How to Get Things Done in a Small Town

A book for residents of small towns and communities who want to make things happen but don't know where to start.

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Table of Contents

Introduction

"Gee, wouldn't it be great if this town just had ……"

Our communities impact every area of our lives: our health, our recreation, our work, our children's education, the water that comes from our taps, our shopping options, the services for our aging parents, and so much more. Each community has resources - some have more and some have less. If you live in a small town you may feel that you've gotten the short end of the stick. Maybe you've visited a big city and have envied the parks, museums, public transportation, recreational trails, thriving downtown businesses, creative programs for youth and seniors and other such 'amenities'.

Well, don't feel sorry for yourself. Living in a small town may mean that you have fewer amenities. But you have a lot more power to influence your environment than you would if you lived in a big city. You can make a change in the world around you. It's actually easier to get things done in a small town!

"OK", you say "if it's that easy, why hasn't anyone around here done it yet?"

There are a lot of answers to that question, but they can all be lumped under the heading of <u>'lack of capacity'</u>. Capacity to do what? To:

- Plan projects
- Choose good ideas
- Get funding
- Help different groups and institutions work together
- Overcome hurdles
- Keep the project moving
- Calm everyone down
- Maintain good records
- Celebrate success!

Here's some good news – you can <u>build</u> capacity. You can learn to do some of these things and you can find experts to help you with others. You can bring resources into your own small town and you can build your dream community right in your own backyard!

Here's a story from my own small town. I live in North Fork, California, a town of about 3500 folks nestled in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada range. Like many foothill towns, this one was built around the logging industry. The local sawmill was the town's major employer and propped up the rest of the town's businesses. Then, in 1994, it closed. The mill owner moved out of the State. The community lost about 50% of its jobs. The economic domino effect caused several other businesses to close – and there weren't many there to begin with. For a while there was nothing left in the town but the bar, the market, and the auto parts store.

Before the mill owner left, some of the community leaders got together and asked him to donate the 135-acre mill site to the town, and after some negotiations he agreed. The town didn't have an organization that could take legal ownership of the mill site so the County agreed to take the property and hold it in trust for the community. Then the town folk got busy. They organized a Community Development Corporation. They started to get grants to do community plans. They worked with consultants to create visions and land use maps. They wanted jobs, recreation, and community amenities. They had a whole mill site map drawn up with different land use areas (industrial, commercial, open-space) colored in red, blue and green. And then?

No, it didn't just happen. We found out that there was environmental contamination at the site. So we got some grants to do an assessment of the contamination. Then we got some grants to clean up the contamination. Then they found more contamination. Then we got more grants plus a loan. And while this was happening, we got some funding to put in water lines and power lines. We tried to get money to put in a sewer system. We won the grant but the State program ran out of money. Then we realized that we couldn't implement the original vision for the site because the economy had changed. So we tried a new plan. But that didn't work either. So we tried to market the site to a developer. But no one was interested. So we decided to bring in local organizations and institutions to develop it piece by piece. By this time, the community was getting frustrated and cynical. The Board of Directors of the Community Development Corporation went through some bad times, with arguing and squabbling at every meeting.

("And this", you're saying to yourself, "is supposed to encourage me?" But wait….)

The Board membership changed. People started to work together again. In an astounding move, the local Indian tribe, the County government and the Community Development Corporation entered into a three way agreement to build a fire station and some other public facilities on the mill site. The County transferred the land to the Community Development Corporation, which started selling parcels to a few businesses. Roads started to be built. Infrastructure was extended. Slowly, VERY slowly, the town's dream for reusing the mill site started to come true.

"Okay", you're thinking, "it isn't <u>impossible</u> to get things done. But it sure sounds hard!" Well, yes and no. In North Fork we happened to choose a community project which was on the 'difficult' side of the spectrum. Redeveloping a contaminated industrial property with no infrastructure is a challenge in any area, much less a small rural community an hour drive from the nearest major highway where the economy was not exactly jumping with opportunities. There are plenty of projects that are easier to do and could still make a big difference to your community.

On the other hand, North Fork is blessed with a lot of resources. In addition to a healthy environment and a setting of natural beauty, it has lots of good people with a diversity of background and skills. Some folks have been here forever and can build anything, drive anything, fix anything, bake anything and sell raffle tickets to boot. Some folks moved here more recently from big cities and know how to write grants, incorporate a nonprofit organization, write a business plan, and facilitate a meeting. Of course most people don't fit neatly into these categories and have skills all over the map. Suffice it to say that when we all get together, which happens fairly frequently, we're a pretty smart, powerful and capable bunch of folks. Our County government doesn't have much money or staff, but they're willing to work with us. And when we can get some of the local organizations involved, or the Chamber of Commerce, or the Tribe, we've got a really good team.

The fact is you probably have most of the same resources in your own community. And if you're willing to learn new skills, work with others, and stick with it through a long and often frustrating process, you can make things happen in your own small town.

This book will help you. First, by telling you lots of stories about other small towns that have 'made things happen'. These stories will help you learn about the process by which a vision gets translated into reality. And they'll inspire you to take the first step or to keep on going when things get tough. That's what stories are for! The book will also break down the confusing process of project planning and implementation into small steps, giving you background of why things have to happen certain way and some suggestions about how to approach each new challenge. It also contains plenty of links and resources to help you learn more or get additional assistance.

This book will help build your 'capacity' to get things done in your community. But reading the book will not be enough. Like everything else, you learn by doing. You learn by making mistakes. You learn by listening to the others. You learn by just taking a deep breath and deciding to embrace the challenge even though you've never done it before and you know your neighbors (and probably your family) will probably think you're crazy for trying.

Great! So let's get started.

The secret is out... Some of you readers are <u>not</u> from small towns. You may be saying, "Okay, I don't live in your ideal, chummy, inspiring, fiercely independent small town. I live in a small city. Or a large city. Or a suburb. But I still want to see things get done in my community. Can this book help me too?" Yes, of course. The steps and skills it takes to get things done are pretty much the same across the board. The difference is that <u>usually</u> in a small town there are not a lot of groups already working on community development projects. And there are relatively few layers of bureaucracy that need to be overcome in order to get permission to take an action. If you have spirit and energy and are willing to stay the course, you can generally impress the key people whose support you need, and they will help you get the required official approvals.

In a larger, more sophisticated community there are more politicians, boards, and community agencies that have to be won over to support your idea. And there may be groups which have already initiated plans or started projects and which may or may not support any overlapping efforts.

If the difference was just quantitative - the same steps but they take longer – I'd say that this book would be equally useful for those of you who don't live in small communities. But there are qualitative differences as well. Those of you in larger communities will need political skills and social strategies that won't be discussed in this book. I have lived and done community work in both settings. I know that when I lived in Oakland I would never have ventured to get involved with the kinds of projects that I regularly plunge into as part of my small community life. But others did, and they succeeded in getting things done. Even though I can't inspire you with the same confidence I feel about making things happen in a small town, I'm not discouraging you. Read this book to learn some basic steps and skills. Then find someone who knows what it takes to get things done in your community and learn the rest of what you need to know.

PART I. The Road from Vision to Reality

Question Box: As you are reading these chapters you will come across boxes like this. These invite you to stop for a moment and apply the information you just read to your own community project.

You say you don't really have a project in mind? Well, think of one! You may or may not end up moving forward with it, but for purposes of learning the information it will be helpful to have a something in mind that you would like to see happen in your town. If you read this book with a project in mind, the concepts and strategies presented will have more meaning and the information will be easier to absorb. And if you do move forward with your project, it will help you sound like you know what you are talking about. And you will!

Part 1: Chapter 1.
Overview: Different types of projects and what's involved in getting them done.

When you first start imagining doing something in your community, it appears in your mind as a beautiful, exciting vision. You see the children playing noisily in the new park, the bright yellow van driving up to the door to deliver hot meals to the town's seniors, the colorful awnings shading the shop windows on a revitalized main street. When you start thinking about how to actually make it happen, you're likely to face a blank wall. Where do I get started? What on earth am I supposed to do first?

We'll talk later about the specific steps to project planning and implementation. But one thing is certain; you're not going to do it alone. No matter what the project, you'll have to start by sharing your idea with other people and getting them to help you. Some of those folks (like maybe your spouse) will be happy to dream along with you. But the people whose support you'll need to really get the project going will listen a little more critically. It's a hard fact of life that busy, capable people are frequently approached for assistance, and tend to make quick judgments about these requests – sorting them into the people they will help and the people they will thank sincerely and get rid of as soon as possible.

As a professional grant writer and program developer I'm one of these people who is approached frequently with great ideas for the community. A lot of them get the 'smile and nod' treatment. But some of them get a serious hearing, thoughtful consideration, and suggestions for next steps or resources. Sometimes, I'll even give a promise of assistance. What makes the difference? It's not the idea itself. (I love all ideas for how to make communities better places, that's why I'm writing this book.) The difference is how much work it will be for me to communicate with this person. If it is clear that they have no idea what is involved with making their project a reality, I just don't have the time or the energy to explain it all to them. If, on the other hand, they seem to have a good idea of how to approach their project, I'm happy to give them a little push forward.

So in this chapter you're going to learn a little more about types of projects and what is involved in getting them implemented. This is basic information that will give you some context for your project idea and will help you sound like you are serious and deserve support. This is just an overview. Later on we'll discuss the steps in more detail, as well as the how to get the resources and skills you'll need to move through the implementation process.

<u>Types of Projects</u> There are three basic categories of community projects that will be discussed in this book:

1. Construction Projects. Some common examples are community centers, fire stations, health clinics, school buildings, museums, parks, trails, and bike paths. Also included are public art, downtown beautification, tree planting, community gardens, creek restoration, etc. Basically, anything that results in a *physical* change.

2. **Planning Projects.** These are projects where *the result is a plan* that helps to control or shape future policies, activities or projects. Examples are Watershed plans (these can control activities that pollute waterways, land uses and development policies, habitat preservation, etc.), Community Design plans (guidelines for construction types and materials, signage, tree planting, etc.), Recreation plans, Economic Development plans, Cultural Plans, Emergency Preparedness plans, etc.

3. Programs. These projects focus on *activities*. Examples might be afterschool programs for youth, senior services, low cost spay and neuter programs for pets, a community orchestra, or an oral history project documenting your town's early beginnings.

There are other types of things you might want to get done in your community. You might want to get someone elected, incorporate your town, stop a strip mall development, pass a new community ordinance banning amplified rock concerts or develop restrictions against keeping alligators as backyard pets. These are *policy* or *political projects*, and they won't be covered in this book. However, you will find that a lot of the same principles, skills and steps discussed in this book apply to these types of projects, so it is probably worthwhile to keep on reading.

Question: What category best describes your project?

Steps to Implementation

Every project is different. But most projects pass through similar steps in their path from vision to reality. These steps include Visioning, Program Development, Design, and Implementation. These steps are slightly different for each category of projects - construction, planning and programs, but they serve the same functions.

Visioning (Pre-Planning): This step is first and foremost about *sharing and support*. You start by asking yourself, "Who are the people and organizations who would be interested in this project?" These are called 'stakeholders' and the process of identifying them is called 'stakeholder analysis'. Once you know who these stakeholders are, you start talking with them. As you do this, your ideas about your project may change. This is a good thing. It means that you are listening as well as talking and you are on the path to developing 'buy-in' and support from the larger community. It also means your project is leaving the realm of 'vision' and coming into the realm of 'reality'.

