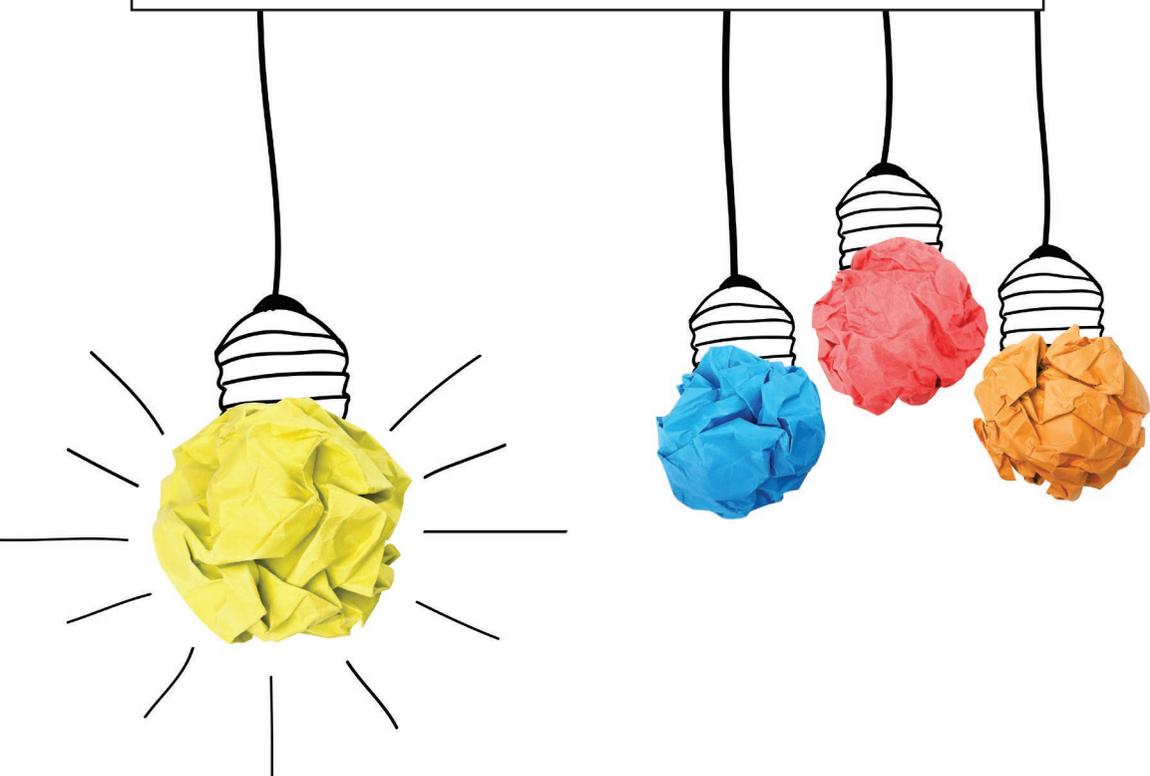


# Writing Successful Grant Proposals

Ellen W. Gorsevski



*SensePublishers*

# **Writing Successful Grant Proposals**

# TEACHING WRITING

## Volume 3

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**Ellen W. Gorsevski**



**SENSE PUBLISHERS  
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## **PRAISE FOR *WRITING SUCCESSFUL GRANT PROPOSALS***

“This little book gets quickly to the important points. Even better, Dr. Gorsevski has been around the grant-writing block a few times herself. She’s giving honest answers and pragmatic advice. This is all the stuff you really need to know!”

– **Dale Cyphert, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Management, College of Business Administration, University of Northern Iowa**

“Great! It will be very helpful to countless academics. I have been looking for a short, targeted grant-writing book [like this] all my academic life, because successful grant-writing keeps academic careers and institutions alive. The volume is encouraging, fact-filled (e.g., making your proposal stand out through images, sounds, and media), and resource-rich (e.g., finding grant opportunities). It comprehensively walks readers through the entire grant-writing process. Unlike most books on grant-writing, this one is lively, witty, and even anxiety-reducing, making first-time and veteran grant-writers more eager to take on the task. The last chapter, a newsworthy feature, explains what to do after the grant has been won, e.g., using polite immodesty, use-or-lose budgeting, and marketing of successes. I highly recommend this book and will tell all my colleagues about it.”

– **Rebecca L. Oxford, Ph.D., Professor Emerita, Distinguished Scholar-Teacher, University of Maryland and author of *The Language of Peace: Communicating to Create Harmony***

“Finally! A savvy book on grants that speaks to large social concerns of peace, environment, justice and multiple audiences. Gorsevski’s book is a much needed resource for agency, academic and volunteer leaders alike regarding the do’s and don’ts of dealing with diverse donors and RFPs.”

– **George A. Lopez, Hesburgh Professor of Peace Studies Emeritus, University of Notre Dame, and former Vice-President of the US Institute of Peace**

“Dr. Gorsevski offers an excellent guide into the life of writing grants. Grant writing tools are critical instruments to the infrastructure of nonprofits and this book is a great asset. Her explanation of what a grant is offers step-by-step instructions for every stage of the grant process, which she makes clear is not without challenges. For beginner grant writers to the experienced writer, this book is a must have that ensures the reader leaves nothing to chance when taking on the large task of writing a grant. I highly recommend it.”

