

Grant Writing Essentials for Today's Economy

Faced with funding shortfalls and ongoing operational challenges, government grants can be a good alternative source of funding for many organizations. Unfortunately, the competition for public money is really fierce among organizations. So, how does an organization go about getting a grant in recessionary times? Here are some pointers to help your organization get started:

- **Identify very thoroughly the program you wish to fund.** This is the most logical place to start – by examining the operational and administrative components and costs associated with your proposed program. Some things to consider:
 - Is your program right for the uncertain times we are in?
 - Is the program essential for your organization to have to serve your client base?
 - What would be the consequences to your organization, your clients, and the community you serve if this particular program is or isn't funded?
 - What kind of documentation or research do you have on file that could support the need for your new program?
 - Will the funding be for a community-wide or province-wide initiative?
 - Are you looking to fund a short-term or a long-term initiative?
 - What other sources of funding do you have, or are you considering?

These are all good questions to work through as you determine the nature and scope of your program.

- **Examine your competition.** It is useful to know what other organizations in your community, or in nearby communities are doing in your sector and whether they have a similar public program in place – if they do, it could impact your organization's chances of getting funding. Talk with these organizations and learn from them. Find out what's working for them and determine how your proposed program can be differentiated or improved.
- **Conduct an environmental scan of available funders.** Search the Internet to short list government agencies and foundations offering grants. Depending on the type of program and its scope, you may want to consider local, provincial or federal funders – or a combination. Charityvillage.com offers a comprehensive listing of funding agencies and foundations and can be a good place to start: <http://www.charityvillage.com/cv/ires/fund.asp>
- **Take time to really understand the funder.** Once you've decided on the funders you'd like to consider, take some time to understand exactly who they are, their history of funding and their selection criteria. Get to know the conditions under which they operate and how their application processes work. Understand the types of projects they have funded in the past and their funding directions for the future – perhaps the changing economy will impact the nature and scope of the projects they will be funding this year. Make sure you also understand all documentation and reporting requirements and their application deadlines.

Once this groundwork has been done, it's a question of getting the proposal written and the application process completed in accordance with the funder's requirements. **Sibal Writing & Consulting** offers a free step-by-step checklist that organizations can use to ensure they've covered all the bases before submitting their grant application to a potential funder. We can also assist organizations with the application and reporting processes. Contact us today at info@sibal.ca or call us at 905-580-4433 to get your free copy of our checklist.