It is good at this stage to start to gather more information about what it will take to get this project done. What funding has to be raised? What property or equipment purchased? What structures built? What permits and approvals are required? Which people and organizations will have to officially endorse the idea? A good way of getting this information is to *look at similar projects in other communities.* Find the people who organized these projects and spend a few minutes on the phone or on e-mail. This can provide a big jump forward in your understanding of what is involved completing your project, as well as some good suggestions on how to overcome common obstacles.

Another aspect of this step is *identifying resources* that can help you complete your project. These can include grants from foundations and governmental entities, local fund-raising, city or county funds, loans, and even special taxes. It is also important to identify local expertise to help you design and implement your program, as well as volunteers to help with everything from fund-raising to program staffing. When you can point to resources to make your project a reality, it becomes a lot more exciting and attractive for others to get involved.

Program Development (Planning): Once you have gathered preliminary information about your project, you enter into the process of program development. At this stage you sit down with your stakeholders and develop a more formal analysis of your project and its relationship to the community. What need are you trying to fill? How will this project make a change? What specific results do you expect from the project or program? What are all of the steps needed to implement your project? Who will be involved in implementing each step? What are the resources (money, materials, staff time, etc.) that will be needed? How long will it take the project to be implemented? How will the project be operated or maintained? How will you know that your project is a success? This is called *program design*, and like a business plan it serves two main functions: 1) it helps you think clearly about the best way to structure your project, and 2) it convinces others that you know what you are doing and makes them more willing to give you money and support.

Once you have completed this analysis, you may want to seek official *approval* of your project. At this stage you are not asking for money. You are asking the key policy boards that are responsible for your area to give 'conceptual approval' of moving forward with the project. Possible bodies to approach can include the Neighborhood Association, the PTA, the Town or City Council, the County Board of Supervisors, the Workforce Investment Board, the Community Action Agency, the Commission on Youth, etc. You may need to approach several of these bodies but this can be an advantage since each approval can make the next board more likely to fall in line.

Completing the program design process and obtaining official approval will put you in a good position to start *applying for resources*. This is the 'continental divide' point between having a good idea and having a real project. You don't have to get all the funding at once. You can start with getting funding for a more detailed planning effort or for the design work necessary to move forward. You can also 'phase' the project and get funding to start with a small piece of the larger vision. Or you can try to raise 'leadership' grants to get the fund-raising process started. This is one area where success breeds success. Once you start getting funding, it becomes easier and easier to get more funding.

Design: This is the stage where you finalize everything you will need to start implementing your project.

First you will need to get agreement on all of the details of your program and produce a *final project design*. Naturally this process will look different depending on whether you are trying to create a physical project, a services program, or a plan. In most cases, you will probably not be able to design the project yourself. For instance, if you are working on a construction project, you will probably need engineers and/or architects to produce detailed plans and calculations. For other types of projects you will want to work together with experts in appropriate fields to identify all of the components of your program. For a watershed plan, for instance, you might work with biology professors from local colleges, state or county staff or representatives of environmental organizations to identify the types of research to include. For an afterschool program you'll need to develop plans for activities and curricula as well as detailed information about the staffing needs, equipment, and hours. School personnel or other educational experts can help with this.

Once you have the details, you need to determine whether there are any *permits* needed, and if any documentation, such as environmental assessments, will be required. Most planning processes are exempt from the need for permits. But for construction projects they can be a serious hurdle to overcome. Some of the things you might need include zoning approvals (often Conditional Use Permits), grading permits, building permits, state and federal environmental assessments, etc. For programs you need to be concerned mostly with 1) whether your staff and volunteers are eligible to take responsibility for this type of a program (i.e., appropriate certifications) and 2) whether the facility where you will offer the program needs any special approvals. You may have to deal with zoning issues or health certifications for your facility.

In all cases, this is the time to finalize your *budget, timeline, and scope of work*. This is not always easy to do, since there is almost always something that will take longer than expected and unanticipated costs arise with depressing regularity. The best strategy is usually to delegate responsibility for this task to an agency with more experience and more resources. If you can get your local government, for instance, to take charge of this it is more likely that it will be done correctly. And if things don't happen according their timelines or budgets, you'll at least have the comfort of someone else to blame.

Finally, you want to make sure you have a good *evaluation* strategy in place. This will allow you to measure the effectiveness of your program or project. This isn't just an exercise in showing how right (or how wrong) you were in promising all of those benefits to the project's funders and supporters. Most projects take place in phases and in order to get funding and support for the next phase, you'll need to show that the first phase met your expectations.

Implementation: It is hard to generalize about this phase of the process because we are talking about so many types of projects. But basically implementation will involve

- Hiring consultants
- Starting the work
- Maintaining records and documenting the process
- Developing reports and invoices
- Working with an oversight or advisory group to keep the project on track
- Finishing the project and getting final approvals
- Enjoy the results!
- And don't forget, evaluation.

For those of you who benefit by seeing visual representations of concepts, here's a chart that may help you:

STEPS TO PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION			
VISIONING	PLANNING	DESIGN	IMPLEMENTATION

As we go through this section of the book, each of these 'steps' will be broken down into further components with details about how to move through each one successfully. We'll add more layers to this chart to represent this added detail and to remind you where you are in the big, complex process of 'getting things done'.

Do you feel exhausted and overwhelmed? That's normal. This is a complex process and having all the details presented to you can be daunting. Imagine, for example, a young couple trying to have a baby who just found out that they were pregnant. They would be filled with excitement and anticipation, with maybe a little fear thrown in. But then imagine if someone sat the couple down and outlined every detail of diapers and vaccinations and choosing a pre-school and teacher conferences and adolescence and summer camp and report cards and driver's education and college applications. They would feel exhausted. It is valuable to know that these things are coming up, but it can also be overwhelming to try to process it all in your mind at one time.

In reality you will move through this process just as you move through the other complex processes in your life. You take it one step at a time. And one step leads to another. It is good for you to get an idea where these steps are leading, but don't feel like you have to comprehend all the details at once.

The subsequent chapters in this section will take these phases one at a time and will give you more details on what is involved in each phase. Read them once to get an overview; then use them as a reference as you move through the phases of your own project. And don't worry! Making things happen is hard, but it is incredibly fulfilling and can also be great fun!

Part I: Chapter 2   Visioning

STEPS TO PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION			
VISIONING	PLANNING	DESIGN	IMPLEMENTATION

VISIONING			
Stakeholder Identification	Engage Stakeholders	Research Similar Projects	Identify Resources

Step 1: Visioning (Pre-Planning)

You know what you want. It's clear in your mind. A sunny park, a cheerful pre-school, a classy face-lift on the buildings down town, a culinary training institute for the local junior college with a great on-site restaurant where young people learning to be top chefs serve fabulous meals at rock bottom prices, etc. And Cinderella, as she sat by her cold hearth and dreamed, knew exactly how she wanted to arrive at the ball – crystal beads sewn into her white gauze ball gown, pearl necklaces around her throat and red plumes on the white ponies that pulled her coach. She got exactly what she wanted. You won't.

Unless you have a fairy godmother to move your dreams right from your head into reality, you are going to have to get others involved in helping you. They may be inspired by your vision, but they won't buckle down and help you with the grunt work unless they have their own vision, something compelling enough to make them turn off the TV and roll up their sleeves. And their vision is going to be different from your vision. Also, if you want to get funding for your project, you will most likely be asking the support of government agencies or philanthropic institutions that have their own visions of what they want to see happen for communities. Success will only come if you find a way to bring all these visions together.

What happens when all these visions get together can be magic. Other people will bring wonderful ideas and great strategies that you would never have thought of. At the same time this process can be maddening. You find yourself losing control of a dream.

The process of moving from vision to reality is a process of change. If you accept that this is going to happen, you can make it easier on yourself. After all, the core of your vision is to fulfill some need that you see in your community. The details you add to this core build motivation and excitement, but they are not essential. As you go through the steps in this chapter, think about how you might let go of some of these details and hold on to the heart of your dream. Let go of your vision, and watch it grow.

a. Stakeholder Identification

STEPS TO PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION			
VISIONING	PLANNING	DESIGN	IMPLEMENTATION

VISIONING			
Stakeholder Identification	Engage Stakeholders	Research Similar Projects	Identify Resources

The process of making a vision into reality starts with sharing your vision with others. But with whom should you share it? Start by asking yourself, "Who are the people and organizations who would be interested in this project?" These are called 'stakeholders' (as in, those who have a 'stake' in the outcome) and the process of identifying them is called 'stakeholder analysis or identification'.

Here are some possible categories of stakeholders:

- Local political representatives (County Supervisors, City or Town Councilmembers, Mayors)
- Staff from government departments that have responsibility over the issue (Road Department, Park Department, Social Services Agencies, etc.)
- School officials (if the project deals with education or youth activities)
- Business groups, chambers of commerce (if the project involves economic development, downtown beautification, etc.)
- Representatives from nonprofit organizations that focus on this issue (youth services, seniors, recreation, hiking, environment, etc.)
- Neighbors – people living next to the proposed project or whose lives or properties will be impacted by it
- Neighborhood Associations
- Appropriate State and Federal officials (Fish and Wildlife, if the project involves working in a creek, Forest Service, if you are looking to do a trails project on or near public lands, etc.)
- Old timers – respected people to whom the community looks for guidance.

These are only the obvious categories. Each community has its own configuration of power, resources, knowledge, and experience. Ask yourself:

- Whose approval will I need?
- Who has experience in this area?
- Who will be mad if they get left out?
- Who has knowledge and resources?

Question: Think of at least three people in each of these categories that are 'stakeholders' for your project.

Remember, 'stakeholders' are not just those people who will support your project. Don't be afraid to approach potential opponents. It is better to engage these individuals and groups early in the process. They may annoy you with their negativity and cause a certain amount of chaos at meetings. But they will also raise some good points which, if you take them seriously, can greatly improve your project. And if these folks are included from the beginning and feel that they have been listened to and taken seriously they are much less likely to react in a drastic manner (such as by filing a lawsuit) later on.

Your stakeholder list will grow over time. As you meet with your initial stakeholders they will be able to recommend other people who should know. It is a good idea to keep track of the people you have contacted and those you still need to contact. Here's a sample 'Stakeholder Analysis Sheet' that you can use. Let's pretend we're doing this list for a nature trail project. I've included some examples of (made up) stakeholders to show you what type of information you might want to keep:

STAKEHOLDER LIST – Goodtown Nature Trail

Name	Organization	Address	Phone /Fax	e-mail	Interest	Notes
Mr. Goodwin	Goodtown elementary school	xxx	xxx	xxx	The school is close to the nature trail and might use it for environmental education.	Very positive! Will write letters of support. Suggests we notify school site committee and PTA to get more letters and possibly volunteers.