– **Catherine Wyatt-Morley, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Women On Maintaining Education and Nutrition, Nashville, TN**



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	ix
Acknowledgements	xiii
Introduction: Writing Grants that Succeed: Harnessing the Power of Rhetorical Theory and Practice	xv
Rhetoric	xvii
References	xx
Chapter 1: What Is a Grant Proposal? And Where Do I Find Grants to Apply for?	1
Introduction	1
How to Find Grants to Write Proposals for	3
Summary: Where to Start Looking for Grants	10
References	11
Chapter 2: What Goes Inside a Typical Grant Proposal? Always the Same Dish but with Varied Ingredients	13
Introduction	13
Elements of a Grant Proposal	14
Summary: The Guts of Grant Proposal	26
References	27
Chapter 3: How Can I Make My Grant Proposal Stand Out from All the Others? Star Spangled Banter	29
Introduction	29
Feasibly Nonconformist	30
How to Set Apart Your Grant Proposal from the Rest	31
Summary: A Singing, Soaring Script for Success	43
References	44

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 4: How Can I Get My Grant Written and Submitted on Time? ... Or What Ever Happened to Work/Life Balance? 45

- Introduction 45
- Grantswomanship 46
- Summary: Making Time for Grants 54
- References 56

Chapter 5: Yaay, I Was Awarded the Grant, Now What? The Art of the Progress Report 57

- Introduction 57
- Marketing and Public Relations for the Grant Award 58
- Progress Reports 59
- Summary: Progress, Extensions, and Deliverables 66
- References 67

About the Author 69

## PREFACE

As was often the case with proposals work, our firm's engineers had made some late-hour changes. I was revising and double-checking the proposal right up until the last minute.

Hyperventilating, I made the two copies of the proposal on the persnickety copy machine. It was 1:45 in the afternoon. I had to make it to the FedEx delivery drop by 2 p.m. Copies done, I placed them one by one into the hole-puncher for the comb style binding. Once the holes (which were not round, but rather were long, narrow rectangles) were punched, next I had to slide each of the stacks of paper into the comb binder insert machine. The hand-cranked machine would usually make the comb miss a page or two, which then had to be fixed manually. It was 1:50 p.m. Damn-it! I couldn't miss that FedEx or my job was on the line. This project proposal was worth hundreds of thousands of dollars in business to my company. If awarded, the project would pay all of our company's employee salaries, nationwide.

By 1:53 p.m. I was sliding the two completed masterpieces into the pre-addressed FedEx shipping envelope. I grabbed my purse, car keys, and the package and ran down the stairs, almost twisting my ankle at the stairwell. Stupid high heels! Reaching my car, it was 1:55 p.m. It usually took ten minutes to get across town to the FedEx drop. I weaved through downtown traffic, barely stopping at stop signs to look, and then gunning the engine. As I pulled into the parking lot of the drop station, to my dismay I saw the FedEx truck driver getting into the truck and starting his engine. He had already finished his pick-up from the drop box! There was only one thing to do.

I drove right up in front of the huge truck and blocked it with my tiny car so he couldn't drive away. Furious, he got out, hollering, "Hey Lady! What the ...?" He gestured with both his hands and arms as if shooing away a big fly, saying, "Move your car out of my way!"

"Please! Wait!" I implored. "Please take this package, it's got to go out today," I said breathlessly, lurching out from behind the driver's seat with my package.

"Fine!" he retorted, clearly irritated. Grabbing the package from my trembling hands, he added, "Just this once. But don't you ever try this stunt again!"

It was 1993, and I was working as a full-time proposal writer for a small construction management company. The company had three offices,

one branch was in Washington, D.C., where I was initially hired, the main headquarters in Durham, North Carolina, and a west coast office in California, somewhere beyond greater Los Angeles. It was my job to write proposals to local city, state, and federal government entities to garner projects for our company. Usually marketers or engineers would locate the call for a grant from local listings of requests for proposals (RFPs), hand it over to me, and then I'd work my magic. I spent some time on the phone, asking engineers how things worked, or sometimes asking them to write a few paragraphs about technical aspects of projects that only they would know.

I worked typically six days a week. During frequent deadline weeks, I would work every day from seven in the morning until midnight. Most days, I barely had time to eat; I was gaunt and thoroughly exhausted. I had ulcers. I drank coffee all the time, which did not sufficiently keep me awake but only made me more anxious.

I am not certain if it was this moment of crisis in front of the FedEx truck when I decided to quit, or some of the many other awful, stressful hours I spent in that job. But I left that company shortly thereafter, and went on to earn a Master's degree in Speech Communication. The required course work in the excellent program at Oregon State University included classes on the ancient art form that had become a contemporary science of *rhetoric*, which to my amazement I realized I had been practicing already as a proposal writer. I learned that rhetorical theory and practice was a mainstay for politicians, diplomats, corporate heads, and other movers and shakers.

As a proposal writer, I had been just doing persuasive writing instinctively, intuitively, but without the valuable theoretical base of knowledge about persuasion as a roadmap, which my graduate coursework was now providing. After completing my Master's degree, I went on to earn a doctorate at Penn State University. Throughout my graduate school years, I found the hands-on experience and work ethic I'd developed during my early technical editing and proposal writing jobs really came in handy.

Following graduate school, as a budding academic, I continued to do more grant proposal writing, with some success, which I have been fortunate enough to continue to this day. I have found that when I combine my public and private sector experiences, skills, and knowledge, I can prove to be a rather formidable grant proposal writer.

