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Ten Steps to Grant Funding Success

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Get Me the Money: Funding for PSAPs and Public Safety



Ten steps to grant success

IN THE OSCAR®-WINNING MOVIE *JERRY McGuire* Cuba Gooding, Jr's character directed his agent, played by Tom Cruise, to "Show me the money!" Can you put yourself and your agency in the same situation? And, if so, can you go so far as to say, "Get me the money?" It might not be as tough as it seems if you faithfully and diligently follow the "10 Steps to Grant Success".

The "10 Steps to Grant Success" appear logical, and almost "too easy", but like any other project where results are critical – a diet, a regular work-out program, studying for the ENP exam – success comes from dedication, commitment and relentless pursuit of the goal. If you are ready to be successful in acquiring critical funding for the on-going operation, or expansion, of your public safety programs then read and apply these ten steps.

Step #1: Define Goals & Objectives

If it is not possible to develop clear goals and objectives at the start of a project then you must ask if the project needs to be pursued in the first place. It is very rare that we jump into the patrol car, turn on the

lights and siren and speed off without a known destination. The successful funding project is no different. You must begin with a set of clear goals and objectives – a clear destination. The goals and objectives should be carefully crafted so as to get buy-in from all involved parties and it is an extra bonus if the results are measurable, and attainable, rather than abstract.

While this first step may seem pretty basic, it really isn't. It is much easier to get support, and funding, if the goals and objectives are clear to all parties and align with the needs of the grant applicant and the granting organization. Here's a quick quiz. Which one of the following objectives is better, A or B?

- A:** To get money for more call takers.
- B:** To improve public safety by reducing 9-1-1 call answer times to 1 ring for at least 92% of all calls.

How about these, A or B?

- A:** To purchase the best body armor that money can buy.
- B:** To reduce officer injuries and deaths in crimes involving firearms.

I hope that you said "B" in both cases. The reasons should be clear and provide some guidance in developing your own objectives.

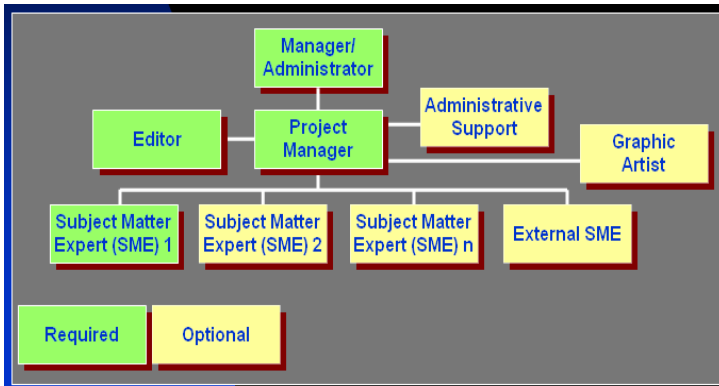
Step #2: Use The Power of Cooperation

Cooperation is a very powerful tool. One agency submitted a successful homeland security grant application accompanied by supporting letters from the police chiefs of twenty seven surrounding communities. Those 27 letters of support echoed the main objectives of the application and described how the grant being sought would help satisfy their own homeland security needs. They also pointed out that there were plans to train their own officers on the new equipment and that the equipment would be available for their use in case terrorists struck in their jurisdiction. They mentioned the populations of their jurisdictions as well as what they would be able to do with funding freed up by the sharing of equipment.

10 Steps to Grant Success:

- 1) Define Goals & Objectives
- 2) Use The Power of Cooperation
- 3) Combine Complimentary Initiatives
- 4) Find Multiple Funding Sources
- 5) Consider State, Local and Private Funding
- 6) Assemble A Grant Proposal Writing Team
- 7) Apply a Selling Process
- 8) Gather Intelligence
- 9) Perform Grant Self-Evaluation
- 10) Submit Grant and Monitor Grant Progress

YOU MUST BEGIN WITH A SET OF CLEAR GOALS AND OBJECTIVES - a clear destination.



Proposal Team.

Many agencies have applied for grants for joint Emergency Operations Centers, or have signed mutual assistance agreements to use each other's EOCs or PSAPs as back-ups in the case of disasters. Agencies reduce training costs by doing joint training and exercises and in hundreds of other ways that make a positive impression on granting organizations.

It might also be the case that your agency is not qualified, under the grant rules, to receive a specific grant but you could benefit from the grant. A cooperative effort with an agency that is qualified, and the sharing of the results, could also be a good investment of your resources.

Step #3: Combine Complimentary Initiatives

Think outside the box or, better yet, discard the box completely. Say, for instance, you are in a rural agency and are having difficulty finding medical personnel with specialized hazardous materials experience, a potentially important skill set if you've got railroad tracks or eight lanes of interstate highway running through your jurisdiction. How do you solve this problem? Why not provide assistance to promising students from your local Indian reservation in obtaining special grants for Native Americans who wish to become doctors or nurses? Help them with the grants, support them in their college efforts, encourage them to stay near home and give them a job.

