

May, 2020

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 they need to fund priority projects. According to The Foundation Center, foundation dollars available for all subjects in Kansas increased 462% from 2009 to 2015. Grant writing workshops were created to help communities and funders with the same priorities find each other to create change. Individuals and organizations in every Kansas community want to make a difference; when they come together in grant writing workshops, they discover shared goals and untapped resources to make miracles happen.

### What We Did

From November 2016 to March, 2020 local agents hosted 58 grant writing workshops in all four quadrants of the state to 1,674 people. Participants ranged from the Perry Volunteer Fire Department to Pratt Public Schools; from Norton Public Library to the Humboldt Humanity House. Participants learn about new sources of data to document their community's need, sources of grant funding, how to develop a grant budget and how to evaluate and report their success. By working together in groups, they gain new support networks, lose their fear about asking for money and get feedback to sharpen their skills. Fifty percent of grant workshop participants have never written a grant before; 29% have written local grants, 14% have written federal grants, 7% identified as "other experience." In 2019, 27 workshops are scheduled; we expect to continue as long as there is interest.

### Outcomes

Participants at grant workshops reported:

- 95% have greater confidence to write a successful grant.
- 99% learned new sources of data to document community need.
- 99% learned new sources for finding grants.
- 93% have greater confidence to evaluate and measure their grant success.
- 89% gained confidence at writing a grant budget.

Of the participants who responded to the survey 6-12 months after their grant workshop (34% response), \$20 million of grants were written with \$11.3 million of successful grants (56% success) to fund leadership, education, prevention, emergency assistance to low income families and non-profits, art programs and exhibits, health and nutrition programming, culture of health, parenting classes, rent assistance, park improvements and recovery classes. To put that into perspective, one grant expert predicted that "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."<sup>1</sup>

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

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## Success Stories

After attending a grant writing workshop in Shawnee County, two participants reported their success: Juliet Swedlund, the director of the Topeka Doula Project wrote four grants for \$60,000 and was fully funded for all four. Swedlund said, “The workshop contributed to my ability to speak about my cause and give a compelling narrative.” Using the same skills, Juliet wrote for two scholarships and received \$1,550 of free training. Swedlund said, “The grant writing workshop gave me all I needed to take the next step forward with confidence.” The Topeka Doula Project offers volunteer, evidence-based doula support to teen mothers, incarcerated and reintegrating mothers, and low-income mothers and their families.

Dorothy Bryan is the president of the Auburn City Council. She said, “Auburn has been stagnant for so long, my sister and I decided to change that.” She said, “Coming to the grant workshop spurred me on, I thought, ‘I can do this!’” She wrote her first grant for fitness park equipment at the park and received \$55,000 from Momentum 2022. The process included making a presentation to a 7-member panel. At the end of the presentation, the panel chair said, “It was your passion that got you the grant. We knew you could do it.” Bryan said, “That equipment is busy morning, noon and night.” Next, she went to Free State Electric. She knew that every household in Auburn gets their electricity from Free State and could see from her research that they’d never given any money to an Auburn project. Bryan saw the largest grant Free State had ever made was for \$5,000, but she said, “I just went for it. I asked for \$14,500 and I got it all.” That will buy playground items for the younger kids, so they can play nearby. At last report, Bryan said, “We were able to do more with the grant than we promised. We squeezed in a drinking fountain with a dog waterer.” These successes are causing others to contribute their ideas and resources to make the park better. Bryan has her eye on two more grant possibilities and says, “I’m just getting started!”

*“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

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*You are a great teacher and mentor, and it's a training session that I will never forget. Literally changed my life by building my confidence in knowing how to do this grant writing thing!* Colette M. Black, Chief Development Officer  
Emmanuel Family & Child Development Center, KC, MO