Ask & Receive

Raising Funds and Friends for Campus Ministry

Ask & Receive December, 2011

ASK: GRANT WRITING

Just write a grant to cover the expenses! How often have you heard this offered as a quick and easy solution to your organization's financial woes? While grants may legitimately be part of your strategic financial plan, they are seldom quick and easy to secure. Here are some things you need to consider before you put pen to paper.

First, most granting sources should be thought of as the human institutions they are. They have values and priorities. They also have limited resources and deadlines. So to begin with, get to know the basic priorities of the organization, much like you would get to know your donors on a personal basis. Read their literature. Find out what they tend to fund and if you are within their scope. If possible, pay a visit and get to know some of the staff. They can be helpful if and when you decide to apply for a grant. They want you to be successful, so may organizations will be ready to work with you in your preparation—not to give you preference, but to make sure there is a good match between your initiative and their priorities.

Second, once you receive the application, read it carefully and prepare to provide every item that they require, such as last year's financial report, a listing of your board members, etc. Don't overwhelm them with extraneous stuff, like newsletters or letters of commendation. Note deadlines.

Third, be prepared to describe the mission of your organization and how it fits with the mission of the granting institution. Don't twist or fabricate things, however. If there is a genuine match, make sure that the connections are obvious. Demonstrate how the grant can fulfill the needs of both the granting and the receiving organizations.

Fourth, be clear about the need which will be addressed by the grant and how your organization is prepared to respond to that need. Refer to your history of meeting such needs before. Be explicit about how you are going to meet the need this time. Yet, be imaginative about new possibilities, as long as they are feasible and will not waste the grant you are seeking. Some organizations are eager to find new solutions. Is the one you are working with one of those? Here's where knowing the organization pays off. What is predictable and what is possible? Your proposal should reflect good planning, research, and vision.

Fifth, follow the format required by the granting organization. Be as concise as possible and as clear as possible. This is not the time to wax poetic, but write interesting copy nonetheless. Use good grammar and spelling. If the application allows a freer style, be sure to still include these essential elements: project purpose, defined needs, feasibility of meeting those needs, expected outcomes, how the grant will be utilized, accountability, competence, and any possible matching funds from your organization.

Sixth, if your proposal is denied, ask for feedback from the organization. Successful grant writers learn from failure and few hit the nail on the head every time. Experience and relationships count heavily. Do your best, study your process, and hang in.

Seventh, you can save a lot of time and frustration by consulting *The Foundation Directory* in your local library. Solid research will tell you if your organization has any potential matches with the priorities of the granting institutions.

An Initiative of the Ecumenical Campus Ministry Team

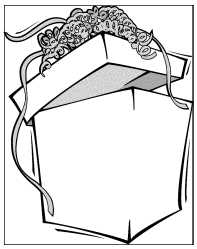
- The Episcopal Church
- The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
- The United Church of Christ
- The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
- The United Methodist Church
- The Presbyterian Church (USA)

ECMT
Ecumenical Campus Ministry Team

Affiliated with the Education and Leadership Ministries of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA

To learn more about the Initiative and apply for training or consultation services, go to the ECMT Web site at *www.higheredmin.org*

RECEIVE: AFTER THE GIFTS ARE OPEN



"We cannot create feelings. We must learn how the tide is running in people's minds, and float our messages on the surface."
Drayton Bird, *Common Sense Direct Marketing*

It's a familiar scene this time of year. Packages have been delivered. Carefully wrapped presents have been anxiously opened. Gifts generously chosen have been gratefully received. Now what? What are some ways that your organization might parallel the celebrative mood of the holiday season.

First, say thank you promptly and sincerely. Let your donors know in as personal a way as possible how much you appreciate their thoughtfulness and generosity. If Aunt Martha sent you a book to complete your collection of classics, be sure you let her know right away. Call her, or at least write a personal note within a couple of days. The success of the Billy Graham Crusade's annual fund was based on the fact that a thank you letter was sent to every donor within 24 hours of its receipt. Regardless of the size of the gift, be prompt and personal in your reply.

