

Hi everyone,

I'm Alyse Dunavant-Jones, and I'm the Assistant Director for the Community Virtual Library.

<https://communityvirtuallibrary.org/>

Before I begin, I will drop each of you a Grant Resources Notecard that links to this presentation as well as the following google doc:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1noUX4rXaQnLb46Wz9c2gTHPmY6orludXAVUGiAauxag/edit>

I have a BA in Writing and an MLIS in Library and Information Science, so grant writing is a natural fit for me :)

Out of curiosity, is there anyone here who has written a grant proposal? Feel free to put a Y in the chat and as many or as few details as you'd like!

Before I begin, I'd like to give some quick background about where I obtained the information for this presentation.

In 2018, I took a Grant Writing course as part of my MLIS coursework. My professor tasked me with finding a client, interviewing the client, searching for grant opportunities for the client, and writing a grant proposal for the client.

Naturally, I chose CVL. We're a nonprofit library in need of funds for any number of projects.

I assumed the most difficult part of the process would be the writing itself.

It turns out grant seeking is a *little* more complicated than I anticipated.

It also turns out that CVL's status in virtual worlds made things a little more complicated as well!

I also assumed that grants were the same as scholarships--money you apply for, obtain, and then use. Simple.

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This slide demonstrates the differences between grants and donations.

Grants are NOT donations. Similar to scholarships, you must apply for a grant and use it for a specific purpose--whereas donations are more flexible.

Unlike most scholarships, however,

a grant requires applicants to give exact details of how you will use the money, when you will use it, and who exactly in your org will use it.

Once you obtain the grant, you also have to report back in detail with feedback.

If you misuse the money or don't meet your goals, your organization's reputation may be at stake.

Imagine applying for a college scholarship, and instead of an essay for why you deserve the money,

you also have to submit a spreadsheet with your expected school and living expenses for the year--which would dictate how much money you receive.

And, you need to let the scholarship committee know how much of your own money you'll be investing in college for the year

as well as where any other monies will come from (such as your parents).

You also need to submit specific goals and objectives for that year along with a plan for how you will meet them,

how you will measure your success/progress, and how you will report back.

You also need to submit all of your professors' and classmates' names and credentials ahead of time.

I was overwhelmed at first, but having busted my misconceptions about grant-seeking, I soldiered on!

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I soon discovered that virtual world organizations have some unique challenges when it comes to grants.

First, many virtual world orgs are led by 1-3 "movers and shakers". Using CVL as an example, CVL has three main leaders:

Val Hill (Director), me (Assistant Director), and Suemoon Magic (Head of Reference Services).

Val and I are responsible for the "big picture" stuff and overseeing our volunteers and programs.

Suemoon is responsible for our reference volunteers, tools, etc.

We have ~4 additional board members who regularly attend board meetings, each of whom head specific projects or services.

Everyone's plates are piled pretty high, so finding someone to take responsibility for an entire grant project is difficult.

We also tend to be volunteer-based, meaning many of us have day-jobs, families, or other priorities that take precedent in our lives.

But grant-seeking, applying, executing, and follow-up takes a lot of work and time!

Anonymous volunteers are also prevalent in virtual worlds. This makes accountability an issue.

It is difficult to prove you are part of a serious organization to a potential funder if you don't know any details about your colleagues.

This means that volunteers or staff who wish to participate in a grant MUST disclose personal information.

Anonymous community participants are also a huge challenge for measuring demographics.

How many women attend your org's events? Minorities? Persons with disabilities? What is the average age of your community?

Additionally, many grants are location-specific. For example, only orgs in a specific state or region are eligible.

Furthermore, national and world-wide grants are more competitive and often deal with sums far higher than appropriate for smaller nonprofits and projects or first-time grant-seekers.

Virtual world nonprofits also tend to have no regular income/fund-base outside of virtual dollars.

This makes it difficult to contribute our own money to a grant project.

There is no hard and fast rule about this, but many grantors expect grant recipients to shoulder a portion of the project costs.

Many grantors also expect you to receive monies for the project from other sources (such as other grants).

Contributing your own money to a grant project shows a funder you are serious about the project and more likely to bring the project to fruition.

Finally, you will over and over again face the question: "What are virtual worlds?"

Most grant-seekers have no idea what a virtual world is; so in explaining your org, you will also have to explain what virtual worlds are,

why they are relevant, how your org exists in them, and how your community participates in your org.

Virtual worlds are also in a limbo right now because they have a stigma of being virtual

(hence not as "real" as physical orgs and locations) while also not being the cool new kid (VR/AR/MR).

None of these challenges disqualifies us from receiving a grant, but it does make

our job more difficult.

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Okay--so we've established that virtual world nonprofits are underdogs when it comes to grant-seeking. But that's okay.

