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# Successful Grants Development: It's A Team Sport

Neil Herbkersman and Karla Hibbert-Jones  
Sinclair Community College, Dayton, OH



The stereotype of a person working in the grants office is a shy individual, slaving over a PC at midnight with coffee and a copy of the Federal Register, pounding out a proposal in isolation. Nothing is further from the truth. The effective grants office employs some of the most people-oriented individuals on the community college campus. Individuals may visualize new projects, but it takes a major team effort to plan and successfully implement them and to understand the full impact the new project will have on the institution. That is why grants development is a team sport and team members have specific and important roles. The roles are defined and performed with the help of communication and planning tools that involve a written master plan for the grants office, flow charts, timelines, and process descriptions.

Sinclair Community College (Dayton, OH) has adopted teamwork as a core competency for all staff and high levels of cooperation are expected across the college. The Sinclair Grants Team (the Grants Office) has as a major role in the overall orchestration of the grants development process. To be effective, the Sinclair Grants Team has become skilled in the proposal development process, Total Quality Management, project management, facilitation, and college protocol. Teamwork increases productivity and creates better projects. The following teams are intimately involved in the proposal development process at Sinclair:

**1. Grants Team:** The Grants Team facilitates the development of project ideas into fundable proposals, serves as project management experts, motivates the faculty to participate and the proposal development team toward goals, and facilitates team communication.

**2. Executive Leadership:** The President, Provost, and Vice Presidents review

and approve grant projects that advance the mission and vision of the college, are supportive of the grant development process, and mobilize resources to improve student learning.

**3. Financial Team:** The financial team helps identify matching funds, analyzes the return on investment for new projects, ensures fiscal accountability and stewardship, and provides post-award financial management.

**4. Faculty and Staff:** Faculty and staff visualize new projects and programs, serve as subject matter experts, write and edit proposal drafts, and serve as Project Directors and Principal Investigators.

**5. Support Team:** Secretaries in many departments facilitate communication, organize meetings, and assist with the internal transmittal process of all proposals. Dedicated staff in the duplication department and mailroom help ensure that the proposals get out the door before the due date.

**6. Technology Division, Institutional Planning and Research, Sinclair Foundation, and Public Information:** Information Technology staff provide resources to support new initiatives. Using studies and reports generated by Institutional Planning and Research, Project Directors document the need for their projects based on college data. The Sinclair Foundation assists with gift solicitations from private sources, and the Public Information Department publicizes new projects and their success stories.

**7. External Partners:** Sinclair partners with other educational institutions, non-profits, and governmental organizations to shape and meet project goals. Involving business and industry partners strengthens the development, implementation, and evaluation of many projects.

All proposals that the Sinclair

Grants Team submits have champions—natural owners who have passion and are willing to expend energy at aerobic levels to make them happen. Ideas with champions, developed through teamwork, translate into strong proposals because they are created through the synergy and deep thinking that happens in effective teams.

Developing winning proposals requires teamwork and takes time; winning requires careful stewardship of external funds. One question asked of all proposal teams is: “Are we prepared to win?” The team approach helps ensure that projects are realistic and can be implemented and easily managed with the required level of support. Well-managed projects are a natural outcome of effective teamwork because people generally rally around that which they helped to plan and create.

The proposal development process can be stressful and tiring. Kate Ludeman, speaker and author on workplace culture says: “The single best way to judge the health of a team or a company is by how much humor there is.” A team that laughs and has fun can alleviate pressure and sustain energy to meet goals. Before shifting attention to other projects, it is important to celebrate and share team successes.

Every team loves to win. Development officers can increase the odds of helping their team win grant awards by becoming involved in the professional development opportunities of the Council for Resource Development. You can find more about the Sinclair Grants Team at their website [www.sinclair.edu/departments/grants](http://www.sinclair.edu/departments/grants).

*Karla Hibbert-Jones is the Assistant Director of Grants Development at Sinclair Community College; Neil Herbkersman is the Director.*