The Crux of a Compelling Grant Proposal

Grant writing is about meeting community needs. As I explain in my book, *Confessions of a Successful Grants Writer*, once you have established the need and your method of meeting it, grant writing is about being the best conduit of funds among a variety of choices. It’s about making the perfect match and establishing a productive relationship with a funder.

Notice that first and foremost, it is about community needs. The crux of a good proposal is it needs statement. Although this might not be the order of final presentation, in writing a proposal, it is only after you have established the community need and your agency’s ability to meet it, that you should turn your attention to describing how you think your organization will be successful in meeting the need you described in the way that you described it. In other words, when writing (as opposed to the final presentation) a proposal, establishing your agency’s credibility is one of the last things you do.

Most grant writers have no problem talking about how great their agency is. But in a good proposal, describing the wonderful things about your agency should relate to meeting the community need you describe, not just anything or everything your organization might be. For example, any awards that your agency has received or certifications it might have should only be brought up if they relate to how well you will meet the need you described. For example, you wouldn’t put an excellence in housing award in a proposal about parent education. Or you wouldn’t talk about your staff’s certification in reaching adolescents if you are writing a proposal about elder care.

But make sure to make note of any awards or certifications that relate to the topic at hand, especially anything that distinguishes your organization form the rest of the pack. Your goal here is to communicate what makes you unique. Funders receive thousands of proposals. You want to stand out from the crowd. You want your proposal reviewers to see you as the best choice among the many proposals they read. You do that by pointing out what you have that others might not. For example, a long history of meeting a need that no one else is, your record of growth, a prestigious board or staff member, being first at something, or the number or prestige of your community partners, to name a few. The list can go on and on.

But be cautious that your organization is not the main focus of your proposal. The main focus of a good proposal is squarely on meeting community need. Your organization should not be at the front and center of your grant writing efforts. Your organization’s achievements are only
relevant as they pertain to the need you meet. With this focus in mind, you should always describe why you are the best choice among many. Stand out from the crowd and establish your uniqueness.