Name	Organization	Address	Phone /Fax	e-mail	Interest	Notes
Ms. Big	Local Supervisor	xxx	xxx	xxx	In her district. She's on the County's 'recreation planning committee'.	She was positive but concerned that the trail crosses County land. She's worried about liability. The recreation committee has some funding. She could also get the Planning department to help with environmental documentation.
Mr. Green	Forest Service Supervisor	xxx	xxx	xxx	Trail is mostly on Forest Service land. Forest Service has recreation plan.	Somewhat positive but also bureaucratic. We'll have to jump a lot of hoops to get something constructed on Forest Service land. Suggested we get the Congressman's support
Ms. Frien dly		xxx	xxx	xxx	Owns the property next to trail.	Surprisingly positive – so long as we take care of any damage that kids might do to her property.
Mr. Hike	Sierra Club – local chapter– president	xxx	xxx	xxx	Dedicated hiker – teaches environmental education at summer school.	A supporter! Will help get volunteers, raise funds, develop educational materials.
Mr. Cash	Cash's grocery	xxx	xxx	xxx	His business is adjacent to trail on the other side	Opponent! Over his dead body! Crusty old guy but kind of friendly. He comes to meetings to share concerns.

b. Engaging Stakeholders

STEPS TO PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION			
VISIONING	PLANNING	DESIGN	IMPLEMENTATION

VISIONING			
Stakeholder Identification	Engage Stakeholders	Research Similar Projects	Identify Resources

Now that you know who your stakeholders are, what do you do with them?

Your goals in approaching stakeholders include:

- Getting good advice
- Getting support from individuals and groups that will be helpful in getting your project done
- Showing that your project is 'collaborative' – this will impress the organizations that can provide funding and approvals
- Defusing potential conflicts and problems that can unexpectedly arise and threaten your project's forward progress

These goals help dictate your approach. Overall, you want to be respectful, open, interested, inclusive, and friendly. On a more specific level, here are some suggestions for how to approach stakeholders:

Approach Key Stakeholders Individually

STEPS TO PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION			
VISIONING	PLANNING	DESIGN	IMPLEMENTATION

VISIONING			
Stakeholder Identification	Engage Stakeholders	Research Similar Projects	Identify Resources

ENGAGE STAKEHOLDERS		
Approach Key Stakeholders Individually	Approach Groups	Call a Community Meeting

The Individual Approach: This is an approach to use with key stakeholders who have a lot of experience, power or authority in the community. It is often wise to approach a few of these stakeholders first. Pick the ones that you already know or with whom you have friends in common. Ask for a few minutes of their time, if possible set up a face-to-face meeting. (Phone calls are fine in a pinch but I find that face-to-face meetings are the easiest settings to communicate respect, excitement and commitment.)

Here's a possible approach for your meeting: There's something I really want to see happen in this community (describe project, not too detailed). I wanted to check in with you and see:

- Is this something you would support?
- Do you have any good suggestions on how to proceed?
- Has anyone else tried this?
- What were the obstacles?
- Do you have any suggestions on how to overcome these obstacles?
- Is there something that would make you more inclined to support this?
- Who else should I talk to?

If the County Supervisor or City Councilmember from your area is approachable, that could be a good place to start. Generally the County or City is going to have approval authority over your project. These political bodies generally have similar group dynamics; they operate with a certain amount of 'I'll scratch your back if you scratch mine'. Usually these representatives are elected by district. In that case, when a community project is proposed, the other Supervisors or Councilmembers will look to their colleague who represents that district to gauge their support or opposition to the project. Without this support from the local representative, you are not likely to get a positive response from the body as a whole. On the other hand, if the project has enthusiastic support from the local representative, sometimes this will be enough to win the entire board's approval.

Try to identify other people in your community whose opinions are highly regarded. These folks like to be asked for advice, so ask them! If they are a little crusty and cynical at first, don't be discouraged. This is a common attitude for folks who have 'seen it all'. Acknowledge their experience and gently keep on pressing your case. Make some jokes at your own expense. Most people will eventually warm up to you if you are respectful, humble, realistic and persistent.

Question: Who are some of the key stakeholders in your community and how might you get access to them?

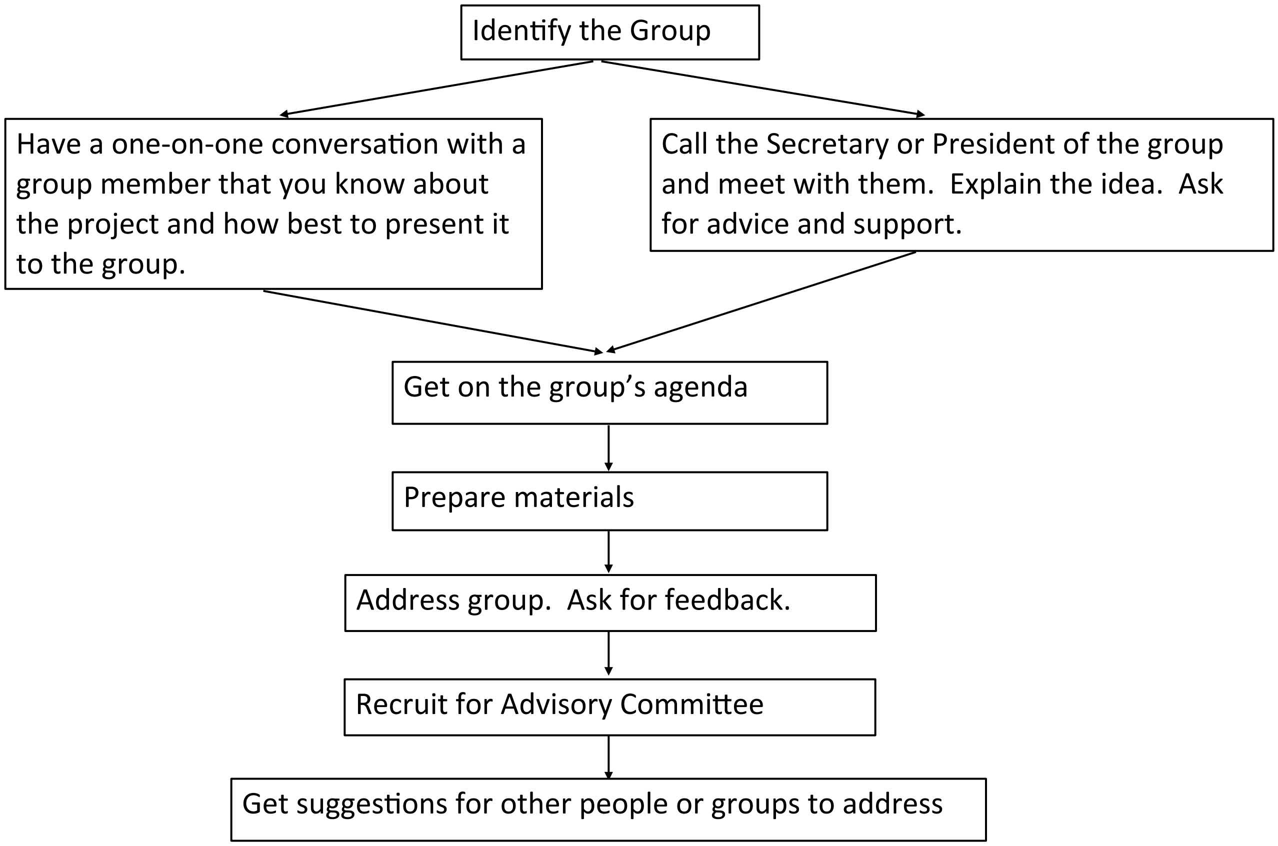
STEPS TO PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION			
VISIONING	PLANNING	DESIGN	IMPLEMENTATION

VISIONING			
Stakeholder Identification	Engage Stakeholders	Research Similar Projects	Identify Resources

ENGAGE STAKEHOLDERS		
Approach Key Stakeholders Individually	Approach Groups	Call a Community Meeting

<u>Approaching a Group</u>: Organizations such as Chambers of Commerce, PTAs, service groups and other nonprofit entities can be approached as a group. But before you do this, it is best to have a one-on-one conversation with a member of the organization. If you don't know someone involved in the group, call and make arrangements to meet with the president or secretary of the board. Explain your idea and that you'd like to ask for advice and support. Ask how to get on the agenda for the next meeting. If you strike up a good rapport, ask the representative what they think of the idea and what the group's response is likely to be. Try and identify land minds/pitfall ahead of time so you can be prepared. ("I know you might have concerns that this skateboard park could bring teenagers downtown and that these kids might paint graffiti on the storefronts. This is definitely something we'll have to deal with. Do you have any suggestions on how we might prevent these types of problems?")

When you address the whole group, it is nice to have something to hand out. Perhaps you can prepare an outline of the proposed project components (make sure you note that this is <u>preliminary</u> draft and open to changes), a map, or an article on a comparable project in other areas. Your approach will be similar to your individual meetings – you are interested in pursuing this idea, you understand that this is an area they have worked with in the past (or you understand that this will affect their activities and interests), you wanted to talk to them at the very beginning of concept development to make sure you get their feedback and suggestions, etc. If they bring up problems and challenges, take them seriously. Ask for suggestions on overcoming difficulties. At the end of the meeting, ask if any of them would like to be on an advisory committee for the project. One way or another, promise to keep them 'in the loop' as things develop. And, as always, ask them if they have suggestions for other people (or groups) to talk to.



Question: What are the service organizations (i.e. Lions, Boosters, Rotary, Kiwanis) and nonprofits (i.e. beautification committees, watershed councils, friends of the library/park) in your community which might have an interest in this project?

STEPS TO PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION			
VISIONING	PLANNING	DESIGN	IMPLEMENTATION

VISIONING			
Stakeholder Identification	Engage Stakeholders	Research Similar Projects	Identify Resources

ENGAGE STAKEHOLDERS		
Approach Key Stakeholders Individually	Approach Groups	Call a Community Meeting

Calling a Meeting: In some cases you may want to call your own meeting of stakeholders to discuss the project. We can call this a 'pitch meeting' – you are going to pitch the ideas and see if you get any hits. This can be an open meeting (you publicize it with flyers, notices, e-mail groups, etc. and invite the general public), or it can be by invitation only. In both cases, make contact with some key community stakeholders and ask them to attend. A good size for a pitch meeting is five to 15. If you have fewer than five you may feel discouraged at the lack of interest and if you have more than 15 you may find it difficult to have an informal discussion where everyone feels free to participate. Find a comfortable, accessible room to hold the meeting. Meeting rooms are often available for free in libraries, banks, and other community facilities.

If you have already discussed the project with your city or county representatives and have received a promise of enthusiastic support, you might ask them whether they would be willing to organize the meeting for you. Their sponsorship adds a great deal of value and will help generate a better response. If they are fortunate enough to have staff helping them, they might be able to assist you with the logistics of the meeting (finding a meeting space, publicity, etc).

Ideally, you would like this pitch meeting to be both positive and constructive. You may want to invite some friends to give you support and to help set a positive tone. Make sure to have some nice refreshments.[1] You can try your hand at facilitating the meeting yourself, if you like, or ask someone with facilitation experience to take the lead. In either case, it is wise to spend some time with an experienced friend planning the meeting agenda. *(You'll find more information on planning and facilitating meetings in Part II, Chapter 1.)*

Here's a possible meeting agenda for your pitch meeting:

1. Preliminaries: Thank everyone for coming and go over the agenda (it is nice to have this typed out and copied so you can distribute it to participants). Pass around a sign up sheet for people's names and contact information. (This information will be integrated in your 'Stakeholder List'.)
2. Introductions: Ask people to introduce and say something about themselves. This should be something neutral and non-threatening, such as where they live or how long they've been in the community, rather than their political party or where they go to church.
3. Project Description and Feedback: Explain the project. Ask people for the following feedback:
    a. What do you like about it?
    b. What potential problems or difficulties do you see?

