BEST PRACTICES IN GRANT PROPOSAL WRITING

FOR ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS

A report submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

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ABSTRACT

Productive environmental education – which seeks to engage citizens of all demographics in critical, knowledge-based conversation about how to sustain and enhance the environment – requires the deliberate and prudent management of resources, including financial resources. Additionally, environmental education projects and programs often require special, or supplementary funding. Due to these realities, many environmental educators need to find, compete for, and secure funding for their projects and programs out of a scarce pool of existing financial resources, including grant programs.

This study investigated the grant proposal writing experiences, practices, and results of seven environmental education professionals in the State of Wisconsin with the aim of facilitating the successful acquisition of scarce grant funding. Respondents participated in a semi-structured interview and submitted an accompanying questionnaire to provide the qualitative data for this study. The transcription and qualitative analysis of the transcribed interview text led to 131 recognized propositions, or related ideas. These propositions were combined with similar, or related propositions to form 21 categories. Ultimately, the text-based categories were combined further based upon textual and thematic similarities to produce a theoretical narrative built upon the three themes of (1) grant proposal preparation factors, (2) grant proposal writing factors, and (3) environmental education grant proposal differentiation. From the theoretical narrative presented in this research report the author also presented a summative list of best practice recommendations for future environmental education grant writers.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

A. Statement of Problem

This research will investigate grant writing procedures and how they relate to successful grant funding within the professional field of environmental education.

B. Statement of Sub-Problems

Sub-Problem 1   The first sub-problem is to identify and outline universal and/or generalized best practices in grant writing with regard to publicly funded grants and use this information to inform the creation of interview questions.

Sub-Problem 2   The second sub-problem is to identify, interview, and consult with experienced grant writers who have written grants – both successful and unsuccessful – for a variety of environmental education projects and programs.

Sub-Problem 3   The third sub-problem is to compile and code the qualitative data acquired through interviews and analyze the findings in search of themes that may be applied and generalized to the environmental education field.

Sub-Problem 4   The fourth and final sub-problem is to report any findings that may

be useful and generalizable to professionals and grant writers in the

environmental education field and to design an effective manual

for disseminating best practices.

C. Hypothesis

The hypothesis is that there are specific best practices for grant writing on behalf of

environmental education projects and programs and that these practices increase the

likelihood of successful grant funding. This hypothesis will be evaluated though this

research and the best practices will be identified and disseminated.

D. The Importance of the Study

The importance of this study comes from the need to find, compete for, and secure

funding for environmental education out of a scarce pool of existing resources. This

study aims to facilitate environmental education by (1) determining what factors in

the grant proposal writing process make funding more likely for environmental

education projects and programs, (2) determining what factors in the grant proposal

writing process make funding less likely for environmental education projects and

programs, and by (3) providing professionals in the field of environmental education

with a tool that will facilitate successful grant writing in order to aid in funding and

advancing the field.

E. The Limitations

Limitation #1   This study will be limited to interview respondents in the United States of America, with a focus on educators and grant writers working in the upper Midwest.

Limitation #2   This study will not reveal any information that can guarantee grant proposal success.

Limitation #3   This study will focus on best practices for writing grant proposals for government, or publicly funded grants.

F. Definitions

Best Practice: professional procedures that are recognized or recommended as being most effective in the current context.

Environmental Education Projects and Programs: organized efforts that seek to teach about how natural environments function and how human beings can manage their behavior and ecosystems in order to live sustainably.

Grant: a sum of money awarded by an outside organization or government body for a particular purpose.

G. Assumptions

Assumption #1   Experienced grant writing respondents will have experience with and practical knowledge of the field of environmental education, which they can apply to their grant writing practices.

Assumption #2   Experienced grant writing respondents will have experience with and practical knowledge of applying for government and/or publicly funded grant opportunities.

Assumption #3   Experienced grant writing respondents will participate in the interview and other research processes without any form of compensation beyond acknowledgment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews literature from the field of environmental education and several parallel and pertinent professional fields including nonprofit management, fundraising, policy, and pedagogy. Collectively, the findings in this review legitimize the need for the present study by offering evidence of (1) the demand for fundraising in non-profit organizations, including environmental education organizations, (2) the opportunity for improving grant-writing practices as a means to increase funding, and (3) the potential for an efficient staff training manual for writing successful grant proposals for environmental education projects and programs.

(1) The Need: Demand for fundraising in non-profit and environmental education organizations

Research presented by Akchin (2001) asserts that while many U.S. nonprofit organizations, including educational nonprofits, are increasing their marketing and fundraising efforts, a majority of these organizations are not utilizing optimal financial strategies to promote their organization. Akchin (2001) speculates that low salary structures and inflexible nonprofit leadership are major contributing challenges to the financial operations of the nonprofit sector. Additionally, Snavely and Tracy (2000) claim that scarce financial resources from the community and low staff salaries present major barriers to nonprofit success and cite inter-institutional collaboration as a potential solution.

With these difficulties in mind, the work of Hager, Rooney, and Pollak (2002) sets out to more closely investigate fund raising methods across the U.S. nonprofit field. Their work defines three critical domains of funding sources; (1) formal fundraising operations, (2) internal fundraising operations, and (3) the external institutional environment. Notably, while nonprofits with more dedicated, full-time fundraising staff are able to pull in larger sums of cash, most nonprofit fundraising does not happen at the level of fundraising-specific staff. A number of organizations that choose to fold the responsibility of fundraising efforts, including grant proposal writing, in with other job duties have demonstrated high levels of successful revenue generation. (Hager, Rooney, and Pollak, 2002) These findings suggests that in many nonprofit organizations non-fundraising-specific staff may represent key investment opportunities for building fundraising skills and increasing fundraising activity and success without the cost of formal, fundraising-specific staff and operations.

(2) The Resource: Opportunity for improving grant-writing practices as a means to increase funding

If we acknowledge that nonprofit staff whose primary responsibility is not fundraising still represent potential sources of fundraising effort for an organization then there exists institutional motivation to train and improve existing staff as revenue generators. Chávez, Chávez-García, and Alvarez (2009) have emphasized the importance and success of mentors within the context of academic grant writing training. If intra-institutional staff can provide advice and support to inexperienced grant writers in academic contexts and we presume similarities between teams in academia and teams in

nonprofit organizations, then we can infer that staff mentorship and training processes presents a potential avenue for increased fundraising in the nonprofit sector, including environmental education nonprofits.

Researchers in scientific and medical fields have already published extensive grant proposal writing tips and training material specific to their discipline, such as Bordage and Dawson's (2003) eight-step, 28-question approach to the planning of experiments (or programs) to maximize the chances of success in applying for grant funding. While the research presented by Bordage and Dawson (2003) is intended to be applied to quantitative studies, the principles remain applicable to evaluative and qualitative designs as well. There exists a precedent of discipline-specific grant proposal writing resources being generated and used effectively.

(3) The Means: Potential for an efficient staff training manual for writing successful grant proposals

After recognizing a lack of grant writing know-how among graduate students and seeing potential for improved grant writing success, researcher Eissenberg (2003) demonstrated that after a one-time course focusing on grant writing for specific programs, students who completed said grant writing course had mean grant proposal scores that were significantly higher than the mean for all competing applicants, and additionally, all graduates of the course who applied for funding received it on their first proposal after completing the class. It would seem from this empirical evidence that a course, manual, or some other resource designed to train and improve grant writers could

be highly valuable to any field to which it was designed, including environmental

education.

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the research methodology used to gather, interpret, and report the qualitative data related to the research question and sub-problems.

Sub-Problem 1: identify and outline universal and/or generalized best practices in grant writing with regard to publicly funded grants and use this information to inform the creation of interview questions.

