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You Can Get \$ for Your Program! Give It a Try!

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Abstract

This article will discuss the resources that speech-language pathologists (SLPs) have available to access grant money at the local, state, and federal levels. Despite grim economic times, funds are still available to SLPs who know where to look for the money and how to ask for it.

Many local education agencies (LEAs) and individual schools are experiencing decreasing budgets in these challenging economic times. Cutbacks have affected materials, facilities, programming, services to students and staffing. Like all school employees, speech-language pathologists (SLPs) have felt the sting of these cutbacks in all the areas just mentioned. In many cases, money to purchase materials to use in therapy has dried up. Computers or other forms of technology that the SLP requires to provide state-of-the-art services are not being updated or replaced. Assistive technology devices and adaptive equipment that students require to be optimally productive is not being purchased. Innovative programs to serve students and continuing education are not being provided. Supplemental, enrichment, or summer programs have dissolved. Some LEAs are even being forced to cut staff. Funding in these times can be a grim picture.

A bright spot may be the money that states and LEAs receive from The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. You can check out exactly what your state and even LEA have received by going to <http://www.recovery.gov/Pages/home.aspx>. In the Recipient Reported Data Search, select your state and Department of Education. An alphabetical listing of grants to your LEA or charter school will pop up. LEAs have the right to use the money (within guidelines) as they see fit at the discretion of their superintendents. LEAs have used stimulus money to provide staff development activities and to purchase equipment, including augmented communication devices, computers, educational software, sound field systems, and audiometric testing equipment.

SLPs can advocate for the use of these funds and others through proper channels. The use of “proper channels” usually means through the chain of command from the principal to the special education director to the superintendent or school board. Many SLPs have experienced very positive outcomes by using the chain of command to advocate for funding for their programs. Be sure to put the needs of students as the primary goal in your requests. “Sell” your request in terms of positive outcomes for students manifested through the attainment of individual education program (IEP) goals or in terms of helping the school achieve “adequate yearly progress” (AYP).

SLPs can be proactive in receiving money from outside agencies by authoring grants. Traditionally, school-based SLPs do not enter into the world of grant writing. A wealth of philanthropic money exists even in these fiscally conservative times. In many cases,

philanthropic money goes unused and sometimes is retracted because no one has submitted an application for it. Many SLPs are intimidated by the thought of authoring a grant or requesting money from an entity outside their LEA.

Perhaps a major reason for SLPs not requesting money from outside sources is the perception that the process is lengthy, arduous, and complicated, fraught with many secret unwritten rules for success. However, in many cases, the process for requesting money is a simple, straightforward, transparent process. Although authoring large grant proposals to the National Institutes of Health or the United States Department of Education is a very involved process, many smaller, less intimidating sources of funds exist and are waiting to be tapped. Some of these funding sources include, but are not limited to,

- AT&T Foundation: <http://www.neighborhoodlink.com/demo/att4.html>
- Allstate Foundation: <http://www.allstate.com/foundation/funding-guidelines.aspx>
- American Express Foundation: <http://home3.americanexpress.com/corp/csr.asp>
- Andrew W. Mellon Foundation: http://www.mellon.org/grant_programs/programs
- Best Buy Children's Foundation: http://communications.bestbuy.com/communityrelations/our_foundation.asp
- Blockbuster Foundation: <http://www.blockbuster.com/corporate/corporateGivingGuideLines>
- Brinker International Foundation: http://www.brinker.com/contact/charitable_requests.asp#gui
- Carnegie Corporation: <http://www.carnegie.org/sub/program/grant.html>
- Chevron: http://www.chevron.com/products/sitelets/elsegundo/downloads/grant_application_guidelines.pdf
- Citigroup Foundation: http://www.citi.com/citi/foundation/a_edu.htm
- Dirkson Congressional Center: Robert H. Michel Civic Education Grants: http://www.dirksencenter.org/print_grants_overview.htm
- Dreyer's Foundation: <http://www.dreyersinc.com/dreyersfoundation/index.asp>
- Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation: <http://www.delmas.org/guidelines/index.html>
- Grant Wrangler: <http://www.grantwrangler.com/>
- IBM: <http://www.ibm.com/ibm/ibmgives/grant/education/programs/reinventing/>
- Lindbergh Foundation: <http://www.lindberghfoundation.org/docs/>
- Ludwick Family Foundation: <http://www.ludwick.org/>
- Mitsubishi Starfish Grant: <http://www.meaf.org/about-us.php>
- Mockingbird Foundation: <http://www.mockingbirdfoundation.org/funding/guidelines.html>
- NEC Foundation of America: <http://www.necus.com/NECFoundation/>
- National Center for Accessible Media-Cornerstones Literacy Project: <http://ncam.wgbh.org/about>
- Public Welfare Foundation: <http://www.publicwelfare.org/OurGrants/>

- State Flexibility Demonstration Program & Local Flexibility Demonstration Program: <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/stateflex/index.html>
- Target Store Grants: <http://sites.target.com/site/en/company/page.jsp?contentId=WCMP04-031767>
- The Christensen Fund: http://www.christensenfund.org/frame_grants.html
- The Toby Wells Foundation: <http://www.tobywells.org/>
- Tiger Woods Foundation: <http://web.tigerwoodsfoundation.org/programs/grants/index>
- Toshiba America Foundation: <http://www.toshiba.com/tafpub/jsp/home/default.jsp>
- Verizon Foundation: <http://foundation.verizon.com/grant/>
- W. K. Kellogg Foundation: <http://www.wkkf.org/default.aspx?tabid=63&ItemID=6&NID=41&LanguageID=0>

School-based SLPs have successfully secured money for a variety of projects, including summer camps; supplemental therapy or tutoring; field trips; materials for therapy or special projects; staff development; augmented communication devices to give to students or share through a lending library; technology like computers or white boards,;books or reading programs. Be creative and try to make your wish list come true!

