

# **Intentional Grantseeking: Planning to Win**

*By Cynthia M. Adams, Founder / CEO,  
GrantStation.com, Inc.*

Copyright © 2018 GrantStation Press

# Table of Contents

<b>Table of Contents</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Chapter One: Strategic Thinking: Tinkertoys on Steroids</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Chapter Two: Adopting Alignment: An Integral Piece to Consider</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Chapter Three: Building a Grants Development Program</b>	<b>7</b>
Review Your Mission: Establish Objectives	8
Weave in Your Strategy	9
<b>Chapter Four: Generating a Grant Strategy for Each Project</b>	<b>10</b>
Geographic Focus	11
Areas of Interest	12
Target Population	13
Type of Support	13
The Next Step: Research	17
Finding Connections	18
Moving on to National Funders	19
Strengthen Your Strategy	21
<b>In Summary</b>	<b>22</b>

## Introduction

I started writing grant proposals in the 1970's when I was in my 20s, working as a fundraiser for a small but dynamic grassroots environmental organization in Alaska. It took me another 20 years before I realized the importance of actually establishing a grantseeking program built on a clearly articulated strategy, as well as the importance of creating a strategy around each and every project that needs funding.

I had always been relatively successfully writing grant requests, but much of that success was based on the issue (conservation) and the location (Alaska) and the decade (1970s), not on my skills! In a way, I was blessed because I was demonstrating success. In another way, this hindered me because I was successfully securing grants, but I really wasn't learning as much as I could about what I now think of as "intentional" grantseeking. It did however provide a good training ground, without the rejection letters chipping away at my confidence.

I moved on to work for other nonprofits, and eventually run the Economic Development Center for the Fairbanks North Star Borough, and this is when I began to learn the importance of developing a deliberate approach to grantseeking.

At that point, it didn't take me long at all before it became clear that organizations can submit a grant request here and there, and they may (or may not) get them funded, but if that same organization adopts an intentional approach their success rate goes way up.

As you can easily surmise, based on the fact that I wrote this e-primer, I am a big fan of developing an intentional approach to grantseeking even if you are only going to submit a few grant requests each year.

In this e-primer I will share my ideas around thinking strategically as you undertake your grantseeking efforts. I will also describe my step-by-step approach to building a strategy around each project or program that needs funding. I hope the examples I provide will help clarify how this process could work for you.

Of course, this is just how I approach grantseeking. Hopefully, you will take some of the ideas that I share and incorporate them into your own methods and processes. When all is said and done, the goal is to feel comfortable with the way you develop your grantseeking strategies.

## Chapter One: Strategic Thinking: Tinkertoys on Steroids

We all want to develop the ability to think strategically. But thinking strategically can be a bit of a brain twister. I often find myself scratching my head when someone starts talking about strategy. Are they talking about tactics? Or are they talking about a broader view, perhaps referencing policy? It seems that if you introduce the word strategy into a conversation clarity can go down the drain.

Let's see if I can make this perfectly clear. This e-primer will focus on how you use strategy to build your grants program, and to secure funding.

When I consider thinking strategically, I always picture a set of Tinkertoys (Remember those? If not [check them out](#).) You have a finite set of pieces to work with, you put two pieces together, and it magically becomes something. You add a third piece and it immediately changes shape again. Each piece you insert, every decision you make, impacts the other pieces and the overall shape of the final product. Your original design, your goal, may change because of the pieces you have to work with. However, if you are clever and put enough forethought into the planning, you will end up exactly where you wanted to be. That is strategic thinking in a Tinker toy nutshell.



**Tinkertoys: It's all about building connections**

Thinking strategically about grantseeking is much like working with those Tinkertoys. Each decision you make will impact the overall outcome of your grantseeking efforts.

What many of us who work in fundraising simply don't take into consideration is that each grant request is a connector. It has to be part of the overall picture. If it isn't then we are literally undermining our own efforts. We haven't put enough forethought into our final product.

