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Grant Writing for the Counseling Professional

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Grant Writing for the Counseling Professional

Abstract

This article provides an overview of grant writing for the counseling professional. The information presented is a combination of several sources including recent literature; current government regulations, policies and submission guidelines; information from foundations and non-profit funding agencies; and the author's own ten years in grants administration. The aim of this article is to provide counselors and counselor educators new to grant writing a better understanding of the typical processes and procedures in proposal preparation. Concepts discussed include identifying a strong need, working with a team, finding the right funder and the fundamentals of writing a successful proposal.

Author's Notes

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Keywords

grant writing, proposal development, external funding, research

There is an ongoing movement in the counseling discipline to produce more empirical evidence for counselors and counselor educators (Kline, 2003; Borders, Boul & Horton, 2013). At the same time, counselors are directly working with clients that may lack resources and need ongoing support (Kaplan, Tarvydas, & Gladding, 2014). Producing quality research and implementing effective programs requires logistical and financial resources. Grant funding can provide the time and capital needed to support research and programmatic activities. Many counselors and counselor educators must find external funding through government, foundations, or corporate sources in order to advance their initiatives (Daniel, West, Daniel & Flowers, 2006), yet they may not have been trained nor have any experience in pursuing grant funding (Lambie & Vaccaro, 2011; Villalba & Young, 2012). With an understanding of the grant writing process, thoughtful planning, and persistence, receiving grant funding is attainable.

The American Counseling Association (ACA) Code of Ethics (2014) states the importance of a thorough understanding of use of research in evidence-based practice and an understanding of proper methodology and principles. Yet only the standards for doctoral study indicate that the student “demonstrates the ability to write grant proposals appropriate for research, program enhancement, and/or program development” (p. 56). While there is discussion in the counseling profession on the quality of research (Wester & Borders, 2014; Wester, Borders, Boul, Horton, 2013), including a recent dedication of an edition of the *Journal of Counseling & Development* (summer 2011) to preparing and publishing research, there is little in the counseling literature that discusses grant writing and external funding. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to provide an overview of the grant writing process with the aim of encouraging and demystifying the process for counselors and counselor educators. The information provided is garnered from the author’s ten years of experience in university grants administration which

successfully secured over \$15 million dollars in federal, state and foundation grants, combined with recent literature, government and non-profit policies and submission guidelines.

Counselors and External Funding

There is a push in the discipline to further develop and enhance counselors' research identity through education and research opportunities (Heppner, Wampold & Kivlighan, 2007; Kaplan et al., 2014; Reissetter et al., 2004). Whether qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods, the need for empirically-based research is critical for continued momentum in the counseling profession. A recent review (Ray et al., 2011) of over 4,000 articles published in ACA journals found only 31% of the articles to be research-oriented, with the remaining based on theory and practice. This is especially true for practical applications as only 6% of all articles focus on effective counseling interventions (Ray et al., 2011). Since research is the foundation of understanding the human condition and the knowledge that drives work and practice, there is need in the counseling profession to produce more empirically tested research (Elliot & Swerchuk, 1999; Reissetter et al., 2004; Villalba & Young, 2012).

Counselor Educators and External Research

In most institutions, counselor educators must engage in teaching, service, and scholarship, which include the publication of scholarly works (Davis, Levitt, Glothlin, & Hill, 2006). Many within the discipline argue the need for counselors and counselor educators to expand their researcher identity (Heppner et al., 2007; Reissetter et al., 2004; Wester & Borders, 2014) in order to produce more evidence-based work as well as to propel the discipline. Having the time and monetary resources are important consideration for counselors/counselor educators who wish to conduct research. Grant funding can provide not only the funding but also allow

accommodations for the time needed to conduct research (such as in course release buy-out and summer salary to focus summer activities on research endeavors).

Practicing Counselors and Grant Funding

Since counselors frequently work on important and needed programs which are often under-funded (Kettner, Moroney & Martin, 2013), finding funding from external sources can be critical to the development, success and sustainability of a project. In the author's own experience working with counselors at non-profit agencies, many state that they did not expect to be writing grants when they were initially planning their careers or in their counseling masters programs. Some find, however, that grant writing becomes a part of their job responsibilities and an acquired and necessary skill. Grant funding can often provide the ongoing sustainability of needed programs and projects (Posavac, 2011).

