



Access Today

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Funding Accessibility Projects: In Search of the Money Tree

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In these times when resources are stretched, budgets are tight and agencies struggle with a laundry list of safety, accessibility, and maintenance projects, identifying funding for the projects can be one of the greatest challenges. Finding external funds can be a necessary component to many accessibility projects. Where internal funding may allow for the project to be completed at a minimum, external funds may bolster the project to provide optimal access for the widest spectrum of users through creative and innovative design. External funding may also allow for more projects to be completed in a more timely manner than waiting for each annual allocation where only the top priorities are scheduled. Securing funding sources can be a tedious task; however there are helpful resources that offer solutions to sometimes



Crews install a playground surface at Thatcher Park in Indianapolis.

difficult to fund accessibility projects.

The competition for external funding is high. Whether you are seeking grant funds, soliciting organizations for donations, or conducting fundraising activities it is critical to spell out for potential funding

sources why your project should be supported. Potential funders are generally overwhelmed with solicitations and in almost every case; requests far exceed an organization's ability to accommodate requests. One CEO recently stated, "I get at least 10 phone calls, emails or letters per day from organizations soliciting

support. It is impossible to even respond to all of the requests, let alone to fund them." Prior to soliciting funds from any source, it is critical to develop a strong case statement for your project, program, or activity. This may be the most important aspect of the entire fund seeking process. There are a number of things that you can do to enhance the possibility of getting your project or program financial

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support. One of the best places to start is within your own organization. Involving accessibility in the initial discussions and planning stages for new programs, renovation of facilities, etc. can save your organization a lot of money.

Plan for Access in the Initial Design Stages!

Following this simple rule can save a great deal of expense and headache. If accessibility is included from the beginning, seeking additional funds will not be necessary. There is often a misconception that accessibility increases costs. When included in the initial design, this is generally not true. Expenditures can, however, be increased when accessibility is not considered during design stages and pre-existing plans have to be modified to comply with

the law. It is much more cost effective to pay for one set of plans that are in compliance rather than having to go back and make changes to include the technical specifications for accessibility. According to the Final Regulatory Impact Analysis for Final ADA Accessibility Guidelines for Buildings and Facilities from the U.S. Access Board, designing buildings for accessibility from the beginning adds less than 1% to the total cost of construction for a new facility.

Take a Workshop on Grant Writing or Fundraising

Courses are available through continuing education programs at universities and community colleges in both grant writing and fundraising. In addition, several online seminars are also available. The following websites, just to list a few, might be useful www.revisions-grants.com, www.apa.org/science/freegrantclass.html, or www.eduplace.com/grants/help/courses.html. If fund raising is going to be part of your ongoing responsibilities, these types of courses can be invaluable in saving time and providing guidance to maximize your time searching for funding.

Get Local Support

Although frequently overlooked, the necessary funding may be right in your own neighborhood or community. Often local busi-



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Recreation and Park Administration and is funded in part by the U.S. Congress through the National Park Service. NCA focuses primarily on accessibility as it relates to parks, recreation, and tourism industries. Major objectives include: conducting research, providing technical assistance, developing resources and training materials, and conducting educational programs.

Access Today is a publication of the National Center on Accessibility. As a continuing service of technical assistance, the National Center on Accessibility has published a series of tech sheets on access to outdoor recreation environments. These tech sheets are intended to be used only a resource. They are not intended to be used as a design guide. As a result of evolving accessibility guidelines, some technical specifications presented herein may change as new accessibility guidelines are released. This publication is available in alternate format upon request.

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nesses donate to local projects as a way to pay back to the community for their support. Additionally, businesses or corporations will want to know how the project can benefit them. Sometimes it may be as simple as an acknowledgement in the form of a plaque signifying where the funding came from, or through a press release recognizing their contribution.

Local bank branches also frequently have designated funds at the discretion of the bank manager to give back to the community. The same quid pro quo can apply here by offering positive promotions for them in exchange for their donations. A little recognition can go a long way.

Another way of securing external funds from local sources is to form partnerships with local organizations, schools, etc. Local civic clubs such as Kiwanis, Lions, Rotary, Junior League, etc. often look for philanthropic causes. Contact information for these clubs can be found in the resources section on the last page of this monograph.

Expand the Search Outside the Community

1. The Internet

The internet is a great resource...even for dollars. There are a few websites in particular that are full of funding opportunities.

Funds Net Services may be found at www.fundsnetservices.com.

This website has a variety of categories including grants specifically aimed toward disability related projects.

The Foundation Center found at www.fdncenter.org, offers a Finding Funders section that includes information on grant applications. There is

that includes information on grant applications. There is also an online directory of both individual and foundation donors. The Foundation Center is arguably the most authoritative source of grant and funding information. Generally, local libraries will have resources available from The Foundation Center, particularly in larger cities.

Most state university websites also offer a variety of funding resources. An example is Indiana University's Research Gateway found at www.indiana.edu/~rschinfo/Funding/index.html. This source incorporates various federal agencies as well as organizations and Indiana state funding opportunities. Other state Universities will most likely have similar websites.