[1] This is not as trivial as it sounds. If you serve some home-baked cookies and/or fresh fruit and coffee you are 1) showing people that you care that they have come, 2) giving the impression that you are an old hand with meetings, and 3) producing a pleasant sensation in their bodies that they will subconsciously identify with your project in the future.

c. Suggested strategies for overcoming difficulties
d. Any resources that might be available
e. Who else should I talk to about this
(It is nice if you can put separate sheets of paper on the wall and take notes, but you can also just write things down. Make sure that participants see you writing down their suggestions so they feel 'heard'.)

4. Closure and Next Steps: Explain your 'Next Steps' for moving the project forward. (This may be a brainstorming session, a meeting with technical advisors, a presentation to the City or County, etc.) Thank everyone for coming and ask if any of them would like to be on the 'Advisory Committee' for the project.

<u>Forming an Advisory Committee</u>: As you approach your stakeholders, you will find a range of responses. Chances are that some will have a negative or dismissive response to your overtures. Don't let this discourage you unless it is the majority response. If it is, you might want to re-think your project. (My mother often quotes an old Dutch proverb: "If one person tells you you're a horse, forget it. If two people tell you you're a horse, forget it. If three people tell you you're a horse, go out and buy a saddle.") But hopefully most of your stakeholders will respond in a positive manner. Some may just wish you well. Others may have some advice or suggestions for resources. And a few will be sincerely interested and want to stay involved with your project. A good way to provide this opportunity is to organize an advisory committee. You can meet with your committee on a regular basis and give them updates on the progress of the project. They will provide advice, feedback and resources. They can also be useful in making a good impression in the community, especially if the group includes some key stakeholders. When approaching new organizations or individuals about your project, drop a few names… "You must know Mr./Ms. So-and-so, they're on my advisory committee. *Jump right up on this bandwagon*!"

The whole process of identifying and engaging stakeholders may seem like a lot of unnecessary work, but believe me it is not. In the business, this is called 'doing your homework'. If you ever stop by and watch City Council or Board of Supervisors meetings (which is not a bad thing to do, by the way), and someone gets an unenthusiastic – even nasty - response to a proposal, you may notice people in the audience looking smug and muttering, "They didn't do their homework." You may have gotten away with it in high school, but in the world of community development this homework has to be done.

Identifying and engaging stakeholders is the foundation of your project's success. It will help you avoid land-mines and navigate your way through troubled waters. It will give you the support you need to be taken seriously by public officials and funders. It will give you the benefit of other people's experience and wisdom, and will help refine your project concept, eliminating foolish or infeasible elements and adding great new ideas that you might never have come up with yourself.

BACK TO NORTH FORK….. North Fork Fire Station Project.

Here's an example of the power of stakeholder identification and engagement from my own small town:

North Fork needed a new fire station. The town had a fire station but it was so small that the trucks could barely fit in without getting scraped up on the walls. Also the station was built into a hillside which had natural springs, and during the rainy season water would seep into the station through the floors and even through the electrical outlets. It was inadequate, unsafe, and uninviting for the volunteer firefighters that staffed the station and protected this high-fire danger area.

The local supervisor had pushed for the County to build a new station, using $500,000 in capital improvement funds that were available for this type of project. Staff held meetings with community, plans and analyses were drawn up, and the project was brought to the Board of Supervisors. The estimated project cost was $1.5 million, and staff proposed that the County take out a 40-year loan from a federal agency to fund the remainder of the project. When the project was presented, however, the County Administrative Officer spoke up against it. He was a very fiscally conservative administrator, and was strongly opposed to the County going into debt for that period of time.

The Board of Supervisors took his advice and turned down the project. They made it clear that they considered the new North Fork Fire Station a County priority, but no one had any idea on how to get the necessary funding. I was asked, as the County's grant writing consultant, to research if there were any grants available but I found no funding that the County could get for this type of project.

I knew of one grant program that was available to Indian tribes, in fact I had written several applications for this grant on behalf of the local tribe, but I also knew that the tribe had a long list of its own projects for this grant program. We had all pretty much given up; still the project kept simmering in the back of my mind.

One day I got a call from the Tribe; the new Tribal Administrator wanted me to come in and talk about grants. We talked about library grants and education programs and just as I was leaving I brought up the fire station project. I suggested she might think about using their grant program funding for this project in the future. The Tribal Administrator looked up, surprised. Actually, she said, they had received a $500,000 grant under this program but found they couldn't implement the project. The granting agency (HUD) said that if they had another project ready to go, they could use the funding for the substitute project.

The Tribal Administrator and I looked at each other with the same idea in our heads. We started throwing out ideas. The Tribe could use the $500,000 grant for the fire station, the County could put in their funding, and maybe the Community Development Corporation could donate some land on the mill site which would lower the cost of the project. I was friends with the CDC president and knew that he wanted to get something – anything – under construction to jump start the redevelopment process. But timing was an issue; the Tribe had to submit a revised grant proposal in less than two weeks in order to keep the funding.

I left that meeting and got on the phone. First I called the CDC president. Yes! He was enthusiastic and promised to contact the other key Board members to share the idea. Then I called the County Supervisor. He thought it was a great idea and promised whatever assistance was needed. I asked him to take the lead on organizing the first stakeholder meeting. He said he would call the key County staff people and explain the idea, and would have his immeasurably efficient staff person arrange a meeting in the next couple days.

Sure enough, within a few hours I got an e-mail from the Supervisor's assistant inviting me to attend a stakeholder meeting on the North Fork Fire Station project the very next day. When I got to the meeting I was amazed. There were representatives from the County Planning Department, the Building Department, the Fire Department, the County Administrator's office, the Tribal Administrator, the Tribe's Chief Fiscal Officer, several members of the Tribal Governing Council, the Community Development Council president and vice president, the local ambulance company and the Fire Department Auxiliary. These were all of the major stakeholders and the Supervisor's office had gotten them all together to a meeting within 48 hours.

I had quickly drawn up a conceptual project outline and given it to the Tribal Administrator after our talk. She had made a few changes and distributed the revised draft to the stakeholders. Then we started to refine the project concept. Our initial idea was to have the fire station include an ambulance bay and a training facility. The ambulance company had originally hoped to contribute $100,000 to the project, but a recent economic downturn made their Board of Directors skittish. They would keep an ambulance at the facility, but they couldn't contribute any funds. This made the finances tight, but it turned out the costs would be lower than the original estimate because the Mill Site property was flat, close to the road, and already had some infrastructure built. Then the Fire Chief said that a training facility wasn't really feasible. Okay, we couldn't do an official training facility, but we could have a multi-purpose room that could be used for volunteer fire fighter training and other emergency preparedness. This preserved an important element of the grant application. The Tribe wanted more land on the mill site in return for their contribution to this project; they needed it for other public facilities. The CDC representatives thought this would be acceptable.

We left the meeting with a revised concept that met the general approval of the meeting participants. Another week of scrambling and all of the entities had officially approved a conceptual proposal. A revised application was submitted just under the deadline. Six months later the funding was approved and the representatives from the Tribe, the County and the Community Development Corporation officially signed the final three-way agreement. And eventually we all gathered at the mill site for the ground-breaking – all of the stakeholders with the ceremonial shovels smiling into the news cameras.

This example is unusually dramatic, but it illustrates the crucial role of stakeholder input in making things happen. It also shows the value of building relationships within your community. Funding opportunities often arise unexpectedly and you may have only a few weeks to put an application together. If you have already engaged your stakeholders, spent some time discussing ideas and built relationships of respect and trust, you will be much more likely to get the cooperation you'll need to pull off a speedy, successful proposal.

STEPS TO PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION			
VISIONING	PLANNING	DESIGN	IMPLEMENTATION

VISIONING			
Stakeholder Identification	Engage Stakeholders	Research Similar Projects	Identify Resources

c. Gathering Information on Similar Projects

It is good at this stage to start to gather more information about what it will take to get this project done. How long is it likely to take? How expensive will it be? What property or equipment will need to be purchased? What structures built? What permits and approvals are required? Which people and organizations will have to officially endorse the idea?

A good way of getting this information is to *look at similar projects in other communities.* As they say, there is nothing new under the sun. Chances are that at least one - and probably a good many - communities have completed a project like the one you envision. You may even have seen such projects and been inspired by them.

So how do you find information about these projects?

1. Locate similar projects –

- Internet Searches - In these days of the internet, finding information of this kind is not difficult to do. A simple internet search will turn up many examples of mural projects, afterschool programs, recreational trails, etc. If you get too much information you can narrow your search to the nearby geographic area. That will make it easy for you to visit the project and talk to the coordinators face-to-face.
- State or Federal Agencies – Many agencies publish reports, studies, and even 'How To' guides that can be very helpful. You might find details of teen crime prevention programs on the Department of Justice website, a guide to developing watershed plans on your State's Water Resources page, etc. Start with the State or Federal agency that is most likely to support your type of project. If you don't know the agency's name, do a search with the name of your project and the name of your state, or 'federal' if you are looking for national programs. You may end up with a report or a newspaper article, but a quick reading will likely mention some agency involvement and there is your name. When on the agency's website, look for a 'local assistance' or 'community programs' page. That's where this type of information is usually kept.
- Funders – When you research funders (see Part II Chapter 3) and find some likely prospects, look at their annual reports. These reports are usually on line, and typically include a description of the projects that have received funding. This should give you enough information to track down the organization or individual responsible for making the project happen.

2. Talk to the Project Coordinator – Once you've found the project, try to find the people who were the driving force behind its success. They may be people like you, who looked around their community, saw a need, and took the leadership to see that it got filled. That would be hitting the jackpot! You could learn not only about the details of their project but also the story of how they learned to make it happen. More likely you will find yourself talking to an agency staff person. You can still count yourself lucky, particularly if they are willing to spend a little time on the phone answering your questions.

In order to get the best information in the shortest period of time, it is good to have a list of prepared questions. These could include:

- What were the major resources you needed and where did you get them?
- What permits and approvals did you need?
- Who were your best helpers?
- What obstacles did you encounter?
- How long did it take to complete the project?
- What were the most important lessons you learned?
- If you had it to do all over again, what would you do differently?

Be organized but spontaneous. Develop a list of questions but give your informant free range to tell their story.

Question: What information would you find most helpful in talking to coordinators of similar projects?

<u>Keep Records!</u> The information you gain from these interviews will be very helpful as you move through your process. You might even want to make a chart:

Interview Notes: Example Ourtown Mural Project

	Project A	Project B	Project C
Project location	GoodTown	Arttown	Cooltown
Project description	Mural on downtown buildings	Mural on the theater	Many murals scattered throughout town
Contact person name and info	Mr. Cool	Ms. Art	Mr. Organized
Questions:			
Who started it?	He did! He saw something like this in another town and decided to do it at home	The Women's club	The local art gallery
Where did you get funding?	He had a lot of bake sales for supplies, got donations of paint and got volunteers to help	They got a grant from the local arts council and raised money through bake sales	The Chamber of Commerce, the County, the School District, and bake sales.
What was the local government involvement?	They did an informational presentation and got a positive response, but local government had no official role.	Local government was not involved, just the theater owner.	Had to go through an approval process with the planning commission and the town council, but they were very supportive.

