Where’s the Money?

Strategies to Get Grants for Community and Economic Development
Money’s Tight

• State and federal funds is getting harder to access.
  – Grant programs have fewer funds
  – Granting requirements are getting harder to meet.

• Local governments finances are also very tight.
  – Difficult for them to undertake basic services (police, fire, etc.)
  – Economic and community development is a lower priority.
Get Ready

• Follow the Boy Scout Moto – “Be Prepared”
  – Communities that have some basic items in place are generally the ones that will receive funding, when it is available.
  – While the requirements of different programs will differ to some degree, there are some basics that you can prepare now.
What Do You Want?

• Develop a plan or “wish list”
  – Don’t worry about the money (at this stage)
  – Involve the community and/or stakeholders in the “dream” stage
  • Develop a “strategic plan”
  – Set project priorities – which project is most important?
Local “Buy In”

- Local support for the project is critical
  - Large (expensive) or controversial projects may generate public opposition
  - Early anticipation of possible opposition can be essential
  - Identify which projects are top priority
  - Show a united front to potential funders
  - Projects with a local “champion” and/or group of supporters have better chances of succeeding
The Basics

• Ideally you should have the following items determined before seeking funding:

  – Preliminary engineering
  – Cost estimate - budget
  – Property issues
  – Potential environmental issues
  – Local match
  – Who will own and maintain - costs
Special Requirements

• Some funding sources require certain things **before** the community can apply:
  – Plans (i.e. master or recreation plan)
    • Project listed as a priority in the planning document
  – Feasibility study
  – A DDA in place (or similar entity)
  – Be a “Main Street Community”
  – Be certified as a Redevelopment Ready Community (RRC) (not yet, but on the horizon)
Where to Look for $

• The Web
• Associations’ Newsletters, Magazines and Web Sites
• Networking with peers
• Contact with regional organizations, legislators and/or funding agencies
Searching on the Web

• Good place to start
• Can be very time consuming
• Different types of grants:
  – Public: Federal, State, Regional
  – Private Foundations: Private Companies, Private Families, Community Foundations, Utilities
What to Look For

• Does your project fit the funding source?
  – What types of projects and activities are eligible?
  – What types of entities are eligible to apply?
  – Are certain geographic areas targeted?
  – What are the min/max grant amounts?
  – Local match required?
  – Any special requirements (low income, population size, project listed in a plan, only in traditional downtowns, etc.)
  – Grant deadlines
So Far, So Good….

• Look at examples of successful applicants
  – Does your project seem to be similar?
  – Is your community/organization similar to successful applicants?
  – Have they funded any projects in this general geographic area?
  – Is your project cost within the range of other projects?
Still Looking Good?

• Call the agency or foundation and describe your project to them.
  – See what they think about your chances of getting funding
  – Is the project “fundable”?
    • There’s a difference between being “eligible” and being “fundable”
  – Talk to peers/regional agencies/consultants too
• Look over grant program carefully:
  – How much time & effort will it take to complete application?
  – How will your project rate against other applicants?
  – How much funding is available?
  – What is the application deadline?
  – How long is the project review time?
  – When must the project be completed?
  – What is involved in grant administration?
Getting Started

• Get copies of the most up-to-date forms, guidelines and rating system
• Get to know funding agency contacts
• Tap into local support
  – Letters of support
  – Resolutions from local governments
• Get support from State/fed reps
• Get preliminary engineering/cost estimates
• Identify potential environmental issues
• Hold public hearings, if required
Documents you may need

- Organization’s mission, history, operation and sources of revenue
- Organization’s By-Laws, Articles of Incorporation
- Proof of 501(c)3 status (if applicable)
- List of Board members, staff
- DUNS and SAMS/CAGE Code numbers
- Current Audit
Make Your Case

• Explain everything
• Meet grant’s goals
• Get maximum points
• Use the funding agency’s terms
• Back it up with sources
  – Census data
  – Local Plans
  – Special Studies
Details, Details

• Read and follow directions
• Answer all questions
• Answer in the same order and same numbering system as asked
• Label all sections and attachments
• Sign all forms
• Make sure application is complete
• Check for errors or contradictions
• Get the application in on time
Standard Application

- Needs assessment
- Project description
  - Project timeline
- Project details
  - Engineering
  - Environmental
- Budget
Working with Foundations

- Start search closer to home
- Develop a relationship with foundation’s director/board
- Understand the foundation’s purpose - your project needs to fit what they support
- Sell your organization and/or project before applying
• Foundations can be more flexible than government, but can be harder to talk to.
  – Get an introduction through friends/acquaintances
• Foundation funds can be “local match” to State and federal funds
Private Sector Big Daddy

• When a private person/business takes on a troubled building or location – for the public good (but they still want to make a profit).
  – Seeing more of this lately
  – A forward thinking community could try to do some match-making between wealthy locals and buildings (locations) that they would like to see redeveloped.
If Application is Turned Down

• Ask why - nicely
• Find out how your proposal rated
• Find out what other projects were funded
• Learn from your mistakes and try again
• Be ready for other potential funding sources
If Application is Approved

• Keep your promises
• Comply with State/fed regulations
• Keep good records
• Submit complete reports on time
• Get project done on time
• Stay within budget
• Stay in touch with funding agency
• Get assistance along the way
It’s Not Brain Surgery

• Be Ready
• Be Patient
• Make Contacts
• Follow Directions
• Keep on Trying