# Grant Writing & Matchmaking Workshop

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**Presenters:**
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## Welcome & Introductions

- Jennifer Conley Darling, President, Darling & Company (jenniferconleydarling@gmail.com)
- Gregg Strand, Vice President of Advancement, Starr Commonwealth (strandg@starr.org)
- Brief Audience Introductions (Name, Organization)
- Brief Audience Poll (years of experience, grant funding raised, and/or annual goals)

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## Flow For the Afternoon…

I. **Understanding Grants and Funders 101**
II. **Preparing For The Process**
III. **Anatomy of a Grant**
IV. **Advice from GrantMatch.com**
V. **Brief Exercise – Speed Dating**
VI. **Local Resource Exchange**
VII. **Q & A**

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## Oh, to be a Grant Writer!

**grant writer**
(noun */grant righter*)

1. A strategic storyteller
2. A matchmaker between mission and money
3. One who makes resource gaps sound like investment opportunities.

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## 101: Understanding Grants & Funders

**What are Grants?**

- **Non-repayable**: Unlike loans, they do not need to be paid back, *as long as the funds are used according to the grant's terms*.
- **Purpose-driven**: *Awarded for clearly defined activities aligned with the funder's priorities and geographic focus.*
- **Conditional**: *Recipients/organizations must be eligible and follow specific rules, submit reports, and often meet stated performance or impact goals.*
- ***Grant are Contracts!***

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## 101: Understanding Grants & Funders

**Grant Types:**

1. **Program Grants**
   Support specific projects or services that directly benefit a target population, such as youth music classes or after-school tutoring.
2. **Planning or "Seed" Grants**
   Support the early development of a new idea, program, or initiative—funding research, pilot phases, or planning work.
3. **Capacity Building Grants**
   Help strengthen an organization through things like staff training, technology upgrades, or strategic planning—to improve effectiveness and sustainability.
4. **Capital Grants**
   Fund major physical needs like building renovations, equipment purchases, or facility construction.
5. **Operating Support Grants ("unrestricted")**
   Provide flexible funding to cover day-to-day expenses like salaries, utilities, and administration, often referred to as "general support."

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## 101: Understanding Grants & Funders, Cont.

**Grant Sources:**

- **Government:** Typically fund large-scale public programs like health, education, and housing using taxpayer dollars. Public grants often win the "red tape award".
- **Private Foundations:** Typically fund nonprofit work based on a founding mission using money from families or individuals (e.g. Kellogg, Kresge, Mott, Binda)
- **Community Foundations:** Typically support a wider variety of things using pooled donations from a range of sources, but with a very localized focus.
- **Corporate Foundations:** Typically provide funding tied to business service area and community reinvestment.
- **Individual Donor-Advised Funds:** Typically give through investment firms based on personal passions, often through flexible, donor-managed accounts and by invitation (hard to find if not at a community foundation).

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## Preparing for the *Process*

- **Compile Essential Organizational Documents**
  - **IRS 501(c)(3) or Non-Profit Determination Letter**: Proof of tax-exempt status; funders usually require a copy.
  - **Annual Operating Budget:** Your organization's current annual budget, including income sources and expenses.
  - **Audited Financial Statements** (if available): Official financial reviews, showing fiscal responsibility and transparency.
  - **Board of Directors List:** Names, roles, and affiliations of your board members — funders often look for engaged, diverse, and qualified boards.
  - **Current Strategic Plan:** Outlines your organization's vision, mission, goals, strategies, and priorities for the next few years. If you don't have one, seriously consider creating one so funders can see that you are, well, strategic!
  - **Organizational History and Overview:** A brief narrative about when, why, and how your organization was founded, its major achievements, reach/impact and its capacity. Almost every grant funder will ask for this summary in a grant.
  - **Executive Summaries/Past Grant Requests:** If you routinely request funding for specific programs/projects, maintain updated executive summaries and previous grants that clearly articulate your request(s) and jumpstart new grants.

