



GRANT WRITING: GETTING THE MOST OUT OF YOUR PROPOSAL

Presenter

Kari Aanestad,
Director of Advancement
at MCN



Session Objectives

Participants will:

- Have a deepened understanding about the process for developing a case for funding.
- Develop an understanding of the sections of a grant proposal including budgeting and evaluation.



AGENDA

- **Case Development**
- **Major Sections of a Proposal**
- **Program Evaluation & Budgeting**
- **Tips**
- **Q&A**



Grantwriting

Why do Nonprofits need Grants?

Yes

- ❑ To respond to a situation in the community
- ❑ To complement a well-rounded funding strategy for the program

No

- ❑ “We are out of money”
- ❑ The program will not exist without these funds
- ❑ Staff will lose their job without these funds

Grantwriting

- The primary task is to connect...
 - ▣ The strengths and opportunities of the community
 - ▣ And the mission and capabilities of the nonprofit
 - ▣ With the mission and the resources of the foundation





Case Development

Case Development

- Staff Teamwork
 - ▣ Proposal Development
 - Ideation
 - Development
 - Writing and Submission

Case Development

- Case development can take 40-60 hours
- Foundations can take 3-6 months to respond (or more)
- Be aware of big due dates; plan work accordingly!

Months 1-2	Months 2-3	Months 3-4	Month 5	Months 6-12	Month 12	Months 12-24
Case development	Connect with funder to vet case	Amend case based on funder feedback	Submit proposal	Wait for Foundation's response	Notification of funding	Grant period

The Grants Calendar

MAY FUNDRAISING CALENDAR

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 Target App. Due		2	3 4
	5 Strategic Disc. w/ Phillips Fdtn.	6	7	8	9	10 11
12	13	14	15 Otto Bremer Report Due	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24 Otto Bremer App Due	25
26	27	28	29	30	31 Xcel Energy App Due	



Stages of Proposal Development

- Ideation
 - ▣ Identify the situation, beneficiaries, goals
 - ▣ Organizational capacity – can we do this?
- Development
 - ▣ Define project scope: goals/objectives, costs, expected results, timeline
 - ▣ Get feedback from key constituencies
- Writing & Submission

Case Development

- How is the “problem” being defined?
 - ▣ Is the community being blamed?
 - ▣ Are there historical events and broader systems that have adversely impacted communities?
- How are strengths, assets, resources, and solutions being identified?
- Who is at the table in defining problems & challenges, identifying strengths, assets, and solutions?
- Who is designing solutions and evaluating impact?

Case Development

- Staff Teamwork
 - ▣ Engaging staff
 - Work to close the information gap
 - Cultivate a close working relationship
 - Develop clear and concise forms of information collection
 - ▣ Tools
 - Logic Model/LogFrame
 - Budget



Major Sections of a Proposal

Letters of Inquiry

- This is the “first impression!”
- Keep it short - check the guidelines for information on content and length.
- If you have a connection, mention
 - ▣ Previous grants
 - ▣ Personal contacts
- Your job is to help the Foundation meet their goals and fulfill their mission.



Proposal Outline

- Cover Letter/Cover Sheet
- Organization Description
- Situation Description
- Project Description
- Evaluation
- Sustainability
- Budget
- Attachments



Cover letter and cover sheet

- Cover letter
 - ▣ State your key information:
 - Situation Description
 - Your Organization's Response
 - Funding Requirements (ask for money)
 - Why 'you' are best suited for this work
 - ▣ The reader should be tantalized
- Cover sheet
 - ▣ Provides very basic information: contact info, amount of request, and 2-3 sentence summary of the request.

Cover sheet

- Cover sheet
 - The basic information: contact info, amount of request, and 2-3 sentence summary of the request.
 - Often the first section of online applications asks for this information
 - See *Minnesota Common Grant Application* for paper applications
 - Sometimes includes other service statistics



Organization Description

- Mission
 - ▣ Vision, Values
- History
- Programs
- Leadership and governance
- Collaborations



Situation Description

- Answers the questions
 - What is happening in the community (that your project will address)?
 - Who is affected?
 - What facts and statistics, stories can be used?
- Important to include your **CONSTITUENTS** as part of this section

This is what the proposal is about: responding to the community.

