



AT THE LIBRARY

By Julie Winkelstein
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“No grantmaker wants to adopt you. Funding sources want to know how you will continue your program when their grant runs out.”

-From the Grantmanship Center's "Program Planning & Proposal Writing," by Norton J. Kiritiz and Jerry Mandel

I recently attended another Infopeople workshop, this time on grant writing. Infopeople itself is supported by a federal Library Services and Technology Act grant, distributed by the California State Library. According to Holly Hinman, the class instructor, there are two ways California distributes funds from LSTA grants: as competitive grants and as priority projects, that are “deemed to be projects that give broad benefit to the state over a long period of time.” Infopeople falls into the second category.

As preparation for the class, we were each asked to bring an idea for a grant we would actually like to write, and our first assignment of the day was to explain our project to the person sitting next to us. Each of us then presented our neighbor's proposal to the class. As she explained it, Hinman's motivation for this was for us to immediately experience the concept that “grant development is not a solitary process,” but rather a team effort.

This exercise was fascinating, since each person (and there were about 20 of us) had a completely different idea. The range was amazing, including a newspaper digitization project, a historical project that required cataloging 1300 boxes of photographs, a Spanish language literacy program, a calendar, a creative writing workshop for elementary school children, a diabetes education program to be offered in several languages, a library card campaign for second graders and a program to increase the library resources and programs for developmentally delayed adults. Most of the plans seemed to come directly from personal experience; that is, these librarians saw a need of some kind and wanted to meet it.

The agenda for the day was divided into five parts and as we worked our way through each section, we spent quite a bit of time working in small groups. This gave each of us a chance to get comments and suggestions about our projects –

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a concept I found one of the most rewarding parts of the day. Ever since my children were in middle school and complaining about group work, I have had mixed feelings about group assignments. However, in this case it was perfect, since we all seemed committed to listening to each other and then contributing suggestions.

According to Hinman, “developing a grant project is 80% planning.” As an example, she explained that out of the 10 months a year she works on the Infopeople grant, only 3 or 4 weeks are spent writing – the rest is groundwork. To help us with this preparation, our workshop packets included information about grant writing, sources for finding grants, a few grants currently open and – my favorites – examples of actual successful grants.

In addition, there was a project planning worksheet, and as we worked our way through each of the sections, we

used this to record our conclusions. This means that by the close of the day, I had a two-sided sheet of paper that described my project in one sentence, identified my target audience, described the need, listed possible community partners, set the goal, itemized objectives and action steps, described evaluation and identified possible personnel.

At the end of that sheet was step B – a description of the steps I will take over the next 4 to 6 weeks. I was glad to see this included because I know from experience that it is difficult to return to work after a workshop like this and actually follow through. Having the list will, I hope, inspire me to take that first step.