Locating funders, researching projects, and writing, organizing, and submitting grant proposals can be a challenging process. Nowadays the old copy machine battle and tedious struggle with the comb binder for a paper proposal has been in most cases replaced with endless online, web-based

submittal forms, which inevitably crash the second you start to click on the ‘Submit’ button, thus losing all your information and necessitating a redoing of *all* the online forms. With proposals, it seems, there are few short-cuts.

Fortunately, now as a professor, I am no longer in a completely “soft money” (meaning 100 percent self-funded) position that necessitates the teeth grinding, ulcer-inducing nightmare of having to write, assemble, and submit grant proposals all the time. I do, however, still write small grant proposals periodically so as to help fund my research projects.

This wee guidebook is designed to help others with what I have learned about writing successful grant proposals. There are some things savvy proposal writers can do to make their projects attractive to prospective funders. This book may not necessarily be able to reduce all of the stress that comes with writing grant proposals, nor can any reputable person or book or weekend seminar guarantee a successful outcome for all proposals, many of which are subject to the vagaries of politics and economic boom and bust cycles. But this book does assist with demystifying grant proposal development, which can often seem like, and occasionally prove to be, a quite complicated and intimidating process.

In the chapters which follow, I share with readers some effective strategies for writing the proposal, and also for staying on-task and getting the project you proposed completed on time, and within the financial limits listed on the proposal’s budget list. And since some grant agencies still occasionally call for a paper copy to be sent by old fashioned postal mail or a shipping service, try not to vex the driver of the delivery truck.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many opportunities for academics to write books these days, but few of these books ever wind up being useful in what is often referred to as ‘the real world,’ or, to update in gender-neutral terms the old saw from country and western music, the ‘working person’s Ph.D.’ Having both kinds of career experience, in which much time was spent writing grant proposals, I have learned many of the tips I have provided here by doing enough gophering, which led to collaborating, then to leading, and now, to a measure of mastery that merits sharing.

Because this rare little book was enabled to come into being as a guide that would be useful in many a working person’s realms, I would like to thank Patricia Leavy and Peter de Liefde (Sense Publishers) for their expansive vision and for giving me the chance to write it. I would also like to thank Shalen Lowell and Jolanda Karada for able assistance with formatting and other book production guidance.

Much gratitude goes to my family and friends for granting me extra hermit time at work to get this weighty wee tome written.



## WRITING GRANTS THAT SUCCEED

### *Harnessing the Power of Rhetorical Theory and Practice*

There are many long-winded grant writing books out there that go into excruciating detail about how to research, write, assemble, and submit a successful grant. Even *Grant Writing for Dummies* is nearly 300 pages long! I do not attempt to duplicate that level of detail in this little handbook.

Indeed, to be transparent from the start, I must delineate for whom this book is written and for whom it is not written. This book is mainly designed for proposal writers in the arts and humanities. It is primarily for single authored projects, and for lesser amounts of money. Most of my grants are in the range of up to \$1,000 to about \$5,000 or less. That is the kind of small change I am talking about. But remember, small change, when saved and added up, can cumulatively yield great long-range fiduciary and career success.

Certainly the tips that follow in this book could potentially be used to write grant proposals seeking funds in the six-figure range, and perhaps even more. But my heart beats and flutters for the small but worthy projects that typically do not win large suitcases of money. In an age of cold statistics, cyber-existence, electronic gadgets, and space-age violence, I seek to help those whose creative themes and peaceful projects can be sustained by modest funds that keep the arts and humanities alive.

This book is not primarily for giant teams of scientific researchers seeking to clone the best and fastest race horse by acquiring many millions of dollars in private-sector funding of oil-rich Texas entrepreneurs, nor is it intended for scientists seeking to grab millions of bucks to grow giant sequoia trees out of petri dishes, nor is it crafted for purveyors of military hardware and software who seek billions of dollars in funding by the federal government to enhance military-grade toilet seats or radar-invisible panelling on fighter jet wings and unpiloted drones.

Instead, this book is for the lone researcher, mainly in the humanities. It will probably be most useful to scholars who work with just themselves, but with no more than very small groups of people, such as two- or three-person

teams of researchers. In short, I use my more than 20 years of experience writing successful grants to provide a less daunting introduction and overview of the basic components of a successful grant proposal. I sketch and advise how to get the writing done. I also discuss how to handle completing the work that you promise to your granting agency that you will accomplish on time and within the budget you estimated.

With brief but concise handbooks that have stood the test of time as role models, this little tome is designed to provide a clear, simplified entry point into the daunting world of grant writing. For my purposes in this handbook on how to write grants that succeed, I follow the path of old standby's of vigorous, high quality writing that are paragons of brevity and wisdom, such as William Strunk and E. B. White's *Elements of Style* (1979), or for rhetorical theory, Arthur Quinn's *Figures of Speech: 60 Ways to Turn a Phrase* (1982). With these timeless and refreshingly brief paragons in mind, this grants writing book condenses what I view are the most useful yet frustratingly ineffable aspects of successful grant writing.

In a nutshell, writing grants that succeed in garnering a monetary award involves four core skills: writing well, being persuasive, and being organized and diligent. As Quinn (1982) puts it, "Writing is not like chemical engineering. We shouldn't learn the figures of speech the way we learn the periodic table of elements... Learning about the figures of speech ... [is more] like learning how to model clay" (p. 2). Similarly, learning how to write high quality grants is more like an artful exercise, such as *yoga* or *tai chi*, which one may begin to attempt rather clumsily, but if one keeps at it, with practice, one can become quite versatile and perhaps even master the art form.