In the initial stages of this research, the researcher reviewed published articles, books, and websites, which are included in chapters 2 and 4 of this report, which featured advice or best practices in grant writing. Information from across sources was synthesized to inform the creation of a set of semi-structured interview questions as well as pertinent demographic and background questions to be posed to interview candidates (Appendix A and B).

Sub-Problem 2: identify, interview, and consult with experienced grant writers who have written grants – both successful and unsuccessful – for a variety of environmental education projects and programs.

Through the use of professional networking opportunities at the Wisconsin Association for Environmental Education summer conference and through consultation

of the publicly available Wisconsin Environmental Education Board Grant Award Database online, a list of potential interview respondents was compiled by the researcher. Potential respondents in and outside of the environmental education profession were contacted via email or phone and asked to participate in a phone or in-person interview. Interview sessions were conducted, electronically recorded, transcribed, and coded until data saturation was reached (C. McReynolds, personal communication, September, 2014). The transcribed, coded, and categorized interview responses from persons with grant proposal writing experience for environmental education projects and programs contributed the qualitative data for this project.

Sub-Problem 3: compile and code the qualitative data acquired through interviews and analyze the findings in search of themes that may be applied and generalized to the environmental education field.

The research ultimately draws on a sample of seven individuals who have experience writing grant proposals for environmental education projects and programs in the State of Wisconsin. All respondents participated in an initial, oral interview guided by a semi-structured set of interview questions. To ensure accuracy of the data collected all interviews were conducted and recorded electronically over the phone with the aid of a digital voice recorder. Additionally, respondents completed a background and demographic information questionnaire with additional prompts and open-ended questions.

Later, the audio recordings of the seven interviews were transcribed. These transcriptions combined with the text from the questionnaires provided the qualitative data. The text data was then coded into relevant propositions, which combined to form categories, which combined to form themes using a prescribed form of open coding described by Dr. Corky McReynolds (C. McReynolds, 2013). The data-based themes were then analyzed, described and evaluated by the researcher and used to inform the narrative presented in the final chapter of this report.

Sub-Problem 4: report any findings that may be useful and generalizable to professionals and grant writers in the environmental education field and to design an effective manual for disseminating best practices.

After the analysis, description, and evaluation of the qualitative findings based on interview and questionnaire responses outlined in chapter 4 of this report, the researcher chose to revisit and reevaluate the importance of sub-problem 4. Through further scrutiny of the data and through consultation with research advisers, the researcher deemed the publication and distribution of the findings unnecessary. Due in large part to the qualities of the findings as well as social and contextual issues discussed in chapter 5, the findings of this research were not disseminated in a manual or guidebook format. Rather, the findings were shared with the interview respondents and made publicly available solely through this research report.

RESULTS

This chapter summarizes the results of qualitative research that contributes to the development of recommendations for best practices in grant proposal writing for environmental education projects and programs. The results of this study are reported here in relation to the sub-problems outlined in chapter one and the application of the results is reported in chapter five.

Sub-Problem 1: identify and outline universal and/or generalized best practices in grant writing with regard to publicly funded grants and use this information to inform the creation of interview questions.

Initial investigation into publicly funded grant writing procedures was conducted by the researcher in the fall of 2013 in preparation for the formulation of interview procedures used later in this research. Written, electronic resources available from the Wisconsin Environmental Education Board webpage were used in conjunction with notes from a free, publicly-available online course entitled, "How to Write an Effective Grant" on Udemy.com, a platform for public online learning (Keys to Success, 2013). Together, the information from these two sources was synthesized to provide background information on grant writing practices that were used to create a questionnaire and series of interview questions used in this research (Appendices A and B).

Based on the highlights of and commonalities between these grant writing resources, the researcher chose to focus on respondents' approaches to eight proposal sections: summary, introduction to applicant organization, problem statement, program

outcomes, methods, evaluation plan, future support, and budget. Additionally, interview questions were designed to reveal any differences in writing, strategy, or approach when writing proposals for non-environmental education projects and programs as opposed to environmental education-specific projects and programs.

Sub-Problem 2: identify, interview, and consult with experienced grant writers who have written grants – both successful and unsuccessful – for a variety of environmental education projects and programs.

Respondent Demographics

This study was completed with focal limitation on grant writers with work experience in the State of Wisconsin. Therefore, the interview candidates were selected from a pool of potential respondents formed from the publicly available Wisconsin Environmental Education Board Grant Program Applicants database. In total, two pilot interviews and seven formal interviews were conducted in support of this research until data saturation was reached (C. McReynolds, personal communication, September, 2014).

Respondents' identifying information was collected and kept confidential throughout this research process. Demographic and other descriptive information gathered from questionnaires and interviews was collected to aid in describing the respondent population. Of the seven individuals who contributed in data-providing interviews, four were male and three were female, all had experience writing between

one and seventy publicly funded grant proposal in the State of Wisconsin, and age ranged from mid-twenties to mid-sixties.

Data from the seven formal interviews were used exclusively in the formulation of propositions, categories, themes, and the overall narrative of this study. This chapter reports those interview results by proposition and category (see sub-problem 4) while the overall narrative is described further in Chapter five.

Sub-Problem 3: compile and code the qualitative data acquired through interviews and analyze the findings in search of themes that may be applied and generalized to the environmental education field.

The process of qualitative interview analysis began by selecting relevant text from the written transcripts of recorded interview sessions. The analysis led to 131 recognized propositions, or related ideas, from the transcribed interview text. All propositions were direct quotes or ideas paraphrased by the researcher. These propositions were coded as P1 through P131 and were combined with similar, or related propositions to form 21 categories. Categories were coded as CI through CXXI (Appendix D).

As the coding of text available from the interview transcripts was examined and the qualitative analysis progressed the researcher noted emerging ideas and occasionally returned to previously analyzed interviews to select text for new propositions that supported emerging ideas. Researchers have long held the stance that there are multiple, equally acceptable, equally justifiable, equally correct methodologies for interpreting

qualitative data so long as the propositions and later claims are supported by the data (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003).

Next, similar and related categories were combined into themes. At the category level, the researcher chose a succinct conceptual name, logically related to the data and derived from the interview transcript text (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The 21 categories were then conceptually grouped into three themes. Themes titles were developed based on category similarities and were more abstract and succinct than categories. Themes and categories are listed below, under sub-problem 4. Themes were labeled TI through TIII and are used to inform the narrative results and suggestions of this study in chapter five.

Sub-Problem 4: report any findings that may be useful and generalizable to professionals and grant writers in the environmental education field and to design an effective manual for disseminating best practices.

The full list of text-based propositions can be found Appendix D of this report. The following subsection reports the 21 categories as organized by theme TI through TIII. In order to elucidate categorical meanings and highlight core ideas some propositions and some direct quotes from respondent interviews are included under each category along with descriptive information.

Theme I. Proposal Writing Factors

This theme is composed of ten qualitative categories derived from the transcript text. This first theme includes the most categories and is organized around content specific to the grant proposal writing process. The categories are explained in further detail with exemplary propositions included in the following pages:

Category CIV: Granting Organization's Guidelines

Multiple interview respondents referred to the presence and importance of guidelines for grant proposals defined by the granting organization.

"We had fairly clear guidelines … dictated by the funding source" (P22)

Category CV: Follow Instructions Carefully

Most interview respondents suggested or explicitly asserted the importance of following the instructions provided by a granting organization closely. This category was composed of many repeating and related propositions and quickly emerged in the coding process as a commonly valued concept.