	Project A	Project B	Project C
Has it had beneficial effects (on tourism, economic development, youth, town spirit, etc.)	Seems to have increased downtown shopping by locals. Some tourism improvement maybe.	Everyone likes it but it's hard to say what the impacts have been.	The tourism council has used this for marketing. Also seems to have reduced graffiti, since we involved local youth.
Notes:	This is an on-going project, they do a building or two each year. Then they have a big party!	They chose a town-history theme.	He invited me to come and check it out, he'll let me stay at his home!

STEPS TO PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION			
VISIONING	PLANNING	DESIGN	IMPLEMENTATION

VISIONING			
Stakeholder Identification	Engage Stakeholders	Research Similar Projects	Identify Resources

d. Identifying Resources.

Bake sales are great! But they don't go very far when you have a project of any size in mind. And, as they say, money isn't everything. To make your project happen you'll have to pull in a lot of resources of many different types. In addition to money, these can include technical expertise, property, materials, and labor. Of course, money can buy you all of these things, if you have enough, but money for community projects is always in short supply. You'll want to look for other types of resources that might be more readily obtained.

At this stage you may not know exactly what kind of resources and how much of them you will need, but even a rough analysis will be a good start. Here are some types of resources you may need to bring your vision into reality, as well as some places you can go to find out their availability in your community.

STEPS TO PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION			
VISIONING	PLANNING	DESIGN	IMPLEMENTATION

VISIONING			
Stakeholder Identification	Engage Stakeholders	Research Similar Projects	Identify Resources

IDENTIFYING RESOURCES				
Technical Expertise	Property/Facilities	Materials	Volunteer Labor	Cash

1. <u>Technical Expertise</u>

Resources you might need:

- Economic analyses
- Architectural and landscape design
- Educational program design
- Evaluation program design
- Engineering work
- Grant writing services
- Graphic art work
- Computer programming and/or web design
- Video services
- Meeting Facilitation
- Grant administration
- Early childhood education
- Bi-lingual translation
- Environmental compliance/permitting
- Etc.

Where you might find them:

- City/County Staff – A surprising amount of technical expertise can be found in city and county staff. They have engineers, planners, architects, programmers, and grant administrators in regular positions. Often other employees have facilitation, graphic art and similar skills. Of course, these resources may not be available to you. But, if you 'do your homework' and get the support of your local government's Board or Council, they may make them available.

- Universities and Colleges – This is my favorite place to go for technical expertise. Often your local college or university will be very willing to assist with the design of a community project. In fact, when I was in graduate school, I was part of a university institution that was created specifically to provide technical expertise to the local community. Professors are often busy with their classes, consulting or field work, but they may be able to suggest a bright, capable student who can do a good job for free, just for the experience and the joy of being needed!
- Friends and neighbors – You'd be surprised at the technical expertise that lies unseen in the quiet houses and streets of your hometown. Your neighbor or your friend's husband or the fellow who runs the hardware store may have just the expertise that you need. People are often willing to volunteer for projects in their community, even if they usually charge big hourly rates for their services. Start asking around.

STEPS TO PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION			
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<u>2. Property/Facilities</u>

Why you might need it:

- If you want to build something
- If you want open space for a park or playground
- If you want access through property (this is called an 'easement', and it is a type of property right)
- If you want to use someone's wall for a mural
- If you need a facility to hold an event or program

Where you might find it:

- Look for vacant land - Identify the approximate street address, go to your local Planning Department and ask for the ownership information. If it has been vacant for a long time it is possible that the owner may decide to donate it for public purposes (particularly if you name the park after him or her!) Or they might be willing to sell it at a discounted price.
- County/State/Federal land – It is hard to persuade public agencies to part with their land. But you may be able to get them to agree to put your project on their land! They may even agree to take over the operation and maintenance of the project, which would be a very good thing. If you or your organization maintains ownership of the project, you can still put it on public land if you can negotiate an easement or a special use permit.
- Utilities – These companies often own excess land and may be willing to part with it if it is not needed for the operation of their facilities. If you have your eye on utility company property, it is definitely a good idea to get your local representative involved in the discussions. Utilities are often in some sort of negotiation with the local government and your representative may have some leverage that could make a difference.
- Churches and Schools – Many churches and schools also have vacant property which may be a good site for your project. They may be willing to give you a long-term lease for the site, or you may be able to negotiate for them to take ownership of the project, if this is a good fit. These entities often have multi-purposes facilities that you can use for one-time events or short-term programs.
- Local Businesses – Businesses may have vacant storefronts, warehouses, or other properties that could be useful for your project. They will probably not be willing to give up their land, but they might be willing to enter into a long-term lease, possibly for a reduced rate. If you are planning a project that involves business property you can get a lot of cooperation by offering to publicize their philanthropic donation in your promotional literature.

STEPS TO PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION			
VISIONING	PLANNING	DESIGN	IMPLEMENTATION

VISIONING			
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IDENTIFYING RESOURCES				
Technical Expertise	Property/Facilities	Materials	Volunteer Labor	Cash

3. Materials

What you might need:

- Computers
- Office supplies
- Building materials
- Paint and brushes
- A sound system
- Furniture
- Food
- Prizes for raffles
- And lots of other things!

Where you might find it:

- Local Businesses – It often surprises me how willing business owners are to donate goods for public projects. My estimate is that one out of every two businesses you approach will be willing to make some sort of a contribution for a charitable purpose, particularly if it is already supported by the community and local officials. Make sure to thank them with free publicity and remind them to take a tax deduction[2]!
- Public Agency Surplus – Public agencies often replace furniture and equipment and the old stuff often isn't that bad. They give it away for free to nonprofit organizations. These give-aways aren't always publicized, so you have to have a network of 'ears to the ground' to take advantage of them.
- Rummage – Ask your friends and neighbors to check their garages, their cupboards, their gardens and their closets for un-needed items.

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[2] Note – tax deductions are a nice incentive, but they are only available if the donation is going to a nonprofit organization with tax-exempt status, often referred to by the Tax Code Regulation number: 501(c)(3). If your project is being sponsored by a 501(c)(3) organization, then you should write a donation letter to each donor confirming that they have made a donation, stating the market value of the donation, and listing your Tax ID number. This is important documentation for their tax deduction.

STEPS TO PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION			
VISIONING	PLANNING	DESIGN	IMPLEMENTATION

VISIONING			
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IDENTIFYING RESOURCES				
Technical Expertise	Property/Facilities	Materials	Volunteer Labor	Cash

4. Volunteer Labor

What you might need:

- All kinds of help, including people to help you with planning and organizing, people to help build and paint your projects, volunteers at your fund-raising functions, people to maintain the trails and landscaping, volunteer tutors, mentors, etc.

Where you might find it:

- Volunteer Centers - There are many organizations that help link people who want to volunteer with community projects. You may have a volunteer center in your County or region with a list of likely prospects. An internet search can also give you access to on-line volunteer matching options.
- Churches and schools – These institutions provide an opportunity to get the word out about your volunteer needs. Many have newsletters with opportunities to describe your project. You can also ask for volunteers at a Board or PTA meeting.
- Businesses and public entities – Many large businesses or city/county governments have employee volunteer programs and community relations staff to help you put out the word.
- Educational Institutions. From high schools through college many programs require their students to volunteer a certain number of hours in community service projects.
- Correctional Institutions. If your project involves manual labor (such as brush-clearing, trail building, etc.) and will not present undue risks, these institutions sometimes have community work programs. You may be required to pay for a supervisor.
- Friends and neighbors. You're certainly getting to know those friends and neighbors! But don't be shy about asking. You are giving them a wonderful opportunity. Many people feel lonely and disconnected from their community; they may appreciate the chance to spend some time hanging out with other people and doing good work. Make it fun! And don't forget those refreshments!

5. Other in-kind resources

- Fee Waivers – You'd be surprised how many permits and licenses are needed when you try to get something done. And they're usually not free. But you can often request a fee waiver for your community project. The agency may require that your project be sponsored by an official tax-exempt nonprofit organization, so if you aren't already working with one of these, see if you can get a friendly non-profit to sponsor you. (See Part II Chapter 4).
- Publicity – This is easy. Most newspapers and newsletters are happy to hear of a positive, community-oriented story. Check with the community editor. Even if you can't get a story, there is generally a community calendar where you can publicize your project's events. Keep your eye out for internet sources too – there may be a community website, blog or e-mail group that is appropriate for distributing your messages and notices.

STEPS TO PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION			
VISIONING	PLANNING	DESIGN	IMPLEMENTATION

VISIONING			
Stakeholder Identification	Engage Stakeholders	Research Similar Projects	Identify Resources

IDENTIFYING RESOURCES				
Technical Expertise	Property/Facilities	Materials	Volunteer Labor	Cash

6. Cash

What you might need:

- Anything you can't find for free, you'll have to buy. Standard categories of funding needed include:
    - Project Coordination
    - Planning costs (design, technical experts, etc.)
    - Project implementation costs (these may be construction or non-construction)
    - Project administration costs
    - Evaluation
    - Overhead (office rent, phone, postage, communication, etc.)

  (For more information on budgeting, see Part 1 Chapter 3.)

Where you might find it:

- Bake sales (or other grass-roots fund-raising efforts) - Don't knock them! If all you need is a few hundred dollars cash, a bake sale, rummage sale, community dinner, sponsorship run, or even a kissing booth can take care of it. They can also be fun opportunities for building support and educating the community about a project.
- Service Organizations – If you need a modest amount of funding, in the $500 - $5000 range try asking your local Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions or other service organization. These organizations exist to do good work in the community and regularly give out small grants for good causes.
- Local Charities and Community Foundations – Your region may have a United Way or a Community Foundation. If so research their funding programs and deadlines. Often these entities give out 'seed grants' in the amount of $5,000 - $10,000 to get a project started.
- Foundation Grant Programs – There are thousands of charitable foundations in the country that give out grants for community projects. The challenge is to find the foundations that want to give money to your type of project, include your region in their funding areas, and will accept applications from your type of organization. County and University libraries usually contain books, journals and databases on philanthropic giving. Get help with your search, otherwise you may drown in the sea of information. (More information on how to do this is available in Part II Chapter 3)
- State and Federal Grant Programs – This is where the really big funding lives. There are some challenges, though:
    - You have to be an eligible applicant. Many grants are only available to local government or nonprofit organizations with tax exempt status.
    - You have to have an eligible project. These grant programs are very specific about the type of project they will fund. They also tend to be very competitive. The application guidelines will list program elements that are necessary to get rated highly enough to win funding.
    - You usually have to show a track record or other evidence of your capability to complete the project. This can be a problem if you are new to community projects. You can overcome this barrier by collaborating with a more experienced organization. (See Part II Chapter 4.)
    - You have to be able to maintain the project. This means you need to show that you have an on-going source of funding for maintenance and operations. Of course, you'll need this in any case, no matter who funds the project. But often these resources come later, when you've developed the project and have gotten buy-in from local government, other agencies, or the grateful public. Large grant programs tend to ask up-front that you prove you have the capacity to maintain the project.
    - You have to show that this project will have an impact. You'll learn more about measuring and evaluating outcomes in Part 1 Chapter 3).