Thinking strategically about your grantseeking program is really just a matter of being able to make projections based on your internal resources, knowledge of external factors that may impact your fundraising efforts, and keeping your leadership involved so you have the support you need to be successful.

Many organizations that apply for grants do so in a somewhat haphazard manner. For example, every year an organization submits a health and human services application to their state agency. It is always funded – although maybe not at the level they would like. And then perhaps one of their board members brings a funding opportunity to their attention, and this grant would help with hiring a new staff member, so they apply. And the Executive Director is approached by a representative of a local business who likes what the organization does and asks her to apply. So that proposal gets written and submitted. The organization may also need to expand one of their programs, so they do a little research and find a few funders they can approach to underwrite the expansion costs.

What's wrong with this approach? Think about any of your other fundraising programs.

Let's take membership development as an example. Membership development is a true program. Your organization may even have a chair of the membership committee, or a dedicated staff person who runs the membership program. There is a built-in strategy – timing, target markets, marketing messages, etc. There is a schedule put in place and measurable objectives identified. Your organization doesn't just run a little campaign here and there. Significant thought is put into how you are going to drive membership development throughout the year and measurable objectives are established for your campaigns. Consideration is given as to how the fall campaign builds on the spring campaign and how you will target expired members.

But we seldom do this same sort of planning, intentionally connecting one request with another, when it comes to grantseeking. And, truthfully, it is a shame, because soliciting and securing support from carefully selected funding sources can dramatically escalate addressing your organization's mission. And you also want the time and energy you put into each and every request you write to be worthwhile.

In my opinion, there are two strategic avenues you need to embrace. There is the overall strategy you employ to grow a fundraising program within your organization – more of an internal strategy. And there is the strategy you build around each project or program that needs funding. I will discuss both avenues, but before I do I'd like to engage your thinking about strategizing in general.

## Chapter Two: Adopting Alignment: An Integral Piece to Consider

More than one person has suggested that questions are the language of strategy. As you begin to develop a strategy for your Grants Development Program (GDP) start by asking several questions such as:

- What are the early signs of success or failure?
- What does success look like in six months? One year? Eighteen months?
- What might impact the outcome in a negative way? In a positive way?
- Do our projected outcomes support our mission?

I'm sure you will come up with additional questions that are relevant to the work you do as well as your own organizational structure. However, don't skip this step as it is critical to address these questions in order to construct a solid foundation for your GDP, and engage your leadership. Which speaks directly to alignment.



Let's go back to the Tinkertoy analogy. Alignment is defined as "an arrangement of groups or forces in relation to one another." Many people say that the key to successful strategic execution is good alignment within the organization. You can develop the best grantseeking strategy in the world and it will fail if you don't have buy-in. This means that everyone in your organization – volunteers, consultants, staff, and board members have to both understand the strategy and actively support it. All those Tinkertoy pieces must intersect – no loose pieces clanging around in the box.

Setting aside some time to bring together board and staff to talk about the GDP will make the program real in their minds. They are being asked for their opinions about how this new or expanded program can function at a high level, supporting them in their own work as you secure new funding. Asking stimulating questions like these will help to cement the idea of grantseeking as a program, not just a one-off. And it will encourage everyone think about how your organization is actually addressing its mission.

Create a written document that outlines these discussions and also includes the clearly stated, measurable objectives for the GDP that the board and staff developed. All of the organizations players need to know about and understand these objectives, as well as understand their role, if they have one, to help meet them.

It will be difficult to establish realistic objectives for your new or expanded GDP unless you are building on some assumptions that are both practical and resonate with like organizations. Let's talk a bit about building your GDP.

## Chapter Three: Building a Grants Development Program

Most nonprofit organizations focus on their day-to-day operations, with some attention toward the next six months. This is understandable, but in the case of grantseeking, this lack of a longer-term vision can truly hurt your efforts.



Mark Zuckerberg once said, *“I’m here to build something for the long-term. Anything else is a distraction.”* That’s how you have to think about your GDP.

