

The GRANT WRITING and FUNDING COACH

Target and Acquire the
Funds You Need

*How individuals, nonprofits, local governments, and
community organizations build bridges with funders*



Deborah Griffiths

Self-Counsel Press
(a division of)

International Self-Counsel Press Ltd.
USA Canada

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Self-Counsel Press acknowledges the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Canada Book Fund (CBF) for our publishing activities.

Printed in Canada.

First edition: 2017

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Griffiths, Deborah, author

The grant writing and funding coach : target and acquire the funds you need: how individuals, non-profits, local governments and community organizations build bridges with funders / Deborah Griffiths.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

Issued in print and electronic formats.

ISBN 978-1-77040-288-1 (softcover).—ISBN 978-1-77040-480-9 (epub).—ISBN 978-1-77040-481-6 (Kindle)

1. Proposal writing for grants. 2. Fund raising. I. Title.

HG177.G75 2017

658.15'224

C2017-900430-1

C2017-900431-X

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Self-Counsel Press

(a division of)

International Self-Counsel Press Ltd.

Bellingham, WA
USA

North Vancouver, BC
Canada

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THANK YOU

Thank you to the clients who have welcomed me into their communities and into the heart of their projects.

A special thanks to Tom Bohmer and Graham Stanley of Community Futures Stuart-Nechako and InvestLocalBC; to Marc Crane and Community Futures Strathcona staff. Also to CEO of FundRazr, Daryl Hatton, for his generous insight and time. To Project Gutenberg for bringing the past into our lives today. To Raymond Greene, Lorna Wilson, Patricia Maguire, Mary Mowdy, Christine Richardson, Steve Slaunwhite, Patrick Trask, Allan Tweedie, Peter Wiebe, Paula Wild, Kathleen Zeno, and my family. Thank you.

A special thanks to Self-Counsel Press; to publisher, Linda L. Richards for her interest in this book; and to editor, Eileen Velthuis, for her insights and suggestions.

WELCOME

Welcome to *The Grant Writing and Funding Coach*.

Are you new to the world of seeking funds to advance your work or study? Do you work with a nonprofit charitable organization (sometimes referred to as a 501(c)(3) in the US) and want to begin to explore the world of grant writing and finding funds? Do you represent a local government, community group, or agency and need time-saving information about organizing and writing grants?

Are you an artist, athlete, military dependant, or veteran who needs funds for education, training courses, or travel expenses? Alternatively, are you a business owner with a special project? Are you a funder who sees a great project that could use some help in building bridges for your funds?

If you've answered "yes" to any of the above, this book is for you!

You may be reading *The Grant Writing and Funding Coach* because your community needs brick and mortar for a community hall or swimming pool. Or you need programs in the areas of health, education, sports, arts, culture, or others. Whatever your need might be, in this book you'll find proven methods for achieving your goals.

I created this book because I've written grant applications for more than 25 years and have had a business as a professional grant writer for the past 16. This has given me rewarding opportunities to be on both the

applicant's and the funder's sides. I've also been a museum curator for more than 25 years and enjoy exploring new ideas and subjects every day.

From working in small- to mid-size communities with projects worth from thousands to millions, I've learned the one common thread that runs through successful grant applications:

Funders want to play an active role in your community's success and there are easy, enjoyable ways for you to provide them with opportunities to say yes.

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I've also learned that the business of writing grants and applying for funds is sometimes presented as being more complicated than it actually is, even though there is great need for it in some communities. My aim is to remove some of the higher mystery aspects of looking at grant writing and finding funds that fit your needs, and to equip you with common-sense methods for success.

A note on the style of this book: If you are seeking a highly technical, academic-speak book about grants and funding, this isn't it. This is, pure, businesslike, pleasure-reading about idea advancement backed with solid experience and information from people in the business of applying for and giving funds in the form of grants.

I focus on the essentials of grant writing and finding funds that will keep you current and proficient as the industry and funding sources change. I share straightforward methods for individuals, groups, and communities that have little or no experience with grants and funding to become acquainted with logical, engaging steps to help build up ideas through narrative and budget, building strong bridges to funders and successful fund-finding.

To get you on the road, I discuss a sample project throughout the book. The project includes narrative and budget summaries, checklists for staying organized, and a general view of matching fund possibilities such as crowdfunding.