Remember, at this stage of the process you are not necessarily applying for this funding. You are just researching possible funding sources. But even this research can help your project gather steam. When you can show that the resources exist, it becomes a lot more exciting and attractive for others to get involved.

Start a chart! Keep track of the resources you will need for your program and the possibilities for finding them. This information can come in handy if someone asks "Is there anything I can do?"

Project: Ourtown Mural Project		
TYPE OF RESOURCE	**WHAT DO I NEED?**	**WHERE MIGHT I FIND IT?**
Technical Expertise	Graphic Artists Fine Artists (esp. with mural experience) Grant Writer Meeting Facilitator	Arts Council Local Colleges United Way School District
Property/Facilities	Meeting room Walls for Murals	Local bank or library Chamber of Commerce
Materials	Paint for murals Materials for wall preparation and sealing Printing for posters	Art Stores/Paint stores Hardware Stores Print shops, College
Labor	Baking for Bake Sales Wall Preparation Painters	PTA Volunteer Center High School/College Art Classes
Money	$2500 for professional assistance $3000 for non-donated supplies $1000 for commemorative posters	Bake Sale Grant from Art Council Poster sales

Even if you start out with guesses and estimates, this is a worthwhile exercise. This chart will eventually become your budget. The more thought you put into it, the more accurate it will be!

CONCLUSION

If you've gotten this far in your process, you are to be congratulated! (If you've gotten this far in the book you don't really deserve congratulations; maybe a pat on the back though. Good job. Keep on going.) You've taken the first step from vision to reality. You've gotten feedback from your stakeholders and have rounded up some folks to help you with the next step. You've researched similar projects to get more information on what will need to be done. And you've done a rough analysis of the resources you'll need and given some thought to where you might find them.

So are you ready to get started with your actual project? Nope. The next step is more planning. But you've moved ahead and are ready to start the program development phase. This is analogous to creating a business plan for your project. Once you've completed this step, you'll have all your ducks in a row to get funding and other resources. So take a deep breath and let's go forward…

Part I: Chapter 3
Program Development (Planning)

STEPS TO PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION			
VISIONING	PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT/ PLANNING	DESIGN	IMPLEMENTATION

<table>
<tr><th colspan="4">PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT/PLANNING</th></tr>
<tr><td>Goals & Objectives</td><td colspan="2">Community Need</td><td>Program Description</td></tr>
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At this point you've already put quite a bit of time into planning your program. You've refined your vision, obtained some stakeholder involvement and started analyzing the resources you'll need for your project. Now you start building. Not with hammers and nails, bricks and boards. You start the building process on paper. And you don't start with the square footage of the facility, the type of paint, the landscaping. You start by analyzing your community, its resources, needs, and potentials. You start by making sure that the program you are proposing makes logical sense. This process is called <u>program development</u>.

Why is this important? By going through this process you will end up with a well-conceived, logically consistent project proposal that will

- Convince funders to give you money
- Inspire the community to give you support
- Succeed in fulfilling your vision!

Not every project actually goes through this process. Some organizers try to rely on their status, their experience, or their persuasive powers to push their visions forward. Some of their projects may get built. Some may even succeed. But many more will fall by the wayside. And even those that succeed in becoming a reality will not be as good as if they had gone through this rigorous analysis.

The program development process is analogous to writing a business plan. How many good business ideas have you heard? And how many of them have actually become businesses? Without an analysis of the market, the available experience and skills, and the funding needed, a business has a hard time getting started let alone becoming profitable. Going through the business planning process and getting the results down on paper is one of the best indications of an entrepreneur's ability to succeed. This is true in the world of community projects as well as the world of business.

What value does the program development process have for community programs? It makes sure:

- Your program is logical

- Your program is designed to meet a real community need
- You understand the costs, resources and time that it will take to complete your vision
- You've identified the individuals and organizations that will assist you and you know what roles each will play
- You've thought through the specific steps to program implementation
- You have projected results that are reasonable and achievable
- You have a way of measuring whether these results actually take place

This sounds like a lot of work. It can be. But the good news is that this is exactly the information that you will need to create your applications for project funding. Basically, when you have this information on paper, you have pretty much written your grant proposals.

So why not just wait until you need to write those grant proposals before going through this analysis? Because program development takes time. And not just the time needed to make yourself sit down and write. You'll have to do community research. You'll have to go back to your stakeholders for input. And you'll have to reach some specific agreements with your program partners on roles and remuneration. Most grant programs give you four to six weeks from the time the funding announcement is released to the time the proposal is due. That is not enough time to do a good job on program development, even for a professional grant writer. And the quality of your program development will directly impact your proposal's likelihood of success. This is one of the first things I tell my grant writing classes: Grant writing is program development.

Even if you won't need grants to implement your program, the work you do in this chapter will still be valuable in developing clarity and effectiveness. You will be moving your ideas from your head onto paper where they can be read, considered, and used in a variety of ways in your implementation process. So let's get started!

Elements of Program Development

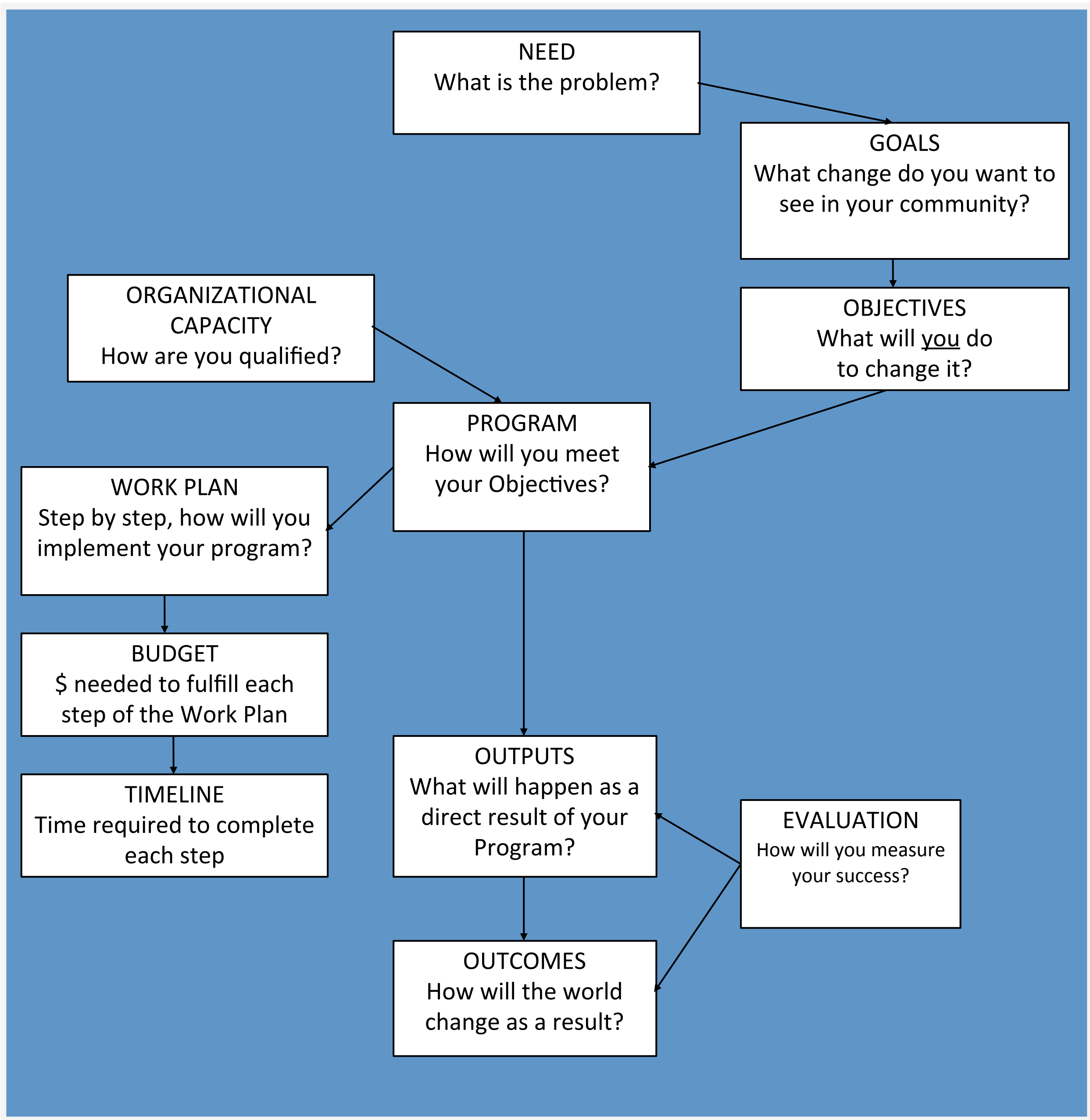
The best way to approach program development is to think of it as an interview. You are being asked questions about your program and you have to convince the questioner that your program makes sense, that it is the best way to address this community issue, and that it will generate substantial and meaningful results. Here are the elements of program development in the form of questions:

a. What are the project's goals and objectives?
b. What is the community need that the project is addressing? Can you document this need?
c. Describe your proposed project or program and how it will meet this need.
d. What is the step-by-step work plan you will follow to implement your program and how much time will each step take?
e. What is your budget for implementing the program?

f. What will be the immediate and long-range benefits (outputs and outcomes of the program) and how will you measure them?
g. What capacity do you and your partners have to succeed in this effort?

These elements are logically related to one another. For instance, your goals and objectives should directly address the community need. The program's benefits should fulfill the program objectives. The work plan, budget and timelines should be structured so that you can follow any element of the program and see the specific work that will be needed to complete it, how much that work will cost, and how much time it will take. For those of you who are visually minded, this chart may help:

LOGICAL FLOW



The rest of this chapter will address these program development elements individually. Warning – program development is not an easy process and reading through this chapter is likely to be difficult. My suggestion is to take the sections one at a time. Stop in between sections and take a break. There is a lot of material here! It will be easier to digest if you apply it to your own project, so take the plunge. As you go through this chapter, JUST START WRITING! Don't worry about complete sentences or even complete thoughts. Just throw your ideas down on paper. Writing is difficult and scary for all of us, but it is essential for making your vision into a reality. Your words are your bricks and boards. Pile them up now and gradually you'll start to put them in their proper places.

a. Goals and Objectives

STEPS TO PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION			
VISIONING	PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT/ PLANNING	DESIGN	IMPLEMENTATION

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT/PLANNING			
Goals & Objectives	Community Need	Program Description	
Work Plan & Timeline	Budget	Outcomes	Organizational Capacity

When you begin crafting your goals and objectives, you are starting the process of grabbing hold of your vision and wrestling it into words. These words need to take specific formats. It may be difficult to fit your vision into these formats. It is like trying to fit your romantic feelings into a love poem. There is so much to say, but how to say it?

Here's a strategy that can help. Most people use the terms 'goals' and 'objectives' interchangeably, but in the program development context these are terms with specific meanings. <u>Goals</u> are general statements of the purpose of your program. Basically they can be thought of as 'how you want the world to change'. <u>Objectives</u> are the specific things that you intend to accomplish in order to meet your goals.