To look beyond today, you have to stay abreast of trends in your own industry – weather it be health, social services, environment, the arts, etc. Try to be aware of game changing trends and consider how your overall grantseeking efforts can take advantage of these changes.

For example, China now has as many billionaires as the U.S., quite a few of whom have strong ties to the U.S. Some of these individuals have already been giving fairly large gifts to U.S. nonprofits. That trend will continue for decades to come. Is this a trend your organization can tap into? If so, how do you weave this trend into the overall strategy for your grants program?

Another trend is the amazing growth being experienced via donor-advised funds. Alan Cantor opened an editorial piece he wrote for the Chronicle of Philanthropy (March 2018) with this statement: *“The most dramatic phenomenon in American charity in the last decade has been the rise of donor-advised funds.”* Mr. Cantor is a consultant who advises nonprofits on fundraising, strategic planning, and governance. Can you develop a strategy around tapping into these funds?

Mission-Related Investments (MRI’s) are also a growing trend. MRI’s are market-rate investments that support the mission of the funder by generating a positive social or environmental impact. Is there a way to weave an MRI into your overall grant strategy?

Another trend, actually this has become more of a movement, is building collaborative efforts to address a particular problem within a community. This trend can be easily incorporated into almost any grant strategy, and almost always gets a positive reaction from the funder. Often, when you mention building a collaborative effort, people tend to roll their eyes and think, *“Oh, man, that is a lot of work.”* But there are simple ways to engage others in solving a problem that aren’t quite as complicated as a full-blown collaboration, such as simply being part of a network.

You get the idea! Keep tabs on the trends happening in philanthropy in general and incorporate those that may work well for you.

## Review Your Mission: Establish Objectives

The first thing to do when building or expanding a Grants Development Program (GDP) is to review your organization’s mission. You want to determine if the mission:

- reflects current thinking and reflects the work you’re doing; and,
- can be addressed in both the short term and long term.



You want to weave your mission statement, or at least a quote from it, into every grant request you write, so it is very important that it truly reflects your organization’s current activities and demonstrates how you are working toward resolving the overarching issue. You may want to add this conversation to the next board of directors meeting to make sure that all leadership is in agreement.

Once you have reviewed, and perhaps updated, your mission statement, then you should determine specific objectives for the GDP. If you can’t articulate specific objectives, it is difficult to

both move the program forward and measure your achievements.

Before you establish program objectives, it is important to determine what other organizations of like size and mission are able to raise via grants. One good place to do this research is to reference the most recently published [State of Grantseeking](#) (SOG) reports published by GrantStation twice each year. These reports are free and open to the public on the [GrantStation](#) website under Public Resources.

The current report can help you determine such things as the number of applications submitted vs. the number of awards received.

Number of Awards	Number of Applications						
	1	2	3 - 5	6 - 10	11 - 20	21 - 30	31 +
None	87	86	98	21	6	2	2
1	125	131	139	16	5	1	2
2	16	118	231	60	10	1	2
3-5	6	14	393	241	71	10	7
6-10	2	2	33	161	165	43	13
11-20	1	0	3	19	83	73	46
21-30	0	0	1	0	12	20	34
31+	0	0	1	1	2	6	63



This report also provides benchmarks regarding how long it takes from the time you submit a grant request to an award decision. Factoring in this lead time helps you establish realistic objectives for the overall GDP. Also, for planning purposes, you want to have some idea of when the monies, once awarded, will be released. Again, you build these averages into your overall objectives for the GDP. The SOG reports will also provide you with a good idea of how much money you can expect to raise considering the size, mission, budget, etc. of your organization.

Once you've done a little external research, then you want to turn your attention to your internal circumstances. Start by looking at your overall operating budget and determine what percentage of it you need to raise through grants.

Remember, objectives are measurable and usually time-bound, so objectives for your new or expanded GDP might read:

- To submit a minimum of 11 applications within 18 months
- To secure five grant awards within 18 months
- To secure a minimum of \$100,000 in grant awards within 12 months

Establishing objectives for your GDP based on what other like organizations have experienced will allow you to breathe a little as you execute your overall strategy because you know you have a real shot at achieving these targets.

