

Chapter VII

Funding Your Service-Learning Program

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It would be best if you could fund your service-learning program from the school or district budget. If this is not possible or you are seeking additional resources, funding is available from multiple other sources. This chapter examines potential sources of funding, ways to research funding possibilities, and how to develop a proposal for funding. Forms to help guide your thinking are also included.

What Funds Are Available To Support Service- Learning?

Service-learning can be funded in several basic ways. In the best of all worlds, funds are a regular part of the school or district budget, reflecting the fact that service-learning is a part of the mainstream educational delivery system. Many districts choose to fund service-learning as either a line item or as a strategy to accomplish whatever curricular goals there are without a specification of particular funds, particularly if you are primarily seeking funds to operate the program (as opposed to funds for planning or costly materials for special projects). This is the best way to fund service-learning since this type of funding is most

likely to foster continued development and sustainability of your service-learning program.

If you are not able to fund service-learning in this way or if you need additional funds to support start-up or special activities, funds can be generated as part of:

- the Corporation for National Service Learn and Serve America program;
- reallocation of funding from other federal and/or state sources such as Title I and other Title programs (for example, Migrant Education, Indian Education, Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities) under the Improving America's Schools Act, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (often referred to as Special Education), School-to-Work and other career education programs, character education programs, and so on;
- solicited or unsolicited grants or donations from public or private foundations;
- grants available from individuals, school districts, businesses, nonprofit organizations, and other sources; and/or
- fundraising by parents, teachers, students, and/or community members.



In Minnesota, statutes that specify how funds are to be used by school districts specifically mention service-learning. For example, the statute governing use of funds for transportation explicitly allows funds to be used to transport students to places where they are performing service. Schools with community education programs may approve youth development and youth service programs that provide training for pupil volunteers, integration of academic learning with the service experience, and youth projects such as tutoring and mentoring, services for the elderly, environmental services, and other service-learning activities. By enacting this provision in the statute, the state has recognized the value of service-learning and the need to fund it within the district budget.

Depending upon the target of your fund seeking and the amount that you are requesting, you will need to write your application differently. Many sources of funding have specific requirements and many schools already receive these funds and use them for particular programs and purposes. (For the requirements of the Learn and Serve America program, call the Corporation for National Service or your state Learn and Serve America office. For the requirements of the Improving America's Schools Act programs, see, for example, the *Linking Service-Learning and the*

Improving America's Schools Act program developed by RMC Research or go to the U.S. Department of Education website. For the requirements of the School-to-Work program, see the publication developed by the Council of Chief State School Officers. Other resources can be found in the appendix.) There are many good sources of information on where to obtain grant applications. The Clearinghouse for Service-learning is a good place to start. There are also a number of websites established specifically for grant seekers. These include:

- **URL List for Grant Seekers:**
<http://wsrv.clas.virginia.edu/~ebf9q/url-list.html>
- **GrantsWeb**
<http://fie.com/cws/sra/resource.htm>
- **Nonprofit Gateway**
<http://www.nonprofit.gov>
- **The Foundation Center**
<http://fdncenter.org>
- **U.S. Department of Education Grant Information**
<http://ocfo.ed.gov/grntinfo.htm>
- **Grant Sources for Educators**
<http://www.capecod.net/schrockguide/business/grants.htm>
- **Search engines such as Yahoo or HotBot**

Proposal Requirements

Most solicited or existing calls for proposals (Requests for Proposals (RFPs) or Notices of Funds Availability (NOFAs) or Requests for Quotations (RFQs)) have specific requirements. These requirements are generally listed as part of an application form. Be sure to pay close attention to all requirements. Any missing pieces may disqualify you for funds. Also, many of these solicitations have strict page limits. If you exceed the page limits, your proposal may also be dismissed without being read.

No matter which type of funds you seek, you must follow the specific application guidelines. Most of these guidelines include some or all of the following:

Meeting the Goals and/or Purpose of the Grant/Authorizing Statute: Every grant or funds program has a purpose. Applicants must demonstrate that they understand that purpose and that the objectives of their programs will meet the purpose of the grant. These purposes represent absolute priorities. No matter how wonderful your ideas and applications may be, unless

they meet the overriding purpose of the program, they will not be funded.