1. What Can the Grant and Funding Coach Do For You?

This book can:

- Provide you with a framework to present your project in a clear, confident manner, to create a rapport with funders, and to succeed in your efforts. Funders will believe in your project if you do.
- Encourage you to tell your story. A true and compelling story is at the heart of all successful grants, whether you are requesting hundreds, thousands, or more. When you inspire your funders with a true story, you'll see results.
- Help you organize a successful application. I'll walk you through fundamental steps required to create a sound grant application, no matter what your project, where it's located or the size of your organization.
- Advise you to keep it simple. In grant writing, less is more. Why use a 1,000 words when 500 words will suffice? Grant writing is not an arduous and impossible task. In fact, funders appreciate clear, simple applications that get to the point.
- Advise you on sources of funds and how to look for them.
- Whether you're looking for public or private funds or want to explore the world of crowdfunding, I provide methods that stay current, no matter how much the industry changes.
- Provide checklists. Maintain a sense of order and keep it simple and you're on your way to creating a successful application. Step-by-step, the checklists and tools I provide help you move from start-up, to organization, to submission, and follow-through.
- Give you examples. What can you do to help a funder make a favorable decision? Having experienced the applicant and reviewer's sides, I provide some examples of what works well and what does not.
- Invite you to have fun. Let's face it, some people see grant writing and fund-finding as a stressful and tedious exercise. Isn't it great that it doesn't have to be? Every application is a chance to learn, excel, make friends along the way, and provide the same opportunity for funders. Join me in enjoying the world of using your ideas to build bridges with funders.

2. How the Book Is Organized

There are 11 chapters in this book. I've arranged them to walk you step-by-step through the same process I use to write grants and find funds.

The first three chapters are about taking your idea and creating a draft budget and draft summary which will stay with you as you build your application, and will help set a successful course to support and funds. With this, I use a sample project which I carry through to later chapters in the book as you progress with your idea.

Chapter 4 is about making room for your idea. I talk about the foundation of grant success — organization — and how you can set the stage to attract funders.

Chapter 5 looks at fitting your idea to the right funds. There are general summaries of private and public funds, operating versus special project funds, the difference between, a look at grants and foundations, and the difference between professional grant writing and fundraising.

Chapter 6 explores the world of crowdfunding and gives you some beginning tips on finding a platform and setting up a campaign. Just a note, this chapter does not provide a glossary of specific funds. Instead, I provide some wayfinding tips in the big world of money for projects.

Chapter 7 is about finding, approaching, and connecting with funders.

In Chapter 8, we discuss building bridges with funders and double checking to ensure that the fund fits your project's need and the funder's need. In this chapter you will also find examples of what works and what doesn't work so well with funders.

Chapter 9 focuses on the final application, while Chapter 10 is about reporting, and 11 explores saying thank you.

As thanks to you, in Appendix I, I've provided ten tips to take the stress out of proposal writing.

Finally, Appendix II contains books, blog links, and portals which I discuss in the book. For portals for funding and associations, you can find an extended list on my website www.griffithscommunications.com.

Chapter 1

YOUR IDEA

If you have an idea about a project you'd like to see happen in your community, congratulations. You, as an originator, have taken the first step in initiating progress in any number of areas including education, building, health, the arts, heritage, sports, agriculture, the environment, and more. Your idea could help shape the world in a positive way.

Ideas show up in our conversations, dreams, in the shower, while driving, walking, even napping. They can happen in a moment or grow for years. If you've picked up this book because you have an idea you'd like to move along, you've come to the right place.

You might be able to see an empty lot across the street from your office or home. You've noticed that the children who walk by the lot every day would gain from a pool, gym, or a place to gather. You see the need. You can envision the building and you might even be able to imagine people entering and exiting after a family swim.

Or, maybe the river trail you walk on every day is deteriorating and causing problems for people, wildlife, and the river environment. You can see how upgrades might help the situation. You see the problem and, like most people, the solution.

I'm the same: I can see the problem and solution. However, when I first began writing grants, thinking about activating that solution seemed complicated. A long road stretched out in front of me with speed bumps

of concepts and paperwork. Delineating the “goals” and “objectives” bored me silly.

I loved the stories, the subjects, research, people, and especially, results. However, I didn’t look forward to writing overblown prose.

Early on, I realized that there was probably a better way. I persisted in developing an easier system for myself because I enjoyed the challenge. I also like gaining money for enhancement of public spaces or needs.