And, thinking about that larger vision of addressing your mission, you might have an objective such as:



Having articulated these longer-term objectives will help keep your GDP focused, and trigger opportunities that you might otherwise overlook.

## Weave in Your Strategy

Now that you've established the GDP objectives, it is time to formulate your strategy. This strategy is something you will revisit every few months to make sure you're on track, or to adjust as internal and external things change. At this point you should identify potential risks and opportunities and do some analysis before you pour concrete around your GDP objectives.

Start by looking at the risks involved. Many things can throw your GDP objectives off course. You may experience a cut in the budget and lose your grantwriter, or you may have a leadership crisis.

For example, just the fact that your organization hasn't ever embraced a full-blown GDP is a risk factor. Because you have no prior experience you may overlook activities you need to perform, or you may

underestimate the time and resources you need to perform them. Having no prior experience doesn't guarantee you'll have problems, but it does increase the chance that you may.

Another risk might crop up if you haven't done your homework and determined what other organizations of like size, mission, and budget have been able to accomplish in the area of grantseeking. This is a risk factor you can alleviate before you launch the program by doing your research.

Or, perhaps, you've decided to incorporate one of the current trends into your overall strategy but you recognize that this may not pan out for your organization. That would be a definite risk factor that could affect the bottom line.

You don't need to spend a lot of time on this but try to be cognizant of the risks involved in your plan. Be sure to note them, in writing, so you can check throughout the year to see if any of these potential risks are starting to become reality. If they are, then you have to adjust your GDP objectives accordingly.

Now it's time to spend a bit of time looking at any opportunities. Remember the Executive Director that was approached by a local business to submit a request? That's an obvious opportunity. The trick here is how do you best take advantage of that opportunity? Years ago, I had a major donor walk into my office proffering a \$10,000 donation. I asked her if it would be okay to use her gift to help me leverage an additional \$10,000 I needed to launch a new program. She, of course, agreed and I used the opportunity to secure a matching grant from a local family fund.

Opportunities come in all shapes and sizes, as you can imagine. For example, you may have a new board member who is affiliated with a large corporation. Can he or she introduce you to their corporate giving officer so you can potentially weave their support into your GDP? Or perhaps your organization has just received a lot of press. Can you take advantage of being in the public eye to strengthen your GDP?

Just take a little time and put a wee bit of thought into the opportunities at your fingertips. And as these opportunities arise always consider how you might knit them into your existing strategy.

## Chapter Four: Generating a Grant Strategy for Each Project

Once you have determined your overall objectives for the GDP, it is time to drop down into the weeds and develop a strategic approach that will be woven into grant requests for each project or program that needs support.

Below I've outlined the process that I have developed and follow.

I begin by creating a project description worksheet for every program or project that needs funding, including general operating support. This worksheet guides my research as I attempt to identify those grantmakers most likely to invest. An added benefit is that this worksheet can also serve as a draft letter of inquiry.

The worksheet includes:

### Working Title

#### Statement of Need

This can be a summary but the more detail you include the more key words you will generate. These key words are used when doing your research.

#### Project Description

This can also be a summary. The details of the tasks included in the proposed project are not as relevant to your research as your statement of need.

#### Project Budget

Put as much detail into the budget as possible. If you are purchasing equipment or any other products try to add brand names.

Next you should develop the key search terms to be used when doing your research. In order to do that you need to answer these four questions:

1. What is your geographic focus?
2. Which areas of interest do you address?
3. What is your target population?
4. What type of support are you seeking?

### Geographic Focus

Keep in mind that you probably serve at least two geographic areas. I call these your primary and secondary geographic focus areas.

For example, let's say you run a public health clinic. That clinic serves a specific community or neighborhood. You would call that your primary geographic focus area. But you also actually serve a

secondary focus area that may stretch as far away as the regional hospital or the emergency services provider in the area.

