

Basics to Today's Successful Grant Writing Proposal

Huntsville, AL

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As part of The Community Foundation's Nonprofit University



What is the Center for Nonprofits?

What is our association with grants and funders?

Grantors

➤ Foundations

➤ Government

- Federal, state and local

➤ Businesses

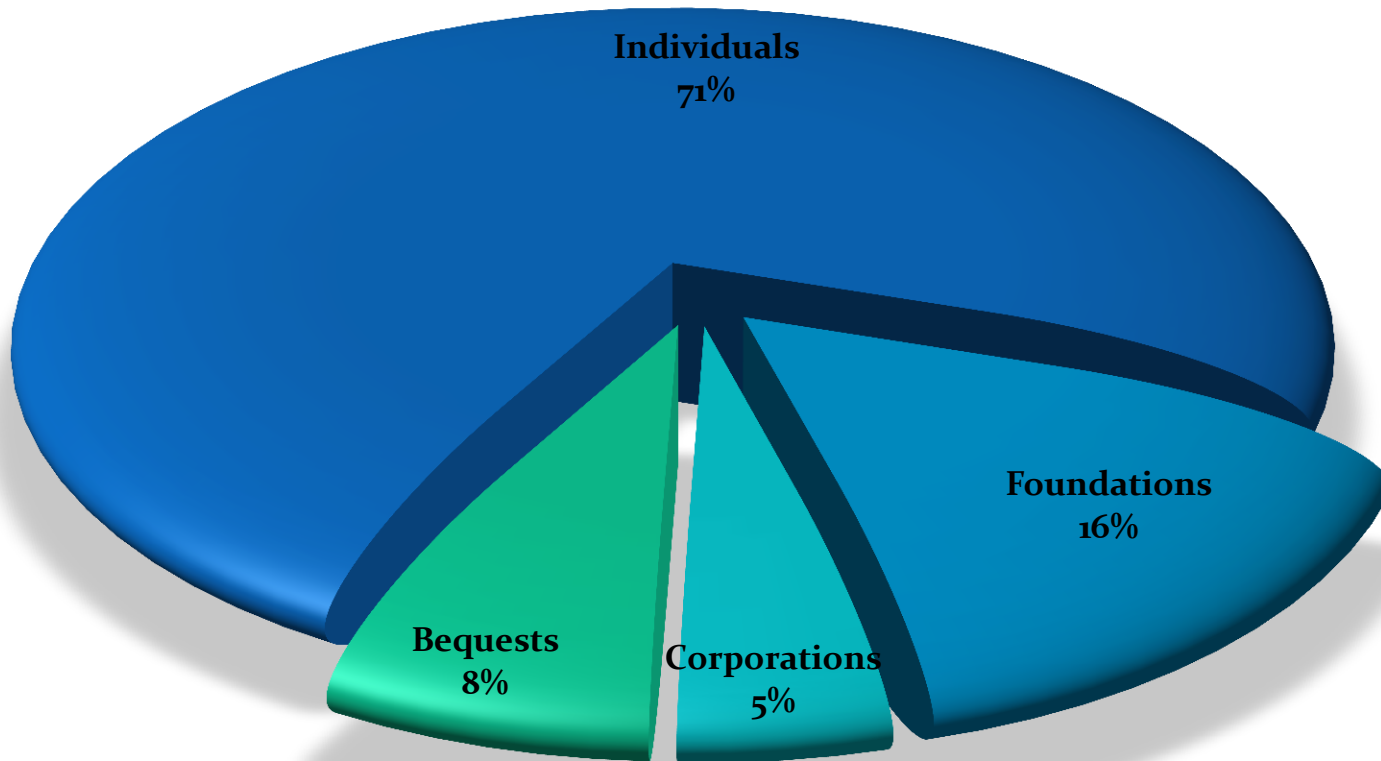
- Direct corporate giving program

➤ Other Charitable Organizations

- Parent nonprofits with affiliates (e.g. Habitat for Humanity International, Girls Incorporated)

