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“A Vital Christian Presence in Social Work”

**KEYS TO OBTAINING GRANTS AND RESOURCES FOR
CHRISTIAN ORGANIZATIONS THAT HELP THOSE IN NEED**

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Keys to Obtaining Grants and Resources

for

Christian Organizations that Help Those in Need

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Abstract

Faith-based organizations are religious in nature and often excluded from applying for certain grant dollars due to their religious association. This paper provides a brief overview of The Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, and how its establishment spearheaded a movement to provide more support for faith-based organizations. Furthermore, additional suggestions for developing fundraising plans, evaluating the outcome of fundraising efforts, and applying for grants funds are provided specifically for faith-based organizations.

Introduction

Clearly, faith-based organizations have faced a myriad of challenges when applying for the federal funds that are needed to support their community-based services (Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, 2009). Although for decades, faith-based agencies have provided many of the same services as non-profit organizations, they have not always received the same support merely due to their religious activities. A faith-based organization is philanthropic in nature, organized as a charity or non-profit, and aligns with the mission and goals of major religious organizations (Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, 2009).

In response to the disparities that formerly prevented faith-based organizations from applying for federal funds, in 2001, President George Bush created the White House Office of Faith-based and Community Initiatives. This department was developed in order to ensure that non-profit and faith-based organizations have a level playing field when it comes to applying for federal funding. While this initiative exists to support faith-based organizations, there are still many grantors and individuals that choose not to provide monies to organizations that are religiously centered. The goal of the present paper is to provide faith-based organizations with a framework on how to develop a fundraising plan, apply for funding, and evaluate their efforts. As a result personnel at faith-based organizations will be aware of the funding opportunities available to them, how to effectively apply for them, and evaluate the outcomes.

Charitable Choice

In response to the disparities that formerly prevented faith-based organizations from applying for federal funds, President George Bush created the White House Office of Faith-based and Community Initiatives. This department was developed in order to ensure that non-profit and faith-based organizations have a level playing field when it comes to applying for federal funding. Although the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives exists, obtaining funding for organizations that coordinate religious-centered programming is still a continual struggle. Many grantors and individuals are nonpartisan and choose not to provide monies to organizations that are religiously centered. However, certain governmental agencies must provide federal funding. This is ensured through a concept called Charitable Choice.

The concept of Charitable Choice was established in order to abolish the fundraising barriers between non-profit and faith-based organizations. Charitable Choice is federal legal language developed to ensure that equal opportunities in federal fundraising exist for faith-based organizations. However, it only applies to a few federal programs (welfare, core funding for community action agencies, and federal drug treatment money).

Charitable Choice ensures the following for faith-based organizations:

“A Level Playing Field. Faith-based providers are eligible to compete for funds on the same basis as any other providers, are neither excluded nor included because they are religious, too religious or of the wrong religion” (United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2009).

“Respect for Allies. The religious character of faith-based providers is protected by allowing them to retain control over the definition, development, practice, and expression of their religious beliefs. Neither federal nor state government can require a religious provider to alter its form of internal governance or remove religious art, icons, scripture or other symbols in order to be a program participant” (United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2009).

“Protecting Clients. In regard to rendering assistance, religious organizations shall not discriminate against an individual on the basis of religion, a religious belief, or refusal to actively participate in a religious practice. If an individual objects to the religious character of a program, a secular alternative must be provided” (United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2009).

“Church-State Separation. All government funds must be used to fulfill the public social service goals, and no direct government funding can be diverted to inherently religious activities such as worship, and sectarian instruction” (United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2009). Charitable Choice makes federal dollars more accessible to agencies with a goal to fulfill their mission based upon Christian principles.

Prior to applying for federal funds, faith-based organizations should obtain a Duns and Bradstreet number. All United States contractors and grantees are required to obtain this nine digit number. It helps governmental agencies to identify them.

This section has provided a brief analysis of federal funding for faith-based organizations. The next section provides an analysis of how agencies should consider developing their fundraising plan.

Developing a Fundraising Plan

Fundraising for any organization is much more than merely putting ideas together and hoping that they will come into fruition. Fundraising takes planning. Steps towards the creation of an effective fundraising plan should consist of the following: (1) creation of a small reserve fund specifically for fundraising, (2) check income projections (3) supplement with non-cash contributions (4) draft a plan (5) strategize (6) evaluate (Bray, 2005). In order for faith-based organizations to compete for the dollars that are allocated specifically for the purpose of their mission, they must first develop an effective fundraising plan. Once a plan is drafted that outlines these six core areas, the agency must prove to funders that their agency needs funding and will manage the funds appropriately. This can be determined through the development of a case for support. This document is further explained in the next section:

Developing a Case for Support

Grant developers create what is known as a case for support. “A Case for Support – also known as a Case Statement – is a short, targeted, persuasive document. It convincingly demonstrates a societal need and showcases the organization's ability to meet that need” (Miller, 2008, para. 1). The case for support allows organizations to prove why their organization needs funding while emphasizing what areas of the organization need funding the most. The information needed to develop this document can be obtained from a wide array of resources like brochures, letters and even annual reports. Included in the case statement are typically both quantitative and qualitative data. The goal of a case statement is to fully explain the significance of the organization and its need for funding.