Grants are the great leveller. It is not always the most popular person, nor the handsomest, nor the highest paid, who always lands the grant. Just as *yoga* or *tai chi* as both art forms and exercises can be practiced and done well by a portly senior citizen with arthritic joints, so too can grants writing be done well by the independent humanities proposal writer who is not at a Research I institution in higher education. It is not the individual grant writer's glowing stature of being ensconced in an endowed professorship in the ivory tower that necessarily will attract grant funding, nor is always the youthful, willowy selfie-taker that may have the proper *yoga* form and movement: she may be too distracted by her fancy pants that recharge her phone while she does a crooked downward dog to notice that the 80-year old lady to her right is striking the perfect pose. So, it is the writer who is able to argue persuasively and straightforwardly to a group of variously bored, tired, and often grumpy grants reviewers. Grants reviewers are people who

are frequently tired and overworked. So what will capture and sustain their attention?

What distinguishes the successful grant writer from her competitors is that her grant proposal *speaks* to the exhausted reviewer, rousing him or her from torpor. Meanwhile, the 49 other dull proposals that the reviewers have in the stacks on their desks (yes, there are plenty of old-school paper readers still out there), or cluttering up their laptops' hard drives, or their employer's electronic 'cloud,' are only soporific means to send them off on their next Starbucks run. How does a grant writer transform the seemingly boring and technical genre of proposal writing into an opera that sings, arousing even the most lethargic of readers and audience members to a state of agreeable acceptance, if not outright rapture? The answer to that requires some introductory discussion of an ancient theory, art form and exercise that is as old and well-practiced as *yoga* or *tai chi*: that art form and exercise is called *rhetoric*.

## RHETORIC

### *What is Rhetoric?*

Rhetoric is one of Aristotle's (1954) books that is often required reading for majors in degrees such as Communication or English. What Aristotle attempted to do was to explain the process of persuading audiences to agree with a speaker or writer. It sounds quite simple, but rhetoric can be a very difficult art form because, like *yoga* or *tai chi*, it requires a lot of practice. Aristotle, along with hundreds of other great and little known scholars alike from wisdom traditions worldwide, reminds us that while 'rhetoric' can certainly mean its first dictionary definition that we today associate with the term, which is usually something like 'BS' or 'empty fluff,' rhetoric means the artful and seductive use of language, including its ordering, organization and movement, to win over someone else. Using rhetoric denotes *convincing people to agree with your desires* to accomplish a task or to ponder new perspectives. Therefore, if you are writing a grant to, say, study the frescos in a cave in a war-torn part of the world, you must persuade your potential, prospective funders to agree that doing so would be a worthwhile endeavour.

*...so what does rhetoric have to do with successful grant writing?*

The individual grant reviewer who decides your proposal is worthwhile might not want to spend her life looking at frescos, and certainly not to schlep

along with you through active minefields to get to the cave in question, but you have, through rhetoric, given the reviewer the imagination to see that, nonetheless, this would be a worthwhile activity. The reviewer, then, need not agree with your lifestyle, nor your perspective, nor even your politics. The reviewer simply needs to agree that such actions are potentially useful in some objective sense. Hence understanding and using rhetoric is instrumental to winning that reviewer over to deciding to fund your grant.

Take the early example of an iconic critical thinker gauging rhetoric as functioning like cultural and political glue to a nation-state. For Aristotle, rhetoric is “a faculty [or ability or skill, depending on the translation from Greek] for observing in any given case all the available means of persuasion.” In other words, socio-linguistic practitioners who are versant in rhetoric are like the MacGyvers of language. Instead of taking a toothpick and using it to dig his way out of quicksand like MacGyver might, or Bear Grylls’ inevitable rope to get Kate Hudson to rappel down a steep cliff, the successful grant writer uses words to capture and sustain the attention, and more importantly, the purse, of the institution or grant agency that funds the project the proposal writer seeks to do.

Likewise with Aristotle’s many international compatriots in obsessing over the art and science of rhetoric as an erudite person’s skill in persuasion, such as Islamic scholar Ibn Rushd (Borrowman, 2008; Clark, 2007), or China’s sage Confucius (Ding, 2007), valuing lucid communication that arouses readers and audiences’ imaginations and, importantly, the urge to elicit agreement, is an archetypal preoccupation of human kind. Rhetoric, then, is quite certainly *not* fluff: rhetoric is indeed a goodly part of the substance that makes for winning grant proposals.

For Ibn Rushd, a scholar who studied and translated Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* for Islamic audiences, the art and exercise of *al-bayan* (clarity) and *al-badi* (metaphors and figures of speech) were rhetorical means to fostering messages of social uplift, in ways such as creating beautiful poetry for cultural cohesion and for fostering morality, everyone could appreciate and apply skilful uses of language (Borrowman, 2008; Merriam, 1974). Similarly, for wide-ranging walks of life of peasants to courtesans to emperors, Confucius understood that rhetoric combining word and deed was the key to rising from lowly social status, to maintaining efficient organizational communication, to aptly performing kingly tasks of being a wise and fair ruler (Ding, 2007; You, 2006).