Proposal Development and Grant Writing

While the idea of grant writing may seem overwhelming, it is actually quite achievable with some planning and direction. The key is to find funding opportunities that best match a research or program interest and then take the time to write and submit a quality proposal (Lusk, 2004). This manuscript outlines three critical steps to the grant writing process: (1) identifying and describing a compelling need, (2) identifying the appropriate funder and (3) developing the key components of the grant proposal. With this information, new grant-seekers can begin the process of writing and submitting grant proposals.

Identifying and Describing a Need

Experience combined with a thorough review of the literature reveals the gaps in services, treatment, or research. Grant funding is awarded to organizations, researchers, or agencies seeking to address the gaps and provide potential solutions to societal problems or

scientific questions (Posavac, 2011). A school counseling professional, for example, may notice that her/his students often leave school and have no supervision nor productive after school activities. As a result, they often get into trouble. She/he may have a unique idea on how to approach and transform the problem that is based on her knowledge of the subject, current research and her understanding of the unique needs of her community. Her/his idea requires start-up funds, however. So how does she/he then take her/his idea and produce a fundable proposal? First, she/he must have a compelling statement of need that is well researched, thorough and compelling. For example, she/he could state: *the purpose of this project is to provide an afterschool mentoring program for 9-10th graders at Regional High School*. While this does summarize the overall purpose of the project, it does not provide any real perspective of need or potential impact. Or she/he could provide a stronger statement of need and purpose:

Regional High School is made up of middle to lower income working class families with a large population of first generation immigrant families. Regional High School has over 900 students, of which approximately half qualify for free and reduced lunch. Through parent surveys, it is known that while parents would like to send their children to afterschool programs, most cannot afford the additional costs. Through the same survey, it is also known that parents are most interested in mentoring programs, especially if presented in a bilingual (Spanish/English) format. Research shows that high-quality peer-to-peer mentoring provides support and positive role modeling which in turn improves academic performance and increases graduation rates (Murman et al., 2014; Price & Jones, 2001; Wahl, Susin, Kaplan, Lax, & Zatina, 2011). Therefore, the purpose of this proposed project is to provide a high-quality bi-lingual afterschool mentoring program two times per week to eligible 9-10th graders in Regional High School.

In the latter statement, our school counselor is able to paint a more compelling picture. The statement also shows that the grant writer conducted a survey of participants to gauge actual interest in the proposed project which presents a clearer understanding of both the need and goals of the project.

Grant funders reading and scoring grant applications look for a comprehensive assessment of the population's specific need and whether or not the proposed project can successfully fill that gap (Kettner et al., 2013). Identifying and describing a need begins with a thorough review of the current literature. The literature review must include the most current research on the topic and outline what strategies and interventions have shown to be effective (Coley & Scheinberg, 2007). A successful proposal builds upon the existing literature but extends the literature with a unique concept, idea or intervention (Gerin, Kapelewski, Itinger, & Spruill 2010; Heppner, et al., 2007). In addition to the literature review, grant writers must outline what is known about the population and resources currently. For example, if a proposed program was to expand services to include counseling at a homeless shelter, the grant writer would conduct a thorough literature review about the specific mental health needs of those who are homeless as well as the influence of counseling on mental health. The grant writer also needs to provide specifics of the proposed recipients of the intervention, which may include how many people are in this particular homeless shelter, what are their current mental health issues (and how the data collected) and what programs are currently offered including mental health services, if any.

Working with a team. It is critical to identify partners and collaborators before submission. Using the above example of providing counseling within a homeless shelter, the grant writers would speak specifically with shelter administrators and secure a written agreement

of collaboration for the project. Often these are called letters of agreements or memorandum of understanding and are typically included within the appendix of a grant application. In our example above, grant writers and shelter administration would set clear guidelines, roles and responsibilities, anticipated outcomes and budgetary requirements. This would be outlined in the letters of agreements or memorandums of understanding and signed by officials from both agencies.

Funders are more likely to support a team with a project that is well established and demonstrates the capability to start working immediately (Lusk, 2004). In our counseling/shelter grant, the writers demonstrated that they have an established partnership with a homeless shelter, so time does not have to be spent finding a site, establishing relationships and negotiating details. Instead, counseling services can begin almost immediately allowing grant funding to be used for direct services.

