

## **Quarterly Consortia Conference Call Summary Foundations of Proposal Writing**

On March 4, 2008, Neighborhood Networks held its Quarterly Consortia Conference Call entitled “Foundations of Proposal Writing.” Cynthia Adams, president and chief executive officer of GrantStation, a Neighborhood Networks national partner, provided information to consortia members about identifying suitable funders, broadening the circle of potential grantmakers, writing successful proposals, as well as building credibility and forming relationships with funders.

### ***Highlights from the call:***

- To ensure grantmakers that their dollars are used effectively, consortia should demonstrate that the grant award positively impacts several Neighborhood Networks centers. Adams suggested making a case for supporting an economic downturn, and demonstrating how the residents are affected. Consortia should also focus on the following:
  - Identifying a “big-picture strategy” that will guide the proposal development process.
  - Securing new relationships with major donors and grantmakers, such as foundations, corporations, associations, and membership clubs.
  - Establishing a formal and an aggressive grant-seeking program. This coordinated and strategically driven program will allow consortia to focus on grantmakers most likely to fund their services as opposed to the grant opportunities that land on their desk. The GrantStation Web site ([www.GrantStation.com](http://www.GrantStation.com)) has a 10-step tutorial on how to establish an aggressive grant-seeking program.
- Neighborhood Networks consortia should always use grant awards to leverage additional funds. Once a consortium has been awarded a grant, it will be much easier for the consortia to obtain additional revenue. Examples of grantmakers include:
  - Foundations (private, family, community, or corporate). Adams advised that consortia identify foundations that will be positively impacted by the consortia’s services. For example, a foundation associated with a corporation needing skilled workers will likely support an adult workforce training program in a particular geographic area.
  - Associations. A state bar association will support juvenile prevention programs, or a university association of women will support literacy projects.
  - Clubs. The local Elks, Lions, or Eagles clubs will consider a general support grant for Neighborhood Networks consortia.
  - Businesses and corporations. They are likely to support consortia if they identify their mission as closely linked to that of the consortium.
  - Local, state, and federal government agencies.

- Adams encouraged the participants to follow six steps to increase the success of identifying the right grantmaker. They are:
  - Always seek federal and state funds first. Government awards can often be “one stop shopping” since some of these grant programs may directly match the consortium’s needs. Identifying private foundations in this step may also yield the desired results.
  - Review the application guidelines and eliminate grantmakers that are less than a perfect match. If the deadline date is not approaching set the grant application aside. It is also recommended that consortia not apply to award grants that are too small or too large.
  - Review the grantmaker’s latest annual report or their Internal Revenue Service Form 990. These documents can be viewed through their Web sites, or by e-mailing the grantmaker directly to request a copy of the latest annual report. For federal and state sources, research information about the enacting legislation that originally identified funds for the program/service.
  - Create a brief description of the project and the Neighborhood Networks consortium and compile a list of questions directed to each potential grantmaker.
  - Call or e-mail the prospective grantmaker to schedule a meeting. This is the most critical element of the funding search process. When calling the grantmaker, try to schedule an appointment to talk with them, and let them know that you only need five to ten minutes of their time. Explain in the e-mail or during the phone call that their application guidelines and annual report have been reviewed and that you would like to determine if your project fits their objectives.
  - Complete a final review of the prospective grantmakers. Eliminate those that may not fit the consortium’s projects and set them aside for later projects, if appropriate. The list should have three to five solid leads, and should be incorporated along with other funding strategy for the project.
  
- Neighborhood Networks consortia can build credibility and establish relationships with grantmakers. Credibility is the touchstone of grantmakers. If a funder trusts the consortium and its mission, it will be easier to gain the funder’s financial support. For example, develop a short biography for each board and staff member and create an aura around the consortium that reflects “strength” and “trust.”
- It is vitally important that grantees track grant funds to assure funders that the programs under their stewardship have been successful.
- Contracting, the process of forming agreements between the funder and the grantee, begins with the development of a document that contains standard provisions, assurances, and specifics about the funded project. It is during this process that the consortium and the grantmaker can alter the specifics of the proposed project. At this time, budgets, payment dates, and amounts are agreed upon. Allowable costs are specified and the option to change amounts between categories may be constrained.
- Once an organization receives an award, it will have to comply with numerous grant management and follow-up requirements, which include establishing recordkeeping, accounting, and financial reporting systems, tracking organizational performance, and demonstrating administrative capabilities. There are two basic rules to follow throughout the post award process:
  - Notify the grantmaker of all cost overruns.

- Never use funds from one project to pay expenses of another.
- Adams highlighted two promotions that GrantStation is offering that may assist Neighborhood Networks consortia with their grant-seeking efforts. They are:
  - A 30-day complimentary membership to use GrantStation's funding database. This promotion is only available to Neighborhood Networks stakeholders. Interested consortia should e-mail Devin Jefferson at [djefferson@bctpartners.com](mailto:djefferson@bctpartners.com).
  - A one-day membership costing \$99 that is open to all visitors through May 14, 2008 in partnership with TechSoup. Adams encouraged the participants to visit the GrantStation Web site at [www.GrantStation.com](http://www.GrantStation.com) to find additional information about this promotion.