The proposal is NOT about your need for dollars.



Situation Description

- Quantitative
 - ▣ Gather statistics, research and “proof”
 - Needs assessments, surveys, focus groups, interviews, usage, media coverage, demographics, government reports, projections for the future
- Qualitative
 - ▣ Anecdotes – pull on the heartstrings, make them think.
 - ▣ Use real examples (not real names)
 - Use quotes from beneficiaries

**Strive to center the strengths/assets
the community!**

Situation Description

- Present yourself as an authority on the issue
- Balanced yet compelling analysis of the parameters of the problem and your ability to solve it.
- Give the reader hope -- your organization is ready to build on and contribute to positive change

Project Description

Tie the community situation and your proposed activities together

Describe your vision for the future

Use a logic model!





Program Evaluation & Budgeting

Logic Models: Goals

- What is your goal? Your vision of the future? Your response?
 - ▣ It must relate to the situation description!
 - ▣ Broad statements

Logic Models: Activities

- What are the core activities of your program that relate to your goal?

Logic Models: Outputs

- What are the quantifiable “products” that result from the activities?
 - ▣ Number of children, families, elderly served
 - ▣ Number of afterschool tutoring sessions offered
 - ▣ Pounds of vegetables grown

Logic Models: Outcomes

- What are the changes that result from your work?
- Can be written as a vision for the future
- Can be written using verbs that denote change (also called objectives)
 - ▣ Improve
 - ▣ Decrease
 - ▣ Increase

Logic Models: Indicators

- How will you know you've met your goal? How will success be indicated?
 - ▣ Quantifiable
 - ▣ Time-specific
- What tools will you use to measure change? (performwell.org)

Logic Models: Resources/Inputs

- What do you need to reach your goal?
- Think of resources expansively:
 - ▣ Funding
 - ▣ People
 - ▣ Space
 - ▣ Supplies

Goals and Objectives

- **Goal:** Develop an informed, connected, and strong nonprofit sector

Activities	Outcomes	Indicators
10,000 served through 100 paid workshops & 7 major conferences	Increased skills & of nonprofit leaders	80% reported leading significant changes in their organizations
Major publications, newsletters, website, blogs, etc.	Informed & organizations	1.5 million site visitors 10,000 publications distributed
100 free community events, peer convening major conferences	Connected & engaged networks	70% took actions to positively benefit their communities

Evaluation

- What are your evaluation questions?
 - ▣ What do YOU want to know?
 - ▣ What will the Funder want to know?

- What is the best way to gather evidence to answer these questions?

Designing Evaluation

- Meaningful way to measure outcomes?
- What mechanisms will be used? Already using?
 - ▣ Surveys
 - ▣ Observations
 - ▣ Tests
- Who will do the evaluation? What systems will you use? (central database? EMR?)
- Will beneficiaries be involved?

Designing Evaluation

- Picking Your Assessment Strategy
 - ▣ Leverage existing assessments
 - Eg. Early Childhood Services Intensity Instrument, Grassroots Efficacy, Beck Depression Inventory
 - ▣ Design your own
 - In house (pre- and post- test)
 - Post-service survey

Sustaining the Project

- Long-term financial viability
 - Are you building constituent capacity so that you won't be needed?
 - Are there earned income streams?
 - Do you have an individual donor base?
 - Special events?
 - What costs will increase? How will you address this?

Appendices

- Tax exempt status
 - Board of Directors
 - Audit
 - Financial Statements
 - Organizational budget
- If requested:
 - Other current/pending
 - Bios/resumes
 - Annual report
 - IRS 990
 - Org chart
 - Media articles
 - Newsletters



Budgets

▣ Crafting a budget for a proposal - 3

Types:

- General Operating (full agency)
- Program
- Project (ie. technical assistance, specific initiative, capital campaign)