"What advice do you give for a first time grant writer? Adhere to the guidelines. That's just absolutely critical" (P37)

"[the proposal] moved over to a third page by one sentence and they didn't even review it. It just was automatically dismissed because it didn't meet the two page guideline. Following the instructions is critical." (P39)

Category CVI: Submit Proposal on Time

This category emerged from propositions related to the group in category CV but with a specific focus on grant proposal deadlines and timetables. This category and the preceding category were closely linked but determined to be distinct from one another within the larger theme.

"Part of the guidelines is making sure you get it in on time" (P40)

Category CVII: Be Concise and Well Written

Multiple interviews included mention of writing style in addition to technical writing details. Specifically, an emphasis on concision, clarity, and quality of language use emerged to form this category.

"[Be] concise and well written" (P43)

"it has to be well written" (P47)

"You've got to know how to be very concise in your language" (P48)

Category CXI: Continuation Plans

Many transcript-based propositions included references to granting organizations positive response to sound program continuation plans within a grant proposal, regardless of whether the program was environmentally focused. Sustainability and program seeding were perceived to be of high value to granting organizations. This category included suggestions and warnings against program dependence on grant funds beyond startup or initiation expenses.

"One thing that I think is very critical to some granting institutions is plan for a continuation without the grant money" (P79)

"most grantors are looking to provide seed money for a project and so plans for a continuation I think are very important" (P80)

Category CXII: Evaluation Section

A number of interview questions were designed with the intent of exposing critical components within the grant proposal. Upon evaluation and analysis of the transcripts it quickly became evident that a number of respondents found the program evaluation plans to be "very important" to the overall grant proposal. This category included propositions that related to evaluation plans as well as practical evaluation follow-through.

"Generally the things that people forget about, and one of the reasons they're not funded, is the evaluation component of it. It's great to do something, but how do you know what you've done is worthwhile, and can you demonstrate to the board that what you've done is worthwhile?" (P92)

"the evaluation section would also be very important" (P86)

Category CXVI: Program Creation

Multiple interviews included references to the perceived value of seed money for program creation. Respondents highlighted experiences of successful environmental education grant proposals which they believed were successful in part due to their nature as program generating or program initiating proposals.

"Most environmental education grants are out there to start something." (P111)

Category CXVII: Grants Don't Fund Personnel

In a similar but opposing fashion to category CXVI, some respondents included advice against writing grant proposals that focus solely or even largely on funding personnel. It seems that proposals that do not focus on salaries as major components may do better in the selection process.

"They don't like to fund personnel if that's all you're asking for" (P112)

Category CXVIII: Realistic Budget

In response to the several interview questions designed with the intent of exposing critical components within the grant proposal the budget section emerged as a critical component. Upon coding and analysis of the interview text it quickly became evident that a number of respondents found the budget to be important in multiple ways. Some propositions emphasized realistic, conservative budgets, while others stressed not "underselling" the value of the environmental education project or program. Regardless of which particular stance the interview respondent took, it became apparent through multiple repeated and related propositions that the budget section was perceived as critically important to a grant proposals success or failure.

"I see grants that people propose to do way too many things, and you can tell by reading it, you can't do this on this budget" (P118)

"a lot of them seem to undercut themselves and not ask for what they really need in a budget" (P115)

Category CXIX: Section Alignment

In addition to highlighting some key individual sections of grant proposals, many interviews included mention of the importance of harmony and connection between all the sections of an environmental education grant proposal. Interestingly, all of the propositions within this category mentioned multiple sections and subsections of grant proposals, but all also mentioned the budget section.

> "Making sure those things are matched up is really hard to do, and it would be great to see examples and guidance toward making sure that all of these components are connected together and specifically program outcomes or objectives with budget" (P124)

Theme II. Preparation Factors

This theme is composed of seven qualitative categories derived from the transcript text. This second theme is organized around content specific to the preparation process prior to the grant proposal writing process and between successive grant writing projects. The categories are explained in further detail with exemplary propositions included in the following pages:

Category CI: Co-authorship, Collaboration, and Partnership

This category emerged in the coding process unexpectedly and strongly and was supported by a high number of related and repeated propositions from the interview text. Many interview respondents included mention of the value of collaboration and teamwork in the environmental education grant proposal writing process.

"The proposal was probably successful because first of all, it had two major

organizations partnering" (P10)

It is worth noting here that the propositions in this category alluded to connections,

collaborations, and partnerships between both individuals as well as between

organizations. The researcher found it reasonable to include all types of partnership

within this category from co-authorship to outside advocacy for the proposed project or

program.

Category CII: Practice

Perhaps unsurprisingly, multiple propositions included mention of the value of

practice when it comes to the skills needed to write a successful environmental education

grant proposal.

"I think practice. The more grants you write, the better you're going to get at it"

(P15)

Category CIII: Small, Easy Introduction Grant

Interestingly, a number of different interview respondents, when asked about their

beginnings and their early grant writing experiences, mentioned the value of starting

small and applying to "simpler" or smaller scale grant programs. Additionally, some

mentioned writing proposals that asked for small monetary awards.

"do something perhaps small, see if it works for you…" (P18)

Category CVIII: Find a Grantor that Matches Your Needs

One of the most highly supported, recurring ideas emerged to form this category. Almost all respondents mentioned the critical importance of finding a granting organization or specific grant that aligns thematically with one's proposed environmental education project or program. Interview respondents frequently mentioned the importance of aligning goals, language, and mission with the granting organizations stated position on such topics.

> "One big piece of advice is to always pick an RFP or grant funder that matches what you want to do." (P55)

> "You have to address what the funder sees as relevant and look at it through their eyes instead of your eyes. What they need is what you need to focus on. What they want is what you need to focus on and how you're going to address their desires, their goals and their funding program." (P64)

Category CIX: Educational Resources

Whether they were asked for insight into specific educational resources for grant writers or not, multiple interviews arrived at helpful suggestions for pursuing and utilizing existing education resources. Resources alluded to included books, websites, databases, classes, and videos. Most of the specific resources mentioned did not include information specific to environmental education program grants.

> "online resource…I definitely would recommend them, they had lots of good advice and I think when you start seeing the same thing over and over again in different books or resources, it tells you that's probably a good thing to do" (P72)

Category CXX: Feedback

Multiple propositions included advice pertaining to the acquisition and application of feedback on both successful and unsuccessful grant proposals.

"Where you can obtain feedback from a reviewer or from the committee, board, whoever it is that's doing the review and evaluation of your proposal, obtain that, to get it" (P125)

Category CXXI: Other Helpful Advice

This category was composed of helpful but miscellaneous propositions that offered advice to the aspiring environmental education grant writer. While all of the propositions in this category were considered useful by the researcher, they failed to fit perfectly into any of the other categories, thus the only thing they had in common was their shared lack of commonality with any other group of propositions. All propositions from this category are listed below.

"the power of narrative and stories and quotes and pictures" (P127)

"people in Wisconsin know the WEEB grant program, but it's only one program, there are so many other programs out there and so many that are national programs that anybody in Wisconsin has a good chance to get just like anybody from any other state." (P131)

Theme III. EE Differentiation

This theme is composed of four qualitative categories derived from the transcript text. This third and final theme includes the fewest categories and is organized around content specific to the research question of the existence or absence of distinction between environmental education grant writing processes and grant writing processes for programs in other disciplines. The categories are explained in further detail with exemplary propositions included in the following pages:

Category CX: Environmental Education Components

This category of propositions was formed to establish the presence of familiarity and expertise within the environmental education field. Propositions in this category support the notion that interview respondents do indeed possess experience specific to environmental education specific grant writing processes.