Second, look at how the gifts you received matched your expectations. Did you receive more or less than you anticipated? Why? What did you do well or what might you have done better in soliciting these gifts? For example, you might note that this year's successful letter was filled with stories of how gifts make possible student connections with the wider world. Or you may determine that the first sentence of your letter was off-putting or you sounded desperate. Could you have sent the appeal letters earlier than you did? Might you have segmented your donor list and sent one kind of letter to some and another kind to others? Did you use bulk rate postage when your more faithful donors might have been sent first-class mail?

Third, along with your leadership, give some thought to the question of how the mission and vision of your organization were communicated and if that influenced the contributions in either a positive or negative way. Is it time to draft a new mission statement? Are you out of touch with what donors are interested in funding, particularly newer, younger donors? Is your vision compelling and exciting? Are you able to assure accountability and outcomes? In other words, are you able to keep your promises? If Billy wanted a new sled for Christmas, Aunt Martha would appreciate a picture of him sliding downhill on it. If a new approach to peer ministry is the center of your appeal, donors would like to hear from these leaders about the effectiveness of the program. Are you on track with your mission and vision and do your donors know it?

Fourth, define what adjustments or major changes you are going to have to make in the months ahead based on new realities.

- How will you work to expand your community of supporters? Who are potential new donors and who might be encouraged to give more if relationships were strengthened? How can former donors be retrieved and reconnected?
- Are you in need of new software for keeping financial records and tracking donor information? Do you need a volunteer or staff person to manage it? What will this cost and how can you budget for it? Might you be able to share this expense with a nearby church or other ministry?
- How can the board and staff together re-evaluate the work load of the staff, given new fundraising responsibilities? Be upfront and be realistic.
- Is it time for moving beyond a successful annual/sustaining fund to the consideration of a campaign for a larger fund or the establishment of an endowment? Note: all donors of larger gifts must first be faithful annual contributors. A simple feasibility study might be worth doing. If not now, what might you have to do to prepare for such a major campaign?

Finally, be truly thankful for the generosity of your donors and the ways in which God continues to provide for your ministry in special ways .

GIVING TRENDS

In the past few years, giving circles have become a significant trend in philanthropy among donors of all levels and ages. A new report by the Giving Forum indicates that donors say they give more and are more strategic in their giving when they join with others in giving circles. Beyond that, they state that they become more knowledgeable about the non-profits that appeal to their interests and see ways in which they might participate in these selected organizations.

Giving circles are simple constructs. They consist of groups of individuals who pool their resources and determine together how to distribute these resources held in common. Often they consist of friends or like-minded individuals who have a shared experience, such as working together on a service project or encountering a new need in their communities. They want to make an impact beyond what their own smaller gifts can do, so they combine their gifts, fuel them with enthusiasm, and commit themselves to ongoing support.

"The Impact of Giving Together," released by the University of Nebraska at Omaha, the Forum of Regional Associations of Grantmakers, and the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University, specifically examines the impact of giving circles on members' giving and civic engagement[1]. Findings include:

- Giving circle members say they give more and give in more strategic ways than other donors.
- Giving circle members are highly engaged in their communities. Giving circles also increase members' knowledge about philanthropy, nonprofits, and community needs.
- Giving circle members say they give to a greater number of organizations, compared to other donors.
- Giving circle members are more likely than other donors to give to areas less often funded by organized philanthropy, such as to organizations serving women and girls, ethnic and minority groups, and for arts, culture and ethnic awareness.
- Giving circles can have even a greater impact in these difficult economic times because members pool their donations and are able to make larger grants to nonprofits then they could have individually, and they are providing creative opportunities for new ways to give.

Giving circles for campus ministries are a natural. Circles could be comprised of alumni groupings, members of congregations, board members (both past and current), and students who shared the experiences of mission trips or peer leadership (again both past and current). Once started, giving circles can have a life of their own, meeting regularly and determining how, this year, they are going to support your ongoing ministry. There might be a annual gathering to celebrate the year's accomplishment and enlist new members. It has potential. Try it!