Identifying the Appropriate Funder

There is a great deal of variability within funding sources. As such, it is important to understand differences in funding options in order to successfully identify which agency and/or foundation is most appropriate to target and navigate options. Federal, state, foundation and corporate funding opportunities exist for mental health, school counseling and addiction-related research, projects, and programs (Vernon & Rainey, 2009; Villalba & Young, 2012).

Grant funders. Federal agencies are large government-run organizations that receive funding from legislative appropriations. Examples include the National Institutes of Health (NIH), U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) and National Science Foundation (NSF). Federal government grants are typically the most complex, competitive and lengthy type of proposal. For multi-year projects that require a considerable budget, federal agencies are often

the best option for funding. That being said, federal agencies, such as the NIH and USDOE, do provide funding for small projects and new investigators.

State and local government grants are also excellent resources for funding. Some state and local funding are federal pass-through money (funding received by the state from proposals to the federal government) or through special appropriations and/or tax allocations. Often states have designated websites for different departments and links to funding opportunities. Typically grants are awarded one year at a time and renewable based on continued state funding appropriation. Local government grants typically are funded from monies received through block grants and tend to be small and allocated annually (Coley & Scheinberg, 2007). The appeal of state and local grants is that they are often location specific and can be a perfect match for geographically-bound initiatives.

Another area of funding includes independent, community or company-sponsored foundations. Independent foundations are established to aid an educational or charitable activity or a social cause and are typically endowed by a single source such as an individual or family (Coley & Scheinberg, 2007). Community foundations are publicly-supported and provide grants for charitable purposes, again, usually in specific geographic areas. Company-sponsored foundations are typically endowed by a profit-making corporation (such as the Walmart Foundation or the Coca-Cola Foundation). Company-sponsored foundations may support activities occurring in the location of the corporate offices and/or they may fund programs that impact communities near a store or a branch location. Corporations may be interested in creating or increasing public awareness by being associated with a particular cause or assisting a local community. (Posavac, 2011).

Where to look for funding opportunities. Starting the search for funding can seem overwhelming at first. The grant seeker should take sufficient time to think about the size and scope of the project and to which funders it may appeal. Is it a large multi-year project possibly affecting a large geographic area? Then federal grant opportunities might be the place to start. If the project is geographically bound or a pilot project, a state agency or local foundation might be the best place to contact. The following section provides information on where to begin the search for funding.

Federal grant announcements are compiled at the clearinghouse called Grants.gov (www.grants.gov). This comprehensive site enables searching for funding opportunities by using keywords or more specific information. Discretionary grants (grant awards made on the basis of a competitive process) from the 26 federal grant-making agencies can be found on this website. Federal opportunities are submitted electronically, most through the grants.gov portal. If the grant seeker works at an academic institution, the sponsored programs office, a department dedicated to grant administration, most likely already has a grants.gov registration and will submit on the applicant's behalf. Otherwise, plan accordingly to allow time for the grants.gov registration to be completed (obviously well in advance of a grant deadline).

There are specific federal departments and divisions that are more applicable to counselors and counselor educators. The following table provides a brief overview of federal grants most applicable to counseling:

Agency Name	Funding Priorities	Website
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment Center for Mental Health Services 	Addiction and mental health issues	www.samhsa.gov/grants
National Institutes of Health		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Institute of Mental Health 	Mental health research and programming	www.nimh.nih.gov
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities 		www.nimhd.nih.gov
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development 	Supports projects in support of children, families, and communities	www.nichd.nih.gov
US Department of Education (USDOE)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elementary and School Counseling Program 		www2.ed.gov/programs/elseccounseling

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) is a complex and intricate grant funding organization consisting of 27 different specialized institutions; each provide many different funding opportunities at various levels. The complexities of federal grants are beyond the scope of this article, but there are excellent resources available to learn more about federal funding opportunities, especially at agency websites.

Agency Name	Website
Grants.gov	www.grants.gov/web/grants/learn-grants
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration	www.samhsa.gov/grants
National Institutes of Health*	www.grants.nih.gov/grants www.grants.nih.gov/grants/grants_process.htm
US Department of Education	www2.ed.gov/fund/grants-apply

*The NIH website in particular is also extremely helpful and provides information, podcasts and videos on how to best navigate the complexities of the organization.