Over the years, certain constants began to emerge from the grants I wrote. I realized that funders were probably just as bored with figuring out the nuances between goals and objectives as I was. It was a relief to find that they shared my love of the subjects, stories, research, and people. Opportunities to connect with and impact the community were more important than prose or word count.

More years rolled along and I began to review grants as well as write them. That’s when I began to understand that it doesn’t matter what your level of experience is with writing grants, or with writing, for that matter. Successful funding happens when an application embodies certain qualities that connect you and the funder.

Successful funding happens when an application embodies certain qualities that connect you and the funder.

These qualities are organization; confidence in your goals and partners; an honest, compelling story; congruency in budgets and narrative; and saying thank you. Combine them all and you have a project over which you and the funder can shake hands.

Because of people like you, wharves, hospitals, railway stations, airports, shelters, schools, and public gardens happen. You initiate restoration and conservation of sanctuaries, forests, and watersheds. Museums, schools, galleries, hospitals, theaters, and more gain capital and program funding.

Whatever you might want to help to accomplish, writing grants and looking for funds that fit your need is a venture into the creative world of future improvement.

If you have an idea that has stuck with you and you’re beginning to look at pursuing it further to find some funding for it, here are some questions to ask yourself.

1. Basic Questions about Your Idea

- Have you floated your idea with board and community members, with politicians who might be able to speak for it, and have you received honest feedback on it?
- Is it easy for you to think of potential partners for the project?
- Once the project is up and running, will it sustain itself so that you're not going back to funders year after year?
- Have you estimated generally how much this idea will cost and can you describe clearly who the benefactors will be?

If you can answer “yes” to these questions, you have an idea with which you can work.

Now let's talk about money: cash, funds. You'll need some. Moreover, you'll need to be able to say how much you need, what it's for, and why it's an opportunity for funders to give it to you.

2. Your Idea Happens with Money

The lack of money is the root of all evil.

— Mark Twain

Samuel Langhorne Clemens — a.k.a., Mark Twain — included money in his observations of everyday life. His rich, ironic accounts of the mundane and obvious made a mark on society.

Twain, in this one out-loud sentence, nailed the complexities of cash. We're human: Our social dance and pecking order around money is complicated. There are myriad socially acceptable ways of seeing and discussing, or not discussing, money and the power balance it brings along for the ride.

In some circles, discussing money indicates that you have a lack thereof. Certain high-end restaurants don't list prices on the menu. The idea of sitting back, relaxing, and taking Twain's quote seriously as you read the entrees without fidgeting over the double-digit numbers across from them is inviting. This “forget about it” approach to dinner out is much more relaxing than trying to calculate the price of a chef's salad for yourself with the luxury of a slice of dark chocolate cake at the end. It's also a rarity for most of us.

Let's say I had a chance to travel back in time to the early 1900s, and Twain and I were talking, one-on-one, in late afternoon on a lanai overlooking the slopes of Maui. I'd probably try to be urbane and wise and counter his quote with, "Even worse, not being able to talk to a funder about a need for money is the root of all trouble for a grant writer."

3. Go Forward with No Fear

Because of my own preconceptions about money, when I first started applying for grants, it was sometimes difficult for me to ask for money in a clear manner.

After all, I was asking for money: I felt it necessary to approach the funder as though I was describing a higher mystery that was most deserving of support from funders. I suspect that it was difficult for funders to get through my obtuse and lofty prose to cut to the chase.

What I've learned over the years is to drop the fear of discussing money and be clear about an organization's needs. Approaching funders is not about asking funders for money. It's about offering them positive opportunities and empowering them with the opportunities your idea presents. Together, you're going to build bridges.

4. A Smart Investment for You and the Funder

Right out of the gate, let's get money straight. Cash and dollars are central to all funding applications. But once funders see a solid, feasible budget, they move beyond that framework to get to the heart of the project — their core purpose — and that is to make smart social investments.

Treat the dollars in your application as a means rather than an end. If you worry about cash, try to overthink it, get hung up on it, equate your idea to it, feel you have to prove you, or your organization, are worthy of it—don't. It will deter your efforts.

You need a tight, solid budget upon which you can stand. Your idea, and how you shape it on top of that budget is what holds the value for a funder. You, in providing the right opportunity at the right time to the right funder, are presenting a product with value to the funder and partners. Keep this in mind and it will help you throughout to define your project and search for supporters, partners, and funders.

Let's begin to put your idea into reality by creating a draft budget in Chapter 2.