



AFP Information Exchange

A Step-by-Step Primer on How to Obtain Large Government Grants for Nonprofits (Part 3)

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A Step-By-Step Primer On How To Obtain Large Government Grants For Nonprofits (Part 3)

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Obtaining Government Grants: Step 3—Writing the Case Statement

There are many steps to applying for large government grants. Each step is equally important to securing the funding your organization needs for growth. Over the next several weeks, we are planning to outline, step-by-step, the general process inherent in obtaining these grants. Our hope is that other professionals advising or working within the NPO community will comment and offer their own suggestions or opinions. We believe that such productive dialog will be helpful toward bringing more efficiencies (and money!) to Delaware nonprofits. This is the third part of this series: Writing the Case Statement.

STEP 3. RESEARCH

According to expert fundraiser Hank Russo, the "Case" is the underlying rationale for fundraising. A **case statement** is a concise document that clearly explains what goal your organization seeks to meet, how you plan to meet that goal, and what you can achieve with additional resources. It is the urgent call for a solution to a problem. It makes the argument of why the government should support your project; and what your project will accomplish. Case statements vary in length, depth and scope according to the particular needs being addressed.

A case statement should be more factual than persuasive, and be between four to ten pages. The writing should be brief and succinct with excellent, but simple grammar. When preparing a case statement, remember to focus

outward on community needs and the benefits derived rather than inward on institutional desires.

Before you begin, write down several strong, compelling reasons why the organization deserves funding and support, and use these as your key points as you write. Writing your case statement will be much easier if you have prepared the documents described in [Step 1 of our series, "Obtaining Large Government Grants."](#) The resources you will need to complete your case statement are your mission statement, goals, objectives, description of your current programs and services, the project budget and financial plan, description of the governance, staff, explanation of current facilities and service delivery, and a plan for evaluation of the programs and services.

The case statement should have each of these sections:

1) Background Section. The opening part of the case statement should contain several sections describing the organization, including:

a) Executive Summary. The first paragraph of your case statement is the executive summary, which is typically prepared last. It is much easier to summarize your case after you are finished preparing the bulk of the information.

b) Background of Organization and Mission. Prepare a one to two paragraph summary of your institutional background and the mission of your organization. Include a few key historical facts; such as the opening dates of major new programs, mergers, or exceptionally large campaigns. Why was your organization founded? What are some of the key accomplishments?

c) Constituencies and Stats. The next paragraph should describe the constituencies your organization currently serves. What is the role of your non-profit in the community? Do you have areas of specialization? What impact has your organization had on the target population?

There are several other areas on which you may want to focus in this section. What are some key statistics and facts about your clients? Use the

most current research available. Provide facts and figures about your operations, such as, "In 2014; our organization provided 978,998 nights of shelter for homeless males age 18 to 24, at the cost of \$24 per client per night."

With these stats and background information, the grant request is better focused. Explain how the new grant request will be used to serve this population, or a new target group (or, if a new group, why expand/change the target)? Also, this may be a good opportunity to show whether this need is currently an unduplicated service in the community. If it is not, you may want to show whether or not you have partnered with a current provider of similar services, or explain why the demand is so high that additional providers are needed.

d) Organizational Capacity. You will also want to showcase your organization by describing any affiliations or accreditations that make your organization stand out in the community. Describe your organizational capacity; and list any awards, achievements, special credentials of your staff, administration or trustees. If you have a niche, what is it? What makes your programs or services better than your competitors? If you have a previous history of government grant awards, list each grant with the agency, level of government and the amount of funding received.

2) Project description. The next part of the case statement should describe the project you are planning.

a) Summary. Briefly describe the **proposed plan**, building construction, renovations or new program.

b) S.M.A.R.T. objectives. Describe the goal of your project and the key objectives you are attempting to accomplish. When you write your objectives, use the **SMART acronym**; and write **specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely** objectives. For example, "By June 2015, our non-profit will build 300 new units of transitional housing for homeless men age 18-24 at the cost of \$65,000 per unit; as measured by construction logs, financial and occupancy records. This will enable our community to provide the shelter and assistance needed to move three

hundred individuals from the streets to the supportive services needed to become productive citizens."

c) Logic models. Most government grants require logic models as an attachment; which specifically define outcomes and objectives. (Logic models will be covered in another document as part of this series).

