

A LESSON IN MATCHMAKING:

Marrying the Right Grant Program to Your Organization's Needs



Though grants can be a great resource for businesses, granting agencies aren't prone to writing blank checks. Instead, grant programs are designed to award funding to certain projects that advance the specific goals of the granting agency. Therefore, aligning a proposal for a specific project with those goals is foundational to achieving success. Ask yourself the following questions as you develop and assess projects that would be the most beneficial for your business and the most competitive for specific grant programs:

- **Does the project align with the purpose of the grant program?** It's imperative to understand the purpose of the grant program to ensure that your organization and your project are both eligible and competitive. It is often possible to tailor a project to fit the parameters of a program, but if the program is a round hole and your project is a square peg, it ultimately won't fit. Alignment between the project and the program is critical.
- **Does the project align with the strategic plan of your organization?** Evaluate whether the project aligns with your strategic plan, values, and goals. One of the biggest mistakes applicants can make is pursuing grant funding because it is "free" money, rather than effectively leveraging it to move the organization forward. Before pursuing grant funding, take time to evaluate the alignment between the project and the strategic trajectory of your organization.

- **Can the grant funds be used for your project's costs?** It's important to look carefully at what the funds can be used for when selecting and defining your project in order to maximize funding. Only a few grant programs fund equipment purchases; some place maximums on salary reimbursements. Some are designed to help fund market research while others only pay for marketing and promotional costs once that research is completed. Make sure you know what your main project costs are and that those costs are eligible.
- **Does the grant timeline fit with your project timeline?** Evaluating the congruence between the timing of the

grant award, the duration of the grant, and the timeline of your project is critical. Some programs announce awards within a few months, but many don't announce award recipients for six months or more after applications are due. Some grant programs require applicants to spend grant funds within a year, while others allow up to three years. Make sure to assess the alignment between your needs and the funding timelines.

If you're seeking grant funding for a number of projects, we'd be happy to direct you to programs that may be a good fit. If you have a program in mind, we can assist you in evaluating the compatibility of that program. In addition to our grant writing and grant administration services, we also assist clients in long-range grant strategy and can help you develop a strategic plan to maximize funding for the projects on your to-do list—and to make sure you're pairing the right projects with the right programs.



Hilary Tricerri is a consultant in the Morrison & Company Grants service line. Hilary can be reached by phone at **(530) 893-4764 ext. 214** or by email at htricerri@morrisonco.net

Contact Hilary, or any Morrison team member to discuss grants programs, grant writing services, and strategic planning.