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## Preparing for the *Process, cont.*

**Funder Research**

- Use free or paid search tools like ChatGPT, Google, Foundation Directory Online (Candid), GrantWatch, Grants.gov
- Use search criteria to target funders and ensure their priorities align with your mission, program/project and service area.
- Ask experienced grant writers and partners for tips/lists (this room is a RESOURCE!).
- Research funder(s) focus, past grantees, grant sizes, and deadlines (develop "profiles").
- Prioritize a list of grantors/grants you hope to apply to in the coming year or two.

**Develop a Grant Application Calendar**

- Set reminders for key dates to stay on schedule.
- Alert your team, external partners and decision makers who might need to support with each grant (form committees).
- Schedule a meeting with each funder to express your interest in applying and/or submit a "concept paper" (if invited)
- Start drafting grants ***at least*** 6–8 weeks before deadlines.

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## Anatomy of a Grant

- **Grant Narrative:**
  - **Executive Summary**
  - **Statement of Need**
  - **Project Description**
  - **Goals & Objectives**
  - **Evaluation Plan**
  - **Organizational Capacity/Partners**
  - **Sustainability Plan**
- **Budget / Budget Narrative**

### Grant Narratives are circular, they should ECHO, not Ramble

- Dial the Executive Summary
- Tell a True Story of Need
- Use Data and Cite Reputable Sources
- Speak the Funder's Language
- Be SMART with the Project Plan, Goals and Objectives
- Prove Your Ability to Deliver
- Incorporate Partnerships
- Talk to an Evaluator
- Don't Overpromise
- Make sure the Price is Right for You and the Funder

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## Advice from GrantMatch.com

1. **Know Your "Type" -** Funders have types, and so should you!
2. **Don't Be an Imposter -** Be honest about your capacity and limitations in a funder relationship
3. **Make a Good First Impression -** Your executive summary is your "first date". Clear, confident, and compelling wins hearts!
4. **It's Not All About You -** Sure, you're important, but ask your funder questions and introduce them to your friends!
5. **Know What You Want -** A vague proposal is like saying "I don't really know what I want in this relationship".

6. **Prepare for the Long Haul -** Have a sustainability plan—nobody wants a fling!
7. **Don't Ghost 'em -** Follow up, send reports on time, and stay in touch—relationships thrive on communication.
8. **Bring Receipts -** Transparent budgets and accounting make for happy marriages!
9. **Say Thank You (and Sorry!) -** Always express public affection and be open with funders when plans change or "go wrong".
10. **Rejection Isn't the End -** Most dates don't last forever—use feedback, improve and try again.

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## Speed Dating

We need to ask how the room will be set up to be most conducive to this switch & repeat thing. I think we can spend the 5 minutes of them writing and 15 minutes of the dating.

1. Spend a few minutes writing an Executive Summary of your request
   - Who are you/What organization do you represent?
   - What is the need in your area of influence?
   - What is the funding amount and purpose of your request?
   - What impact/outcomes will result from your grant?

2. Pairs "pitch" each other with their Executive Summary (1 minute each)

3. Exchange ideas and contacts if desired, Switch and repeat

*Note the primary purpose of the exercise is to be brief and introduce people, organizations and community "needs" and funding sources to one another, not to stress anyone out or test your pitching skills.

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## Local Resource Exchange

**Local Funding Sources:**
Albion Community Foundation
Athens/Homer Community Foundation
Battle Creek Community Foundation
Binda Foundation
Consumers Energy Foundation
Cronin Foundation
Ford/Ford Fund
Marshall Community Foundation
Michigan Arts & Culture Council
Miller Foundation
National Endowment for the Arts
National Trust for Historic Preservation
W.K. Kellogg Foundation

**Grantwriting Assistance Services:**
Community Foundations (ask for help!)
Peer Grantwriters (ask for help!)
Paid consultants (e.g. Darling & Company)
ChatGPT!

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## Q&A

- Jennifer Conley Darling, President, Darling & Company (jenniferconleydarling@gmail.com)
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