

# GRANTWRITING 201

WHAT A GRANT REVIEWER WANTS TO SEE (AND WHAT THEY DON'T)

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# Grantwriting 201

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## □ Some basics

- Make sure the grant fits your project, not the other way around
- Everything you write should have a direct connection to the grant proposal
- Don't ramble or editorialize
- Follow the grant instructions *in order*
- If you can't fulfill a required element, explain why
- Speak the grantor's language



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- Some not-so-basics
  - ▣ Always position yourself as the solution – not the problem
  - ▣ Maximize the 30 minutes you will get alone with each reviewer
  - ▣ Mitigate potential biases – don't give reviewers a reason to dislike the application
  - ▣ Feel free to call the grant manager with questions



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- Who sits on the Review Committee?
  - ▣ Colleagues/competitors who haven't applied, Nonprofit partners, Foundation staff, Consultants, Government employees, etc.
  - ▣ Assume reviewers have some background knowledge about the subject matter
  - ▣ Assume reviewers don't know a thing about your organization



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- What happens in the Grant Review?
  - Scoresheets
    - Completed prior to the review meeting
  - Moderated Discussion
    - Plus/Minus
    - Analyze multiple variables, including external data
    - Secondary ranking of proposals, based on the discussion
  - Set the bar and adjust funding, if necessary



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- Dirty little secrets:
  - ▣ The purpose of grant reviews is to eliminate poor proposals, not to discuss good ones
  - ▣ If two proposals are equal in merit, the only way to decide between them is on the quality of the application
  - ▣ Reviewers can get cranky after reading a dozen applications – be straightforward
  - ▣ You can ask for scoresheets and notes after the review – they are usually public documents



# Areas where you can stand out

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Problem statement

Data

Project description

Anecdotes/quotes

Connection to broader policy goals

Budget

The Ask



# Examples – Two Competing Applicants

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## Northville and Southville

- CAH's, same number of beds
- Roughly the same budget, margin, age
- Similar communities, list of services
- Both want to start a Health Care Home in their provider-based clinic
  - Want to hire a consultant, undergo a planning process
- Both applying for the ORHPC Rural Hospital Planning and Transition Grant
  - Asking for \$25,000, 50% match requirement



# Examples: Problem Statement

## □ Northville:

“Northville area hospital faces challenges with coordinating care for our patients. Long distances, a lack of providers, low reimbursement from public programs, and high incidences of chronic diseases in our population make it very difficult to keep people healthy.”

# Example: Problem Statement

## □ Southville:

“Through our strategic planning with community partners, Southville Area Hospital has identified the need to better coordinate primary care for our patients. The population we serve is often geographically isolated and increasingly suffers from chronic conditions. Southville Area Hospital wants to assist patients in managing their conditions, rather than treat them as emergencies.”

# Problem Statement

- Don't become the problem
  - Don't bemoan your fate
  - Don't plead poverty, define a need
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- Keep the problem statement focused on what the grant can address
  - Connect the problem statement directly to the project description

# Problem Statement: Data

## □ Northville:

“According to the Department of Health data, North County ranks near the bottom in incidence of diabetes (84<sup>th</sup> out of 87) and heart disease (79<sup>th</sup> out of 87), near the top in average age (10<sup>th</sup> out of 87), and second lowest of all counties in access to dental services (86<sup>th</sup> out of 87).”

# Problem Statement: Data

## □ Southville:

“MDH data show that the population of South County has a high percentage of chronic diseases. Our utilization data confirm that diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease are common among the people we treat. In fact, over 40% of our patients last year had at least one of these conditions.”

# Problem Statement: Data

- Don't fill space with unrelated statistics
- Don't just use broad data to show the problem exists
  
- Give specific data to prove the problem exists
- Give specific data to show that your organization uses data in a sophisticated way

# Project Description: Anecdotes

## □ Northville:

“Our Director of Nursing likes to say that if we got paid for coordinating care, our nurses and staff would finally be able to do what they’re actually trained to do. By implementing a Health Care Home in our clinic, we will maximize the work of our nurses and staff.”

# Project Description: Anecdotes

## □ Southville

“Last year, in a six week period, one patient was admitted to our hospital four times. When he sat down with a nurse and talked through his routine we discovered his wife usually helped him with his medications – but she was in a rehab facility after hip surgery. We started calling him in the mornings, and his condition was soon stabilized. With the structure of a Health Care Home, this kind of intervention will become routine for our patients in need.”



# Project Description: Broader Policy

## □ Northville:

“According to MDH, ‘a Health Care Home is an approach to primary care in which primary care providers, families and patients work in partnership to improve health outcomes and quality of life for individuals with chronic health conditions and disabilities.’ Coordinating care is the wave of the future.”

# Project Description: Broader Policy

## □ Southville:

“Health care is changing rapidly, and Southville Hospital is keeping up with the changes. With the implementation of our Health Care Home, we will be better prepared to transition to an Accountable Care Organization model, and to work with our community partners in a new way. We also plan to align many quality measurement requirements of the HCH with emerging quality metrics on the Critical Access Hospital side.”

# Project Description

- Don't just show you understand the concept
- Don't miss an opportunity to demonstrate how strategic your organization is
  
- Use anecdotes that personalize the problem and clearly demonstrate the solution
- Push your leadership to find connections to broader policy agendas



# Budget

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## □ Northville:

“Northville will work with a consultant familiar with Health Care Home policy. The consultant will be paid at the end of October, following six meetings, three of which will be for the public to attend. Match dollars will be raised after receipt of the grant, or supported by operating funds.”

# Budget

## □ Southville:

“We have selected a consultant who best meshes with our organization’s goals. Attached is a quote. The remainder of the budget will be devoted to 0.1 FTE of the Director of Nursing salary ( $\$64,000 \times 0.1 = \$6,400$ ) and for scheduling 6 meetings, 3 internal, 3 community ( $6 \times \$50$  food and beverage =  $\$300$ ). Match funds will be supported by the operating budget.”

# Budget

- Don't leave holes in the budget
- Don't let reviewers fill in the blanks
  
- Budget for everything you know about the project
- Firm up any matching funds
- Itemize using the budget template – ask the grant manager if you have questions about a line

# The Ask

## □ Northville:

“Northville Hospital is struggling to maintain its margins, and our capital budget is spoken for very quickly – the list of unfunded projects every year is long. We cannot continue to do innovative things without grant funding. Our hope is that with this grant, we can keep up with the changing health care environment and provide necessary services to our patients in need.”

# The Ask

## □ Southville

“As a key component of our strategic plan, a Health Care Home fulfills an identified need in our community. This cutting-edge reform will allow us to expand our efforts to provide patient-centered care for our community, especially those with disabilities. We request full funding for this project. We have raised the required matching funds, but because of other pressing capital needs, this project will not move forward without funding from external sources.”



# The Ask

- Don't plead poverty, define a need
- Don't forget to ask for the money
  
- Include a "but for..." statement
- Remember, the grant exists to fund projects like yours. Your organization is eminently qualified, and deserves the funding.

# Wrap Up

- Focus on the project.
- Communicate with your colleagues and expect the same in return – if necessary, hound them for information, or go over their heads.
- Push your leadership for good data and creative connections to broader policy goals.
- The funding already exists and your organization deserves it.
- Reviewers will sense your confidence in the project.

# Questions?

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