

December 20, 2023

Community Vitality Program Focus Team

Changing the future of communities one grant at a time

The Situation

Nonprofits, educational, and government organizations struggle to find the resources to fund priority projects. According to The Foundation Directory (Candid), foundation dollars available for all subjects in Kansas increased 284% from 2014 to 2019. According to data released at the Kansas Infrastructure Summit (July 2022), Kansas is eligible to compete for \$480 billion of competitive grants from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. Grant writing workshops were created to help communities find funders to create change. Now, more than ever, Kansans have an opportunity to imagine a better future for Kansas.

What We Did

K-State Research and Extension has served 2,146 Kansas in local Grant Writing Workshops since 2016. Since the workshops went online in January 2021, 900 attended an online workshop that fit their schedule instead of their geography. Fifty-one percent of grant workshop participants have never written a grant before; 27% have written local grants, 15% have written federal grants, 7% identified as “other experience.” We can document participation from 103 of 105 counties.

Outcomes

Participants at grant workshops reported:

- 92% have greater confidence to write a successful grant.
- 98% learned new sources of data to document community need.
- 97% learned new sources for finding grants.
- 93% have greater confidence to evaluate and measure their grant success.
- 87% gained confidence in writing a grant budget.

Of the 638 participants who responded to a survey 6-16 months after their grant workshop (34% response), said they wrote \$78.5 million of grants, and \$41.8 million were successful (53% success) came into the communities to fund childcare, technology, education, prevention programs, emergency assistance to low-income families, arts, parks, preventive health, economic development, and infrastructure. To put the success rate into perspective, one grant expert predicted, “An organization should expect a success rate of between 50 and 60 percent if submitting applications to a combination of existing and new funders. This will be much lower if it is funding to a new source or an organization with less structural or fiscal soundness.”¹

What Participants Said:

- “Nancy really made the class personal and encouraged interaction between students. Despite being on Zoom, it was very engaging.”
- “The breakout groups were very beneficial. The discussions led to new ideas. Going through all the examples and being able to download them for future use and reference as needed is awesome.”

¹ Lipten, David, PhD Retired from internet 8-8-19: <https://fundingforgood.org/about-grant-writer-success-rates/>

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service

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Success Stories

Elizabeth Weese, Executive Director of the Community Foundation of Dickinson County attended an online grant workshop in October 2022. Weese wrote, "You did an excellent job presenting the material; it was a very informative class. While on the webinar, when we did introductions, I was introduced to Jacob, a firefighter from Abilene, Kansas. When Jacob said he was on the webinar to learn how to apply for grants for fire department equipment, I sent him a direct message asking him to give me a call. He came in, spoke to me, and gave me a narrative of the equipment needed. I told him to put it in writing, and I'll see what could be done if anything. Well, he did, and I brought the information to my Grant Committee who awarded him \$24,600 to purchase three Thermal Imaging Cameras. Though he didn't get all the money requested, he received over half."

Participants who responded to a follow-up survey one year later reported:
50% made new partnerships, 30% increased their grant revenue, 37% secured non-cash resources, 83% found new grant sources, and 85% found new data sources.
98% would recommend the workshop to others.

Julie Kent's grant writing efforts were covered in an article in the Parson's Sun titled, "Grants Help Erie City Public Library Expand Its Services." (October 22, 2021) Erie's population is 1,150.

Kent wrote, "Just wanted to thank you for the great grant writing program that I attended in 2018. I have to admit that I was still a bit overwhelmed with writing a grant but [in] November 2020, I bit the bullet and wrote a Neosho County grant for the Erie City Public Library to purchase a greenhouse for the library to help with "food insecurity" in our town. Amazingly I followed your grant worksheet and wrote a narrative that I have used for subsequent successful grants in the past 6 months. We have been approved for nearly \$45,000 in grants for this greenhouse, a mobile kitchen for the library, exercise equipment for the Senior Center, a pavilion for the library to use for outside programming, and equipment to complete these projects." Kent says she is amazed when people walk into the library and say, "You're that lady who is good at grants."



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"You brought a positive, relevant, well-researched presentation which sent a clear message: This topic is worth the effort. It's important. You also delivered it with real skill and thoughtfulness, which sent another message: We were worth the effort."

Tom Emerson, Business Manager,
The Chamber Players Community
Theatre, Garnett, KS