This sounds simple, but it is consistently confusing to the students in my grant writing classes. Here's a way to approach it:

*What do you want to do? (This is your **<u>objective.</u>**)* **I want to:**	*Why do you want to do it? (This helps you find your **<u>goal</u>**.)* **Because I think we need to:**
Build a recreational trail	Increase opportunities for healthy exercise
Paint a mural	Add to the attractiveness of downtown

Start a music program for kids	Increase opportunities for youth to participate in the arts
Create a evacuation plan for my neighborhood	Enhance emergency preparedness
Build an amphitheater in the park	Increase opportunities for performing arts

Here are some examples of goals and objectives:
Goal: Conserve natural resources and protect the local watershed by educating families about water conservation skills.
Objectives: Supply all of the elementary schools, Boys and Girls Clubs, and other youth programs in the Watershed with Water Conservation Coloring Books demonstrating ways to save water at home.

Goal: Reduce malnourishment among the senior citizen population.
Objectives: Expand the capacity of Meals on Wheels to deliver meals to all eligible senior citizens.

Goal: Reduce AIDS in rural populations.
Objectives: Provide information and counseling programs on high-risk behaviors to middle-school and high-school students.

Question: What are the goals and objectives of your project? Try scribbling down a couple versions.

Don't worry about getting your goals and objectives perfect on the first try. The way you word them may actually fluctuate over time. You may get a better insight on the specific things you are trying to accomplish with your project. Or you may want to re-word your goal so that it more closely follows a funder's priorities. (It would be a mistake, of course, to change your entire program to fit into funder's guidelines, but a modest reworking of your program description won't hurt.) As you work with them, you may want to make your objectives more measurable, (i.e. develop a computer program for the senior center that will reduce computer illiteracy among town seniors by 10%.) Measurable objectives are often preferred by funders.

b. Community Need:

STEPS TO PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION			
VISIONING	PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT/ PLANNING	DESIGN	IMPLEMENTATION

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Your vision was inspired by an understanding that your proposed project will meet an important community need. But you may not yet have articulated that need, even to yourself. You just got inspired by the vision and knew in your heart that this would be a good thing for your community.

Well, in order to justify your program, you will need to demonstrate to other people that the program will truly meet that important community need. You are not just building this park because you want a nice place to have a picnic. You are building it because everyone wants a nice place to have a picnic and there are no such places available. Maybe there is a park somewhere, but it is not accessible to people in your neighborhood. (Or to kids, or to people without automobiles.) And without a nice, accessible place to picnic, local residents, particularly youth, are spending their free time in front of the television or the computer and losing the benefits of healthy outdoor recreation and are growing indifferent to the natural beauty that surrounds us which will lead to increased environmental deterioration, not to mention health problems due to lack of vitamin D.

As you can see, it is easy to make up a variety of community needs which will be met by your project. But for the purpose of the Program Development process (and for future grant applications), these needs have to be documented. This will take research. So put on your 'Ace Reporter' hat and let's hit the Internet. Below is a list of some common community characteristics used to demonstrate need and some sources for this information.

<u>What you should look for as you do this research:</u>

1. Documentation that your community is <u>worse off</u> than other areas – when looking at population statistics (commonly called 'demographics'), look for documentation that your area is comparatively worse off (more poverty, more crime, less educational attainment, higher unemployment, higher cancer rates, etc.) than other communities. For purposes of this comparison, examine the statistics for your community and also for surrounding communities, the County, the State, and/or the entire Nation.
2. If your community is not worse off look for documentation that your community, though comparatively well off, has <u>fewer resources</u> to deal with its problems than other areas. For instance, the city across the river has more poverty and higher crime but it also has a university and the students have organized tutoring centers for at-risk youth throughout the low-income areas. Since all your community's young adults have to go out of the area for college and employment, you don't have access to these college student tutors.
3. <u>Special characteristics</u> of your area that would make this program very significant. For example, your community is the site of a national beach volleyball tournament. So a poster campaign against skin cancer will reach a lot of folks throughout the country who are at high risk because they play in the sun all day long wearing only their swimsuits.

4. Community involvement in the problem or issue. If you can demonstrate that this issue has been a community concern for a long time, you are more likely to get community involvement and support, which is something that funders and policy-makers want to see.

Here are some places to start your research. If they don't include enough statistics on your individual community, try the appropriate department in your city or county. Even if they don't have their own statistics, the staff might be able to tell you where they look when they want to justify a funding application.

COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTIC	SAMPLE SOURCE OF INFORMATION
Poverty rate	US Census/American Factfinder. The indicator generally used is the Median Household Income (MHI) or percent below poverty.
Unemployment	US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, State Economic Development Department
Crime	US Bureau of Justice Statistics; Census Bureau reports; a variety of websites comparing quality of life in different areas
Health	Center for Disease Control (CDC) National Center for Health Statistics
Neighborhood Deterioration	City/County Housing Surveys
Student Achievement	State Departments of Education, data and statistics
Student Need	Same as above, look for statistics on % eligibility for free and reduced cost lunches or other special programs
Lack of facilities/amenities	City/County capital improvement plans, needs assessments, etc.
Educational attainment	US Census/American Factfinder
Ability to speak English	US Census/American Factfinder
Lack of arts/music programs	City/County/School District Needs Assessments. (If these don't exist, you may want to propose doing a needs survey as one of the phases of your project.)

During this research process you are actually looking for things that are wrong with your community. This foray into negativity is important to justify the need for your project. But don't get carried away. The most effective attitude for your 'Needs' section is not a whining diatribe about how bad things are in your poor little town and how much you need help. Instead it is a sober, objective assessment of community problems, tempered with a hopeful note about the resources and opportunities available to make a change in the current situation. Show that your community is ready to meet its problems straight on and pull itself up from its boot straps. List the special characteristics and resources (such as dedicated and experienced volunteers, a nearby university, people with special skills, etc.) that can help you make this change.

Question: Off the top of your head, what are the characteristics of your community that will demonstrate a need for your project? What are the resources and opportunities that will help you accomplish a change?

What if you live in an area that is comparatively well-off? Don't worry. Everyone has problems, even rich people. Of course, if your area has resources, you should demonstrate that these local resources have contributed (or will contribute) to the issue. But there are a variety of reasons why these needs might still exist. Perhaps people have been unaware of the problems or afraid to address the issues, and you need a public awareness campaign. Perhaps there is a community attitude that needs to be overcome. Be creative.

So with all of this information, what should your community needs statement look like? There is a lot of flexibility, but here are some guidelines and some examples that might be helpful.

- You can start by painting a picture of your area (geography, setting, community size, major industries, etc.)
- Then an objective statement of demographics showing need.
- Talk about the history of this need and ways you have tried to deal with it.
- Put in a few sentences giving examples of how that need impacts residents.
- Then address the opportunities. How is the community is pulling together to address this need? Has it accomplished similar projects in the past? Are there any special resources that will help insure success?
- End with an inspiring sentence or two about how your community is poised to come together, address its problems, and create an important change in the lives of its residents as well as providing an inspiring example to other communities.

Example #1 – Afterschool computer center – Note that the existence of some resources does not negate other needs.

Our Town is a small community of about 13,000 residents located in the foothills about 50 miles from the County seat. This is a low-income, rural region, with no local funders or community foundations. Median Household Income (MHI) for the area is 75% of the State's MHI. The County is one of the poorest in the State and has few resources for youth programs. The lack of public transportation makes it impossible for youth to engage in the few activities outside of the area. And since most parents commute 50 miles to work in the metropolitan areas, there is often no one home after school. Educational attainment is low, with the K-6 grades scoring in the 50th percentile for the State and a high school drop-out rate of 15%.
The community has worked very hard to develop an after-school program at the local Boys and Girls club facility. The club provides a safe place for homework, sports and art programs. However it has not managed to acquire a computer facility where young people could practice their technical skills or do research for their schoolwork. The community includes many retirees from the metropolitan area who are willing to volunteer their services as computer tutors if the equipment could be obtained. At a recent meeting, these potential volunteers were enthusiastic

about the opportunities to support distance learning opportunities and engage rural youth in advanced technical training, preparing them to enter fields particularly appropriate for tele-commuting. Such a program would create an important model for sustainable, environmentally friendly learning and working in rural environments.

Example #2 – Park Grant – Note that "need" is relative to the goals of your program.

The target property is located near a small town in the northeastern part of the County. Even though the County is primarily rural, it has very little parkland. Currently there is only 10 acres of developed parks for the 127,000 population. The County's General Plan mandates 3 acres of improved parkland per 1000 population, which would require the development of an additional 350 acres. In addition to the local need, the travelers along the scenic highway which borders the proposed park property have no place to stop and walk, picnic, or enjoy the beautiful scenery. The County has recently agreed to donate 250 acres of land for a park. In addition to providing recreational opportunities, this land contains one of the area's most important stands of native blue and valley oak woodlands. These trees require conservation, since they do not easily propagate themselves and are in danger of disappearance. Community residents have been working for years to develop a park in this area. Although no local funding is available for park development, residents have created a planning committee to design trails, picnic areas, and other amenities. They have also researched oak woodland stewardship and have proposed a conservation plan for the area.

Back to the North Fork Mill Site… At one point in the development process we thought that starting a business incubator on the mill site would be a good way to spur development on the mill site and for the town in general. We tried to get a planning grant to assess the feasibility of such an incubator project. Here is a 'need statement' that I wrote as part of that planning grant.

North Fork is a small town in the Sierra Nevada foothills of California. The town's major economic generator, a lumber mill, closed in 1994, economically devastating the local economy. Just prior to its closing, the mill employed a total of 120. The loss of these jobs created an 11.5% job loss for the area.

The town has not recovered from this economic disaster. Approximately one-sixth of the town's businesses have closed down since the mill ceased operations, and other businesses or contractors that supported the mill operation, such as logging contractors, equipment operators and truck drivers, were put out of business. Unemployment in the town is estimated to be 16%. In the local area near the former mill site, household income averages $12,000 per year. In addition, the town is the home to a federally recognized Indian tribe, the North Fork Mono Rancheria. Members of this tribe were particularly hard hit, since many of them were employed at the mill or in subsidiary forestry operations.

Rather than accept these conditions, the citizens responded by organizing the North Fork Community Development Council (CDC) to protect the community and revitalize the economy. The CDC obtained the donation of the 135-acre mill site for the town's economic redevelopment, worked with the community to develop a site plan, and started site preparation activities. It has obtained funding for environmental clean-up and infrastructure. However, attempts at attracting a developer or large businesses to bring economic activity and jobs to the site have had no success. This is partially due to the recent economic slow down, but also can be attributed to factors common to rural redevelopment – remote location, lack of transportation access, environmental liabilities, lack of infrastructure, and fewer suppliers and customers immediately available.