Statement of Need: Funds for most proposals are based on need. Grantmakers must weigh the extent of need for funds as explained by each applicant and make decisions about who has the greatest needs. Typically reviewers examine the match between the need outlined in the call for proposals and the application; the particular needs that are identified; the soundness of the methods used to determine those needs; documentation or evidence that the needs exist; the number of needs identified (too many? too few?) for the proposed timeframe and resources requested; and the specificity of the needs such that the reviewers can determine whether the needs are well enough defined so that the project may focus on them.

Program Goals and Objectives: This requirement is best served by outlining both broad program goals and specific measurable objectives. All goals and objectives should be consistent with the purposes of the authorizing goals of the funders program, and should give specific, detailed information about the intended targets of services (clients) and expected outcomes. Timeframes are usually also specified.

A Research-Based Rationale for Why Your Design Is the Best for Meeting Program Goals: Many grant applications now require citations of research that support the program design that you propose. The idea here is that most funders want to invest in something that has a high probability of being successful and builds upon what we know works in other situations.

A Description of Planned Activities: Once again, specificity is often the key to success here. Funders want to know that you have carefully planned a series of tasks or activities that will accomplish the objectives that you set forth.

A Management or Operations Plan: Often this is combined with the description of planned activities. This plan details the timeline for meeting each objective, allocation of resources to the objective, logical progression of tasks, administration and management of tasks, personnel, and budget, and assurances that the program will be in compliance with statutes governing safety, equal access, and other state and federal laws.

Personnel or Staffing Plan: All applications require you to specify who will fill staff roles. You must also detail the relevant qualifications of each of the individuals you propose. The person

selected as project director is often key to success here. For all staff, however, you must present job descriptions and evidence that the staff proposed has appropriate qualifications for the job; clearly defined roles and duties; any training that will be offered to prepare staff and maintain skills; and time each proposed staff member will devote to the project.

An Evaluation Plan: Funders are concerned about accountability for both program outcomes and use of funds. Most require a plan that shows how you will track outcomes and evaluate the success of the program. Funders usually want to be assured that the methods of evaluation are appropriate to the project and that the evaluation will be objective. They prefer methods that measure how effectively the program meets its stated goals and objectives; indicators of program quality; and measures of program impact on the target clients. Certain technical standards such as the validity and reliability of the data that are collected must also be met.

Resources: Many applications ask you to detail the resources that you have available to support a project. These resources include technology and other equipment, materials, facilities, and sometimes, access to people with specialized expertise or experience.

Budget and Cost Effectiveness: The final part of all applications is the budget. Proposed budgets should be clearly detailed and adequate to perform the specified activities. The amount of funds that are requested should be reasonable and justified. Funders often dislike proposals that are “top heavy” with regard to funds allocated for administration.

Proposal Review Processes

Generally, proposals are reviewed by either an expert panel or peer reviewers. These reviewers are given training on how to review the proposals that are received. They are often also given a rubric for scoring. Panels tend to review three to five proposals each. Scores are generated and the top proposals are selected for funding.

Some funders take a two step approach to proposal review. They ask for a short concept paper or prospectus (often just a page or two) that explains what you would like and the broad outlines of your proposal. If they like what they see, they invite you to

submit a full proposal. Occasionally they give you feedback to use when generating the full proposal. This practice is more common among nonprofit foundations and grant makers than other funders.

Meador (1991) cautions that every proposal writer must pay attention to the following cardinal rules:

- **Do not put the work off until the final days before the proposal is due.**
- **Do not slough off proposal preparation as an unimportant routine.**
- **Obey instructions.**
- **Make clear that you know what you are doing and what you intend to do, and that you should be helped to do it.**

Source: R. Meador (1991). *Guidelines for Preparing Proposals*, 2nd ed., Chelsea, MI: Lewis Publishers, Inc.