"I think every grant that I have written has ... Or proposal has had an environmental education component For most it's been the major component" (P77)

Category CXIII: Subjective Review

This category featured propositions that describe or suggest the subjectivity behind environmental education grant proposal reviews.

"the second part of the [WEEB] review is the merit review. That is a little bit more subjective" (P94)

Category CXIV: No Difference Between EE and Other Grants

   This category emerged importantly from propositions from multiple interviews and speaks to the presence or lack of differentiation between environmental education grant processes and other grant processes. Many of the propositions in this category were obtained in response to interview questions designed to expose a perceived differentiation in process among experienced writers. Overwhelmingly, the propositions that emerged in the coding process supported a lack of major difference for environmental education grants. Very few propositions emerged that supported any differences in environmental education grant writing when compared to grant writing in other disciplines. Several, strong propositions are included here to emphasize this point.

   "[is there a difference in grant types?] "I will say no." (P98)

   "Do you change your application strategy for Environmental Education grant writing? No." (P99)

   "I think really when it comes down to it, the advice sounds the same, you're educating or you're advocating or you're supporting it, whether it's public health or it's environmental education" (P101)

Category CXV: EE Grants are Smaller

   This category included the only propositions that supported any difference between grants for environmental education projects versus grants for projects in other disciplines. The propositions that emerged to create this category focused on the dollar amount of environmental education grant awards and all noted that environmental education grants were typically smaller in dollar amount.

"I guess for the environmental grants, the only difference is that they tend to be a smaller dollar value." (P102)

IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS
FOR BEST PRACTICES

This chapter summarizes the qualitative research findings of this study and uses the categories and themes that emerged from data to construct a theoretical narrative. The theoretical narrative is also examined under contemporary socio-economic contexts and includes suggestions for best practices among environmental education professionals.

Conclusions and Narrative

The qualitative coding of the transcribed interview recordings that contributed to this research was a process that ultimately raised fewer questions and provided fewer answers than anticipated. The qualitative analysis yielded 21 data categories related to grant writing practices which combined to form three larger, abstract themes. The three theoretical themes that emerged from the data are (1) Proposal Writing Factors, (2) Preparation Factors, and (3) Environmental Education Differentiation Factors. The first two themes can be taken together and interpreted as best practice suggestions for environmental education grant writing, delineated by temporal boundaries into writing and pre-writing practices. The third theme elucidates the limited distinctions that may exist between grant writing practices within the environmental education field and all other fields.

Proposal Preparation Factors and Proposal Writing Factors emerged from the interview data and were often repeated or reiterated by different respondents. Proposal Preparation Factors included categorical data suggesting the benefits of leveraging

resources, both human and written, from multiple sources. Practice, simple first steps, and the value of partnership also emerged as important considerations when preparing an environmental education grant proposal.

Proposal Writing Factors arose in many categories and ultimately materialized as the largest, or most heavily supported, of the three themes in this report. Particular importance and care toward grant proposal components such as the budget section and the evaluation section was a common narrative in the interviews. Beyond this structural information on grant proposals, many process categories emerged as well including careful consideration of guidelines, deadlines, and continuation plans. Grammar, concision, and writing style were also mentioned as important components in this section of the data.

The third theoretical theme, consisting of categories related to the concept of environmental education differentiation, was a smaller, but highly valued section of the data for both the researcher and the respondents. It was proposed by some advisors at the conception of this project that there may exist a small difference, either procedural or structural, that significantly differentiated environmental education grant writing from other disciplines. The interview process and data analysis sought to clarify this proposal and answer the question; what is the environmental education difference in grant writing? Interestingly, the qualitative data suggest that there is largely no difference in grant styles across disciplines. The only data-supported claim regarding environmental education specific grant characteristics involved grant value. The propositions support the notion that, in general, environmental education grants tend to be smaller in monetary value than

many other grants in other fields. This third theme has significant implications for the distribution of the findings in this study.

The third theme, Environmental Education Differentiation Factors, when taken under consideration together with current social and economic climes in Wisconsin, does not warrant mass publication or distribution of the findings of this study as initially proposed. As of the writing of this report, in March of 2015, the recommendations within the 2015-2017 Executive State Budget for Wisconsin and Senate Bill 21 call for the elimination of the Wisconsin Environmental Education Board as well as elimination of funding for the general grant program by the end of the fiscal year 2015. Further proposed cuts also seek to eliminate forestry and school forest grant programs in the State of Wisconsin during the fiscal year of 2016.

In the State of Wisconsin, while the future of environmental education funding, and perhaps the field as a whole, is in question, the findings of this research stand and provide data-based suggestions for best practices among environmental education grant writers of the future and in other contexts.

Suggested Best Practices

1.) Seek out a grantor whose stated mission, goals, and/or needs align with your project or program's missions, goals, and/or needs.

2.) Leverage the human resources available to you in the preparation and writing process – co-author, collaborate, and partner with others for added viability.

3.) Consult existing written resources on grant writing practices, especially if they exist specifically for your context.

4.) Follow the granting organization's guidelines and instructions very carefully including deadlines.

5.) Be concise, well written, and as professional as possible in your language.

6.) Give special attention to crafting sound continuation plans, evaluation sections, and budget sections within a proposal.

7.) Remember that grants often fund program creation and rarely emphasize funding personnel.

8.) Whether a grant proposal was successful or not, seek feedback from the granting organization.

9.) Remember that if there is anything that sets environmental education grants apart from grants in other fields it is that environmental education grants tend to be smaller in value.

10.) Practice, practice, practice.

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with Selected Annotations

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Anselm Strauss, & Juliet M. Corbin (Eds.). (1997). Grounded theory in practice. Sage.

Akchin, D. (2001). Nonprofit Marketing: Just How Far Has It Come? Nonprofit World. *19*(1).

This research draws data from 90 responsive nonprofit organizations associated with the Maryland Association of Nonprofit Organizations. By quantifying the responses of "marketing, public relations, or communications" officers to a mailed questionnaire the authors make generalizations about nonprofit marketing behavior in the nonprofit sector. The authors conclude that while marketing strategies have been increasing in the nonprofit sector, the majority of nonprofit organizations are not utilizing optimal marketing strategies or efforts to promote their organization. The authors also speculate that, "low salary structures… [and] nonprofit leaders who don't appreciate marketing…and aren't fully committed to incorporating the marketing approach into their operating strategies," are major contributing challenges to the nonprofit sector.

Themes: marketing, professional development, expertise

Bordage, G. and Dawson, B. (2003). Experimental study design and grant writing in eight steps and 28 questions. Medical Education. *37*, 376–385.

The researchers behind this study propose that experiment (program) design is a necessary and critical process for grant applicants to refine before beginning to write a grant proposal. The result of their work is an eight-step, 28-question approach to the planning of experiments (or programs) designed to maximize the researchers' chances of success in applying for grant funding. The authors eight steps include, (1) defining a relevant research question; (2) selecting instrumentation, (3) study design and statistics; (4) determining sample size and (5) sampling procedure; (6) ensuring data quality throughout data collection and analysis; (7) setting personnel and budget requirements, (8) and lastly, writing a convincing grant proposal. The authors also emphasize "clear and easy to follow" proposal writing. The authors acknowledge that, "while the research presented is best applied to experimental studies, the principles are also applicable to a wide range of questions and observational, evaluative and qualitative designs."

Themes: research design, funding, writing standards

Bornmann, L., Mutz, R., Hans-Dieter, D. (2007). Gender differences in grant peer review:A meta-analysis. Journal of Informetrics. *1*(3)

This research represents a meta-analysis of existing peer reviewed research on gender bias in grant proposal peer review. The authors compile data from 21 studies to find that evidence of, "robust gender differences in grant award procedures." These findings are contrary to previous studies that have shown negligible or no evidence of gender bias in the awarding of grants. The researchers found in their analysis that among grant applicants men have statistically significant greater odds of receiving grants than women by roughly 7%.