WORKSHOP APPLICATIONS INVITED

The Ecumenical Campus Ministry Team invites campus ministries across the country to apply to host a workshop on fund/friend raising and board development for both staff and board members. The cost of the training services are shared with the ECMT. A workshop was held in Norfolk, VA in December. In 2012, workshops are in process for Atlanta, GA, Chattanooga, TN, La Crosse, WI, Iowa, Northern California and Montana. For information about attending a workshop, contact *ecmtconsultant@hotmail.com* Application

ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER

Ask & Receive is a newsletter designed to supplement the Fund Raising Initiative of the Ecumenical Campus Ministry Team. It presents a series of ideas and resources on a monthly basis to address the challenges of fund raising and board development, focused on the particular context of campus ministry. Each issue deals with an aspect of fund raising, such as the annual appeal, visiting donors, trends, or tuning up the board. *Ask & Receive* is published on behalf of the Ecumenical Campus Ministry Team at 2358 151st Avenue NW, Andover, MN 55304. The editor is Galen Hora. Phone: 763-350-3898 E-mail: *ecmtconsultant@hotmail.com*

A key ingredient in building a dynamic, productive board is helping people feel comfortable."

Carol Weisman, The Honeymoon Never Has to End

BUILDING A BOARD BOOK

I am convinced that local committees/boards do not spend enough time on recruiting the right members, orienting these new members, and evaluating the work and effectiveness of the board/committee on a regular basis.

One of the essential tools that effective boards need is a thoughtfully prepared, comprehensive board book. Whether building a house or rebuilding an engine, those who roll up their sleeves to do the work must have at hand the proper tools and the knowledge of how to use them. A board book is what the doctor ordered, both for emergency operations and for long-term care.

Here are some common, useful documents that should be placed into such a book.

STRUCTURE DOCUMENTS

- Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws
- Denominational Policies and Procedures for Campus Ministry
- Mission Statement, Vision, and Strategic Plan
- Member and staff information, including terms
- Statement of board responsibilities and/or job description
- Committee membership and functions
- Calendar of meetings and events
- Personnel policies
- Relevant documents related to insurance and/or facility maintenance/ownership

In addition to these foundational items, there are other pieces that ought to be placed in the board book. They are called "monitoring" because they help board/committee members monitor the work and effectiveness of the ministry as it moves through the year. They are like the "check engine light" that helps us know if the car we are driving is running properly.

MONITORING DOCUMENTS

- Brief written history and/or updated fact sheet about the ministry
- Copy of the last ministry review or annual ministry evaluation
- Job description for staff
- Communication pieces, such as Web site, brochures, newsletters, clippings, or mailings
- Information about the university
- Financial reports, both current and annual
- Budget and operating grant requests for the coming year/s
- Most recent audit/financial review
- Minutes of meetings
- Staff reports
- Annual reports to denominations or denominational leadership

Of course all of these items could be on file somewhere in the ministry offices, available for anyone to read and consult at any opportunity. But frankly, most people won't know how to find these items, take the time, or be reluctant to ask. How much better it would be if each new board member was given a board book prior to their first meeting and was asked to become familiar with it from the outset. A secondary assumption would be that the board book is used frequently during meetings and that new information is presented for inclusion from time to time.

I still remember meeting for coffee with a retiring member of one of my campus ministry boards. As we were saying "goodbye" in the parking lot, she said, "You know, I never did understand very much about serving on the board." She had served six years, had been on the executive committee, part of the time as treasurer. Yet there were gaps, and as I asked her what would have helped, she said that there were so many things she didn't know and often felt that she was not privileged to certain information. She verbalized the silent frustration of many board members. She should have had access and been instructed in the use of these key documents from day one.

Give some thought to how information is shared with your board/committee members and if a comprehensive book of such information would assist them in their work.