Or let's say you are a regional environmental organization. Your primary focus area is the county in which you're based. However, one of the areas you work to protect is a migratory waterfowl refuge. So, in fact, your secondary focus covers the flight path of these seasonal visitors. Your organization plays an integral part in maintaining this rest stop for these birds.

You can see how thinking about both primary and secondary impact of your work can broaden your geographic boundaries. Knowing and acknowledging these impacts will help you when it comes time to weave together your strategy.

## Areas of Interest

Developing key search terms around the areas of interest for your project is probably the most important of these four questions. Knowing the right language to use when doing your research will help you identify the best grantmakers to approach.

On the GrantStation website our researchers have identified key [search terms](#) that you can use when doing your research. This terminology is based on the language being used by grantmakers. Referencing these search terms will help you build a solid set of search terms to use as you do your research. Here is an example I've pulled off that list in the area of Arts, Culture, and Humanities. (On the GrantStation Search Terms page each of these areas of interest are [further defined](#).)

### Arts, Culture, & Humanities

- Arts/Culture/Humanities: General
- Architecture
- Art Education
- Art History
- Audience Development
- Crafts
- Dance
- Ethnic/Cultural Awareness
- Heritage Preservation
- Humanities
- Literary Arts
- Museums
- Music
- New Media Arts
- Opera
- Performing Arts
- Photography

- Theater
- Visual Arts

As you can see, this is a comprehensive list of search terms you can use when doing your research. Referencing this public resource as you build your search terms for each project is key to identifying the most likely grantmakers to fund your work.

## Target Population

You will also want to highlight any specific population with whom you work. You may not always have a specific population, but if you do you certainly want to call it out. Let's say you run a public health clinic based in rural Alaska. Noting that you're mainly serving Alaska Natives will help you identify the best opportunities for funding your program. Or perhaps, you operate a theater company, and your project is to install assistive devices for the hearing impaired. In this case, your target population is people with disabilities. Here is a breakdown of the target population area of interest that we provide on GrantStation. You can get a definition of each category [here](#).

### Target Populations

- Target Populations: General
- African Americans
- Alaska Natives
- Asian/Pacific Islanders
- Children/Youth
- Hispanics
- Immigrant/Refugee
- LGBTQ
- Minorities
- Native Americans/First Nations/Indigenous Groups
- People with Disabilities
- Seniors/Aging
- Veterans/Military Affairs
- Women/Girls

## Type of Support

The final question you have to answer concerns the type of support you need. Perhaps you are looking for funds to grow your organization. You would probably include both general operating and capacity building as key terms.

Going back to that migratory waterfowl refuge, perhaps you are looking for support to draw attention to the importance of this refuge. Then you would want to include advocacy as one of your key terms.

Or using the example of that theater company looking to purchase assistive devices for the hearing impaired, you would add equipment and perhaps product donations to the type of support you need.

Here is the listing used by GrantStation to determine type of support. You can see how we define each type of support [here](#).

### Type of Support

- Advocacy
- Awards/Prizes
- Capacity Building
- Capital/Building Funds
- Challenge Grants
- Collaborations/Coalitions
- Conferences/Seminars/Workshops
- Emergency Funds
- Endowment
- Equipment
- Events/Sponsorships
- Fellowships
- Film/Video Projects
- Loans/PRIs
- Matching
- Product Donation
- Project Planning
- Project/Program Support
- Research
- Residencies
- Scholarships
- Startup Funding
- Technical Assistance
- Technology/Computers/Software
- Training Programs
- Travel Expenses

Now let's look at the completed project description worksheet that I will use to walk you through the process of identifying funders and building your strategy. (Please note that this community is fictitious, as is the project.)

Project Description Worksheet
<b>Project:</b> Opioids: Outreach and Prevention Program
<b>Lead Staff Person:</b> Mary J Allan, DD and Jennifer Joplin, Director of Outreach
<b>The Need</b> Opioid addiction is America's 50-state epidemic. It courses along Interstate highways in the form of cheap smuggled heroin and flows out of "pill mill" clinics where pain medicine is handed out like candy. It has ripped through New England towns, where people overdose in the aisles of dollar stores, and it has ravaged coal country, where addicts speed-dial the sole doctor in town licensed to prescribe a medication.