Themes: grant writing, gender bias, institutional environment

Brooks, A. (2000). Is There a Dark Side to Government Support for Nonprofits. Public Administration Review. *60*(3), 211-218.

This research article is one of the first investigations into the interplay of government spending (grant funding) and private donations in the context of nonprofit funding. The author introduces the debate over whether or not government funding stifles philanthropy. Using data on federal and state government spending alongside a literature review of economic research, the author finds that government funding does seem to "crowd out" private donations, especially in social service organizations. He further concludes that government spending in the form of grant funding does not stimulate charitable, private giving as previously postulated.

Themes: funding, nonprofit, philanthropy, 'crowding out'

Chávez, E., Chávez-García, M., & Alvarez, L. (2009). Preparing a Successful Fellowship or Grant Application. OAH Newsletter. *37*(3), 7-14.

The authors of this article offer insight from their background in academic, historical studies. Their work offers general advice to those working in academia in order to promote successful grant writing to support work investigating American History. The authors emphasize the importance of reliable mentors who can provide advice and support to inexperienced writers. The paper also addresses ways to identify appropriate grants and all the major, general components of an academic grant application.

Themes: funding, academia, writing standards

Eissenberg, T. (2003) Teaching Successful Grant Writing to Psychology Graduate Students. Teaching of Psychology. *30*(4).

This research was born out of the recognition of a lack of grant writing courses offered to psychology students. The authors acknowledge that while grant writing is important to many psychology professionals, psychology departments rarely train students how to write successful grants. The resulting study took place at Virginia Commonwealth University's (VCU's) Department of Psychology. The department offered a course focusing on the National Institutes of Health (NIH) National Research Service Award grant program. In 2 years, 16 students completed the course, and 6 submitted NIH proposals. VCU students who

completed the grant writing course had mean grant proposal scores that were significantly higher than the mean for all competing applicants. Furthermore, the NIH funded all 6 of the VCU proposals. Beyond these results, the article goes on to define the grant writing course curriculum.

Themes: funding, academia, writing courses, formal training, graduate students

Hager, M., Rooney, P., Pollak, T. (2002). How fundraising is carried out in US nonprofit organisations. International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing. *7***(4), 311-323.**

This study set out to investigate how numerous US nonprofits raised funds without declaring fund-raising expenses in their annual reports. This zero-cost fundraising motivates the paper, but the findings generally raise more questions than they answer. The study included 1,540 reporting nonprofits from a variety of economic sectors. The results of this study illustrate heterogeneity across the U.S. as one might expect. However, by focusing on three 'domains' of funding sources; (1) formal fundraising operations, (2) internal operations, and (3) the external institutional environment, the authors identify trends across the non-profit landscape. One major finding was that nonprofits with more dedicated full-time fundraising staff were able to pull in larger sums of cash. However, the paper also identifies that not all fundraising happens at the level of fundraising-specific staff. A number of organizations chose to fold the fundraising responsibility in with other job duties.

Themes: fundraising, nonprofit, professional development, institutional

environment

How to Write an Effective Grant. (2010). Retrieved October, 2013, from

https://www.udemy.com/

Inouye, S., Fiellin, D. (2005) An Evidence-Based Guide to Writing Grant Proposals

for Clinical Research. Annals of Internal Medicine. *142*, 274-282.

While this research focuses on funding for patient-oriented clinical research, the

findings provide insight for other science research grant proposals. This article

provides recommendations for the grant writing process based on data collected

through the National Institutes of Health. By highlighting key steps in the process

of grant writing, the importance of effective time management and strategic

planning, and discussing strategies concerning sections of grants that are

"frequently scrutinized and critiqued," the authors provide recommendations that

are generalizable and transferable to grant writers across disciplines.

Themes: funding, grant writing, writing standards, science research

Keys to Success. (2013). Retrieved November, 2013, from http://www.uwsp.edu/cnr-

ap/weeb/Grant-Program/Pages/how-to-apply/keys-to-success.aspx

Snavely, K., Tracy, M. (2000). Collaboration Among Rural Nonprofit

Organizations. Nonprofit Management & Leadership. *11*(2)**.**

This article evaluates collaborative practices between nonprofit organizations

based in two contexts; (1) rural southern Illinois, and (2) the Mississippi Delta.

The proceedings discuss environmental barriers to collaboration between

nonprofits in rural areas. The importance of financial resources in the community

is addressed as a major limitation along with low staff salaries. Despite these

challenges, nonprofits in the two rural regions used as case studies do present

significant examples of inter-institutional collaboration. Acknowledging this

successful collaboration and reexamining some characteristics of the rural

environment that actually facilitate inter-institutional collaboration, the authors

suggest practices for effective nonprofit collaboration.

Themes: funding, nonprofit, institutional environment

Appendix A: Pre-Interview Background Questionnaire

Please direct any comments, questions, or concerns to:

Paul Lovaas
5400 N. Black Oak Lake Road
Land O' Lakes, WI 54540
Paul.Lovaas@ConserveSchool.org

Please take a few minutes ahead of our interview to fully answer the following background questions to the best of your ability.

Name: Age:
State:

How many grant proposal projects have you worked on in your career?

Of those, how many were successfully funded and how many were rejected?

How many environmental education grant proposals have you worked on in your lifetime?

Of the environmental education grant proposals you've worked on, how many were successfully funded and how many were rejected?

Of the successful environmental education grants you've worked on, what is the typical amount funded (range of dollars) and what was the maximum amount funded?

Of the environmental education grant proposals you've worked on, how many were publicly funded?

Additional Comments:

Appendix B: Interview Question Guide

1.) Would you please tell me a little bit about your educational and professional background as well as your current job responsibilities?

2.) Could you describe your first grant proposal writing experience? What advice would you give a first-time grant writer today?

3.) What do you believe made your funded environmental education grant proposals successful?

4.) Of your environmental education grant proposals that have been rejected, what has been cited as causes for the rejection? Are there common reasons for rejection of environmental education grant proposals?

5.) In your experience what, if anything, distinguishes environmental education grants from others? Do you change your application strategy for environmental education grant writing?

6.) In general, what would be your best advice for someone writing a grant proposal?

7.) What would be your best advice for someone writing a grant proposal specifically for an environmental education project or program?

8.) Have you ever utilized any form of written manual for grant writing? Would you recommend the use of such a resource to people proposing environmental education grants?

9.) If you were going to author a grant proposal writing manual for environmental educators, what would you make certain was included?

10.) Based on your experience writing grant proposals, please comment on your approach to each of the following eight proposal sections. Are there differences in your writing strategy or approach when writing for non-environmental education projects and programs vs. environmental education projects and programs?

Summary/Abstract

Introduction to Applicant Organization

Problem Statement

Program Outcomes

Methods

Evaluation Plan

Future Support

Budget

Appendix C: Informed Consent to Participate in Human Subject Research

Dr. Dan Sivek, Professor of Environmental Education at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, and his student, Paul Lovaas, are conducting research on grant writing practices and success rates in the field of Environmental Education (EE). We would appreciate your participation in this study, as it will assist us in making recommendations for improving grant writing techniques among EE professionals in the state of Wisconsin.

As part of this study, we would like to interview you and record your descriptions of past experiences with grant writing.

We do not anticipate that this study will present any medical or social risk to you other than the inconvenience of the extra time required for you to participate in an interview.