Here are a few real life success stories:

- Several SLPs have petitioned their parent teacher organizations to fund sound field systems for classrooms. Some affluent organizations are able to install systems with money they have in their coffers, but most employ a variety of creative fund raising activities to finance the systems. Some schools fit one class room at a time, while others are able to equip the whole school at one time. Each situation is unique.
- Many fast food chains, such as McDonald's and Chic-fil-A, will donate a percentage of profits from one night of sales to a school, if faculty help work that night. If the school does a good marketing effort, this endeavor can be very lucrative.
- SLPs have funded the creation of coffee shops run by self-contained classes for students with intellectual disabilities at a high school. Similarly, some self-contained classes have begun cottage industries, like bread baking, raising plants, or jewelry making.
- An SLP received money to plant an organic garden at his school and built IEP goals around teaching about seasons, measuring, plotting and graphing, using multiplication, conserving, comprehending the water cycle, composting, germinating plants, and learning plant parts. The class enjoyed the fruits of their labor for many weeks in the spring.
- One lead SLP wrote a request for six figures to the Winston Salem Foundation for an assistive technology project that was funded and now is self-sustaining.
- One particularly persuasive SLP engaged the owner of a construction company in conversation in a line at Home Depot and was written a check on the spot to fund several sound field systems.
- Many people have had success by simply hitting the pavement in their local communities to request donations of several small businesses to fund a worthy project for exceptional children. Many local businesses, large and small, are very

sensitive to the needs of this population. Pictures of your proposed project and the students it will affect can be very powerful tools of persuasion.

Another road block to authoring grants for SLPs may be lack of experience with this endeavor. Here is an excerpt of tips from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting <http://www.cpb.org/grants/grantwriting.html> to help you navigate this uncharted territory in your practice:

1. Define your project.
 - Have a clear purpose.
 - Define the scope of work.
 - Define project goals and specific objectives.
2. Identify the right funding sources.
 - Look for appropriate funders in the community, on the internet or through your LEAs grant writing department
 - Don't limit your search to just one funding agency.
 - Try to match your needs with those of the funder.
 - Make direct contact with funders who support projects like yours.
 - Request a list of projects that have been previously funded by the agency.
 - Inquire about the maximum amount and typical size of grants funded by the agency.
3. Contact the funders.
 - Inquire about how proposals are reviewed and how decisions are made.
 - Inquire about budgetary requirements. Are matching funds required? Is in-kind support acceptable for the applicant's portion of the share? Learn about the payment process including cash flow.
4. Acquire proposal guidelines.
 - Adhere to the guidelines carefully and ask the funder if you have any questions.
 - Attend to these details carefully; submission deadlines, eligibility, proposal text format, timetables, budgets, funding goals and priorities and award levels.
 - Learn the evaluation process, criteria for funding, and contact person.
5. Know and carefully adhere to submission deadlines and timelines.
6. Determine the personnel and materials needs.
 - Identify people and materials by name.
 - Contact consultants, acquire permission to use their names in the proposal and negotiate compensation in necessary.
 - Collect letters of support from appropriate individual.
 - Establish, update, and adhere to timelines.
 - Write out deadlines, factor in time to write several drafts. Get an outsider to edit.
 - Plan to submit in advance of the deadline, in case something goes wrong at the last minute.

Of course, many proposals or requests to smaller or local organizations may not require all of these components. When you are ready to write the actual text of the proposal, there are several things to remember:

- Receive permission and support from supervisors.
- Be attentive to detail concise and persuasive in your writing.
- State the purpose with measurable goals.
- Define the process and method you will use to meet those goals.
- Be clear how the project will flow from beginning to end and project timelines for completion of each phase.

In preparing to write the narrative, answer the following questions:

- What do you want?
- What concern will the project address, and why is it important?
- Who will benefit and how?
- What specific objectives are to be accomplished and how?
- How will results be measured?
- How does your request relate to the funders purpose, objectives, and priorities?
- Who are you, and how are you qualified to meet the needs stated in the proposal?

A “hook” is an important detail to attend to. The “hook” is what will make your proposal unique and stand out from all others. Make your “hook” align with the goals and priorities of the funding source. Make a compelling argument as to why your proposal should be funded.

You may want to include some supporting materials, such as letters of support from your principal, teachers with whom you work, or others who will be involved and who know your work or who will benefit from the project. Collaboration with other agencies or individuals strengthens the power of most proposals, so you may want to partner with regular education teachers or art, music, or physical education to show collaboration. You may want to include your resume and the resumes of the other partners on the project. Be attentive to what supporting materials are allowed, permitted, or encouraged.

Make a plan to follow up on your submission. Contact the funding sources to be sure they have received all the required materials and to determine the status, evaluation, and outcome of your proposal. It is important to request feedback on your proposal, so you will know the strengths and weaknesses of your effort. This knowledge is especially important if you are turned down on the first attempt and want to resubmit. Be persistent! Even the most prolific and celebrated grant writers are frequently turned down, especially on their first attempt. Don't be discouraged. Resubmit or try other agencies that might support your project.

Some other grant-writing tips and many other resources on funding exist at the American Speech-Hearing-Language Association (ASHA) School Finance Committee's Web page at <http://www.asha.org/advocacy/schoolfundadv/>. This committee exists to inform school based SLPs and others about finance issues that affect their practice. The committee believes that through knowledge, school-based SLPs will be empowered to advocate both internally and externally for increased funds for their programs. The committee's Web page can be very helpful in understanding the flow of money that supports your program.

References

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