For today's proposal writer seeking a grant from organizations both large and small, an awareness of rhetoric as a both ancient and contemporary form of art and practice is essential. Consider rhetoric as the international and intercultural impetus to communicate clearly and beautifully, which takes practice. Rhetoric entails an endless learning curve that is global in its scope. Crucially for successful grant writing, recognizing the reality that many of today's grants-giving organizations are both international and intercultural (even when they might not seem like it), is also a vital skill. Successful writers of grant proposals understand how to reach audiences, draw them in, and keep them cosseted in a message that resonates with a richness and diversity reflective of multifaceted readers, listeners as multiethnic, multiracial, multilingual, and multinational grants donors. Just as rhetoric for the ancients was a knowledge base and skills set for worldly statesmen, so, too, today is rhetoric in theory and practice necessary for prosperous lawyers, thriving politicians, diplomats, and popular speech writers (Fieler, 2015).

Returning to the point of this book, rhetoric is a critical skill to have for thriving academics and staffers at small, non-profit organizations and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) who must write successful grant proposals in order to survive and flourish. As federal and state dollars are increasingly being cut from higher education and from not-for-profit social agencies, being able to write persuasive grant proposals to win funding awards from granting agencies is a necessary skills set. For the independent humanities scholar seeking to fund dissertation research on the dogs and cats of great writers like Shakespeare, to the scrappy, skeleton-crew-staffed non-profit organization that is attempting to press for sane, reasonable gun policies in a society awash in semi-automatic weapons used not on backwoods deer nor battlefields but in movie theatres or schools to mow down innocent bystanders, writing well and writing persuasively can enable projects to get funded.

In short, for aspiring grant writers, grasping rhetoric and using it adroitly in developing proposals helps to get projects funded. A basic, working knowledge of rhetoric as a theory, art form, and form of exercise is particularly advantageous to seeking, developing and gaining grant funding for the kind of small, sometimes arcane, quirky projects that liberal arts researchers, humanities scholars and social work and progressive organizations often undertake. Rhetoric, when applied judiciously in grant narratives, enables the unsung and underfunded projects to get funded: rhetoric helps underdogs to fly.

## INTRODUCTION

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## **WHAT IS A GRANT PROPOSAL?**

*And Where Do I Find Grants to Apply for?*

### INTRODUCTION

Grant proposal writing is a survival skill that can heighten job security and professional opportunities in times of economic upheaval. For many career paths in the non-profit sector, including academia, think tanks, small non-profit organizations, writing grant proposals can be anything along the spectrum from an occasional annoyance to an all-consuming, overtime-inducing preoccupation. But what exactly is a grant? What is a proposal? And how are these two things related?

A grant is typically an allotment of funds that an organization that is tasked with disbursing those funds to awardees it sees as worthy individuals, teams or entities, such as those noted above, to accomplish a specific project. Sometimes grants will include non-monetary aspects as well, such as offering so called ‘in-kind’ support. For instance, there may be pre-paid lodging for a writer-in-residence post at a prestigious university or think tank. So while enticing, it is not always the large monetary grant that will best support a specific project. Sometimes a smaller grant may yield benefits that may feature a monetary quality, such as lodging, but other benefits may accrue, too. There may be prestige associated with a given grant, or perhaps there will be professional networking opportunities linked to a grant, and so forth. Grant awards, like scuba diving gear or prom dresses, can be wildly different yet still useful in being tailor-made to the purposes of the project you are proposing to do.

In the public sector, there are city, county, state and federal government grants to accomplish small projects such as planting flowers along traffic medians dividing roads, or installing flower baskets along Main Street of a town, or large projects such as developing a space craft that can fly to Mars and bring back data about its potential for habitable life on that famous red planetary neighbour of earth. In short, a grant can be as small or large as the

project envisioned by the agency that is offering the funds to prospective experts of all kinds and backgrounds to accomplish specific tasks.

What is a proposal? A proposal is a written plan offering to conduct the type of work that is requested by the agency offering the funds, whether that project is flower planting or Mars voyaging, or book writing or documentary film-making.

A proposal is a document that essentially does three things. First, the proposal states who you are and why you are qualified to plant flowers or build spaceships or write books or make cinematic masterpieces. Second, the proposal outlines your step-by-step plan to get the work done and the time-frame in which you promise to complete the work. Third, the proposal usually requires a detailed budget, listing on a grid or spreadsheet each aspect of the work that you will do along with its associated cost. For example, if you are a geologist who needs to study moon rocks in order to figure out how your spaceship to Mars will gather rock samples, you might include in your proposal's budget items like travel costs. Travel costs entail aspects you would like for the grant to pay for, such as hotel and airfare, for a visit to NASA's Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas to study the earth's largest collection of moon rocks (Atkinson, 2009; Space Center, 2015).

To be able to write a successful grant means that first you must have a good idea. If creativity does not come naturally for you, it may surprise you to learn that grant writers need not be born creative, but effective grant writers do need to practice a lot to build their ability to be innovative. Take, for instance, Apple computer's grammatically questionable but brilliant slogan (Evans, 2015), "Think different."<sup>1</sup> Just like a body-builder builds muscle: with endless repetition of attempts to articulate a state of simultaneous difference and high quality, budding grant writers can improve their ability to communicate with excellence.

Grant writers who are successful must come up with a great idea, and then commit that idea to writing in a stringent form of technical and professional writing that conforms to the request for proposal (RFP), which is also sometimes referred to as the call for grant applications. RFPs and calls for grants can be as rigid in form as poets' uses of *haiku* or the iambic pentameter. Grant writing or proposal writing is highly structured and well organized. Truly successful proposal write-ups add extra elements of originality and uniqueness, which help to set them apart. But we will return to discussing tips for inventiveness in Chapter 3. For now, let's begin with the basics.