One of the best resources available to find information regarding foundation and corporate grant giving is the Foundation Center (foundationcenter.org/). The Foundation Center has been providing information about philanthropic activities for over 50 years. There are five offices nationwide (New York City; Washington, DC; Atlanta; Cleveland; and San Francisco) that provide free access to information, resources and educational activities. In addition, the Foundation Center's website is comprehensive and includes many resources. Some of the information is limited to those with a paid subscription, however, there is an abundance of free resources including a searchable database, information about different organizations and foundations and online webinars including several free tutorials such as "Introduction to Fundraising Planning" and "How to Approach a Foundation" (see <http://foundationcenter.org/getstarted/training/online/>).

Additionally, searching for projects similar to your own is a good way to find information about different foundations and organizations. Begin by reaching out to peers who have had funding success. Most researchers, program directors and grant writers are willing to share experiences, offer strategies and discuss challenges. Websites of similar projects or programs are also invaluable resources. Most funded projects are required to provide information about funding sources directly on their website. For example, an applicant looking for funding for mental health counseling for at-risk children/teenagers can look at similar local projects or even bigger organizations such as the Boys and Girls Club. A school counselor within a school district may have an office dedicated to grant writing or may even provide small amounts of funding to hire a grant writer for a bigger project. Counselor educators who work in higher education typically have sponsored programs offices committed to helping faculty find funding, providing examples of other successful projects and offering direct feedback and assistance on proposals.

Request for proposals. Funding agencies typically announce funding opportunities through Request for Proposals (RFPs), also called Requests for Applications (RFAs). Depending on the funder, RFPs can look very different and be either simple or complex. Federal proposals tend to be more complicated while foundation proposals typically are more straightforward. The RFP contains all of the pertinent information needed to submit a complete proposal. Details within the RFP include funding goals and objectives, eligibility requirements, deadline information, formatting restrictions, submission requirements, contact information for program officers and very detailed instructions on what is required for a complete submission. It is important to read an RFP in its entirety before submitting a proposal.

This opportunity looks good, now what? When reviewing potential funding opportunities, be sure to determine whether or not your project fits within an organization's funding goals and objectives. With most organizations, this involves thoroughly reading their mission statement and funding priorities. Looking through recently funded projects helps to determine whether the funding agency has supported projects similar in type, size, locations and amounts. For example, if a project needs \$300k to run but the foundation typically funds projects closer to \$25k-50k in size and scope, it would be better to consider proposing a part or component of the project and/or continuing to look for another funder who supports larger budgets. It is equally as important that your organization is eligible to apply. Most grant funders do not accept proposals from individual applicants. Check the eligibility requirements for specific information, for example grant funders may require the applicant to be a 501c3 (a non-profit organization), or may only allow affiliates of Institutes of Higher Education (IHE) such as faculty members or affiliates of Local Education Agencies (LEA) such a school counselor. If unsure, contact the funders directly.

After determining if you and/or your organization are eligible to apply, look at deadlines and determine the likelihood and reasonability of completing a proposal on time. Allow sufficient time before the deadline to give the grant writing team the ability to bring all of the partners together for thoughtful writing and review. Too often proposals are written at the final hour, resulting in high anxiety for all involved. For complex federal grants, it is optimal to plan at least 12 months in advance of the deadline. Smaller grants may not need as much time but it is best to be thoughtful in the planning process and give ample time for revisions and more revisions. Finally, keep in mind that, similar to academic journal submissions, you may not submit the same grant application to more than one funding organization at a time.

Developing the Key Components of a Grant Proposal

Grant writing has similarities to academic writing but it is more technical and precise in nature (Porter, 2007). Most often with proposal preparation, writing is done with a team. It is best for the team to collaboratively create a timeline, divide responsibility and establish deadlines. Assign one person to act as the “leader” to be responsible for the overall management of the proposal process. Be sure to have multiple people edit the final draft for any content, grammatical issues, or typos but also for compliance with grant guidelines. Furthermore, be concise with the overall writing and be sure to substantiate any assertions.