Where Funding Comes From

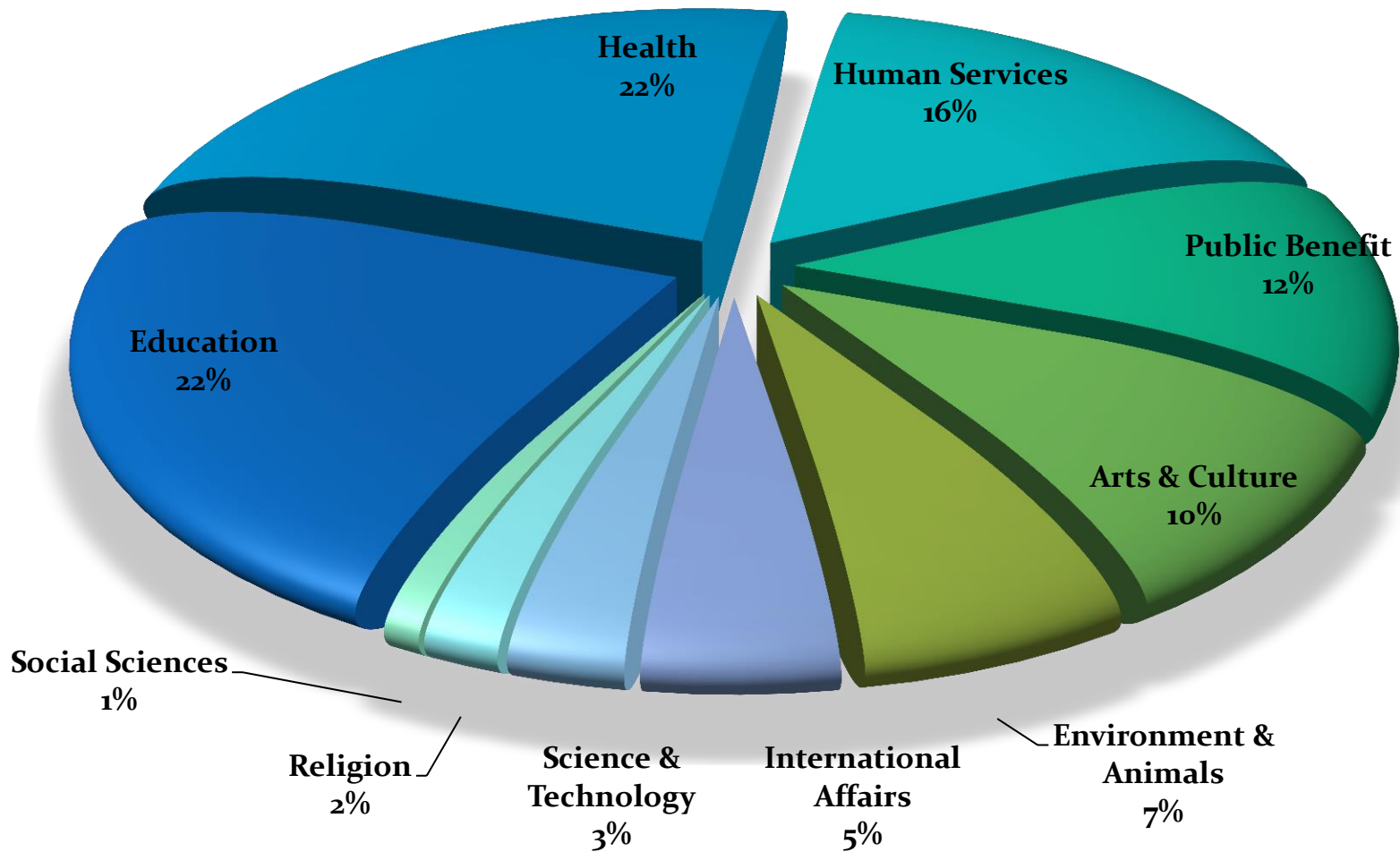
Comprehensive Funding Sources



*The Foundation Center

Source: Giving USA 2015

What Grant Funding Supports



Foundation Facts

- Grants should only comprise 15-20% of your total fund-base
- Giving restrictions based on identified priority areas are common
- Geographic restrictions are common
- Must payout a minimum of 5% of the average market value of net investment assets annually

