Grant Writing for Grassroots Projects

Many grassroots projects receive grants but fail to meet their goals because the project planners didn't understand the community's needs or priorities and did not clearly convey them to grant makers. These tips will help increase your chances of not only getting a grant but implementing a project that makes an impact:

❖ Understand the community and your role in it

How is the community defined, and who has defined it? What does the community want, and how do you know? Who are the leaders in the community, and do you know how or why they have been named the leaders? What has worked well for them in the past and what hasn't? Why?

❖ Work on the community's timeline as much as possible

Be aware that the community's pace may be much slower than the funder's. Look for funders that understand the value of working on the community's timeline to the extent reasonable.

❖ Involve the community in the grant planning as much as possible

If possible, ask community members to help you write the text or at least review the major components of the grant. Explain the timeline and the process, and seek the community's feedback. The more community members understand about what is being proposed and can help shape it, the greater their buy-in and the more realistic their expectations. You are also far more likely to define a clear problem and a viable solution.

❖ Don't overlook the community's assets

Communities may have a variety of resources--people, time, money, ideas, and connections, among others. As you build trust with people, find out what they want to contribute to the project and discuss how those assets can be maximized. Funders often want to see what the community can bring to the table and consider a their contribution to the budget (for in-kind donations, financing, volunteer time, etc.) as a sign of commitment to the project.

❖ Clarify community commitment to volunteering

Volunteering can be a hardship depending on people's financial, work, and family situations, stress level, age, ability and many other factors, but it can also be rewarding sometimes for the same reasons. Ask community members if they want to volunteer and if so, how. Respect their decisions and be clear about commitments, including those of your organization, before you make promises to funders.