Revenue

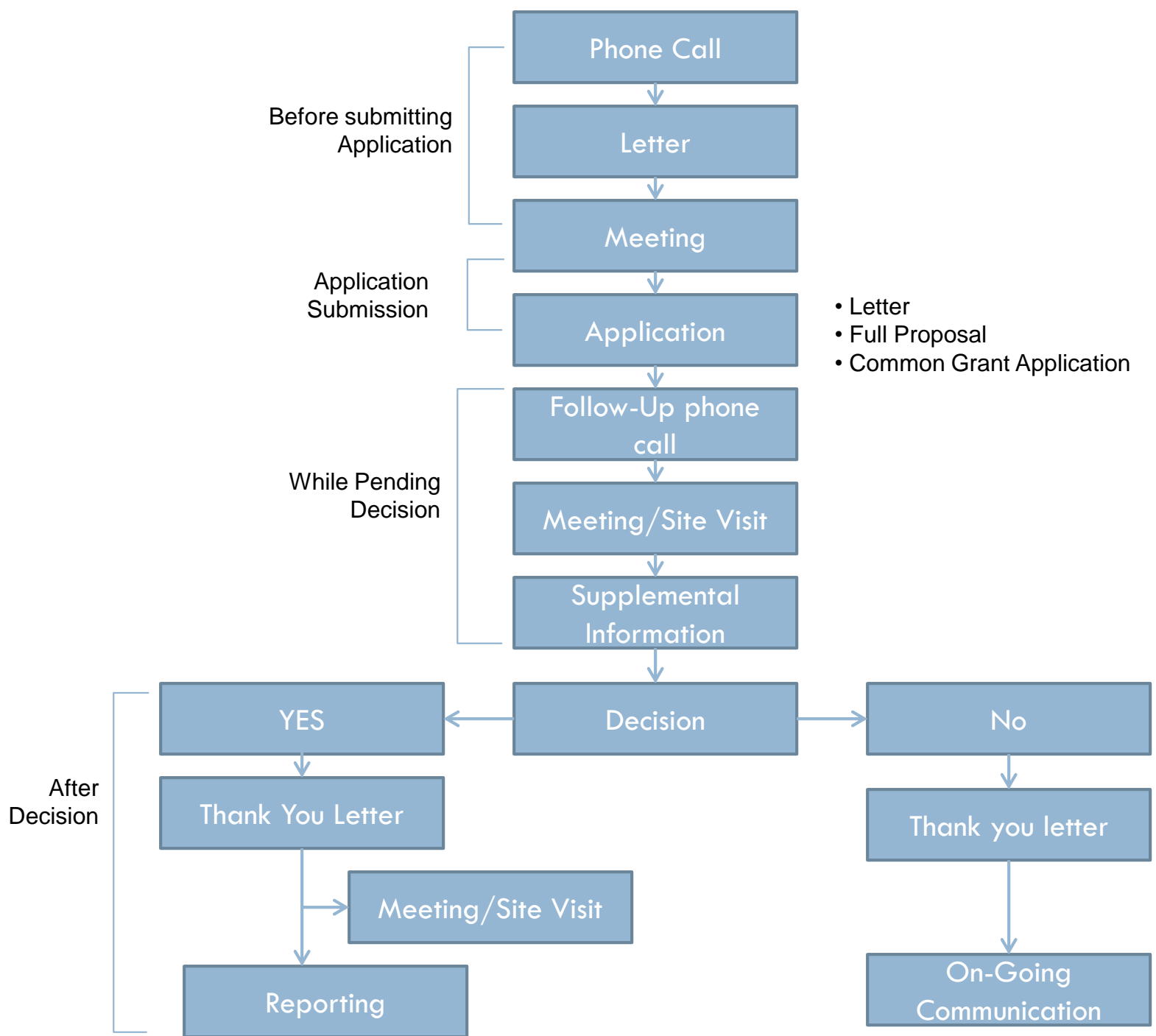
- ▣ Some Considerations:
 - Identify your timeframe
 - Big fish, small pond? Small fish, big pond?
 - Balanced mix of funding sources?
 - Reflect the sustainability plan?
 - Document your assumptions and math!