According to Timothy Seiler (2001), author of Developing Your Case for Support, a case statement typically answers the following questions:

1. What cause does your nonprofit serve?
2. What effect does the work of your nonprofit have?
3. What interests are served by your nonprofit?
4. Why is your nonprofit a reason for someone to take action?
5. Why should someone give you money? (p. 12).

Answers to these questions can be provided in the form of storytelling, case studies or analytical frameworks. For example, a faith-based organization may decide to answer question one by painting a picture of the organization and providing a scenario pertaining to a certain individual that the agency has assisted. The information can be obtained through observations and interviews and then shared with potential donors.

An organization that works on behalf of AIDS prevention may answer question two in the form of a case study. If, for example, the agency worked with individuals in Africa since 1985, a case study would provide an analysis of the prevention strategies used and how beneficial the agency has been to the residents of that land. The case study could be developed as a result of a series of research coordinated by the organization.

A nonprofit organization attempting to develop a compelling case for support might find this type of qualitative method to be useful. Observations, interviews and documented studies could be maintained by the agency over time and shared with the donor in order to express how the organization's internal and external constituents position the organization. This method might strike the interest of potential donors especially if the

mission and vision of the agency aligns with that of the foundation, corporation, or governmental entity.

Once the plan is developed, agencies should start thinking about the implementation of their plan and consider the following questions:

- Do we have a clearly defined mission statement that is understood by our constituents as well as our board of directors?
- Have we developed a case for support?
- Who have we impacted and are they willing to provide a testimony?
- Do we know exactly what our operational budget numbers are?
- Is there a need for our program? Are there others within our area completing the same tasks? What is their impact?
- Does our agency have a strategic plan that is revisited annually?

While this section provided a brief overview of those steps that faith-based organizations should consider when developing a fundraising plan, the next section provides an analysis of how agencies can consider implementing their fundraising campaign.

Implementing the Fundraising Campaign

Organizations use a wide array of fundraising methods ranging from grant writing to major endowments during their development of a successful fundraising campaign. Faith-based organizations interested in establishing fundraising goals for their agency should first develop a fundraising plan and implement it once it is determined to be feasible. This section looks at several fundraising tactics that fundraisers can consider.

Grants

Grants.gov and foundationcenter.org are just a few of the online databases available to faith-based organizations that are interested in applying for grant dollars. When applying for grant monies these agencies must first ensure that the foundation or governmental organization's mission aligns with their own. Funders are reluctant to provide funds to an agency with a mission that is outside the scope of their giving area. Organizations should also ensure that they abide by the application criteria. For example, if the funder requests an agency to provide a twelve page document in ten point font, the applicant must abide by those rules. In addition, funders are deadline driven. It is imperative for organizations to find out when an agency's deadline is and stick to it.

Fundraisers should become familiar with a grant making entities' submission guidelines. Grants.gov typically accepts its proposals online. Provisions are often made when an organization doesn't have access to the internet. Some foundations and corporations also accept proposals online. An organization's guidelines will determine what the exact stipulations are. If these guidelines aren't apparent, consider contacting the agency's Program Manager. Be sure to do your research first. Some foundations only allow potential grantors to make one phone call. Be sure that you know exactly what you want to ask when you place your call.

Some funders might first request a letter of intent or a concept paper. These documents are often shorter than the actual grant proposal. They give the funder a general overview of your proposed program.

Other fundraising initiatives such as capital campaigns and endowments are implemented according to differing guidelines. These guidelines are typically negotiated or established by the donor.

Evaluation

“Fundraising involves many measurable objectives and outcomes. These outcomes are the keys to the organization’s success (Weinstein, 2002, p. 319). Fundraisers for faith-based organizations must take the steps necessary to establish a feasible fundraising plan that has the capacity to obtain the funds needed to ensure ongoing sustainability. First, the agency must establish a list of goals and objectives related to the fundraising plan and an evaluation tool that will be used to determine if those goals are met. Perhaps an agency wants to raise \$50,000. Systems should be in place to ensure that such dollars are generated based upon a detailed action plan. The plan should include the following: a list that outlines how the monies will be obtained, a list of key contacts and their information, and a list of deadlines. Once this plan has been established, and the outcomes achieved, fundraisers should look to their evaluation plan in order to truly determine the agency’s success.