Steps To Take To Develop Your Application for Funds

Haphazard or unfocused grantseeking can result in a lot of great ideas that go unfunded. People or organizations that give you funds need to feel that they are contributing to a well-conceived plan that will be implemented successfully. Funders need to know that your work fits into their mission and strategic directions and that your plan will produce the outcomes you specify.

Identifying Your Funding Needs

Your planning should begin with a self-assessment. At this stage, you should not be thinking about a specific funding opportunity. Here are some typical basic steps:

1. **Write a well articulated mission statement. The best ones are short and clear and concisely represent what you are trying to accomplish.**
2. **Describe your core programs and services and how these are designed and operated to meet your core mission. (Think about your group's strengths and weaknesses.)**
3. **Identify trends or needs that your group must meet in order to continue to be successful and/or to expand or enrich what you are doing.**
4. **Brainstorm strategies for meeting needs. Engage in problem solving/decision making techniques to identify the strategies with the greatest likelihood of success.**
5. **Delineate the likely outcomes that would result from implementing your proposed strategies.**
6. **Discuss which staff and/or the characteristics of staff that are needed to carry out the proposed strategies. Generate job descriptions and a management plan.**
7. **Brainstorm and list any additional resources you will need to be successful.**
8. **Identify a list of people and organizations that will endorse you or write letters of support.**

Students can help at any stage of this process. Their perspective can add real value and teach them lessons about understanding the process as well.

Researching the Possibilities

Proposed projects should be central to your group's mission and objectives, should represent the goals of everyone and not just a few, and should have the backing of top administrators and those teachers and students who will implement the program. When you have generated and written short descriptions of your ideas, then begin the research process.

9. **Develop a plan for locating and applying to appropriate funding sources.**

- 10. Research selected funding sources. Get information on their mission and goals, funding priorities, eligibility criteria for funding, typical size of awards, descriptions of projects that have been funded in the recent past, selection criteria reviewers use to evaluate proposals, anticipated start date and duration of funding, any matching requirements, any restrictions on use of funds, whether the funder awards both new and continuing grants, whether the funder will give feedback on ideas/concepts before applications are due, and a copy of the application form and instructions.**
- 11. Choose appropriate funding opportunities. Be selective! You want your efforts to pay off. Time and resources go into every request you make and every decision funders make. Do not waste anyone's time with a proposal that has little or no chance of being funded. (It will be harder next time for that funding source to take you seriously.)**
- 12. Identify potential collaborators. These days, many funders prefer to work with multiple collaborating organizations. Research the possibilities and give a lot of thought to how a potential collaboration could work, what factors need to be in place for it to be successful, and what could go wrong.**

Structuring and Writing the Proposal

Now you're ready to start the writing process which should include the following steps.

- 13. Create a proposal development plan. Decide the format, what each section will look like, and who the writers will be. Generate a task/timeline and a proposal review process.**
- 14. Write it! Typical format includes brief history of your organization, description of needs or problems this project will address, descriptions of the target populations, description of the project's goals and objectives, expected outcomes, how the outcomes address the needs, all the project details like what the tasks are, the timelines, the amount of time and resources needed to carry out the project, staffing and staff expertise to carry out the tasks, management plan, adequacy of your organization's resources to carry out the plan, how you will know you are successful (evaluation plan), and budget. Make sure each section is**

clearly written and provides examples as needed. Support the writers with diplomatic feedback.

Continuous Feedback

It is always good to reflect on what you have done and learn from the process. Here are some ideas.

15. Give the proposal to others to review. (At the end of this chapter is a grant review form developed in conjunction with the Canutillo, Texas, service-learning program staff.) Carefully consider their suggestions for improvement. Rewrite as needed. Obtain any necessary approvals and signatures.
16. Submit!
17. If you are successful, congratulations! If not, solicit and carefully review the feedback and/or scores you receive and consider resubmitting with revisions. Many groups are unsuccessful in their first attempts, but with persistence and practice, become first rate competitors and winners.
18. It is good to find out what others have proposed. Get a copy of winning proposals from the funders and learn what you can from their ideas. (Winning proposals are available to you through the Freedom of Information Act. Don't be afraid to ask for a copy of the reviews that you got and the winning proposals.)