It is also critical to find someone who will be willing to read and provide feedback on the proposal. This can be someone who has written successful proposals in the past, a colleague or a grants administrator at an academic setting. You can also reach out directly to the funding agency for feedback. Keep in mind that foundations will answer technical questions but not typically provide any direct proposal feedback. However, government entities, for example program officers in National Institutes of Health, encourage reviewing abstracts in advance in

order to ensure that the application is appropriate for their funding mechanism as well as provide valuable feedback and guidance (Gerin et al., 2010).

Take the time to read the funding request (RFP) in its entirety. Create an outline of all of the different required components and double check that list with a grants administrator or a colleague. Transforming the outline into a working document before starting can be a very useful way of organizing and ensuring that each component is completed. It also ensures that the reviewers will be able to follow and score a proposal in alignment with the stated guidelines and procedures. Also, note the details of the formatting requirements. Often RFPs include instructions on page numbers, font size and type, margin width, character limits (if applicable), formatting and sequencing. A proposal can be completely rejected even if only one little aspect is done incorrectly. For example, the author had a lengthy proposal returned without review because it was missing one required letter of support. Grants offices or administrators are available for support and guidance for applicants at most college and universities.

Common elements of a proposal. While foundations and government agencies may have formats in which to submit a grant proposal, the contents of a grant application are usually consistent. The information provided next is gathered from the author's decade long grant writing and administration experience, from texts on grant writing (Coley & Scheinberg, 2007; Gerin et al., 2010; Kettner et al., 2013), as well as excellent online resources (see Appendix A for more information). Sections to be described include cover letters or abstracts, project descriptions and narratives, management plan and key personnel, evaluation plan, dissemination and sustainability plan and a budget and budget justification.

Cover letter. Sometimes the instructions of cover letters are very specific and often include applicant, institution/organization, and contact information, the specific title of the RFP,

the project title and a very short paragraph about the goals and objectives of the project. This is an important document, and in combination with the abstract, is often the gatekeeper for the rest of the proposal. A well-written cover letter (and abstract) will create a first impression and set the tone for the rest of the proposal.

Abstract. Often the funder outlines what is to be included in the abstract and typically it is limited to one page. The abstract is an important component of a proposal as it is, in essence, the “sales pitch” (Coley & Scheingberg, 2007). The abstract is a very concise outline of the entire proposal. It must include the most relevant information and data about the need or problem statement, the research question or programmatic information, an overview of the methodology or work plan and an outline of the overall goals, objectives and broader impacts of the project. This is a document that is best drafted first but refined after the proposal is completed. Be sure that the abstract is complete, compelling and clear in order to entice the reviewer to continuing evaluating the rest of the proposal.

Project description/narrative. The sequencing of the project description or narrative may be predetermined by the RFP and it is important to follow the order as outlined in the proposal. Typically, a project description includes an introduction, including the research questions or program aims; specific aims including goals and objectives; a relevant literature review and a detailed work plan or research methodology.

It is important that the goals and objectives be clear, measurable and concise. The goals are the overall and broad purpose of the project and the objectives are specific ways each goal will be met. The goals and objectives must be realistic and achievable within the timeframe presented in the proposal. They must also be measurable. For example, if a program goal is *reduce depression in military veterans on a university campus*, the objective is *provide weekly*

individual and biweekly group counseling by Licensed Professional Counselors from the University Counseling Center to reduce depression as measured by the Beck Inventory. Goals and objectives must correlate to the objectives of the evaluation section.

A relevant literature review must also be included. Often because of page limit restrictions, the literature review must be succinct. This does not mean that it is not comprehensive, but deliberate and concise with all of the significant information and sources included. It is imperative to cite the most current research on the subject and reiterate how the proposed project extends and/or addresses a gap in the literature. Check with RFP guidelines for formatting of references.

Following the literature review, a work plan or the research methodology is outlined. Here, a detailed plan of how the project will be implemented is presented. If the proposal is for a programmatic project, it is important that the stages of the proposal are outlined and that they are logical and realistic. It is helpful to also include a visual representative of the timeline if space allows. Another option is to include a timeline in an appendix. For research proposals, a well-thought-out research methodology is explained and includes the theoretical model, participant recruitment and sampling procedures, survey or assessment instruments, quantitative, qualitative or mixed methodology procedures and a power analysis (if applicable) (Gerin et al., 2010). Often a proposal will include a separate section for the protection of human subjects, but regardless it is important to include the human subject and consent form procedures. This includes potential risk and the protocols in place to minimize or prevent risk to participants. It is important that the methodology section be as detailed as possible, as it shows reviewers that the proposal is comprehensive (Coley & Scheinberg, 20007; Kettner et al., 2013).