Public health officials have called the current opioid epidemic the worst drug crisis in American history, killing more than 33,000 people in 2015. Overdose deaths were nearly equal to the number of deaths from car crashes. In 2015, for the first time, deaths from heroin alone surpassed gun homicides.

And in New Jersey? At least 1,901 people died from opioid overdoses last year, well over twice the number of people from the state who died in the attacks on September 11th.

Deaths involving heroin and fentanyl continued a meteoric rise in the Garden State, according to new data obtained by NJ Advance Media. Those involving heroin have more than doubled since 2013, while fentanyl-related deaths have risen an eye-popping 2,000% in the same span.

Using a database of opioid deaths in 2016, NJ Advance Media mapped the approximate address of every person who died (while stripping out any personal, identifying information). The result - a grim portrait of a crisis that has blanketed the state from end to end.

### **Project Description**

#### **Outreach**

The Opioid Outreach Program, scheduled to launch in early 2019, will bring together three regional neighborhoods to battle this ever-increasing epidemic. Basing our program on the successful outreach/intervention program in Boston, pairs of outreach workers will walk the neighborhood(s) every day, talking with people, going to meetings at treatment facilities and shelters, speaking with business leaders and others about improving the atmosphere. To grow the outreach workforce, the city has agreed to pair the Center's workers with workers from other agencies.

#### **Prevention**

The LifeSkills Training (LST) prevention intervention will be delivered in 7th grade classrooms, helping children avoid misusing prescription opioids throughout their teen years. Coupling LST with the Strengthening Families Program: for Parents and Youth 10–14 (SFP) enhances this protection. SFP is already a successful program run by the Center for over five years. The LST Middle School program is designed to be taught in sequence over three years in either middle or junior high school. The first year of the program has 15 class sessions (plus three optional violence prevention sessions), the second year contains ten sessions (plus two optional violence prevention sessions), and the third year consists of five sessions (plus four optional violence prevention sessions).

#### **Relationship to past projects**

This specific education/outreach program will build on the success of a similar program we ran these past three years targeting illicit drug use among teenagers and young adults. That specific program has greatly reduced illicit drug use within that population (13 to 21).

## **Budget Summary**

### **Key search terms**

1. What is the geographic focus of this project?  
Madrid, New Jersey
  
2. What areas of interest are we covering with this project?  
Health/Wellness: General  
Healthcare Delivery/Access (patient services/treatment)  
Mental Health (counseling services)  
Public Health  
Substance Abuse (alcohol and drug abuse prevention/treatment)  
Crisis Intervention (intervention programs)
  
3. What type of support do we need for this project?  
Project Planning  
Project/Program Support  
Collaborations/Coalitions  
Conferences/Seminars/Workshops  
Film/Video Projects  
Technology/Computers/Software  
Equipment
  
4. Is there a target audience?  
Children/Youth (10 to 14)  
Adult/Working Class  
Elderly



## The Next Step: Research

Once you have developed the project description worksheet with all of the key search terms identified, it's time to use this document to do your research. At this point you begin to think about building a strategy around securing funds for a particular project or program.

Start your research by looking at all government funding sources – federal/national, state/province, and local government opportunities. I usually start locally and move up to the state/province. After I do the regional research, I move on to federal/national government funding sources. The reason I do government research first is really two-fold:

1. If I do identify government funding it often makes up a large percentage of the funds I need (if not all).
2. If I do not identify any government funding, then I can point this out in my cover letter to the private funding sources I will approach. This demonstrates that I have done my research and that private support is the only avenue open to fund this project.

Doing your government research up front will provide an integral piece of your overall funding strategy.

Building on the earlier example, let's say you are launching a new Opioids Outreach and Prevention Program. You are looking to fund this program for three years at \$250,000 per year for a total of \$750,000. As you are researching local government you find a small grants program that will provide about \$25,000 (at least for year one) and the deadline date is fairly close. Knowing that you have a fair shot at securing these funds you can then use that money to leverage additional support – both government and private.

