

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 questions. *Dialogue* can be received by US post or e-mail.

Q: What makes for a good application?

A: Qualities that come to mind: pithy, to the point, sincere, realistic. Extra points for: humor, pictures, invitation to visit.

Q: What makes you wary of funding an organization or program?

A: Promises too much, "all we need is big money," no prior experience, desperate but they send the request by FedEx. Too analytical vs. applied approach, almost impossible to understand what they are actually going to do.

Q: You talk a lot about program and agency qualifications but doesn't who you know still apply?

A: Personal interaction is all important but it's not so much who you know but how you interact with people and the fact that there is personal interaction.

Q: In your opinion, are diverse boards effective fund raising boards?

A: The best board members are those with passion for the success of their agency.

Q: I work with a number of consultants (marketing, media, direct mail) do foundations see this as negative?

A: No, but if the development officer is nothing but the sum total of what consultants say, something is very wrong.

Q: Is it true that once a foundation funds an organization, the chances of getting annual grants is greater?

RELEVANT READING

For non profit personnel concerned with disaster preparedness, there are two booklets available:

“Disaster Grantmaking: A Practical Guide for Foundations and Corporations”
Council on Foundations, November 2001. Website www.cof.org

“Preparing for and Responding to Public Emergencies and Natural Disasters”
Bill Somerville, Philanthropic Ventures Foundation, September 1993. Website
www.venturesfoundation.org

One of the ideas regarding disaster preparedness is a letter of understanding wherein a funder and an organization have a prior agreement which allows for the immediate expenditure of funds after a disaster with follow up guaranteed reimbursement.

- A:** It is true that a relationship has been formed with the funder which can be nurtured for future (but not necessarily annual) grants.
- Q:** **I have proposals pending that have not been responded to or acknowledged. It's as if they dropped into the abyss never to be seen again. What should I do? I've even gone so far as to write to the foundation suggesting that if they aren't interested in us to let me know so I could quit wasting their time. Don't they concern themselves with our time limitations?**
- A:** Call and keep calling. The foundation has a responsibility to reply. When he was alive, David Packard wanted correspondence to the Packard Foundation responded to in 24 hours even if it was to say “We'll get back to you on this.”
In Buffalo, New York, the failure of a foundation to respond to an inquiry became a court case with a sympathetic judge who was tired of aloofness by foundations.
- Q:** **What is reasonable to request of us vis a vis paperwork, research, and technical information?**
- A:** The basic premise is for applicants to show that they are capable of doing what they are proposing to do. Thus backup information is both useful and required. Don't go overboard but give evidence that there has been a thoughtful process culminating in the idea being presented.

ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

The North Carolina Center for Nonprofits has published “Standards for Excellence: A Self-help Tool for Nonprofits’ Organizational Effectiveness.”

In addition, the Alliance for Human Services in North Carolina has developed “Standards for Accreditation Self-Evaluation Matrix.”

Both of these documents are worth considering.

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Q: How much info is enough? There are some foundations that go so far as to ask the sexual preference of the proposing nonprofit. Isn't this a little much?

A: Yes. Generally speaking, one should give a full rich description of what one is proposing to do. Be complete. One of the most common mistakes is assumption i.e. assuming the reader knows what initials stand for, what in-house professional terms mean, what the gist of the proposal is.

NEW OFF THE PRESS

The Funder's Checklist

An Inside Look at How Funders Evaluate Proposals and Non-profit Organizations.

Dynell A. Garron

Ms. Garron has 13 years experience as a grantmaker and was formally Director of National Programs and Key Market Initiatives at The Gap Foundation.

This is a 40 page booklet that is thoughtfully put together giving basic and complete information for fund seekers. It is an excellent resource tool.

For information on how to order go to:

www.funderschecklist.com

or call (510) 655-5751

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Feel free to ask any question regarding funding and the private dollar and we will get an answer.

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