

# **Winning Grants**

**A How-To-Do-It Manual  
for Librarians® with  
Multimedia Tutorials and  
Grant Development Tools**

**Pamela H. MacKellar  
and  
Stephanie K. Gerding**

**HOW-TO-DO-IT MANUALS®**

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To all librarians who focus on seeing opportunities,  
this one is for you.

—Pam MacKellar

To my husband and true love, Patrick, and to my  
sweetie-pie daughter, Madeline.

—Stephanie Gerding

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# Foreword

I have spent over half of my career working in state library agencies, and I have read hundreds—perhaps thousands—of grant applications. Based on that experience, I can confidently say that every person who is responsible for writing a grant would benefit greatly from reading *Winning Grants: A How-To-Do-It Manual for Librarians with Multimedia Tutorials and Grant Development Tools*. Pamela MacKellar and Stephanie Gerding have created a clear, complete, and easily understood guide that will help novice grant writers create their first proposals and help experienced grant writers fine-tune their skills.

Applying for grants can be a challenging process, particularly with library budgets as stretched as they are now. Some managers see grants as a way to fill the gaps left by budget reductions and want to apply for any and all grants that might provide needed resources. However, starting the grant process by focusing on the library's internal needs is often self-defeating. The library's budget needs are rarely a perfect match for the funders' priorities. Funders don't want just to give the library money. They want to support programs and services that make a difference to the people who use the library.

In this, grant funders reflect the values of the broader public, who also want to know what difference the library is making in the lives of the people in the community. Today's successful library programs and services are user-centered, community-based, collaborative, and evaluated based on quantitative data. These same themes run through *Winning Grants* and reinforce the fact that grants are not just free money. Instead, as noted in the book's preface, they provide resources to “establish valuable partnerships, resolve community needs, and increase community support.”

Throughout *Winning Grants*, Pamela MacKellar and Stephanie Gerding emphasize the importance of library planning as the critical first step in writing a successful grant. They provide a host of reasons for this and suggest a variety of possible planning processes, including *Strategic Planning for Results* (Public Library Association, 2008), which I wrote. Although I have a natural bias toward *Strategic Planning for Results*, in this instance I agree with Pamela and Stephanie: the process you use to plan is less important than the final product you create. If you have a community-based plan with clearly defined service priorities, then you

will have much of the information you need to complete your grant proposal. If your plan includes clearly defined measures of success, then you will be in an even better position when you write your grant, as most funders will expect you to establish targets and gather the data needed to measure your progress toward reaching your targets.

*Winning Grants* is more than a print publication. It includes multimedia tutorials and interactive grant development tools. Pamela and Stephanie have given you everything you need to create effective grant proposals, successfully implement your grants, and establish a framework to support future grant-writing endeavors. Use these resources wisely and all your grant-writing efforts will succeed.

*Sandra Nelson*

**Sandra Nelson** is a consultant, speaker, trainer, and writer specializing in public library planning and management issues. She is a leader in the development of planning and management tools for public librarians and is the Senior Editor of the Public Library Association (PLA) Results series, an integrated library of planning and resource allocation manuals.

Sandra is the author or co-author of six of the books in Results series, including *Strategic Planning for Results*, the foundation of the series, and the recently published *Implementing for Results*. She has used her planning expertise to help library managers, staff, and board members to develop strategic plans in dozens of public libraries of all sizes.

# Preface

Because library budgets have been cut across the nation while library use is increasing, more libraries than ever before are seeking grant funding from both governmental stimulus funds and from private funding sources whose coffers have been eroded by the economic downturn.

Where can librarians charged with writing grant proposals under time and economic pressures turn for help? Library schools do not normally offer courses in grantsmanship, and it's rare for a book on grants to take a library-centric approach. We designed *Winning Grants: A How-To-Do-It Manual for Librarians with Multimedia Tutorials and Grant Development Tools* as a one-stop multimedia tool with both how-to advice and successful examples that can help anyone associated with library grant work. This How-To-Do-It Manual includes worksheets, examples, templates, checklists, an easy-to-follow step-by-step grant process cycle, and instructional videos—all intended to help you prepare a winning proposal.

Grant work is not as difficult as you may think. Librarians and information professionals are often surprised to learn that they possess many of the skills necessary to successfully win grants. They already have the ability to research, synthesize, package, and summarize information; a commitment to reach out, assess community needs, and find solutions; and a cooperative, collaborative professional attitude. This manual provides the necessary tools to create a well-written proposal that describes a worthwhile project planned to benefit your community.

Our manual is written in easy-to-understand language with helpful advice that you can apply immediately. Our instructional videos provide a unique method to learn the essentials of library grant work in a self-paced format.

## Purpose and Audience

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This manual is for anyone interested in learning about grants and writing proposals to fund all types of library programs and projects. Our knowledge stems from experience in every aspect of grant work—as grant writers, grant evaluators, and grant project managers. We have worked for library non-profits, universities, school libraries, public and special libraries, and state library agencies, and have received grant funding

from both government and private sources. We present workshops around the country and consult with libraries, and we have found that our process works for all types and sizes of libraries. *Winning Grants* provides a step-by-step grant process cycle you can follow that will not only save you time and energy but also bring you success in getting the grants you and your communities want and need.