As part of your government research you identify a federal program whose deadline isn't for another six months but it requires a non-federal 50/50 match. This program looks like a very good prospect and will provide up to \$200,000 per year. Since you need \$250,000, and this source requires a match, you will ask for \$125,000.

### Opioids Outreach and Prevention Program

Three-year program at \$250,000 per year  
Total three-year budget: \$750,000

Source	Amount to Request	Review Date	Award Date
Local Government	\$25,000	September 1	October 1
Federal Government (Requires 50/50 Match)	\$125,000	January 15	March 1

You now have two promising government sources and you can move on to doing your private grantmaker research. Start by looking at local and regional sources such as businesses and corporations who serve your community, and regional community and family foundations. Part of this regional research will include finding those elusive giving circles to see if their interest is in alignment with your project. You may not find big dollars here, but remember you are now looking to match that federal request you will be submitting in a few months.

## Finding Connections

*“In the midst of chaos, there is also opportunity.” – Sun Tzu*

At this juncture you may want to do some research to see how opioid addiction is affecting the local workforce or perhaps impacting the public schools in your area. If you learn that regional employers are having difficulty maintaining reliable workers, then you may have uncovered a way for you to partner with these businesses. In fact, if you can demonstrate the work days lost and the cost to the company, you will have built a strong case for support.

This, of course, becomes part of your overall strategy.

And knowing that the federal proposal is due in six months allows you to create a sense of urgency so regional funders see how their support, even if it is a fairly small financial commitment, can play a significant role in your securing the funds to launch and sustain this program.

Let's assume that the regional community foundation may fund your project at the \$30,000 level, and your research indicates that they make multi-year awards, so you will be asking for three years of support. There are two local businesses whose workforce has been impacted by this national epidemic, and you are fairly confident you can secure \$10,000 a year, for three years, from each of these businesses. You've also identified a regional family fund whose average grant is \$25,000. You can now add each of these potential funders to your approach.

## Opioids Outreach and Prevention Program

Three-year program at \$250,000 per year  
Total three-year budget: \$750,000



Source	Amount to Request	Review Date	Award Date
Local Government	\$25,000	September 1	October 1
XYZ Business	\$10,000	Monthly	w/in 30 Days
ABC Corporation	\$10,000	Quarterly	w/in 30 Days
Hardy Family Fund	\$25,000	September 15	October 15
Community Foundation	\$30,000	November 1	December 1
Federal Government (Requires 50/50 Match)	\$125,000	January 15	March 1

### Moving on to National Funders

Your next research step is to identify any national grantmakers that may be interested in funding this new program. In this case, since the opioid program you plan to launch is fairly local, the number of relevant national grantmakers will be somewhat limited. You will be looking for grantmakers that give throughout the country but show an interest in helping to solve local problems or consider funding pilot projects that can be replicated nationally.

Now is the time to use your key search terms to search a funder database such as GrantStation. This research will identify a set of private funders – foundations, corporations, religious grantmakers, and associations that have a grantmaking program. In the case of the opioids project, you still need to identify about \$35,000 in order to demonstrate the required federal match for year one.

Knowing that one of the local businesses you identified to invest \$10,000 is linked to a national corporate office may provide you with an opportunity to secure a larger grant. At the national level you could ask for support in the range of \$50,000 to \$100,000. Now you have to make a decision. Do you want the local business to support you at \$10,000 or do you want to pursue funds from the national office, with a letter of introduction and support from the local office? Again, this feeds into your overall strategy.

Let's assume that you decide to approach the national office, requesting \$80,000. You now have enough money built into your strategy to match that federal funding.