2. State and National Funding Directories

Many directories are available and are extensive resources for external dollars. Directories are categorized by state, region, national, international and topic specific. There are also directories that focus on non-profits. Directories can be purchased through various resources including bookstores, amazon.com, and organizations such as the Foundation Center and the Research Associates. As indicated earlier, they are also often available at the Reserve Desk in local and University libraries. The Foundation Center has several directories such as the Foundation Directory which offers key facts on the nation's 10,000 top



Funding can help to make historic sites more accessible for patrons with disabilities.

foundations by total giving, the Guide to Ohio Grant-makers which profiles of over 3,800 foundations in Ohio, and the National Guide to Funding in Arts and Culture which features essential information on over 7,500 foundations, corporate direct giving programs, and public charities with a demonstrated interest in the field just to name a few. They can be purchased through the Foundation Center's website at fdncenter.org/marketplace.

The Research Associates have various other directories found at

www.grantexperts.com/national_grant_directories.htm. Directories from the Research Associates include Federal Grants and Agency Funding which profiles nearly 100 popular federal grant and contact information, National Corporate Giving Programs which contains more than 150 national corporations such as Microsoft, and National Large Foundations (Volume I, II & III) which lists over 100 of the largest foundations with assets over \$90,000,000.

3. University Grants and Contracts Offices

State universities have departments specifically focused on contracts and grants. These grants and

contracts offices can be used as a source for funding opportunities. The University of Colorado at Boulder is a good example and can be found on the web at www.colorado.edu/ocg. Another example is the University of Michigan and can be found at www.lib.umich.edu/govdocs/fedgt.html#grants. In addition to funding opportunities, university grants and contracts offices are resources for proposal preparation and answers to frequently asked questions on grant writing and fund raising.

4. Disability Publications and Newsletters

Disability publications such as the Disability Compliance Bulletin and Disability Funding News have resources specific to funding accessibility or other projects directly involved with people with disabilities. These publications require the purchase of a subscription and can be ordered through their publishers. The Disability Compliance Bulletin is published by LRP (www.lrp.com), and the Disability Funding News is published by CD Publications (www.cdpublications.com). Both are good resources to obtain if seeking funding for accessibility related projects will be an ongoing task.



Partially completed playground surface at Thatcher Park in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Seek Non-monetary Donations

Dollars are critical in any project, however many other things can be sought for donation. For example, if you are building or altering a play area, equipment or portions of the play surface may be donated by vendors or manufacturers. In addition, the use of volunteers instead of paid laborers can save a great deal of money.

Volunteers offer a valuable service through the dona-

Having a strong case statement is critical in getting any type of resources and donations.

tion of their time. Organizations such as Americorp and Telecom Pioneers are sources of volunteers. Each of their websites provides contact information for various regional chapters all over the country. Forming relationships with local chapters of these types of service organizations are an excellent way of having ongoing volunteer support. In addition, another source of volunteers is students. In particular, college students in certain majors are often required to have service hours to complete their degree. For example, for



Ramp entrance to playground.

Therapeutic Recreation majors volunteer work is required. Contacting the advisor for recreation students at the local university can be an effective method of attracting volunteers.

Local retailers are a good source of specific materials and possibly labor as well. For example, home improvement stores such as Home Depot and Lowe's may be willing to donate materials and workers to build a ramp. Home Depot offers corporate grants through the Home Depot Foundation in addition to donating 7,000,000 hours of volunteer time in 2002. Other goods and services might be available through chain corporations such as Wal-Mart, Target, K-Mart, or

even your locally owned hardware store. Target also offers grants and has the Target Volunteers who are involved in many community projects all over the country.

What now?

Whether you are seeking money, volunteers or materials, keep in mind the importance of the project. As stated earlier, having a strong case statement is critical in getting any type of resources and donations. Convincing potential donors the importance of your particular project is difficult with the harsh competition for resources. However, resources are attainable and available to be tapped.

Ways to Obtain Outside Funding:

1. The Internet
2. State and National Funding Directories
3. University Grants and Contract Offices
4. Disability Publications and Newsletters

Resources

Americorp
www.americorp.org

Disability Compliance Bulletin
LRP
www.lrpdartnell.com

Disability Funding News
8205 Fenton St.
Silver Spring, MD 20910
301-588-6380
www.cdpublications.com

Funds Net Services
www.fundsnetsservices.com

The Foundation Center
www.fdncenter.org

Home Depot
www.homedepot.com/HDUS/EN_US/corporate/corp_respon/corp_respon.shtml

Indiana University's Research Gateway
www.indiana.edu/~rschinfo/Funding/index.html

The Junior League
www.ajli.org

Kiwanis

www.kiwanis.org

The Lions Club
www.lionsclubs.org/EN/index.shtml

Rotary International
www.rotary.org/support/clubs

Target Corporation
http://target.com/common/page.jhtml?content=targetcorp_tc_index

Telecom Pioneers
www.telecompioneers.org

University of Colorado at Boulder
www.colorado.edu/ocg

University of Michigan
www.lib.umich.edu/govdocs/fedgt.html#grants

About this Monograph

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