## Perspective and Organization

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*Winning Grants* is unique because the focus is on library grant work and the use of strategic planning and goal setting as the foundation of grant work. This not only simplifies the work involved but also ensures that your efforts directly support your library's larger mission, vision, and the actual needs of the community.

The material is arranged in three consecutive sections. Part I, "The Grant Process Cycle," features the full grant process cycle, with each chapter encompassing one phase of the cycle. Easy-to-follow examples demonstrate successful implementation. Part II, "Library Grant Success Stories," features real-life success stories that demonstrate the process in practice and provide motivational tips from successful library staff. Part III, "The Winning Grants Multimedia Toolkit and DVD," includes helpful tools, such as checklists, worksheets, and templates, for you to examine and incorporate into your own grant work. The DVD also includes instructional videos that walk you through each step of the grant process cycle, sample RFPs and grant announcements, example winning grant proposals, and a link to the Library Grants Blog ([librarygrants.blogspot.com](http://librarygrants.blogspot.com)) with current grant opportunities. The multimedia approach is unique and serves many purposes, such as appealing to different learning styles, serving as tools for workshops and training, and providing consummate insight from grant experts.

Part I, "The Grant Process Cycle," details the process in ten chapters, as follows:

- Chapter 1, "Making the Commitment and Understanding the Grant Process," outlines the steps necessary to successfully obtain grants. This chapter also provides an overview of the commitments that must be made by a library that is seeking grant funds. Grants are not just free money. Acquiring them requires planning, resources, accountability, and sustainability. Grants also bring in more than funds—they establish valuable partnerships, resolve community needs, and increase community support.
- Chapter 2, "Planning for Success," demonstrates why it is essential to have a strategic plan and community involvement in place before beginning grant work. We help your library get started with developing a successful plan and furnish a sample from the Successful Public Library, the fictitious library we use to depict our process throughout the book.

- Chapter 3, “Discovering and Designing the Grant Project,” covers one of the most creative and enjoyable parts of the process—developing the grant project. By developing worthwhile projects that implement your strategic plan and solve community needs, you can prove to funders why you should receive a grant. We show you how to develop project ideas and goals, outcomes, objectives, action steps, timelines, budgets, and evaluation plans. The included project templates and worksheets will be invaluable when it is time to begin writing your grant proposal.
- Chapter 4, “Organizing the Grant Team,” helps you form a team of key individuals who will share the workload while increasing the likelihood of success. You will learn what qualities are necessary for a successful grant writer. Some libraries are reluctant to apply for grants due to the misconception that they have no staff with the necessary skills. We explain how much of the knowledge needed is developed in everyday library responsibilities. We also include valuable information on the resources needed and the use of volunteers and professional grant writers. To get your team off to a solid start, we provide the basics for your first team meetings.
- Chapter 5, “Understanding the Sources and Resources,” pulls together a wealth of information that will help you explore, locate, and select grant opportunities. This chapter explains the basic types of funding sources, including those specifically geared toward libraries. It also looks at online and print resources you can use to research options or keep current on announcements. We show you that with the increase of electronic information, it is easier to find grant announcements and help with researching your options.
- Chapter 6, “Researching and Selecting the Right Grant,” guides you in the selection of the right funder for your project. You will learn how to assess and identify those organizations whose purpose most closely matches your library project’s goals. A valuable Keyword Selection Worksheet uses your project plan’s goals and objectives as a starting point to increase your search results. The Funder Summary Worksheet will keep your research findings organized.
- Chapter 7, “Creating and Submitting the Winning Proposal,” integrates all your planning and research into the actual grant proposal writing. Many applications request the same basic structure and elements—cover letter, proposal summary, organizational overview, statement of needs, project description, methodology, budget, evaluation, and appendix. We explain these components and provide planning and proposal templates that allow you to easily adapt, modify, and replicate content for not just one grant, but multiple grants, saving you time and money. We also cover how to tell the story of your target audi-

ence and grant concept. We provide checklists to ensure that you have a thorough and clear proposal that could make the difference between a winning proposal and a rejection letter.

- Chapter 8, “Getting Funded and Implementing the Project,” explains what happens after you send off your grant proposal. Find out what to do next, whether your proposal was accepted or rejected. We include an explanation of the most common reasons grants are turned down, details on customary grant report requirements, and steps for beginning your project implementation.
- Chapter 9, “Reviewing and Continuing the Process,” helps your library evaluate its process and improve its plan for the next grant. Repeating the cycle will be easier as your experience grows and you learn from your previous attempts. We include questions to facilitate a review session and ways to keep your grant skills up-to-date through professional development and other collaborative opportunities.
- Chapter 10, “Top 10 Tips for Grant Success,” lists our best tips for grant success. The ten important elements to keep in mind are these: (1) people; (2) planning; (3) priorities; (4) purpose; (5) pursuit; (6) partnerships; (7) passion, positivity, and persuasion; (8) precision; (9) pitch; and (10) perseverance. These tips will help improve your grant project’s potential for success.