Management plan/key personnel. The RFP or grant application may provide an opportunity to outline a management plan. A management plan is the organizational chart for the project and gives the applicant an opportunity to provide details about key personnel. In this section leadership structure and roles and responsibilities are delineated. This section also allows the applicant to expand on the information found in a curriculum vitae or a résumé thereby providing further detail about the specific expertise of the key personnel. A grant application with a detailed management plan allows grant funders to be confident that the project would start on day one with the personnel team intact (Kettner et al., 2013). This provides the maximum time for grant funding to be used for its intended purpose rather than being delayed hiring staff.

Evaluation plan. In programmatic grants, the evaluation section is one of the most important sections of the entire proposal. The general purpose of an evaluation is to determine whether project goals and objectives have been met as well as the overall effectiveness of the project. In the evaluation section of a grant proposal, a detailed plan is outlined including who is conducting the evaluation, their qualifications, the data collection instruments that will be used and data collection and analysis procedures. A good evaluation helps to discover any problems to fix and improve the quality of a program. Furthermore, the evaluation helps project administrators ensure accountability and organize key findings to share with stakeholders and the community (Posavac, 2011)

If possible, it is best to hire an outside evaluation firm or individual evaluator that will work with the grant writing team from the start of the proposal (Posavac, 2011). If using an outside evaluator is not possible, be sure to discuss how the evaluation process will be conducted as impartial as possible. Evaluators typically provide formative, program and/or summative evaluations. Formative evaluation is provided during the program development and

implementation and helps shape the program in order to maximize performance. Process evaluation looks at how program activities are performed and makes recommendations on how to optimize the program delivery. Summative evaluations are provided at either the end of a program year or when the program is finished. The summative evaluation provides a thorough report of the performance of the overall program (Kettner et al., 2013; Posavac, 2011). The evaluation plan should have its own timeline which includes delivery dates for reports, a separate human subjects section and a detailed budget and justification of the expenditures. Depending on the scope of work, the cost of the evaluation can be up to 10% of the total project budget.

In the case of the school counselor seeking funding for an after-school mentoring project, she/he might reach out to a local university to work with a faculty member with research expertise. In this situation, the faculty member would be hired as the contracted evaluator and would write the evaluation section of the proposal. This faculty member would design surveys and/or choose validated instruments that would be used for data collection and/or conduct focus groups/interviews of participants. By using the faculty member to evaluate her/his program, the school counselor would be able to get valuable feedback as well as provide grant funders an impartial report of the outcomes of her/his program. The school counselor and faculty member would negotiate responsibilities and fees in advance and document all in a letter of commitment included in the appendix of the proposal.

Dissemination/sustainability plan. It is also important for a grant proposal to include detailed information about how results and findings are going to be shared with stakeholders and the public. In academic research, dissemination includes published articles, conference presentations or workshops. The more detail provided, the better, including the names of the journals in which articles will be submitted or the organizations or conferences where findings

will be presented. Furthermore, it is important to provide a plan for sustaining the project if it does not have a finite end. For example, if a grant is awarded to establish a counseling center in an area that lacks any mental health services, how will services continue to be provided when the grant funding period is complete. This might involve seeking additional support from current funders or finding additional and separate funding. If the project is able to generate revenue in order to be self-sustaining, be certain to provide information and timing about the plans to do so. Funding organizations are interested in supporting projects that will create new information, generate additional ideas, lead to new proposals as well as provide knowledge and advancement in the field.

Budget and budget justification. A precise and detailed budget demonstrates good planning and foresight on the part of the grant writing team. Begin the budgeting process with the staff and other stakeholders involved by outlining the needs of the project. This can be accomplished by creating a spreadsheet, thinking about any start-up costs and then going through the project and outlining the expected expenses for each item. Read through the RFP for guidelines and restrictions regarding budgeting. For example, some grant funders do not support particular items (such as furniture or office supplies), may cap the amount used for particular line items (such as salary) or may stipulate that a certain percent of the budget must be for participants (such as incentives or direct service costs). Be sure that the project budget follows the guidelines exactly and does not go above funding limits. It is helpful to talk to others that have similar projects and/or have had grant-funded projects. Furthermore, reach out to those experienced with grant management. Often they can speak to expenditures that may not have been anticipated when the project was originally planned and are helpful in brainstorming budget items and approximating amounts for different categories.