These next few slides focus on giving you an edge--that insider information that a lot of grant-seekers don't have.

So what do funders expect?

First, grantors expect you to know EVERYTHING about your organization and any partner organizations co-applying for the grant, including:

Your mission, vision, and story behind your org. This includes who you strive to serve, why, and how.

Information about your employees/volunteers. How many, salaries (if applicable).

This includes the legal names and contact information of your org's leadership.

You will also need leadership information for any parent orgs that will be involved in the project.

As for your community, how many people take part in your community? What are their ages, genders, and race? Where are they from?

In many cases, you will also need proof of a registered nonprofit status--or partner with a 501(c)(3) that will "vouch" for you.

Grantees are accountable to the grant org,

which will require follow-ups to prove you are using the funds according to your pre-submitted/approved planned.

You must also know your proposed project inside and out.

You'll need specific goals and objects, a detailed plan for how you will achieve those goals and objectives.

You must breakdown how much everything will cost and how long each stage of the project will take.

Who will lead the project? Who will play which roles in the project, incl. reporting to the grant org?

Who will benefit from this project? How will they benefit?

How will you measure success? (This includes any software you might use, such as Survey Monkey)

How will you market your project? Don't forget to factor this into your costs!

(Though sometimes, grantors will also have a marketing budget for grant recipients)

If you have other sources of funding for the project, you'll need to detail them into your budget. This includes "In-Kind" contributions.

(Things like volunteer hours, donated furniture, etc.)

Finally, grantors will want to know how you plan to sustain the project after the grant is finished.

For example, if you use a grant to build a new library, how will you keep the library up and running after the grant runs out?

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This slide lists the types of projects I see over and over again when I search grant listings.

If your community and projects fit into any of these categories, that's great!

If not, that doesn't mean there are no grants out there for you. They might just be harder to find.

One of the biggest tips for finding whether a grant or grantor might be a good fit for your org is checking out past recipients.

If a funder has only awarded grants to big universities, a small nonprofit might not

be a good candidate.

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Finally, here are some ways to prepare that will make grant-seeking far less intimidating!

Collect and organize your Admin Docs/Info (incl. partner/parent orgs)

This means you should know who your board/leaders are in SL and RL and have their RL contact info.

Know your budget and tax info or know who to go to and ensure they are available to answer your grant-relevant questions.

If you have documentation re: your users/community, organize this info as well! If not, you will need to collect this information.

You can do this on your own before searching for a grant.

Or you can search for an "exploratory research grant"; its purpose would be to research and define your community.

This is what my professor recommended CVL do because there were so many important aspects about our community I could not answer-- even as Assistant Director!

Establish a regular fundraising routine (ideally both in-world and out-world)

However, even if you are only receiving regular L\$, you may still have a case for your grant if most of your expenses are in-world.

Establish a person(s) dedicated to grant-seeking, writing, submitting, and following through with a grant.

This can be an org leader, an intern, or an especially dedicated volunteer.

But this person must commit to the long-haul, be willing to conduct research, write and edit, partner with and work with others--

(including contacting potential grant orgs for clarifications), and stick with the project to the end.

Is there another organization(s) with similar goals to you? Partnering with another org can offer benefits such as additional funds, tax status, man-power, and knowledge.

However, partner wisely. The wrong org match can add additional complications!

For example, if a health org for seniors partnered with a K-12 children's group, your goals might be too far apart.

CVL gave up its 501(c)(3) status several years ago and instead partnered with New Media Arts (a registered nonprofit) as our parent org.

The partnership has worked out very well!

Brainstorm your org's needs and potential projects your org would like to use grant funds for.

It is tempting to create a project based on a grant's requirements. But you should always search for grants based on your needs.

Strive for an 85-90% match, and you will be more likely to land the grant *and* you will be more successful in executing the grant.

I highly encourage you to check out my Ethics for Grant Seekers presentation for more information on that topic.

Presentation: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1mnCcTUg11Wch30P71TJK0ZJuaRxv0EQo/view>

Transcript:
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1nj4_WiHs2WrbIAQjetAoGre1GeznmUM3W0Vbmaam-bE/edit?usp=sharing

(Both are also listed in the resources notecard for this presentation)

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Thank You for attending this presentation on grant-seeking for virtual world nonprofits!

If anyone has not received the Grant Resources Notecard, please let me know, and I will drop it to you.

I am also working with CVL volunteer Jodie Landon to get these resources up in the NPC Library!

She has been asking for me to put this list together for quite some time :D

Finally, please contact me if you are interested in grant seeking or writing and would like a free consultation.

alyse.dunavantjones@gmail.com

alysedunavantjones in SL

AnteMeridiam DiscJockey (virtual world alt)

Thank you!