**GRANTWRITING AND RETURN ON INVESTMENT: MORE THAN YOU MAY THINK**

**By Dalya Massachi, Founder of Writing for Community Success**

Does your nonprofit seek grants? If so, you’re like the vast majority of organizations in our sector. But how do you measure return on investment for grantwriting?

You may be tempted to think that it’s simply the amount of money you immediately bring in minus the time and money you spent to procure that grant. Right? Not so fast…

We need to look at grantwriting’s return on investment in both the short term and long term.

The number and size of grants directly resulting from any given proposal is often out of your control. Foundation board members consider many factors when funding different grants, and (I dare say) the quality of your proposal is only one of them. The organization’s reputation or history in the community, changing funder priorities or staff, unexpected limitations on funds, and a perceived mismatch with a proposal’s emphasis are just a few. So the short-term success of any proposal (i.e., getting funded) is not the only way we can measure the effectiveness of grantwriting work.

The good news is that the grantwriting process itself can be valuable to the organization in several ways. For example, thinking through the responses to a Request for Proposals can be a great strategic planning exercise. Creating a program budget may shine a light on expenses you have never tallied up before. While writing a general operations proposal, seeing the big picture of an organization (beyond its day-to-day parts) can be an eye-opening experience. I have seen many organizations benefit in these ways from the grantwriting process (whether or not they get a specific grant).

At the end of the process comes that final product. Once you invest the time to create solid, comprehensive templates, subsequent versions take a lot less time. You will have created a document that can be repurposed for many fundraising materials, and can be tweaked for future proposals. That text can be built upon for months, even years, to come.

And don’t forget that an initially rejected proposal can be a blessing in disguise. You may learn valuable lessons from the rejecting funder. Maybe your organization has some weaknesses that you couldn’t see but the funder could? Perhaps you are showing potential and the foundation is able to share non-monetary resources that are actually more beneficial to you right now? Sometimes funders can connect you to a collaborator that will make your proposal fundable next time. Maybe the funder is interested in funding you, but you just need a few more years under your belt? These are just examples of the many valuable lessons you may learn from funders.

So don’t discount the long-term, indirect return on that investment. The value is actually much more than simply a check in the mail for the next funding cycle.

(By the way, if you are looking for free information about grantseeking or grantwriting, check out <http://www.writingtomakeadifference.com/grant>. You’ll find a free **Sample Grant Proposal Checklist, a** quick summary of what NOT TO DO, and even Q & A.)

# SPECIAL FOR OUR MEMBERS! Get $50 off registration for the upcoming Grantwriter’s FastTrack Coaching Program (Feb 2- March 12) to help you shorten your grantwriting learning curve and win grants faster. Space is limited to only 6 people! Learn more here: <http://www.writingtomakeadifference.com/fasttrack>

Dalya Massachi inspires and equips social sector professionals to use their ‘writing to make a difference’ in their communities. Since 1997, Dalya has raised millions of grant dollars for nonprofits of all sizes on a wide range of social and environmental issues. She has also helped several thousand audience members across the U.S. improve their work with her friendly, practical presentations. Dalya is the award-winning author of *Writing to Make a Difference: 25 Powerful Techniques to Boost Your Community Impact.* She is also a co-author of the fundraising chapter in *Do Good Well: Your Guide to Leadership, Action, and Social Innovation****.***

Check out Dalya’s free newsletter and blog at: [WritingToMakeADifference.com](http://writingtomakeadifference.com). Find her on Twitter (@dalyam), LinkedIn (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/dalyam>) or Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/WritingtoMakeaDifference>)