While there may be no immediate benefit to you, we anticipate that the results of this study will help EE and fund raising professionals improve their grant writing practices and increase their success rates in earning grant funding.

The information we gather through observation or that you provide in the interview will be recorded in association with your name; however, neither your identity nor any identifying information will be published or revealed in the final reports and findings of this research without your express written consent.

If you want to withdraw from the study at any time you may do so without penalty. The information on you up to that point would be destroyed.

Once the study is completed, we would be glad to share the results with you. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please ask us or contact:

> Dr. Dan Sivek
> Emeritus Professor of Environmental Education
> College of Natural Resources
> University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point
> Stevens Point, WI 54481
> (715) 346-2028

If you have any complaints about your treatment as participant in this study, please call or write:

> Dr. Jason R. Davis, Chair
> Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
> School of Business and Economics
> University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point
> Stevens Point, WI 54481
> (715) 346-4598

> Although Dr. Davis will ask your name, all complaints are kept in confidence.

I have received a complete explanation of the study and agree to participate.

Name_____ Date _____

(Signature of subject) **This research project has been approved by the UWSP Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects.**

Appendix D: Propositions, Concepts, and Themes

Concepts and Propositions

CI. Co-authorship, Collaboration, and Partnership
P1. I was co-author, I wasn't even the lead author in [my first] grant
P2. Stay connected. Connect with your cohort of people and use the resources to leverage resources
P3. Every time we are looking at a new grant or a special thing comes along or desk that looks interesting, our first reaction is to call someone else
P4. is there somebody else that could help you write those grants?
P5. [Another] person did proofreading and checking to make sure the guidelines were met in what I wrote.
P6. Probably as much as anything, I was proofing and advising [my first grant]
P7. We had a little bit of support as faculty members from staff that worked in that area
P8. there was another person on the panel that was more of a general, big picture kind of advice
P9. Have somebody else proofread it, give you feedback
P10. The proposal was probably successful because first of all, it had two major organizations partnering
P11. I had an advocate on the review board. Having an advocate is important, especially if it's within the funder's program or one of the person's making decisions on funding, there's an advocate there
P12. Even if it's outside and it's someone that has the respect and credibility and might be known to the funder or the committee or individual that's making decisions on funding. Having those advocates
P13. perhaps writing letters of support or perhaps contacting the people making the decisions and letting them know how important this is

CII. Practice
P14. I think that takes a lot of practice and a lot of skill sets.
P15. I think practice. The more grants you write, the better you're going to get at it

CIII. Small, Easy Introduction Grant
P16. The first one I can remember writing … at a small zoo …writing to a foundation that was associated with the American Zoological Society, so they had already agreed to support zoos, so the only competition was from other zoos, not from everyone
P17. I probably wrote a couple while I was a teacher that were small ones
P18. do something perhaps small, see if it works for you and then ... I think practice. The more grants you write, the better you're going to get at it
P19. It was a pretty easy introduction to grant writing,
P20. and it was successful, it was a small grant, it was $5,000 initially

CIV. Granting Organization's Guidelines

P21. They [granting organizations] all provide information
P22. We had fairly clear guidelines … dictated by the funding source

CV.   Follow Instructions Carefully

P23. Follow the instructions verbatim that the grantor provides.
P24. they get a lot of grant proposals and they can eliminate any proposal that does not follow the guidelines to a tee,
P25. and that's probably more true with government-funded grants where they have to follow absolutely the guidelines that their given or disqualify candidates
P26. The successful ones I would attribute to what I just said, following the guidelines.
P27. I've been very careful in trying to follow the guidelines
P28. …Includes following the guidelines and writing clearly so there's no question or doubt about what it is that you're trying to say
P29. WEEB eliminates quickly any proposal that does not exactly meet their guidelines
P30. for example, there's a word limit and it's exceeded, it's pretty much eliminated, no questions asked
P31. Follow the instructions
P32. The first level is what we call a technical review and it basically is, to be blunt, can you read and follow the directions
P33. read and follow the directions very carefully
P34. Some of the things are not following the page limit guidelines
P35. … not having the appropriate person sign the form
P36. For any type of grant you really need to do as I indicated before: read and follow the directions
P37. What advice do you give for a first time grant writer? Adhere to the guidelines. That's just absolutely critical
P38. Follow the instructions, that's the same as adhering to the guidelines
P39. it moved over to a third page by one sentence and they didn't even review it. It just was automatically dismissed because it didn't meet the two page guideline. Following the instructions is critical.

CVI.   Submit Proposal on Time

P40. Part of the guidelines is making sure you get it in on time
P41. … not submitting by the deadline
P42. It took a month or so to write it

CVII. Be Concise and Well Written

P43. being concise and well written
P44. they may be reviewing many grants, they may only be reviewing a few, but you want to make it as easy for them as possible to find what they're looking for
P45. includes following the guidelines and writing clearly so there's no question or doubt about what it is that you're trying to say
P46. I see grants that people propose to do way too many things, and you can tell by reading it, you can't do this on this budget
P47. it has to be well written

P48.   You've got to know how to be very concise in your language

CVIII. Find a Grantor that Matches Your Needs
P49.   finding the right grantor for matching your needs, your desire for money to the needs, the values, the philosophy of the granting organization
P50.   we get rejected, most often it is a misalignment of what we're trying to do and what the funder is looking to fund
P51.   Clearly finding a good match is going to result, I think, in a higher success rate
P52.   [UNSUCCESSFUL] it was marginally addressing the needs of the granting institution. They didn't have an emphasis in international education…in hindsight, clearly that was not a priority at that time, anyway, for them. While I felt bad, I think I know why it didn't succeed
P53.   make sure that you understand that your trying to do something that the funder wants done as well, not just something that you want to do
P54.   It really is a partnership and you need to find somebody who's interest are aligned with yours
P55.   One big piece of advice is to always pick an RFP or grant funder that matches what you want to do.
P56.   I see it a lot with new grant writers …they have an idea and they're just looking for money and wherever they find where there's money they try to make it fit
P57.   If it doesn't fit, don't apply to that program
P58.   look at their [WEEB] priorities for that funding year, that would be another one, very important
P59.   …and then make sure you're aligned with the funding agency
P60.   That's probably one of the biggest things. Make sure you're picking a funder and a grant program that will actually match what you're trying to do, and you already have a good project in mind that's missing focused.
P61.   The opposite of that is where you're just looking for money but don't have a project idea in mind and then you're always creating new projects
P62.   you're just chasing the money but not really trying to further your mission.
P63.   how is it going to fulfill a need that's relevant to the funder?
P64.   You have to address what the funder sees as relevant and look at it through their eyes instead of your eyes. What they need is what you need to focus on. What they want is what you need to focus on and how you're going to address their desires, their goals and their funding program.
P65.   The reasons that they might have been rejected varied. Perhaps it was too much of a stretch in terms of the proposal meeting their needs and what they saw as priorities
P66.   the grant has to use the language and has to be directly aligned with whatever they're looking for from the grant provider. It has to be very specifically addressed.
P67.   Other than- in any grant writing you have to focus on what it is the funder has as priorities. They who have the gold make the golden rule. They're the ones that are making the decisions, you need to know what their priority is and clearly show them how you're going to help them to address their priorities, the needs that

they've identified through your project. Making that connection's critically important

P68.   Various different funding sources have different priorities that they want their projects that are funded to address. This goes without saying, as an Environmental Education grant that's the priority. Then what within Environmental Education is it that they want addressed because it could be going in many different directions within the field as Environmental Education.

