period.

Tip 6: Consider Sustainability

- **Discuss how the partnership and project outcomes will extend beyond the grant period.** Funders prioritize collaborations that demonstrate long-term impact rather than just short-term, grant-dependent activities. Show how partners are committed to sustaining the work through ongoing shared goals, continued resource commitments, or planned future initiatives that build on this project's foundation.