

DIALOGUE

A Periodic Newsletter for Development Officers

- Bill Somerville, Editor -

Dialogue is published to help improve relations between funders and development officers. *Dialogue* was started at the request of a development officer. Readers are invited to submit any questions regarding development issues and we will find an answer.

Q: I am President of the Aphasia Center of California. Over one million people live with aphasia but because of nonexistent media coverage few people have ever heard of us. How do we proceed with potential funders?

A: You need to do research in the “health” field and then begin communication with relevant foundations. Likewise, have relatives, friends, associates of people with aphasia spread the word. This is true for any cause whether well known or not.

Q: After the grant has been awarded, what do individual grantors want from us in the way of evaluation of the project?

A: The Editor asks for a narrative of the grantee’s progress in which he hopes you will share how you are doing regarding the funded project as well as difficulties you have come across. Send pictures of your work. Send a detailed report on how the grant money was used including receipts if you feel that adds substantiation.

Q: What is reasonable for a grantor to request of us in the way of paperwork, research, testimonial information, etc.?

A: Assuming this question refers to an application for a grant, the grantor mainly wants to know that you know what you are doing. If you have used research in your work, share it but just to quote research findings to impress is not necessary. Try not to call your program “unique”.

Q: Would it be possible for certain grantors to consider emergency proposals? Most of you refuse such requests yet such problems are real.

A: The Editor defines emergency as an unexpected event which threatens your agency’s continued existence. Another definition used by foundations in the San Francisco Bay Area is an event which puts your clients at risk of not receiving necessary services. In the Bay Area there is a consortium of foundations which for 26 years has offered emergency no-interest loans. The difficulty in dealing with emergency requests is that often they are not unexpected events even though money is needed immediately.

CAUSE & EFFECT

A consolidated news resource for corporate philanthropy. Free - contact:
clearwatersci@mindspring.com

Q: Should foundations and corporations be more flexible in setting guidelines to better respond to local needs?

A: Here are some rules about giving:

- » Community foundations are local givers.
- » People tend to give where they live.
- » Corporations give where they have their headquarters, where they have outlets, where their employees live, and to things in which their employees are involved.

Q: I get frustrated by a foundation's inability to "commit," i.e., to give more than one year of funding at a time. Wouldn't it save all of us time if they would commit to two or three years of funding?

A: More foundations seem to be willing to consider multi-year grants. One way to approach this is to mention three year support, one-year-at-a-time. Based on your performance, a decision will be made for the next year.

Q: What's the perfect kind of program evaluation?

A: There is now talk of return on investment (ROI) or social return on investment (SROI) with actual scoring schemes. The Editor does not subscribe to this approach. Evaluation is an assessment of how you are doing and your impact. This is depicted by narrative reports of your progress and impact, financial reports of grant expenditures, and perhaps photographs. You should also invite your funders to visit.

Q: You're a maverick in the field of philanthropy, are there others like you?

A: Yes, but you have got to find them and bring them out. Most foundation personnel are swamped in paperwork of their own making. Most would love to be free of paperwork so call them, invite them for site visits, keep them informed of your work, develop a relationship.

E-MAIL NEWSLETTER

The Chronicle of Philanthropy publishes an E-mail newsletter available free to subscribers.

editor@philanthropy.com

FAILURE - THE UNSPOKEN WORD

Failure. Ideally, when things don't work out, we can learn from the experience. Wouldn't it be interesting to have a book of failures from which people could learn about pitfalls. Maybe we could analyze why things went wrong from such a book and create a book of cautions.

It is about time we face up to failures and stop fearing them. Funders need to be more tolerant and agencies need to be more willing to try new approaches.

If you have a failure you want to share, the Editor would be willing to analyze it to see what could be learned from it.

Q: How do corporations and foundations make educated decisions if they don't have staff to research us?

A: Corporations often 'herd' i.e. find out who is funding what and then join in. If a funding source does not have a staff, you can assume the CEO makes the decisions based on information from colleagues, friends, family, and media. Often emotion is the strongest factor in making a decision. Your job as a fund-seeker, is to inject yourself into one of these entry points. For example, knowing the administrative assistant of a CEO is a sure way to get your message across.

Q: What do foundation people really think about development people?

A: This question would apply to any group of professionals and what they think of each other. The quality of the relationship is directly related to the quality of the work by both parties. Quality factors the Editor looks for are sincerity, knowledge of their program, straightforwardness, integrity. He does not value salesmanship.

RELEVANT READING

“The New Landscape For Nonprofits”

The entry of for-profits into social services raises fundamental questions about the mission and future of nonprofits. *Harvard Business Review* - Report 99108.

To order, call 1-800-988-0886

Dialogue

Philanthropic Ventures Foundation
1222 Preservation Park Way
Oakland CA 94612

Non Profit Organization
U S Postage PAID
Oakland CA
Permit 962

Change Service Requested



If you would like to get *Dialogue* by e-mail, please send us your e-mail address. The current issue of *Dialogue* is posted on our web-site.

E-mail address is: info@venturesfoundation.org

Web-Site at: www.venturesfoundation.org