## HOW TO FIND GRANTS TO WRITE PROPOSALS FOR

### *Seek and Ye Shall Write*

Before grant writers can commit words to the page to plug their projects that they seek to be funded, they must first locate funders which are seeking to fund projects. Where are these elusive funders?

In a world of endless and seemingly ever heightening competition, it might appear to be hopeless to try to get a grant funded to study the pet project of, say, a mom who is a peacebuilding tree hugger in a developing nation. But Wangari Maathai, a Kenyan mother and university professor who would later become the first ever environmentalist to be awarded a Nobel Peace prize, found small, international funders—far away in Norway—to help her initiate what would evolve into what is today the Green Belt Movement (GBM). Presently the GBM is a powerful international non-profit organization and educational, activist movement to reverse the negative effects of interrelated problems of topsoil loss, desertification, and climate change by having local people do a simple thing: plant tree saplings. Splendid ideas remain just that until they find a person or organization to help bring the notions to fruition with the injection of a reasonable amount of cash.

For virtually every kind of project, there is a funder out there waiting to give monetary backing and other kinds of invaluable support, such as assistance with marketing and promotion, training, or mentoring. Although the avenues for funding described here below are far from exhaustive, they constitute a good start to helping aspiring grant writers to locate grant agencies that offer RFPs and calls for applications for a host of grant proposals. There are one-time, periodic, or well-endowed perennial funds to annually award different worthwhile projects. Seek and ye shall write!

### *What Is the Best Way to Get Started Looking for Grants?*

Beyond the avenues discussed here below, there is above all, one incredibly useful place to start. Begin your grants journey at your local town, city or nearby university library's information desk.

Librarians get a bum rap. Many people think of libraries too often as repositories of books, and librarians as nerdy relics of a bygone era, but that is a great misconception. While adept at finding books, today's librarians are actually just as knowledgeable in how to sort through the immense overloads of information and misinformation that exists in today's electronic world, where everyone has a blog, and many an uninformed opinion. Most qualified

librarians can help direct you how to sift judiciously through the vast world of grants listings online, in books or in periodicals. Think of your librarian as your efficient and loyal *aide-de-camp* in the process of sorting the useful from the bogus venues for grants. Even if you do not work for an academic institution, as a state resident and taxpayer most citizens will have access to the best state university libraries and librarians' expertise, which are often within a reasonable driving distance away, and well worth the visit. If you are a non-resident or international visitor or scholar, usually there are work-arounds that will nonetheless enable you to use high quality state university library services. Graduate students and international faculty have access to all the same wide variety of library and research assistance support as anyone else, so be sure you seek and get all the help that is available to you.

After reading this chapter, which should give you a good idea of what kinds of grants might fit your base of interests, skills and experience, go to your nearest library. Equipped with questions that occur to you, and which you note as you read, ask the librarian for help in pinpointing sources of funding and calls for grants in your research area or domain of professional practice.

If you work for an academic institution or established organization, there may be one or more full time grants support staffers who can assist you as well with the many stages and phases of grant proposal development and production and submission. Also talk to experienced professionals who have done grant proposal writing and submissions in your field and in your area of expertise for advice and, if possible, proofreading and revising help. We will talk more about the nuts and bolts of writing grant proposals in Chapters 2 and 3, but for now let's focus on how to get started.

### *Networking: Nurture Personal and Professional Connections*

It may be considered common sense, but it is important to nurture personal and professional connections because you never know who might offer you that lucky break. Asking someone interesting to join you for a cup of coffee or tea can usually yield the moral support you need, and occasionally the mention of an opportunity that you had not yet before considered. Also, attending professional workshops, seminars, conferences and classes may sometimes seem like a superfluous expense. However, by meeting up with like-minded professionals, you will be making a fruitful investment in your work.

Martha Stewart, one of the most successful women corporate heads and mavens of all things domestic, has said she actually finds it difficult to date

people because she always starts to talk business and her date ends up being like another meeting leading to a business venture. So while it is perhaps not advisable to go to the extreme of not being able to take a break from your professional side, it is crucial for your life and your career to talk to other people. Yes, even for introverts and ambiverts, putting your cell phone on airplane mode, setting aside your laptop, and talking to people in person is crucial for most careers, and this is particularly so for aspiring grant proposal writers.

To be sure, Skype or phone conversations can be helpful, but there is nothing that can replace the potential for person-to-person positive energy transfer that can happen in the magic of a physically emplaced moment with other smart people around you, talking to you, and you with them. Cesar Millan, a successful ‘dog whisperer,’ often characterizes what he does not as dog training, but as people training. Millan describes his work in reshaping people’s energy in this way:

Energy is what I call beingness; it is who and what you are in every moment. Dogs don’t know each other by name, but by the energy they project and the activities they share. They know humans in the same way. As humans, we too are communicating with energy – whether we realize it or not. (Millan, 2015)

Sharing and gaining energy from other people may sound a bit ‘woo-woo’ or New Age-y, but for productive networking, projecting and commingling positive energy is a necessary activity. Networking takes practice. Sharing positive, productive energy is like skiing or playing tennis or basketball with someone who is better than you—you can learn and improve yourself by watching their expertise in action, and by mimicking their moves. Surrounding yourself as a grant writer with others who have gone before you, and who have written successful proposals, can be quite helpful.