CIX.   Educational Resources

P69.   I've used UWSPs, I'm not sure what their office is called anymore, but the grants office had guidelines for writing successful grants

P70.   They [UWSP online] were very helpful in preparing to write a grant

P71.   I have also used some books. I couldn't give you the names of them at all

P72.   online resource…I definitely would recommend them, they had lots of good advice and I think when you start seeing the same thing over and over again in different books or resources, it tells you that's probably a good thing to do

P73.   WEEB has already got very clear instructions on writing grants

P74.   I did use a variety of different tools when I took a grant writing class as part of my graduate program, but I can't remember the titles or authors

P75.   The University here at Stevens point has…a database, I would recommend to other people to try to find funding sources

P76.   some webinars that will be posted on our the board's website once the next grant cycle opens. They're just full of advice about how to write a grant proposal

CX.   Environmental Education Components

P77.   I think every grant that I have written has ... Or proposal has had an environmental education component For most it's been the major component

P78.   I don't know that there's been any that have not had an environmental education component

CXI.   Continuation Plans

P79.   One thing that I think is <u>very critical</u> to some granting institutions is plan for a continuation without the grant money

P80.   most grantors are looking to provide seed money for a project and so plans for a continuation I think are very important

P81.   Then the sustainability part is important too

P82.   You've got to be able to show that you can continue afterwards that it's not going to die when the money goes away

P83.   You should already have a sustainable program on your own

P84.   If you have a successful program, you want it to continue to be successful so you want to think about how do I reach a new audience or how can I update the program and use your past successes as examples in your proposal to show yeah, I've been successful and now I want to take this to the next level

P85.   River Workshop, it was a new proposal, it was a new project, it was a new idea. We got the grant to do it, but then after that it wasn't sustainable because who's going to fund something for just keeping it going

CXII. Evaluation Section

P86.   I guess my opinion on that also would be the evaluation section would also be <u>very important</u>

P87.   I also thing that's where you can learn a lot about the grant and what you're trying to do from what you're trying to evaluate, so grants that have really strong evaluation plans, who their audience is and what they're going to be measuring

P88.   I think evaluation is really important and then I think you can understand the whole scope of a grant just by looking at its budget, so spending time and being really realistic on a budget are important and those are the two things that fall to the end. Also that they come up within the last conversations of a grant process and I think that is unfortunate. I do. I think they should be at the beginning of the process, both of them.

P89.   Grantors want to be able to provide evidence that your program ... They want you to provide evidence that your program actually did what it set out to do

P90.   …or is going to be able to do what it set out to do so the evaluation part of the proposal would be important

P91.   Following up after the proposal or during the proposal and showing that you've done a good job evaluating program and showing its successes and so on, I would say is very important.

P92.   Generally the things that people forget about, and one of the reasons they're not funded, is the evaluation component of it. It's great to do something, but how do you know what you've done is worthwhile, and can you demonstrate to the board that what you've done is worthwhile?

P93.   and then follow up with them throughout the rest of the school year and providing them support

CXIII. Subjective Review

P94.   the second part of the review is the merit review. That is a little bit more subjective

P95.   People are reading the proposal and trying to determine which ones are the highest quality

P96.   I think reviewers are pretty critical of all parts

P97.   As you read through the proposals there needs to be a clear link from one section to the next

CXIV. No Difference Between EE and Other Grants

P98.   [is there a difference in grant types?] I will say no.

P99.   Do you change your application strategy for Environmental Education grant writing? No.

P100. Do you use a complete different strategy? I'd say no. I'm curious to see what others have said on that.

P101. I think really when it comes down to it, the advice sounds the same, you're educating or you're advocating or you're supporting it, whether it's public health or it's environmental education

CXV. EE Grants are Smaller

P102. I guess for the environmental grants, the only difference is that they tend to be a smaller dollar value.

P103. a lot of other types of funding institutions you can get significantly more than that

P104. The scale of the projects are smaller and they tend to be for a shorter period of time.

P105. I think those are the two main difference: the timeline and the amount that you can get.

P106. I think there's less probably money, obviously, for environmental education grants than for medical research or other areas of the social or sciences. I think there's less grants and there's also the grants for environmental education are generally going to be smaller than other types of grants, especially research grants.

CXVI. Program Creation

P107. we got the money to create an energy education professional development program

P108. typically granting agencies are looking for something new or innovative

P109. They also don't like to fund the same thing you've already been doing

P110. I think most grants that we have in environmental education are for program development rather than research, and so those programs are going to be things that are more likely to be created as new proposals versus something that you've already created to be and try to sustain

P111. Most environmental education grants are out there to start something.

CXVII. Grants Don't Fund Personnel

P112. They don't like to fund personnel if that's all you're asking for

CXVIII. Realistic Budget

P113. your budget should also match all of those things

P114. it should be a realistic budget.

P115. a lot of them seem to undercut themselves and not ask for what they really need in a budget

P116. I think the field in general undersells itself in what they charge for programs and what the real cost is

P117. If there was one thing that you made a mistake on that would really cost you, it would be the budget

P118. I see grants that people propose to do way too many things, and you can tell by reading it, you can't do this on this budget

P119. Propose something that is going to be feasible

P120. I think you can understand the whole scope of a grant just by looking at its budget, so spending time and being really realistic on a budget are important and those are the two things that fall to the end. Also that they come up within the last conversations of a grant process and I think that is unfortunate. I do. I think they should be at the beginning of the process, both of them.

CXIX. Section Alignment

P121. I think all the parts are really important, but I think the idea of making sure they all line up and match each other
P122. your budget should also match all of those things [other sections]
P123. the direct connection between outcomes and budget
P124. Making sure those things are matched up is really hard to do, and would be great to see examples and guidance toward making sure that all of these components are connected together and specifically program outcomes or objectives with budget

CXX. Feedback
P125. Where you can obtain feedback from a reviewer or from the committee, board, whoever it is that's doing the review and evaluation of your proposal, obtain that, to get it
P126. We got the reviewer's comments and resubmitted and then it was funded.

CXXI. Other Helpful Advice
P127. the power of narrative and stories and quotes and pictures
P128. David Bowers The How To Grants Manual
P129. And so we didn't have the credibility of a research institution going into this, so that's one thing
P130. a list of potential places to get money, that would be helpful
P131. people in Wisconsin know the WEEB grant program, but it's only one program, there are so many other programs out there and so many that are national programs that anybody in Wisconsin has a good chance to get just like anybody from any other state.

Themes

Theme I. Proposal Writing Factors
Granting Organization's Guidelines
Follow Instructions Carefully
Submit Proposal on Time
Be Concise and Well Written
Continuation Plans
Evaluation Section
Program Creation
Grants Don't Fund Personnel
Realistic Budget
Section Alignment

Theme II. Preparation Factors
Co-authorship, Collaboration, and Partnership
Practice
    Small, Easy Introduction Grant

Find a Grantor that Matches Your Needs
Educational Resources
Feedback
Other Helpful Advice

Theme III. EE Differentiation
Environmental Education Components
Subjective Review
No Difference Between EE and Other Grants
EE Grants are Smaller

Appendix E: Sample Grant Opportunities

(Retrieved from http://www.uwsp.edu/cnr-ap/weeb/)

Braitmayer Foundation Grant

The Braitmayer Foundation funds a broad range of K-12 education programs, with particular interest in curricular and school reform initiatives and professional development opportunities for teachers. Grants up to $35,000 are available.

Ezra Jack Keats Mini-Grants for Public Schools and Libraries

The Ezra Jack Keats Foundation is accepting applications from public schools and public libraries for $500 mini-grants to fund projects that foster creative expression, working together and interaction with a diverse community.

Youth Birding Scholarships

The American Birding Association offers scholarships to help young people attend bird-related summer camps, workshops, training programs, conventions and other activities.