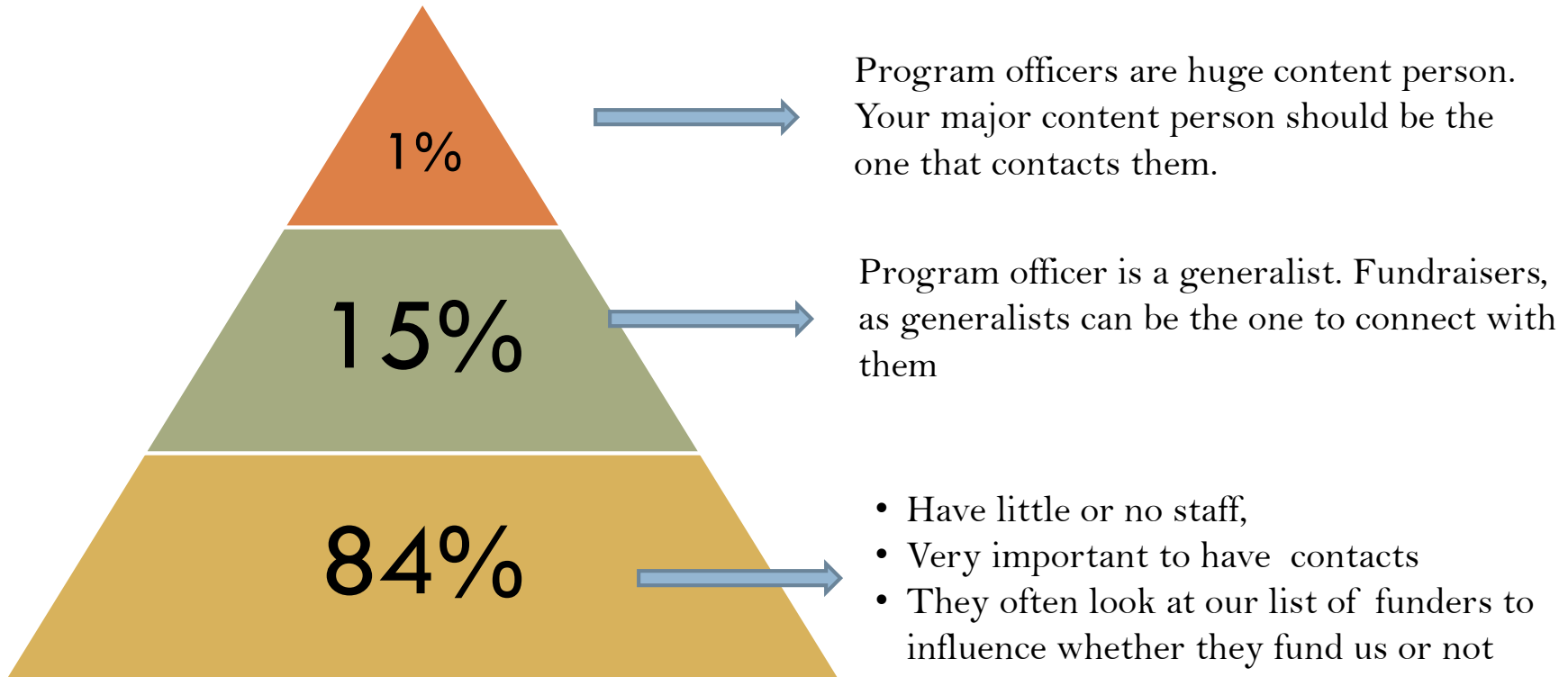
Additional Advice

Communicating with Funders

- Follow guidelines
 - ▣ Some Foundations don't have staff
- Call, e-mail -- **CORRESPOND**
- Ask questions up front, don't make assumptions
- Know their timeline for turnaround



Communicating with Funders



Acceptance/Declination

- Accepting a “yes.”
 - ▣ Re-read your proposal!
 - ▣ Send a thank-you note.
- Accepting a “no.”
 - ▣ Call and ask (don’t yell or pout).
 - ▣ THANK them for their time.
- Accepting a request for more information.
(Do it!)

Getting Grant Savvy

- Reviewing grants
 - ▣ For colleagues
 - ▣ Community panels
- Professional development
 - ▣ MN Council of Nonprofits
 - ▣ Foundation Center – www.grantSPACE.org



Tips for Grantwriters

- Avoid jargon
- Pay attention to writing style
- Don't be afraid to use visual cues (graphs, charts, timelines, or pictures)
- Use logic models and timelines to organize
- Revise and Edit
- Rewriting proposals



Thank you

Please contact me if you have questions!

kaanestad@minnesotanonprofits.org

651-757-3073