Do not get discouraged! If you are persistent, you will find funding.



Students in the Indian Focus Program from the Denver Public Schools decided to help Indian organizations to develop websites as part of their summer service-learning program. When they went to the elementary school to receive training on website development, they found that there were only two computers that they could use for the training. In addition to learning how to build a website, the students also asked for and received training on how to write a proposal to receive more funding for computers. Their proposal was submitted and funded by the local phone company as part of a competitive process.

Business Partnerships

Establishing a partnership with local businesses or corporations is a good way for service-learning programs to understand their communities and reach mutual partnership goals. Many businesses are committed to helping schools in the local communities in which they conduct their business or where their primary clientele are located.

A typical partnership often begins with the business “adopting” a school or a program. The “adoption” may take the form of employees serving as mentors or tutors or, more frequently with service-learning programs, participating as a service site and/or underwriting the program.

Most businesses like to receive public recognition for their efforts. Part of your job will be to help investors recognize the impact that their generosity has on your students.

An effective partnership takes work. *Microsoft in K-12 Education* (July, 1998), a proponent of strong business-school partnerships, offers the following tips for a successful partnership, adapted here for service-learning:

1. *Make contact personal.* Personal visits to businesses help establish a sense of trust. Extend invitations to applicable events and various special meetings, and include your partners in decision making and planning.
2. Know what your needs are. Businesses sincerely want to help but frequently have no idea what a school’s needs are. They may be hesitant to offer assistance, particularly if they fear stepping on someone’s toes. It is up to you to develop an open relationship with business partners so you can feel free to ask for and they can feel free to offer assistance.
3. *Have a plan for how businesses can assist.* Some organizations are comfortable providing financial assistance alone, whereas others prefer to take a more hands on approach to helping. Be sensitive to their corporate giving style.

4. *Publicize the work of your partners.* Whenever your partners sponsor an event, their business logos should be exhibited. At public events, formally recognize your partners and their employees who graciously donate their time, services, and funds.
5. *Allow businesses to sponsor something specific.* Sometimes businesses prefer to sponsor an event, award, equipment, or specific aspect of a program so they feel more ownership and/or have something tangible for which they can receive recognition.
6. *Try to pair and match businesses.* Gaining the support of one organization can often bring you the support of another. Be aware of the partnerships that your sponsors have already created in the market place. You may be able to provide a perfect opportunity for them to publicize their partnership in the pursuit of your service-learning goals.
7. *Foster the relationship.* Remember, people are making a commitment of their time and resources to help you achieve your goals. Keep in touch. Do not just call them when you need a favor. Let them know they are on your mind by sending them school or program newsletters, holiday greetings, and samples of special student work.

Fundraising

Fundraising should not be the primary means for support for your service-learning program. If the program always has to rely on fundraising efforts, it is not likely to be sustainable. Occasionally, however, the program needs a little extra boost. When that is the case, consider well-planned, unique events that attract and build community and financial support.

If you choose this option, you also need to have clear objectives in mind for both the event and the audience. Contests, awards, service-learning nights, “power lunches” and other special events to showcase your activities are options to consider.

Like all other fund generating opportunities, fundraising requires early planning. Avoid dates that conflict with other school or

community events, religious observances, holidays, and other significant occasions. Most people suggest at least four months planning time, and three weeks advance notice for publicity or invitations.

To be successful, invite the media and launch a variety of promotional activities. Be sure to coordinate activities well and follow up by sending thank you notes to contributors, speakers, and others who helped in the activities. You may also want to send press kits to reporters who were unable to attend.

It is important to evaluate the event to see whether it was worth the time and effort. Examine the amounts of funds raised, the publicity that was generated, and the impact the event had on those who planned and participated.