## Opioids Outreach and Prevention Program

Three-year program at \$250,000 per year  
Total three-year budget: \$750,000

Source	Amount to Request	Review Date	Award Date
Local Government	\$25,000	September 1	October 1
XYZ Business	\$10,000	Monthly	w/in 30 Days
Hardy Family Fund	\$25,000	September 15	October 15
ABC Corporation (National Office)	\$80,000	October 5	November 15
Community Foundation	\$30,000	November 1	December 1
Federal Government (Requires 50/50 Match)	\$125,000	January 15	March 1

But wait! What if one or more of these sources doesn't come through? (And we all know that is quite likely.)

A rule of thumb for any funding strategy is to build in more requests than you'll need.

Through the national research process you identified a religious grantmaker that considers supporting non-religious organizations such as yours, with a letter of support from the local bishop of the church. After reviewing their average grant awards, you think that you can ask for about \$35,000. You now weave this into your overall strategy. In addition, you've found one national funder very focused on the opioid crisis, who is funding local and regional outreach programs. Their average award is \$75,000. You add this funder to your developing list of grantmakers.

Now you have enough additional funds built into your strategy to withstand a few rejections.

## Opioids Outreach and Prevention Program

Three-year program at \$250,000 per year  
Total three-year budget: \$750,000

Source	Amount to Request	Review Date	Award Date
Local Government	\$25,000	September 1	October 1
XYZ Business	\$10,000	Monthly	w/in 30 days
Hardy Family Fund	\$25,000	September 15	October 15
ABC Corporation (National Office)	\$80,000	October 5	November 15
Community Foundation	\$30,000	November 1	December 1
Religious Grantmaker (Requires Bishop's Support Letter)	\$35,000	December 12	February 1
National Foundation	\$75,000	January 5	February 20
Federal Government (Requires 50/50 Match)	\$125,000	January 15	March 1

In a nutshell, this is your year one funding strategy:

You will start by securing local government support, move on to securing local business support and a grant from the family fund. You will then submit a request to the regional community foundation, which will allow you to submit a request to the federal government (which requires a 50/50 match). You may not have the entire match by the time you submit (six months from now), but you can show requests pending with several national funders, including one religious grantmaker.

### Strengthen Your Strategy

*“Strategy is a pattern in a stream of decisions.” – Henry Mintzberg, author of Rebalancing Society*

The funding sources have been identified for year one, and you are starting to look at how you will fund years two and three. But before you do that, you need to step back and determine if there are other ways to strengthen your overall strategy.

Take another look at your statement of need. Try to think outside of the box. Is there an inherent strategy that will attract grantmakers you may not have considered so far?

Using the opioid project as an example, think about building a collaborative approach to solving this community problem. Your organization is not an island, this issue is not isolated – it is part of a larger ecosystem. There are others who are impacted by opioid usage in your community. Looking beyond your organization there is the possibility of creating a very strong outreach program if you partner with

the local media – newspaper, radio, and television stations, as well as the public school system and the public health clinic.

In order to strengthen the outcomes of this three-year project you decide to use year one to build the coalition, and years two and three to actively engage your new partners in attacking the opioid problem in your community. This allows you to keep the door open to the future routes you might take with your partners to address the issue.

These new partners will all bring in-kind contributions to the table, and also broaden the scope of funders that may support your project.

This collaborative approach is a way to strengthen the overall strategy for your grantseeking efforts and will open up additional funding opportunities for years two and three, not to mention confirming the importance of your work to those who funded year one. And, of course, you want to engage those year one funders again, if possible.

## In Summary

Creating a strategy that spans both the internal and external functions of your grantseeking program will make a significant difference in the amount of money you bring in to support the good work you do.

Embracing a strategic approach to grantseeking will, I believe, help you monitor and evaluate your failures and successes, as well as determine next steps more easily.

Once you take a strategic approach to funding each project or program, it will start to become second nature. You will look at the money that needs to be raised and think about how you could weave it into a strategy.

Always remember to keep your strategies clear and as simple as possible for both your internal Grants Development Program and for your external grantseeking. You want your organization to look smart and confident in the funders' eyes. One of my favorite Leonardo Da Vinci quotes is "*Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication.*" You want to keep that mantra in your head as you orchestrate your approach to grantseeking.