Andrew Carnegie had his ‘Brain Trust,’ a group of well-educated and experienced advisors who helped him become and to remain one of the wealthiest industrialists of his day. Likewise, by talking to people in your personal and professional life about your interests and goals, you can set in motion an infrastructure of support. Wise and successful proposal writers often get advice, input, and even opportunities that enrich their ability to seek, develop, write, and garner a grant in their chosen areas of work.

Joining professional organizations is a great way to find out what grant opportunities are being listed all the time. Professional associations usually come with old timey newsletters on paper as well as email-based

listserves, which periodically offer listings of calls, invitations and RFPs to apply for. National and international associations exist in most fields of work and study, and offer annual conventions and informative workshops, among other opportunities to network with fellow practitioners in your field.

So get out there. Sign up for a grant writing workshop. Join a professional association. Find mentors. Approach that successful person in your field after their conference presentation and introduce yourself. Successful proposal writers seek out other productive people to gain access to wise suggestions, to be in the loop in terms of ever arising opportunities, and to be able to gather and consider different perspectives.

### *Online Venues: Web Sites and Crowdsourcing*

Using the web today and social media is simply an evolving extension of using traditional personal networks of friends and colleagues to seek to garner funding support for proposed projects. All manner of ideas and products, some worthy and others less so, get advertised and awarded through Internet venues.

Crowdsourcing is simply taking the old fashioned request of a friend or prospective business partner, which used to happen primarily in person, or secondarily by letter or telephone, and placing the proposed project onto a website forum where it can be viewed publically, assessed for its merit, and ideally, funded by people who are interested in the project (Howe, 2006). Look to the ample array of web based venues, such as Crowdsourcing.org, for ideas and platforms through which project funding can be sought.

### *Newspapers*

Although competitive newspapers have increasingly been moving their content away from paper form and into online formats, in cities of all sizes nationwide, many old fashioned newspapers, which are printed on paper and sold at newsstands, surprisingly remain a useful source of information about possible opportunities for grant proposals and funding.

Granted, it may seem counterintuitive to younger generations with many millions of dollars in spending power on the Web daily and on special events such as the much ballyhooed Cyber Monday, but the majority of Americans and citizens in many nations worldwide continue to read newspapers on paper. Newspapers still matter, even as the news media are straddling paper and cyber formats.

With America's population in particular increasingly an older demographic, and with many well-backed funders, members of boards of trustees in all kinds of companies and institutions usually maintain a lot of silver haired persons on board. These active and empowered older people, aged 65 and over, still read newspapers by the millions. People are also waiting to retire until later years than prior generations, so chances are, your grant proposal could be sought after, advertised, reviewed, and possibly funded by someone who still values and uses newspapers.

Keeping up to speed on the daily news from newspapers, which yield listings of public requests for proposals, is one way to find out what is going on, what problems may need attention and redress, and what kinds of projects may be funded. From the small town local-yokel's newspaper to the *International Herald Tribune*, reading and using newspapers remains a useful habit for enterprising proposal writers.

#### *Public Sector: Governmental Agencies*

Governmentally sponsored grants abound, from grants offered by the smallest little burg or village to grants from large, international consortiums of collaborating governments. Government grants are called for all the time. Government grants can prove to be especially challenging to apply for because they typically have extensive, complicated online submissions processes and stringent eligibility criteria.

That said, well written proposals to governments are worthwhile to seek out and to undertake because the work they do can help to create awareness and to foster change. Also, once a grants seeker has attained a government award and delivered the promised work, governments tend to be reliable repeat funders, looking to fund those individuals and groups who have proven they can do the work that was promised.

*International.* While the world today certainly falls short of reaching any perfect kind of global governance, the closest thing to a collaborative world government would be organizations comprised of powerful international governments, such as the United Nations or the G8, which represent—albeit imperfectly—generally agreed upon criteria for issues such as international trade or treatment of prisoners of war, human rights, and limits on pollution as well as norms for addressing climate change. The United Nations (U.N.), through its many branches, offers international and transnational opportunities for proposing and conducting funded work or study.

For instance, a specialist in Mediterranean maritime trade, who speaks fluent Modern Standard Arabic, might look into which calls or invitations to bid (ITB) of the U.N.'s Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) relate to a maritime area of expertise. Another researcher who is interested in projects to study or restore revered antiquities could look for ITBs from the World Heritage Fund of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which grants several million dollars for projects annually (UNESCO Funding, 2015). Yet another expert in journalism that creates awareness of and helps curb hate speech in a fragile, post-conflict society might seek ITBs with UNESCO's International Program for the Development of Communication (IPDC); the IPDC is set up to promote democratic practices within the mass media of small and developing nations (UNESCO-IPDC, 2015). There are many governmental organizations that collaborate across borders on shared problems, from socio-political issues like religious conflict to environmental issues such as desertification or flooding. Many of these internationally collaborative governmental organizations require the outsourcing of expertise, and calls for proposals for projects to assist with studying, managing, or preventing problems in cultural, social, political areas and in the natural environment.

*National.* At the national level, the U.S. federal government, like many countries' governments, solicits RFPs. The American federal government might, for example, fund a study on the reintroduction of wolves to Yellowstone National Park. The federal government is known for "analysis paralysis," in which issues are studied *ad nauseum* but too seldom is anything ever done about a given problem. For grant proposal seekers and writers, the government's collective proclivity to ponder constitutes a potential grant-making gold mine.