McCarthey Dressman Academic Enrichment Grants

The McCarthey Dressman Education Foundation's Academic Enrichment Grants are designed to develop in-class and extra-curricular programs that improve learning for students from low-income households. Grants of up to $10,000 per year are awarded for a maximum of three years, provided eligibility requirements continue to be met.

Dorothy Stout Professional Development Grants

Grants of $750 are awarded to faculty and students at two-year colleges and K-12 teachers to support participation in Earth science classes or workshops, attendance at professional scientific or science education meetings, participation in Earth science field trips, or purchase of Earth science materials for classroom use.

EcoTech Grants

The Captain Planet Foundation, in partnership with the Ray C. Anderson Foundation, is awarding 16 grants of $2,500 each to schools or non-profit organizations for the purpose of engaging children in inquiry-based projects in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) fields that use innovation, biomimicry/nature-based design, or new uses for technology to address environmental problems in their communities.

Every Day Capacity Building Grants

Every Day Capacity Building Grants provide funding to strengthen the effectiveness of public lands friends groups. These grants help fund projects such as staff and board training, fundraising, and technology and website development.

Voya Unsung Heroes Awards

Are you an educator with a class project that is short on funding but long on potential? Do you know a teacher looking for grant dollars? Voya Unsung Heroes (formerly ING

Unsung Heroes) could help you turn great ideas into reality for students. Each year, 100

educators are selected to receive $2,000 to help fund innovative class projects.

Brimstone Award for Applied Storytelling

The National Storytelling Network is looking for storytelling projects from various fields,

including environmental education. The grant provides $5,000 to support a model

storytelling project that is service-oriented and increases understanding of how

storytelling can promote change in individuals and communities.

Alliant Energy Community Grants

Alliant Energy community grants are for programs, projects or initiatives that address

human needs, education, culture and art, civic improvement, and the environment. Grants

are distributed two times a year to qualifying organizations within the Alliant Energy

service territory. Gifts typically range from $500 to $5,000.

Captain Planet Foundation Grant

The Captain Planet Foundation provides grants of up to $2,500 to school and community

groups to support hands-on environmental projects. Applications are accepted twice a

year.

Herb Garden Grants

The Herb Society of America is accepting applications for its Donald Samull Classroom Herb Garden Grant. Public and private school teachers of grades 3-6 with a minimum class size of 15 are eligible to apply.

The Bee Cause Project - Observation Hives for Schools

Schools that receive a honeybee observation hive agree to run an annual fundraiser selling Bee Cause Honey to help pay for the ongoing care of the bee family they have adopted and for the installation of honeybee observation hives at other schools.

Wisconsin Humanities Council Grants

The Wisconsin Humanities Council supports programs that use history, culture, and discussion to strengthen community life for everyone in Wisconsin. This grant program has rolling deadlines throughout the year.

Karma for Cara Foundation Micro-grants

The Karma for Cara Foundation is encouraging kids 18 and under to apply for funds between $250 and $1,000 to complete service projects in their communities. Whether it is turning a vacant lot into a community garden, rebuilding a school playground or helping senior citizens get their homes ready for winter, they want to hear what project you're passionate about. Applications accepted on an ongoing basis.

VolunTEEN Nation International Service Project Grants

U.S. students ages 13-22 who are going abroad to volunteer or study in a developing country are encouraged to apply for an international service-learning mini-grant of up to $300. Applications accepted on an ongoing basis.

RGK Foundation Grants

The RGK Foundation awards grants in the broad areas of education, community and health/medicine. Letters of inquiry are accepted year-round.

World We Want Foundation Grants

The World We Want Foundation promotes and supports youth making positive social change in their communities and around the world. The Foundation works with and through the partner organizations and mentors that applicants provide, helps young people design and conduct meaningful social action projects, provides micro-grants to support projects, and more.

Cornell Douglas Foundation Grants

The Cornell Douglas Foundation provides grants to organizations that advocate for environmental health and justice, encourage stewardship of the environment, and further respect for sustainability of resources. The average grant amount is $10,000. Applications accepted year-round.

National Wildlife Federation Tree Grants

The National Wildlife Federation's tree bank program provides free trees to schools, youth groups and nonprofit organizations. Apply by January 31 for spring planting dates (February-May 10) and by September 21 for fall planting dates (October-January).

Environmental Research & Education Foundation Grants

The Environmental Research & Education Foundation accepts proposals for research projects and educational initiatives for developing tools that promote awareness or increase knowledge of the solid waste industry. Awards are generally up to $500,000.

NiSource Charitable Foundation Grants

The NiSource Charitable Foundation funds nonprofit organizations focusing on learning and science education, environmental and energy sustainability, community vitality and development, and public safety and human services. Eligible organizations must have a direct impact in a NiSource service area.

Norcross Wildlife Foundation Grants

The Norcross Wildlife Foundation provides support to local grassroots organizations throughout the United States that work to protect wild land. Grants are available for public education and outreach materials. Grant applications are accepted throughout the year.

Communities Take Root Grants

The Fruit Tree Planting Foundation (FTPF) and Dreyer's Fruit Bars are planting orchards across the country in a collaborative program called "Communities Take Root," and your town could be next! They invite your community to apply for this exciting opportunity to grow fresh fruit, beautify neighborhoods, strengthen relationships and build community food security—all through the simple act of planting fruit trees.

EarthEcho Water Planet Challenge Grants

The EarthEcho Water Planet Challenge Grants of $2,000 are available to middle and high school public educators to support service-learning programs that improve the health of the planet. Applications are accepted throughout the year and reviewed three times per year.

Jessie Smith Noyes Foundation Grants

The Jessie Smith Noyes Foundation supports grassroots organizations and movements in the U.S. working to change environmental, social, economic and political conditions to bring about a more just, equitable and sustainable world. Applications are accepted throughout the year.

Cedar Tree Foundation Grants

The Cedar Tree Foundation makes grants in the following areas of concern: environmental education, environmental health and sustainable agriculture. Particular consideration is given to proposals demonstrating strong elements of environmental

justice and/or conservation within the program areas listed above. Letters of inquiry accepted year-round.

Lawrence Foundation

The Lawrence Foundation is a private, family foundation focused on making grants to support environmental, education, human services and other causes. Applications are open to any organization that meets the grant guidelines. Grants are awarded every June and December.

Ashoka's Youth Venture

Youth Venture inspires and invests in teams of young people to design and launch their own lasting social ventures, enabling them to have a transformative experience of leading positive social change. When the team is ready to launch, Youth Venture offers seed funding up to $1,000, guidance, tools and support, and a supportive network of fellow Youth Venturers.

Young Wisconsin Conservationist Program of the Izaak Walton League

The Wisconsin Division of the Izaak Walton League has developed a program to encourage and assist K-12 school classes and organizations to carry out environmental and conservation activities. They will provide up to $200/project in funding for worthwhile projects.

Fund for Wild Nature Small Grants

The Fund for Wild Nature provides "small grants to small groups who get things done." The fund provides money for campaigns (including development of citizen science endeavors) to save and restore native species, biological diversity and wild ecosystems. Most grants awarded in the past ranged from $1,000-$3,000.

National Geographic Society Young Explorer Grant

Young people ages 18-25 are eligible to apply for grants to pursue research, exploration, and conservation-related projects consistent with National Geographic's existing grant programs, including the Committee for Research and Exploration, the Expeditions Council, and the Conservation Trust. Applications are accepted throughout the year.

Public Lands Every Day Capacity Building Grants

These grants seek to strengthen the stewardship of public lands by strengthening Friends Groups through funding for organizational capacity building. Applications are accepted April 30 and October 30 every year.