



**Building Communities:
Sharing Strategies to Secure Stimulus Funding**
August 28, 2009

Grant Application Documents to Prepare Ahead of Time

Upon submitting your grant, for government or private funds, you will be asked to include certain crucial organizational information. Instead of scrambling to collect this information in the days before the grant's application deadline, it is a good practice to have this information readily on-hand. Some items to prepare and keep on-hand include:

- Mission/vision
 - Concisely communicating what your organization does and its reason for existence is important, especially in a grant proposal. Grant-making organizations use missions/visions as a quick initial assessment of the many grant proposals they receive.
- Goals/objectives
 - Include the goals and objectives associated with this grant proposal, but also other relevant organizational goals and objectives.
- Strategic plan
 - According to Carter McNamara¹, “strategic planning determines where an organization is going over the next year or more, how it’s going to get there and how it’ll know if it got there or not. The focus of a strategic plan is usually on the entire organization, while the focus of a business plan is usually on a particular product, service or program.”
- Organizational chart
 - The structure and operations of your organization are easily communicated in an organizational chart. Additionally, this document can demonstrate the interaction with and involvement of the organization’s board.
- Board membership and structure

¹McNamara, Carter (1997) Strategic planning (in nonprofit or for-profit organizations). Retrieved April 10, 2008 from Free Management Library Web site: http://www.managementhelp.org/plan_dec/str_plan/str_plan.htm.

- Include necessary contact information and explain the structure of your board. What are the different positions on the board? What functions do they serve? How are they integrated into the organization?
- Letters of recommendation/support
 - According to Miner and Griffith², “strong letters help establish your credibility and document that you have a solid base of support for your project.” Miner and Griffith’s chapter 13 has more advice on this topic as well as examples.
- Press releases
 - Disseminating information through media sources increases your audience. It can be very beneficial for your organization to write a press release when something noteworthy happens. A few examples include:
 - Organization’s beginning
 - Program launch
 - New hire
 - Retirement
 - Awards
 - Exceptional performance
- Recent news clips
 - Similar to press releases, news clips offer your potential funder a look into your organization via the news media.
- Annual report
 - Annual reports function as a yearly organizational summary. They typically focus on financial information, but programmatic and budgeting narratives are especially valuable. If your organization produces an annual report, include it in your grant proposal. If your organization does not produce an annual report, you should consider beginning to do so. The process of creating annual reports, along with the documents themselves, improves accountability and transparency.
- Audits
 - Including audits (internal and/or external) in your grant proposal appendix is recommended. Audits reinforce your organization’s transparency and accountability.
- Financial statements

² Miner, L. E., & Griffith, J. (1993). *Proposal planning and writing*. Phoenix: Oryx Press.

- According to the SEC³, there are four basic financial statements:
 - *Balance sheets*
 - *Income statements*
 - *Cash flow statements*
 - *Statements of shareholders' equity*
- “Statements of shareholders’ equity” is irrelevant for nonprofit organizations, but the other three are applicable. Income statements summarize revenues and expenditures, balance sheets summarize assets and liabilities and cash flow statements address only the most liquid assets.
- 501(c)3 documentation
 - Many grants are available only to 501(c) 3 classified organizations. Including this document in your proposal appendix is paramount.
- Partner agreements
- Memos of understanding (MOUs)
 - Aristotle once said, “The whole is more than the sum of its parts.” Often times, organizations work together to implement a program funded by a single grant because they might not have the capacity to completely implement a program individually. Essentially, MOUs spell out how organizations will interact and offer proof that they have agreed to work together for a common cause. These are referred to by a number of different names. In chapter 13 of Miner and Griffith⁴, you can find a sample “consortium grant agreement.”
- Fact sheet
- Relevant graphics
 - Complicated relationships, funding structures and programmatic approaches can often be communicated best through graphic representation. A well-developed graphic can make it easier for potential funders to understand your grant application and the related information.
- Templates
 - Including templates will simplify and streamline preparations for future grant proposals. Possible templates include any documentation listed above (e.g. letters of

³ U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (2007) Beginners' guide to financial statements. Retrieved April 10, 2008 from U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission Web site: <http://www.sec.gov/investor/pubs/begfinstmtguide.htm>

⁴ Miner, L. E., & Griffith, J. (1993). *Proposal planning and writing*. Phoenix: Oryx Press.

recommendation, financial statements, MOUs, timelines) and any other documents deemed essential by members of the organization.

References

McNamara, Carter (1997) Strategic planning (in nonprofit or for-profit organizations). Retrieved April 10, 2008 from Free Management Library Web site: http://www.managementhelp.org/plan_dec/str_plan/str_plan.htm.

Miner, L. E., & Griffith, J. (1993). *Proposal planning and writing*. Phoenix: Oryx Press.

U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (2007) Beginners' guide to financial statements. Retrieved April 10, 2008 from U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission Web site: <http://www.sec.gov/investor/pubs/b>