The federal government is comprised of people from all walks of life and a range of political and ideological beliefs, which foments an endless thirst for knowledge to justify political, economic and social actions. Proposal writers can slake that thirst. Proposal writers who are successful realize that the government's endless need to identify and to study problems creates a virtually perpetual cycle of calls for projects and a vast number of opportunities to research, develop and write proposals to meet the government's needs.

*State.* At the state level, state governments likewise face a host of problems that need to be tackled. For example, construction of a heavily traversed highway in San Antonio, Texas had to be stopped because a rare spider under

protection of the Endangered Species Act was discovered in the roadbed, and had to be studied (5News.com, 2014). Lucky was the entomologist who had written a grant proposal to study that spider. Meanwhile, angry motorists, tired of traffic jams they hoped would be mitigated by the new highway, could be studied by sociologists with expertise in road rage. The American Society of Civil Engineers understands the problem of “red tape that drags projects out for many, many years” (Natale, quoted in 5News.com, 2014). Different states have different problems and levels of severity of red tape (Economist, 2014). Organizational efficiency experts could write proposals to help states improve their business climates by reducing red tape. The possibilities are extensive, if not endless, to propose and garner grants that help alleviate intractable problems.

*City to county.* At the city or county level, there are also funds to be sought, depending on the size and kind of town or region it is. Problems of sweatshop labor occurring in New York City will be different from that of Mobile, Alabama. As we will discuss in greater detail in Chapter 3, understanding and articulating the specific issues that are relevant to a given place will require an understanding, empathy, and discourse that resonates with the grant’s reviewers in that milieu. City government budgets allow for all kinds of projects, but the size and scope of the project and the grant funds sought will be limited by issues such as the increasing problem of cities declaring bankruptcy, which have fewer funds to disburse than economically booming cities. A grant project funded by a bankrupt city, such as Detroit, Michigan, would likely be on a different scale from San Bernardino, California, which also filed for bankruptcy (Farmer, 2013; Plumer, 2013).

Other differences can apply to the process of seeking county-based grants. A primarily agricultural county in California would have different needs than an urban county, in terms of investment interests, employment, and demographics. A water shortage for a county that relies on tourism might have different causes and effects than drought conditions for a county that relies on agricultural crops such as almond trees (Rodriquez, 2015). Proposal writers need to be cognizant of such variations when searching for projects to be funded. Climate, both weather and political, affects the writing, reviewing and awarding of many grant proposals, including proposals for projects for city and county governments.

The possibilities of studying and addressing problems are extensive, and are often only limited by imagination. Government funding for grant projects, from local to national to international, can be capricious and subject

to political changes of winds. However, funds are frequently available for savvy proposal writers who seek out government-funded grants of many different purposes and kinds.

*Private Sector: Enterprises, Trusts, and Philanthropic Organizations*

Trust ‘doctor Phil’. No, not Oprah’s counsellor, but Oprah Winfrey herself, who has topped lists of wealthy charitable donors for years. Not all generous benefactors, known as philanthropists, necessarily need to be as wealthy as Lady O, but it is important to know that there are many donors of all income levels who may be interested in funding your project.

At this writing, the deficit of the U.S. government—one of the most powerful nations on earth—is about 18 trillion dollars and counting (U.S. Department of Treasury, 2015). Greece, renowned for its time honoured creations from democracy to the Doric column and tourism on gorgeous Greek islands, nearly defaulted on its loans, throwing world markets and nervous investors into a tizzy. The world over, any given government may be broke at least once, but there are still plenty of millionaires and billionaires out there. These people want to give their money to causes and projects they deem worthy. You, dear reader and aspiring grant proposal writer, could be just such a cause.

Many rich, private citizens of the world maintain philanthropic endeavours and favoured charitable organizations, which call for proposals to fund projects in both the arts and sciences. From King of Pop Michael Jackson, to record producer David Geffen, to filmmaker George Lucas of Star Wars fame, to Facebook’s Mark Zuckerberg, many people with loads of cash to spare are looking to give some of it away (Bukszpan, 2015; Titcomb, 2014).

SUMMARY: WHERE TO START LOOKING FOR GRANTS

To recap this first chapter, if you wish to succeed in writing grant proposals that are competitive, you need to first locate reputable calls, invitations, or requests for proposals (RFPs). Public, or governmental agencies are looking to fund all sorts of projects, from studying noisy peacocks disturbing the peace in tiny townships, to immense federal government problems such as how to cut the mind-bogglingly enormous federal budget deficit. Private, or non-governmental sources of funding also exist, funded by entities such as trusts and wealthy individuals.

In order to locate viable RFPs, you need to get help. Based on what type of project you are seeking to get funded, you will narrow your search for grant agencies to those for which your skills and expertise fit. To gather

intelligence about how to develop and write successful grant proposals, you need to surround yourself with a group of supportive and experienced individuals as your ‘brain trust.’ One of the most helpful persons to consult is a librarian. Other helpful people include mentors with experience in garnering grant awards. Networking and attending workshops and seminars on grants development can also be quite useful.

Listings of calls for proposals abound on the Internet, but there are also listings in local newspapers or trade periodicals.

#### NOTE

- <sup>1</sup> The grammatically more common version of the slogan could have been “Think differently.” While exceptions to the use of ‘different’ as an adverb may exist, they are not common. Through uncommon grammar, Apple’s marketing and advertising gurus in effect reiterated Apple products’ purportedly unique qualities.

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