An overview of the information typically needed in a grant budget including personnel, fringe, supplies, travel, incentives, consultants, evaluation costs, indirect costs/overhead and in-kind contributions is provided here:

Personnel. Be sure to include all personnel costs associated with the project. Typically the personnel section is designated for key personnel; consultants are listed in a separate line item. Personnel must match what is listed in the management plan/key personnel section of the proposal. Include salary information and/or outline how compensation is calculated (that is, using an hourly rate or percentage of annual salary). For example, if a faculty member is going to devote 10% effort (or 10% of contracted annual time) to a proposed project and their annual salary is \$65,000, they should request funding for \$6,500. If salary request within a budget is for a full annual amount, or 100% effort, be sure that the salary requested is reasonable with consideration to scope or responsibility and comparable to others doing similar work.

Fringe. Fringe rates are costs associated with personnel expenses such as federal and state taxes, unemployment, social security and benefits (Quick & New, 2001). Check with your institution, organization, agency or school districts on rates charged for full-time and part-time employees. Typically fringe is not charged for consultants.

Supplies. This section includes supplies needed for the project such as pens, paper, copying costs, books, postage for mailing and other necessities. Keep in mind that the supply category may also include items such as computers, software, printers and ink. Check the RFP for details about whether to list particular items in the supply line or as a separate category. Equipment is a separate section and reserved for items that are over \$5,000 (be sure not to include computer supplies in equipment but rather in the supplies budget).

Travel. Travel costs that are associated with the project including mileage costs, airfare, hotel, rental cars, public transportation, incidentals (such as food costs), or other travel expenses. Often federal rates associated with travel for hotel, incidentals and mileage are required and can be found at the U.S. General Services Administration website (www.gsa.gov) under per diem rates or mileage costs.

Incentives. Incentives are often an important consideration especially when it is necessary to recruit and retain participants for a project. Incentives must be appropriate to the amount of time associated with participation. Consider how many hours a participant must commit to the project and estimate an appropriate hourly rate for their time. This is a good approximation on how much the incentive should be for each person. Incentives that are too large are considered coercion and are often not allowed by funding agencies. Incentive options can include cash (if applicable), gift cards, books or materials. Sometimes participant names can be placed in a raffle for a large ticket item, such as an iPad, so long as confidentiality is maintained. Often simply providing food such as pizza or snacks can work well, especially when programs involve children or students.

Consultants. Depending on the size and scope of the project, consultants or per diem employees may need to be included. Consultants are not considered key personnel and typically this is reflected in the scope of their responsibilities. Often consultants are brought in for specific tasks, such as providing feedback or expertise for a particular part of a project, or to do a set amount of training or professional development. Consultants are typically paid an hourly rate that is comparable to what they would earn if the consultant was full-time. Sometimes this hourly rate is inflated to consider other costs such as any pre-planning, travel or other associated costs.

Consultants should provide a letter of commitment that will be included in the proposal. The letter should outline their scope of work as well as the agreed upon fee arrangement.

Evaluation costs. Evaluation costs cover the monetary amount needed to perform an evaluation of the proposed program. If an outside evaluator is being hired, that individual or firm should create his or her own budget based on the proposed evaluation plan. Typically evaluators have hourly rates that incorporate all other incidentals (such as fringe, indirect costs, travel, supplies etc.). The rates often reflect the expertise of the evaluator as well as the complexity of the evaluation to be conducted. Depending on the RFP stipulation as well as the scope of the project, the evaluation costs is typically 10- 20% of the total project budget (Posavac, 2011).

Indirect costs or overhead. This category may be referenced as indirect costs, overhead or facility and administrative (F&A) costs (Quick & New, 2001). Indirect costs are those costs associated with the institution or organization supporting the project and are more typically seen in university proposals. Indirect costs cover expenses associated with facilities, operations and maintenance, financial or procurement offices, computers and technologies. Often institutions have a federally-negotiated indirect cost rate that is used in a budget. Foundations, however, often predetermine allowable indirect costs (such as 10% of the direct costs) or may even stipulate that indirect costs are not allowable. Be sure to check the RFP for exact details involving indirect costs.