Research Funding Opportunities

Look for missions that match

- Foundation Directory
- Foundation websites (e.g. www.cfgc.org)
- Updates, notices, subscriptions
- IRS 990s – through www.guidestar.org or <http://foundationcenter.org/findfunders/99ofinder/>
- News media – use press, internet, alerts
- Foundation staff
- Board members, volunteers

General Research - Prioritize

Look at funding history

- Similar mission/projects
 - Type of awards given
 - Average award size
 - Geography
 - Payout requirement
- Reporting requirements

Trends

- Outcomes and evaluation are required
- Few grants for operating expenses
- Rarely grants for events or fundraisers
- Collaboration is vital
- Emphasis on sustainability after the grant
- Relationship with the funder matters

Make Contact

Initial Approach – before submission

- Try to meet/speak with program officer
- Provide your case for support, in brief
- Ask for feedback, potential partners, advice
- Letter of inquiry often required

Use board members and volunteers

- Initial contact by one who has a connection

Not all allow initial meetings

- Use formal application process

Connections Matter

Invitations are often required

- If you build a relationship, you can often get an invitation

Make routine contact

- Site visits and tours
- Program updates
- Annual report
- Notes with updates

Take the long view!

A funders perspective:

Building relationships is important, but...must also be combined with a *competent staff* and *well designed programs* that are *properly matched to real community needs*.

We don't know these people ... are they credible?

Fundability

More Likely:

- Equipment and other tangible items
- Proven track records, but maybe start ups with traction
- Matching missions – a natural fit
- Look at the guidelines

Not so much..

- Personnel
- Operating/overhead expenses
- Transportation
- Events

Are You Ready?

- IRS Letter of Determination
- Annual Audit
- Annual 990
- Strategic Plan
- Accreditation or Self-Assessment
- www.grants.gov Registration
 - Data Universal Number System (DUNS) Number
 - System for Award Management (SAM) Registration

Grant Proposal Outline

- The Need
- Project Description
- Outputs and Outcomes/ Goals and Objectives
- Activities
- Staff and Volunteers
- Collaboration
- Evaluation
- Sustainability
- Budget and Resources

Example: Statement of Need

From a grant proposal to support an afterschool program:

- More than 90% of students in our school are low-income and only 25% scored proficient or advanced in reading on state assessments (TN Department of Education, 2013).
- Studies show the most at-risk children are more likely to attend schools with fewer resources, and low-income, underrepresented minority, and first-generation students often face barriers to academic achievement (Pianta et al., 2005).

Example: Measurable Objectives

Outputs – tracking activities & participants

- Conduct 4 volunteer tutor training sessions
- Complete 52 weekly tutoring sessions
- Provide weekly tutoring to 60 students

Outcomes – results of the project

- Increase 75% of students' reading level by at least six levels during one school year.

Tips and Tricks

- Follow the guidelines... exactly
- Templates are common
- Online submissions – use Word, then paste
- Page numbers
- Headings
- Make formatting easy to understand

Writing Guidelines

- Use active voice
- No jargon or acronyms
- Use simple sentences, short paragraphs
- Visuals – headings, white space, bullets...
- Write from client perspective

Best Practices

- Tell a story
- Make it concise and compelling
- Footnotes on same page, not at end
- Use visuals only as appropriate
- Spelling counts
- Don't email unless permitted by funder
- Include all attachments
- Include letter for support, if requested
- Everything in one place

Top Reasons Proposals are Rejected

1. Directions not followed
2. Missed deadline
3. Program doesn't match funder's priorities
4. Outcomes were not provided
5. Duplication of Services-submitted blanket proposal
6. Sustainability not anticipated
7. Unrealistic funding expectations
8. Inaccurate, vague, or poor writing
9. Missed reporting



Questions?

Wrap Up

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Register for Tennessee Valley Institute for Nonprofit Excellence (TVI)

Wednesday, Sept. 20, 2017, 9 am – 4 pm.

Chattanooga Convention Center

Dan Pallotta, Keynote www.boldsocialimpact.org