3) Opportunities. Next describe the opportunities that are available. Questions you should consider when drafting this section include: Why is the funding critical now? What are the challenges to implementing the program? What forces, (internal and external) make the success of this project timely now? This section should also describe funding sources, collaborative partners, or overwhelming need, such as a catastrophic storm. You will also want to discuss what resources are needed, such as new staffing, buildings, equipment or partnerships. Also, be sure to discuss the benefits of your project. Consequences of funding or lack thereof may also be discussed. You will want to describe any adverse effects that may fall on your community or the target population if you cannot implement your new program or project. Similarly, discuss how you will move forward with your project if you only receive partial funding.

4) Financing. Next describe how you plan to finance the project. Start with background. For example, if you have a capital campaign in place, how much have you raised to date? What are the sources that you have targeted? Which sources are pending? How much additional funding do you need? Then explain your organization's plan to obtain the balance of the funds needed, and review your proposed fundraising campaign. Include the total goal, timing and benefits of the campaign for the community. Create a one page budget for the project; and make sure the projected income equals the expenses. Include all costs, including in-kind income, and "overhead" that can be allocated to projects.

5) Outcomes. Finally, discuss the anticipated or projected outcomes of the project. How many people will be served? What is the timeline of the project, including start date, end date, and key benchmarks that need to be

met? What does success look like? When your project is complete, how will be community improve and be different?

6) Executive Summary redux. Now that you have the answers to these questions, you are ready to prepare a brief executive summary paragraph that will capture the attention of your target agency's readers. Government agencies do not respond to emotional pleas. They need facts, figures, charts and evidence consistent with their objectives for the community.

Here is an example of a generic executive summary:

NPO is applying to XXXX Agency for \$XX,XXX,XXX in financial assistance to build 135 units of affordable housing for very low-income seniors. Our NPO has solicited \$X,XXX,XXX of the funding needed for this project by the State, County, City and private funders. To date, X,XXX,XXX is committed. This project is aligned with all of the key goals of XXX agency's to w, x, y and z.

Benefits to the Community:

- The project will supply 135 new rental apartments to low-moderate income seniors over the age of 62; and 12,775 more days of care annually.
- With construction job unemployment up to 11% and climbing, see <http://www.bls.gov/lau/home.htm>, our State needs this project. It will offer 60 new construction jobs, and generate over \$270,000 in tax revenues for local jurisdictions. NPO will utilize over 20 existing public and private partnerships, with employment and training agencies to provide placement and training for at least an additional fifteen Section 3 jobs.
- The project is not only on a stop on six City bus routes, but it is located in a walkable community for the elderly, see <http://www.dartfirststate.com/services/services.shtml>. It is less than 0.5 miles from three major hospitals, and within walking distance to pharmacies.
- Every senior who remains independent and does not enter a nursing home saves the Medicaid budget \$76,000/year. See The Kaiser Family Foundation, Statehealthfacts.org. It is projected that this project will save the State over \$XX,XXX,XXX in Medicaid cost in three years; fully recovering the investment by X agency.

- The project preserves a historic building, is in a historic neighborhood, and has Federal Section 106 approval; and is "shovel ready."
- The proposed design has a green roof, and incorporates features allowing it to receive Silver Certification from the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) upon completion.

Conclusion. The most important thing to remember when creating your case for support is the ultimate goal of the document: to present the facts in a manner that is so compelling that it convinces the agency to fund the program. If your case statement accomplishes this task, then it is doing its job.

Don't miss our next article: Step 4 – The Application

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About Cathy D. Cessna, RDH, MPA, CFRE: Senior level private and public sector decision maker; fundraiser, marketing lead, advertising sales, medical software sales; affordable housing development. Eleven years of experience - Adjunct Professor; Marketing, Fundraising, Finance, and Non-profit Legal Issues. Non-profit consultant/public sector: Volunteer: Wilmington Montessori School, Junior League of Wilmington, RHD Howell, Delaware Military Academy, Wellness Center Delaware, Westminster Presbyterian Church, Tower Hill School, Delaware Dental Hygiene Assn.

About Charlie Vincent, Esq.: Charlie has almost 15 years of marketing and business experience across different sectors in Delaware and Pennsylvania, including strategic business planning and marketing, event planning, and fundraising for non-profits, small businesses, and entrepreneurs. As an attorney, Charlie developed a unique understanding and perspective of how different clients think in terms of time, budget, and results. These legal experiences, combined with his marketing and business background, enabled him early in his legal career to help two of largest legal non-profits in Delaware with the planning and execution of multiple successful fundraising events. Charlie formed Innovincent LLC in 2014 to help other non-profits, businesses, and individuals with strategic planning, marketing, event planning, and fundraising needs.

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