Author Tony Ponderis (2009) suggests that fund-developers begin planning their fundraising evaluation from the beginning. He suggests that the following questions should be considered:

“Was the goal realistic? How well did the organizational structure of the campaign work? Did the solicitation kit materials do the expected job? Was the kickoff meeting effective? Were the progress meetings and reports to volunteers effective? Was the campaign able

to fix problems and replace volunteers quickly and effectively? Did the development office function adequately? Which volunteers performed well, and who fell down?

“(Ponderis, par. 5, 2009).

During the agency’s fundraising efforts, several documents can be maintained in order to ensure that these questions are answered correctly. Such documents include communication with foundation and governmental officials (copies of email or letters), marketing materials, results of volunteer campaigns, and results of program evaluations. Ponderis’ proposed evaluation is known as outcome based. Outcome based evaluation is typically measured through inputs, outputs, activities, processes, and outcomes. The information is generally highlighted through the development of a logic model. While outcomes based assessment is often used by fundraisers, it is only one method of evaluation. The next section is based upon evaluability, an evaluation concept developed by Joseph Whorley. While Ponderis’ evaluation is based upon the evaluation of fundraising, Whorley’s concept is based upon the evaluation of programming.

Evaluability Assessment

In the early 1970s, Joseph Wholey and his coworkers developed the concept of "evaluability assessment." This process was developed as a means for evaluators and stakeholders to spark communication and determine ways to develop a focused evaluation study that includes the opinions of all constituents within an organization (Fitzpatrick, et. al, p. 182) (and also to determine whether an evaluation was necessary/possible at a given point in a program’s life). The efforts were a response to the program evaluation that was taking place at the U.S. Department of Health, Education

and Welfare Services. Wholey and his colleagues found that there were differing opinions regarding the definition of assessment which implied the need for the entire organization to come together and discuss organizational program evaluation.

Evaluability assessment was developed in order to ensure the following:

- Program objectives, important side effects, and priority information needs are well defined
- Program objectives are feasible to achieve with the intended target audience, the knowledge and skills of program deliverers, and the resources provided.
- Intended uses of information are well defined (qtd. in Fitzpatrick, et. al, 2004, p.182)

Fitzpatrick states that this type of evaluation was formerly used prior to implementing a summative evaluation (183). In the event that the program did not successfully meet the criteria specified in the evaluability assessment, the agency would choose not to implement a summative evaluation (Fitzpatrick, 2004). Summative evaluation helps organizations to determine if they should adopt, expand or continue a program (Fitzpatrick, 2004). Summative evaluation is coordinated once a program is completed.

An evaluability assessment could be used as a valuable resource to agencies working in the area of faith-based fundraising. When using this assessment in order to analyze a faith-based organization's program, it would help them to ensure that the agency is adhering to the programmatic objectives identified in their strategic plan. It would also help the agency to determine if their objectives are realistic. For example, if

an agency states in its strategic plan that it would like to increase planned giving by 35 percent by January 1, 2010 and they have only increased by 10 percent, the evaluability study can help them to "clarify the program" (Fitzpatrick, et. al, and p.183) and identify those steps need to be taken in order to improve donor participation. Once the donor sees that the program that they are investing in is truly making a difference, they may be more inclined to give, give again, or give more. The program's impact can be showcased to the donor through solicited mailings, dinners, and focus groups.

With this assessment, faith-based organizations could work jointly with internal and external stakeholders in order to collectively figure out ways to develop goals that could be realistically achieved. This would assist with buy-in. The information gathered during the focus group could help individuals within the organization to, "agree on evaluation priorities and intended uses of the study," (Fitzpatrick, p. 183). This is because the evaluability assessment is a preliminary study that includes all individuals within an organization. It is not a "top-down" theory that allows administration to determine what works best. Instead it encourages the opinions of all internal and external constituents.

The two evaluation methods shared here, outcome and evaluability, are only a limited number of resources that can be used to evaluate an agency's fundraising and programmatic outcomes. Agencies should consider researching what is available and selecting the evaluation tool that best helps them to achieve their fundraising and programmatic goals.

Conclusion

There are several factors that faith-based organizations must consider when developing a fundraising plan. The agency must determine if their efforts are feasible. An evaluation plan must also be developed. Most importantly, a case for support will help the agency to create a rationale for their fundraising efforts. This paper has provided a brief analysis of each of these critical fundraising tools.

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