

PLEASE ROUTE:

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR _____

PROGRAM OFFICER _____

CHAIR GRANTS COMMITTEE _____

BUILDING COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS

PHILANTHROPIC VENTURES FOUNDATION

GRANTMAKING CONSULTING PROGRAM
BILL SOMERVILLE, PRESIDENT

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PAPER REDUCTION AND SAVING TIME

After visiting over 250 community foundations, the primary finding is that personnel are overwhelmed by paperwork and bureaucracies of their own making. Consequently, there is not enough time to do labor intensive grantmaking initiatives, such as, finding outstanding people to fund, initiating grantmaking ideas, offering management seminars, ceating a funding library, or convening experts to focus on social issues.

The following are some ideas for reducing paperwork in order to allow staff to have more time for creative grantmaking:

☞ Be selective on what and how much you read.

Don't read everything – don't even try, and don't make yourself feel guilty by creating a pile for future reading. Toss things out if you aren't going to read them.

☞ Keep the bureaucracy under control – it exists for you, not vice versa.

For example, have operating policies that enhance rather than restrict.

If you have to refer to policies to know what to do, you are hamstrung. Keep them general.

☞ Be selective about what you require in a grant request proposal. Do you really need a financial audit or just to know there is one? Consider using guidelines for application versus a form to fill out. Sometimes you ask for so much, that the grant becomes a reimbursement for the time taken to apply.

☞ Require only one copy of a proposal and then copy what is necessary for your committees.

☞ Consider using a letter of understanding rather than an application proposal from agencies

that you know, have funded before, are well established, and respected. This saves all sorts of foundation time and is much appreciated by the agency.

- ✍ Create a “not favored” status, wherein program staff can deny requests that are weak versus processing them for the inevitable turndown.
- ✍ Allow the Executive Director to be able to make decisions on grants up to \$5,000. Why process small grants through the Board? The smaller the grant, the more timeliness is important.
- ✍ Be selective of what you write – be brief and to the point. Volume does not mean quality.
- ✍ Monitor yourself continually to keep it simple in everything you do. For example, the Grants Committee in approving grants can act on behalf of the Board, which in turn confirms the Committee’s actions rather than having to approve everything all over again. This saves considerable time.
- ✍ Don’t attend every meeting announced in your mail – send student interns and have them report back to you about it. Be very selective regarding attending conferences.
- ✍ Keep committees to a minimum. There are three basic committees: investment, development/marketing, and grants. Optional committees of doubtful need: executive committee, nominating committee, regional committees, (various Board members can represent regions), audit committee, personnel committee (the Board can do this).
- ✍ Be selective as to how many people are on a committee, five is ideal. Otherwise you spend forever trying to find a meeting date.
- ✍ Keep Board meetings to a minimum, quarterly or bi-monthly at the most. Preparing for, attending, and reporting on meetings takes a prodigious amount of staff time.
- ✍ Keep the Board informed of progress but be very careful in asking permission for routine things. This causes micro management. For example, the Board does not

need to approve payment of bills.

- ✍ Have Board Minutes that are general and don't try to depict every detail of what went on.
- ✍ Use e-mail versus regular mail whenever possible, but always make sure you identify yourself with full name, company name, address, and phone number at the bottom.
- ✍ Keep staff meetings short and sweet. If one isn't careful, they can go on and on.
- ✍ Hire capable staff and give them independence to do their job versus feeling the need to check with their supervisor constantly.
- ✍ Be clear about staff responsibilities. If things are vague, staff will fill time as they see fit and this becomes ingrained and hard to change.
- ✍ Periodically, have an outside third party meet individually with staff members to go over their work load and efficiency.
- ✍ Have an outside person audit your filing systems. Too much time is spent trying to find things that are poorly filed. This applies to computer data files as well. Check on systems used by giant foundations and piggy back on things they have already spent money to research.
- ✍ Consider saving copies of correspondence on the computer versus hard copies and back up your computer data regularly.
- ✍ In evaluating grantees, keep the task commensurate with the size of the grant. Focus on asking for information that gives you insight as to what makes for a significant grant. Send a \$7 one-time use camera with each grant to get pictures back for evaluation.
- ✍ Once a year have a chiropractor come in and spend individual time with each staff person on such things as chair height, positioning of computer monitor, chair comfort, use of telephone, etc. This cuts down absenteeism.

Building Community Foundations

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PHILANTHROPIC VENTURES FOUNDATION'S GRANTMAKING CONSULTING PROGRAM

PVF has provided on-site consulting to over 250 community foundations throughout the USA, working with staff, board members and the community to improve grantmaking and operations. The Consulting Program is in its 9th year of operation and has been funded by The David and Lucile Packard Foundation since its inception. The PVF consulting fee is paid for by The Packard Foundation. Participating community foundations are asked to pay for travel, meals, lodging and program officer training fee. The services offered include:

- **Program Audit and Evaluation** - Intensive 3-day on-site sessions focusing on analysis of foundation operations, grant making programs, public relations and internal procedures. Includes meetings with foundation board, grants committee, board chair, foundation staff, and executive director. Also included are meetings with funders, interviews with local media, and meetings with local non-profit organizations. The days are full and intense with the result being new enthusiasm, new expectations and new ideas.
- **Program Officer Training** - 2 full days of training for foundation personnel, involving problem solving, interaction of participants and exchange of ideas, accompanied by 500-page reference manual created by PVF. Participants analyze actual grant requests, evaluate and make grant making decisions and engage in role-playing.
- **Board Retreats** - Facilitator for Board Retreats (1/2 to 2 days). Work through issues facing foundations including growth, planning & community outreach. Facilitator draws out strengths and weaknesses, serving as guide through strategic planning process.

For more information, contact Bill Somerville at PVF