If you need money to set aside a special area for drills and training, maybe with realistic urban structures or suburban strip mall store fronts, what is to say that the same area could not double as a sports field when not being used for training. What would keep the counter-terrorism van from being used for non-terrorism police activities? In many cases multi-use facilities can receive funding from multiple sources and increase the overall success.

Step #4: Find Multiple Funding Sources

Some grants specifically limit, or outright prohibit, money from secondary sources while some grants require matching funds. In cases where the rules on multiple sources are not clearly spelled out the rules should be clarified and multiple funding sources should be sought. In fact, if there is the option of investing your limited and valuable grant application resources in a grant that does not allow multiple funding sources and one that does you might opt to go with the one that allows multiple sources as it might be more likely to produce suitable results for the investment you will make in applying.

Multiple sources might also include some non-traditional sources, at least in terms of your agency's thinking. The Department of Agriculture has in the past given grants for rural Emergency Operations Centers and the EPA and Army Corps of Engineers have given grants for protecting water resources and structures such as dams. The US Atomic Energy Agency has money available to increase security at nuclear facilities and numerous other agencies can provide money for a variety of needs.

Another promising approach for multiple "funding sources" is to try and directly acquire the resource that you need as opposed to going through the intermediate step of getting money to pay for it. If your objective is to improve public safety through better education of first responders there are a number of organizations which, for instance, might provide a direct scholarship to the first responder/trainee. There are numerous programs for distribution of surplus materials that might be used instead of obtaining the money to purchase those materials if you will look for them. Some manufacturers have provided direct grants of their equipment or software in return for solid case studies about how their products are used.

Step #5: Consider State, Local and Private Funding

Federal grant programs are far and away the most visible and best funded programs but this does not mean that there are not many other, often overlooked, sources of funding: there are. In addition to Federal funding there is often government funding at the state and local levels as well as private funding. The key to being successful with these prospective sources is the same as with any Federal grant: align your goals and objectives with the needs of the granting organizations.

Will a lower crime rate raise the property values in a neighborhood or increase sales in a shopping mall? Of course it will and these are only two examples of a direct financial benefit as a result of public safety work. Since the fore-going is true you should consider if a home owners' association or merchants' group might not be a good potential source of funding, even if they have never done so in the past.

Step #6: Assemble A Grant Proposal Writing Team

Writing grant proposals should not be a hobby but often other responsibilities keep the writing and management of grants from receiving the attention it deserves and, very often, there is surprise and dismay when you "lost another one!" Dismay is reasonable, but surprise is not. Your fire company doesn't go out on a call when they have time. Your officers don't stop a bank robbery just if it is convenient. Nor should your grant writers be writing grants between traffic stops.

In order to be successful in the grant writing business create a team and give them sufficient time to do their grant writing jobs in addition to their other jobs, or, if possible, pay for full-time internal resources or consultants, trying to draw, where possible, on subject matter experts, such as cops, dispatchers or 9-1-1 call takers, who can apply their street smarts and experiences to the grant seeking process.

At the very least your team should include a manager/administrator of the highest possible position or rank – a lieutenant, chief of police, fire chief or mayor – who can shepherd the project through its various phases., a project manager, to manage the logistics and juggle resources and needs, an editor, to be sure that the overall proposal is readable and makes your points as clearly as possible, and at least one subject matter expert who can readily communicate the needs of your agency relative to the grant. In addition to the core team additional internal and external subject matter experts, a graphic artist and possibly administrative support personnel are also highly desirable.

And, don't be fooled by on-line grant applications. While they appear as easy as applying for a driver's license renewal of buying something on eBay there is just as much work to prepare and submit a successful on-line grant application as its paper counterpart and, some times, even more.

Step #7: Apply A Selling Process

A large part of the success in seeking grants comes from the realization that this is a selling process and all of the elements of traditional sales and marketing should be brought into play. You must have a good "product", usually your agency, or "service", what your agency does and good reputation both in terms of your service to the community and prior grant performance.

The alignment of your objectives with those of the granting agency often may take the form of reforming your objectives to more closely match the grant requirements or taking a different approach

Some Resources for 9-1-1 and Public Safety Grant Seekers

All available through www.grants.gov



Dept of Homeland Security (DHS)

Office for Domestic Preparedness

Dept of Transportation (DOT)

Federal Aviation Administration

Office of Intelligence and Security

Office of Security & Administrative

Management

Research and Special Programs

Administration

Office of Emergency Transportation

Maritime Administration

Dept of Defense (DOD)

National Security Agency

Assistant Secretary of Defense

National Guard Bureau

Environmental Protect Agcy (EPA)

Office of Water

Dept of Labor (DOL)

Employment & Training Admin

Federal Emergency Mgmt Agy (FEMA)

Office for National Preparedness

Readiness, Response & Recovery Directorate

Department of Justice (DOJ)

Office of Justice Programs

National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA)

Transportation Security Administration (TSA)

Federal Transit Administration

Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration

FHWA Office of Freight Management

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

FHWA Metropolitan Capacity Building

Program

to reach the goal, but the ultimate goal should always be the target for which you are shooting.