The sixth grade at Elwood, Kansas, focused their service-learning experience around the elementary school's Accelerated Reading literacy program. One of the goals of the program is for students to increase their comprehension skills. To promote and motivate students to read, students can earn points by passing comprehension tests. These points can be used to purchase merchandise from the Accelerated Reading Store. The sixth grade class chose to operate this store as part of their service project and divided themselves into committees to oversee store functions such as funding, staffing, operations, and so on. The goal of the funding committee was to generate money from external funding sources to supply the merchandise for the store.

To determine what information to include in letters to potential funders, students conducted a brainstorming session. Five questions were posted on newsprint around the classroom: What are we trying to accomplish by having the Accelerated Reading Store? How are we deciding what to put in the store initially and on an ongoing basis? What kind of information about the operation of the store do we think funders will want to know? How will we be able to demonstrate that the store is accomplishing its purpose? How will we determine the amount of money we need for the store? Students divided into groups and answered each of the questions as a group. Responses were then summarized and turned into themes which became the basis for the letters they wrote to potential funders. Students learned about brainstorming, writing persuasive letters, and understanding needs. As a result of this activity, students

received both funds and constructive feedback on how to submit quality proposals for external funding.

Summary

It is best to fund your service-learning program as part of the district or school level budget. When this is not possible or if supplemental funds are needed, you can seek additional monies from a variety of resources. This chapter introduced you to these funding sources and provided steps for developing proposals and other funding strategies. Proposal writers are best advised to select funders carefully and target the applications and fundraising efforts. Generic applications or activities rarely bring the resources you need. Alternatives in the form of business partnerships and fundraising were also explored.

Bibliography

Microsoft in K-12 Education (July, 1998) Chapter 15: Securing Funding and Support, *The Connected Learning Community*. (www.microsoft.com/education/k12/roadmap/chapt15)

Kennedy, D. (1991). *The Ultimate Marketing Plan*, Holbrook, MA: Bob Adams, Inc., p. 13-14,

Meador, R. (1991). *Guidelines for Preparing Proposals*, 2nd ed., Chelsea, MI: Lewis Publishers, Inc.

Sample Service-Learning Grant Review Form

School _____

Principal _____

Project Title _____

Planning Committee _____

Criteria	Maximum Score	Assigned Points
1. Meeting the criteria for authentic project-based learning. (See criteria checklist)	40	
2. Extent to which the project is needed	15	
3. Plan of operation	15	
4. Evaluation and reflection plan	15	
5. Budget and cost effectiveness		
	100 Points Total	

Date Review _____

Comments _____

1. AUTHENTIC PROJECT-BASED LEARNING

Maximum Score: 40

Service-learning programs must demonstrate standards for quality project-based learning based on 17-point checklist.

Page References	STRENGTHS
Page References	WEAKNESSES

2. EXTENT TO WHICH PROJECT IS NEEDED

Maximum Score: 15

Service-learning programs must demonstrate why project is needed using the following:

- 1) needs addressed by project**
- 2) how the program identified those needs**
- 3) how needs will be met by project**
- 4) the benefits to be gained by meeting those needs**

Page References	STRENGTHS
Page References	WEAKNESSES

3. PLAN OF OPERATION

TOTAL POINTS

Maximum Score: 15

- 1) quality of design of project**
- 2) how well do objectives of project relate to the purpose of the program**
- 3) quality of the projects plan to use resources to achieve objectives**

Page References	STRENGTHS
Page References	WEAKNESSES

4. EVALUATION AND REFLECTION PLAN

Maximum Score: 15

Service-learning programs must include processes of reflection and evaluation as important components.

- 1) what multiple methods of evaluation will be used**
- 2) what methods for reflection will be used**
- 3) to what extent will project produce data that are both quantitative and qualitative**

Page References	STRENGTHS
Page References	WEAKNESSES

5. BUDGET AND COST EFFECTIVENESS

TOTAL POINTS

Maximum Score: 15

Service-learning programs must be cost effective:

- 1) Is budget adequate to support cost?**
- 2) Are costs reasonable in relation to objectives of the project?**
- 3) What resources are needed? (including facilities, equipment, and supplies)**

Page References	STRENGTHS
Page References	WEAKNESSES