In-kind contributions. Depending on the scope of the proposal, resources that are already available and provided may be included as in-kind contributions to a budget. In-kind contributions can also be called matching funds. To many funders, this looks more appealing as it shows that if an institution or organization is partially funding an initiative, it is committed to its success. Often funding organizations do not want to think that they are the only source of

funding for a particular project. Providing in-kind support or demonstrating funding from other sources shows that the project is solid and sustainable. In-kind support from the institution can be provided in several different ways such as, a certain percentage of a researcher or staff member's time; a discount in, for example, tuition costs; institutional travel reimbursement. Other in-kind support can come from volunteers or donations. Be sure to be realistic in what is proposed as in-kind contributions as grant funders request detailed evidence of these contributions at the end of the grant project period.

Budget justification. After everything has been outlined and categorized, it is important to include a narrative that provides a detailed account of the expenses. Detail is important as it shows that the budget items are justified as well as appropriate. The budget justification should follow the organization of the budget; for example, if a line-item budget begins with personnel and then is followed by fringe, supplies, travel, etc., the budget justification is organized in that order as well. Often a budget justification is not counted in the overall page limitation and so it provides additional space to further explain particular aspects of the project. Be sure, however, not to use the budget justification (or appendix for that matter) to circumnavigate any project narrative page limitations. Finally, double check that the numbers and categories in the budget justification add up to the same amounts outlined in the line-item budget.

Revise and Resubmit

Tenacity is the most important skill needed for grant writing. If your initial proposal is not accepted on the first submission, ask for and read through reviewer comments and feedback. The clues of what would make a successful proposal are in these comments (some foundations do not provide feedback or reviewer comments but federal agencies typically do). Revise and resubmit based on the comments. Often it is possible to directly respond to the reviewer feedback

in a cover letter or an additional document with a resubmission. Furthermore, a revised and resubmitted proposal may be reviewed by the same committee. If the original project showed potential and the resubmission incorporates the suggested changes, additions and/or edits, it is more likely that it will be funded on the second or third submission (Gerin et al., 2001). In the author's experience, once an applicant or researcher is funded the first time, they begin a track record of successful grant submissions going forward.

Conclusion

This manuscript serves as an initial guide for counselors and counselor educators new to pursuing external funding. By providing the basic concepts of grant terminology plus the typical pieces included in a grant proposal, it is the hope of the author that readers will realize that obtaining grant funding is an achievable pursuit. Readers are encouraged to review the additional resources provided as well as to reach out to colleagues and peers who have sought grant funding to learn more about different experiences, perspectives, and receive guidance and assistance. Ultimately, funding important research and programs within the counseling discipline provides services and support to those in need as well as furthers the knowledge and evidence base in the field.

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Appendix: Grant Resources

Websites

Foundation Center, complete source foundations and philanthropy: www.foundationcenter.org

Foundation Center free newsletters: <http://www.foundationcenter.org/newsletters/>

Grants.gov, clearinghouse for government grants: www.grants.gov; information about grants: www.grants.gov/web/grants/learn-grants

NEA Foundation, provides funding for educators: www.neafoundation.org

National Institutes of Health, the nation's medical and health research agency: www.nih.gov

National Institute of Mental Health: www.nimh.nih.gov

National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities: www.nimhd.nih.gov

National Institute of Child Health and Human Development: www.nichd.nih.gov

Information and resources for NIH grant applications: www.grants.nih.gov/grants

Tips and other resources: http://grants.nih.gov/grants/grant_tips.htm

National Science Foundation, federal agency devoted to science: www.nsf.gov

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA): www.samhsa.gov

U.S. Department of Education: <http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grants-apply.html>

Books

Coley, S. M., & Scheinberg, C. A. (2007). *Proposal writing: effective grantsmanship*. Washington D. C. Sage Publications.

Gerin, W., Kapelewski, C., Itinger, J. B., & Spruill, T. (2010). *Writing the NIH grant proposal: a step-by-step guide*. Thousand Oaks, CA. Sage Publications.

Kettner, P. M., Moroney, R. M., & Martin, L. L. (2013). *Designing and Managing Programs: An Effectiveness-Based Approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA. Sage Publications.