It is also very true that many very worthy grant applications that were not properly “sold” have never been funded while others, of questionable value, have been. Think about this in your own life: the packaging, the alignment of the project to the needs of those who would fund it, the perceived value, are all aspects of worthy and unworthy requests. You must be sure that yours is the one that matches the needs as closely as possible.

Part of this process involves always, proactively, answering the inevitable question “why”. Doing so proactively avoids the dual problem of leaving the question unanswered or having the reader, in this case the person making a decision on your grant, answer the question differently than you would like it answered. For instance, the sentence “We will use \$26,000 of the funds to increase fire inspections ...: could be finished off by a cynical reader with “because we need additional overtime for our inspectors”, but is much more powerful if you finish it with “which the XYZ study has shown will reduce fires by 28% and would mean saving three lives and eliminating \$2.87 million dollars in damage within our jurisdiction, based upon 2006 figures.”

Step #8: Gather Intelligence

Gathering intelligence is as important in seeking funding as it is in any other human endeavor. The more that you know the more likely you will be to customize a request that will result in being granted the funding for which you have asked. What types of intelligence are we talking about? The actual intel can range widely, but for any given grant situation can range from reading prior grants that had been awarded and, where possible, the ones that had not. Asking specific questions of the granting authority about what they are looking for and asking clarifying questions, which is not always possible, but can often be done within the rules through some formal process. Looking at who else might respond so that you will know who the “competition” is and consider joint applications with the strongest “competitors”. Information about anyone associated with the grant, or working in the granting organization who used to work in your agency, went to the FBI academy with your SWAT Commander or has a child in the same private school as your child. It also helps to know the source of funds – private donation (from who?), appropriation (from which committee and which Senator(s) or House Members) – and if similar grants have ever been awarded. Is it mandatory the grants will be awarded? If not, why not. If so, when. These and other bits of intelligence will help you customize your approach and increase the chances of success.

Step #9: Perform Grant Self-Evaluation

When you think that you are ready to submit your grant proposal – and this should not be at the last minute - it is time to step back, take a deep breath and take a long hard look at your proposal. Ideally the grant preparation team should present the grant and have a review by key stake holders. In any case the self-evaluation should include a thorough reading of the document or text that has

been submitted to be copied and pasted into the web page for an online grant application. Reviewers should prepare themselves for the review task by reading, or re-reading, as much information from a Google search on the granting agency, by reading or re-reading the grant application and rules and by trying to really understand the objectives of the grant. Only then should the review begin.

The objective of the review process should be to answer two questions: “If I worked for the granting agency would I give us money for this?” and if the answer to the first question is “no” then the second question is “What can be done to this application or proposal to make it so I would give us money for this?” Once the answer to the first question is “yes”, it is time to submit the proposal.

Step #10: Submit & Monitor Grant Progress

Once most grant proposals go into the mail box or the “SUBMIT” button is pressed for online grants most grant requests are considered “finished”. This is not so. If the grant rules do not prohibit contact with the granting organization you should check in regularly to see if there are additional clarifications or information needed. You should consider offering to do a presentation or meet with members of the granting organization. In many cases grant progress can be tracked online, but it is better if the tracking process is a part of the sales process.

Do the rules prohibit you from contacting the agency? Tough break. But, the rules can’t really prohibit a representative from a Congressperson, Senator or Governor’s office from contacting the agency on your behalf: “Congressman Fitzpatrick knows you understand the importance of this grant to our city and would like to know if there is any way this office can help you in your deliberations.” This is even more powerful if the grant application was accompanied by an interested party letter from the same Senator, the Governor and the mayor.

Get me the money!

The 10 Steps to Grant Success boil down to this: spend the grant money as if it were coming right out of your own wallet or purse and explain the need and the desired results as clearly as possible to the organization giving the grant, explain past successes, cooperation and any other benefits to them granting the money to your agency rather than some other agency. Make it clear that your proposal has a “bottom line” and the bottom line is in lives saved, property protected and citizens’ safety and quality of life. Be diligent and disciplined in your pursuit of funding and use any failure as an opportunity to learn and to better apply your resources next time.

Interestingly, public safety has been under-funded from the time of the Pharaohs, but there always seems to be enough money to fund worthy projects that are properly explained, sold and managed. Good luck with achieving funding for your worthy projects. **ENPM**

About the Author:

James P. Cavanagh is a network industry expert with over a quarter century of experience in traditional and emerging network technologies who has devoted most of the last four years to sharing his knowledge on Internet, Voice over Internet Protocol and IP security topics with the public safety community. Mr. Cavanagh is a Knowledge Transfer Agent (KTA) for The Consultant Registry and is a founder of the Training Institute for Public Safety. He may be reached by phone at 770.984.5800 or email at jpc@911tips.com. This is Jim's second contribution to Emergency Number Professional Magazine.