Part II, “Library Grant Success Stories,” includes sixteen real-life examples of grant projects that were funded. If you need a little help with brainstorming creative ideas for your project or want to get advice from other librarians who have completed grant projects, check out these inspiring success stories from libraries around the country. These selections include best practices and offer you a chance to see how successful programs have been developed, funded, and implemented. Photographs of successful grant projects illustrate project implementation and community participation. There is nothing like a “real life story” to give you inspiration, spark some grant project ideas, illustrate successful partnerships, demonstrate innovative programs, provide best practices, and teach you about what pitfalls to avoid.

Part III, “The Winning Grants Multimedia Toolkit and DVD,” contains valuable tools, such as checklists, worksheets, and templates, for you to examine and complete. All of these tools are in the book and reproduced as Microsoft Word documents on the companion DVD. This enables you to make the templates your own by completing them on your computer or printing them and filling in the information by hand. You can also share these materials electronically with your grant team. These are resources that will help you stay on track, keep you organized, and take you through the grant process cycle, starting with your library goals and finishing with a successful grant proposal.

- Tools for Chapter 1 include a worksheet for use in creating a Grant Partnership Agreement (Tool 1.1) and also a Making the

Commitment Checklist (Tool 1.2) for helping you make sure your library is ready to embark on the grant process.

- Tools for Chapter 2 include a Library Planning Checklist (Tool 2.1) as well as Links to Example Library Strategic Plans (Tool 2.2).
- Tools for Chapter 3 are six templates and a worksheet that will prove invaluable for discovering and planning your grant project, and that will also be very useful when writing your grant proposal. Included are Strategic Plan Goals, Objectives, and Activities Template (Tool 3.1); Project Planning Worksheet (Tool 3.2); Project Action Steps Template (Tool 3.3); Project Timeline Template (Tool 3.4); Project Budget Templates (Tools 3.5 and 3.6); and an Evaluation Plan Template (Tool 3.7).
- Tools for Chapter 6 include a Keyword Selection Worksheet (Tool 6.1) helpful for researching grants, a Funder Summary Worksheet (Tool 6.2) for keeping track of funder information, and links to funding resources for libraries (Tool 6.3).
- Tools for Chapter 7 are three checklists and a template that will be useful when writing your grant proposal and help ensure you've covered all of the important points. Included are Questions for Funders Checklist (Tool 7.1); Grant Proposal Template (Tool 7.2); Grant Proposal Checklist (Tool 7.3); and Grant Submission Checklist (Tool 7.4).
- The tool for Chapter 9 is a Debrief and Review Checklist (Tool 9.1) that will give you an opportunity to learn from your successes and failures and make the necessary improvements or adjustments for your next attempt at winning a grant.

The DVD also includes ten instructional videos that cover the entire grant process cycle and provide a self-paced grant workshop from library grant experts.

- Video 1: Grant Process Cycle Overview
- Video 2: Planning for Success
- Video 3: Discovering and Designing the Grant Project
- Video 4: Organizing the Grant Team
- Video 5: Understanding the Sources and Resources
- Video 6: Researching and Selecting the Right Grant
- Video 7: Creating and Submitting the Winning Proposal
- Video 8: Getting Funded and Implementing the Project
- Video 9: Reviewing and Continuing the Process
- Video 10: Top 10 Tips for Grant Success

Example RFPs and Grant Announcements as well as successful Example Grant Proposals from libraries across the country are also included on the DVD as well as a link to our Library Grants Blog where you will find current grant opportunities.

At the end of the book you will find two resources:

- A bibliography of resources mentioned in the book and additional resources for further reading and study
- A glossary full of useful library grant terms

## Good Luck and Have Fun!

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We know that grant work can seem intimidating, and our hope is that *Winning Grants* will help your library as you create successful proposals and generate new sources of grant funding for your initiatives. We also hope the grants process will be less of a mystery and more of an enjoyable adventure. Your journey may include a little fear, but remember that writing a successful grant is achievable. Our Grant Process Cycle is easy to follow and will set you up for success.

Libraries have distinct advantages in the grant process—we know how to research, attract partners and collaborators, and discover our community needs, and we have a wealth of creative ideas for serving our users and furthering the pursuit of knowledge. By showing the passion you have for your work in the context of a grant proposal, you are sure to find success.

When you finish this book, read the success stories from other libraries and use the worksheets, templates, and checklists provided, and you will be well prepared to seek grants for your own library's projects. There will be nothing holding you back, no reason to hesitate. We wish you the very best of luck! Please let us know about your successes at [librarygrants@earthlink.net](mailto:librarygrants@earthlink.net) and [winninggrants@comcast.net](mailto:winninggrants@comcast.net). We would love to hear from you. Visit our companion website at [www.winninglibrarygrants.com](http://www.winninglibrarygrants.com) for book news and updates.