Recently the CDC decided to take a new approach, leveraging the town's entrepreneurial spirit, scenic surroundings, and commitment to environmental quality and alternative energy. The CDC hosted a symposium where leaders in the fields of sustainable rural development worked with local residents to find ways to make North Fork a model of sustainable rural redevelopment. Out of this event came the determination to look at building businesses from inside the community, using local human and natural resources. This grant will focus on increasing business ownership opportunities and jobs for this low-income community.

c. Program/Project Description – How you plan to meet this need

STEPS TO PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION			
VISIONING	PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT/ PLANNING	DESIGN	IMPLEMENTATION

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT/PLANNING			
Goals & Objectives	Community Need	Program Description	
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This section gives you the opportunity to describe all of the program elements that will help you successfully meet the community need. The goal is to produce a logical, well considered program design which convinces the reader that

- you have thought through all of the aspects your project,
- you have researched best practices and are including those elements which are appropriate for your situation,
- your proposed design is an intelligent, innovative, and effective way to meet the needs you are trying to address.

How will you convince them? Do your homework!

<u>Think through all of the aspects of your project.</u> This is one of the great values of the Program Development process, it forces you to focus on the details. What specifically are you going to do, and who is going to do it? If you don't have the knowledge or experience to complete this section by yourself, that's okay. At some point in the journey from vision to reality you will need to get assistance from people with more knowledge and experience. Now may be the moment to give your advisors a call, sit down with them and start working through details.

<u>Research best practices.</u> If you were inspired by a local model, you have direct access to some practices that seem worthy of replicating. But if you don't, the internet can again come to your aid. There are a surprising number of studies on 'best practices' for all kinds of projects. Do a search and see what you can come up with. Or ask someone in the field to recommend some resources.

<u>Create an intelligent, innovative and effective project design</u>. This will obviously be very specific to your situation and your goals. But there are a few standard project elements or characteristics that funders and other project reviewers look for in a good proposal. I call these 'bonus points'. They include:

- Collaboration - are you working with other organizations, local government, schools and colleges, etc.?
- Leverage – are there other resources available for the proposed program?
- Community Involvement – have you involved the community in your project planning or do you intend to involve them in project implementation? It is particularly effective if this involvement includes a diverse cross-section of the community, and specifically representatives from the target group(s) that you seek to serve.
- Sustainability - will your project be able to financially support itself in the future?
- Special Populations – does your project meet the needs of any special group, (ethnic, rural, low-income, senior, youth, etc.)?
- Replicability – could this project be a model for other communities?
- Track record of success – Are you involving community partners who have a track record of successfully implementing other projects?

Question: Which of these bonus points does your project already include? Which ones could you add?

Level of detail: This section is not the place to describe in exhaustive detail every step that you will take in implementing your proposed program (you will do that in your work plan – described later in this chapter). At this point you want a succinct but informational overview of all of the elements of your program. Just describe what you are doing and why you are doing it.

Here an example of a program description used in a planning grant application. It's a little technical but it does include a lot of the bonus points. See if you can identify them:

This planning project will focus on the design of a vegetation management pilot program, utilizing the best scientific information on effective fuel management practices. This program design will include an evaluation of the benefits achieved through the program (to habitat, fire safety and water production) as well as the financial value of these benefits. The planning process will identify the stakeholders who are the most likely beneficiaries from the program and bring them into the process at the very beginning. These beneficiaries and other stakeholders will be encouraged to work with the scientists to design an evaluation that can demonstrate to them the benefits that will result from vegetation management. The goal is to convince local stakeholders to provide sustainable funding for vegetation management based on the confirmed benefits to their organizations and entities. Through this we hope to pave the way for wide-spread vegetation management efforts, both locally and throughout the region, which will be sustained through buy-in from the principal beneficiaries.

The work completed under this grant will consist of a one-year planning and collaboration building process, which will lead to a four-year implementation/evaluation project. The planning process will include:

- *Identification of stakeholders related to vegetation management,*
- *Education of these stakeholders as to the way in which vegetation management provides them with direct and indirect benefits,*
- *Negotiation with the stakeholders regarding their participation in the pilot project. The goal of the negotiation is to obtain agreement from the stakeholders to monitor the project and help evaluate its benefits. If they are convinced by the process that vegetation management provides them with direct benefits, they will commit to supporting future vegetation management efforts.*
- *Bringing technical experts on fuel management together with local stakeholders to design the pilot implementation program in such a way that it will maximize ecosystem benefits, and designing an evaluation program sufficient to convince stakeholders of these benefits.*
- *Obtaining resources to implement the pilot program.*

Question: How many bonus points can you identify in this project description? (There are at least four.)

d. Work Plan and Timeline

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This is the section where you think through every little step in your project. This can be a painful exercise as you discover how much you don't know about what you are proposing to do. And it can be frustrating too, as you gradually come to suspect that all of the details you are painstakingly recording will most likely change. Even so it is incredibly valuable. It forces you to think your project through. In this process you will refine your ideas, identify the resources you'll need, consider valuable partnerships, get some idea of how much time it will take to complete it. In essence, you are taking the next step of grounding your vision in reality.

A good way to approach this task is to go from the general to the specific. Start with an outline of the steps needed and add the details required for each step. Here's an example. Warning – it's long. And it may be boring. But it's important to learn how to do this. So stand up, stretch, get a drink of water, sit back down, focus your mind, make a commitment to read all the way through it. Ready? Okay….

Let's say you and the other members of the Chamber of Commerce want to put up an information kiosk downtown, on land owned by the County. This kiosk will display information on the cultural and natural history of your area, guide visitors to nearby attractions, and will have an on-going calendar of town events. One side of the kiosk will have advertisements from local restaurants and inns so the project will have a modest income stream that will pay for its upkeep and maintenance.

Let's outline the steps to implementing this project, using the most general level of detail:

1. Get permission to put kiosk on County land
2. Design Kiosk
3. Build Kiosk
4. Create informational signage
5. Sell ads
6. Maintain Kiosk and update information

Okay so far. Now let's start adding another level of detail. You probably could come up with these steps yourself, even if you didn't have much experience.

1. Get permission to put kiosk on County land a. Contact key County stakeholders b. Request permission from Board of Supervisors c. Enter into agreement on kiosk maintenance
2. Design Kiosk a. Create Kiosk design subcommittee b. Select designer/architect c. Agree on design
3. Build Kiosk a. Architect creates detailed designs for permits b. Designs submitted to County for approval c. Make modifications as requested by county d. Select contractor e. Build Kiosk

4. Create informational signage a. Create signage design subcommittee b. Gather relevant information c. Design signs d. Have signs made and installed
5. Sell ads a. Identify businesses b. Set ad fees c. Approach businesses c. Create ads and install
6. Maintain Kiosk and update information a. Find a group to take responsibility for updates b. Find group to take responsibility for maintenance

Are you getting the picture? As you work through the steps questions start occurring and you really need the benefit of a person with experience in similar projects to move to the next level of detail. For instance, what are the implications of putting a project on County land? Does this mean that you have to go through any special environmental reviews? What reassurances will the County require regarding on-going maintenance? If they donate the land, does this mean that they are a partner in the project, which could trigger requirements for bidding procedures and prevailing wages [1]? Is there any other appropriate place to put the kiosk? Let's try one more level of detail. This may or may not be necessary for each sub-item.

1. Get permission to put kiosk on County land a. Contact key County stakeholders i. Ask the local Supervisor to set up a meeting with the County Counsel, a representative from the Planning Department and someone from Public Works ii. Reach agreements on requirements for the project and proposals for the partnership between the Chamber and the County b. Request permission from Board of Supervisors i. Draft request to Board ii. Select representative to attend meetings iii. Meet with select Board members before the meeting to request support c. Enter into agreement on kiosk ownership and maintenance i. County Counsel drafts agreement ii. Get lawyer to look over agreement iii. Meet with Chamber to get feedback and make decision

[1] Prevailing Wage – When a public project is built using government funding, the Davis Bacon Act requires that all the workers be paid 'prevailing wages'. These are set by the Department of Labor and are generally higher than one would otherwise pay under a competitive bid, particularly in non-urban areas.

2. Design Kiosk a. Create Kiosk design subcommittee i. Come up with criteria for architect/designer b. Select designer/architect i. Draft Request for Proposals (RFP) ii. Publicize RFP iii. Select designer/architect c. Agree on design i. Provide specifications to architect ii. Architect creates preliminary designs iii. Meet to provide feedback iv. Approve final design
3. Build Kiosk a. Architect creates detailed designs for permits b. Designs submitted to County for approval c. Make modifications as requested by county d. Select contractor i. Draft RFP ii. Publicize RFP iii. Select Contractor iv. Enter into agreement e. Build Kiosk i. Purchase materials ii. Build kiosk
4. Create informational signage a. Create signage design subcommittee b. Gather relevant information i. Publicize opportunities ii. Meet with cultural, recreational, and historical groups c. Design signs i. Select sign review committee ii. Draft sign contents iii. Get approval on sign contents from community and chamber iv. Select graphic artist v. Review and approve design d. Have signs made and installed i. Get bids from sign manufacturers ii. Select manufacturer iii. Install signs in kiosk

5. Sell ads a. Identify businesses b. Set ad fees i. Research other kiosks and public ad venues c. Approach businesses i. Draft outreach letter ii. Follow-up with businesses iii. Assist businesses in finding ad designers e. Create ads and install i. Find graphic artist to combine ads into attractive display ii. Have display printed on durable but inexpensive medium iii. Install in Kiosk
6. Maintain Kiosk and update information a. Find a group to take responsibility for update b. Find group to take responsibility for maintenance

Now we're getting a good idea of the work involved in this project! But we're not done yet. To be really beneficial, the work plan should list the person responsible for each item and the amount of time it is expected to take. So let's try another round:

TASK	RESPONSIBLE	TIME REQUIRED
1. Get permission to put kiosk on County land		
a. Contact key County stakeholders i. Ask the local Supervisor to set up a meeting with the County Counsel, a representative from the Planning Department and someone from Public Works ii. Reach agreements on requirements for the project and proposals for the partnership between the Chamber and the County	 Me Supervisor Chamber	2 months
b. Request permission from Board of Supervisors i. Draft request to Board ii. Select representative to attend meetings iii. Meet with select Board members before the meeting to request support	 Me Chamber Me	2 months
c. Enter into agreement on kiosk ownership and maintenance i. County Counsel drafts agreement ii. Get lawyer to look over agreement iii. Meet with Chamber to get feedback and make decision	 Supervisor Chamber Pres. Me, Chamber	2 months

2. Design Kiosk		
a. Create Kiosk design subcommittee i. Come up with criteria for architect/designer	Chamber Subcommittee	1 month
b. Select designer/architect i. Draft Request for Proposals ii. Publicize RFP iii. Select designer/architect	 Me, Subcommittee Me Subcommittee	3 months
c. Agree on design i. Provide specifications to architect ii. Architect creates preliminary designs iii. Meet to provide feedback iv. Approve final design	 Subcommittee Architect Subcommittee Chamber	3 months
3. Build Kiosk		
a. Architect creates detailed designs for permits	Architect	1 month
b. Designs submitted to County for approval	Architect	2 months
c. Make modifications as requested by county	Architect	1 month
d. Select contractor i. Draft Request for Proposals ii. Publicize RFP iii. Select Contractor iv. Enter into agreement	Subcommittee, Chamber	3 months
e. Build Kiosk i. Purchase materials and/or seek donations ii. Build kiosk	 Contractor Subcommittee	4 months
4. Create informational signage		
a. Create signage design subcommittee	Chamber	1 month
b. Gather relevant information i. Publicize opportunities ii. Meet with cultural, recreational, and historical groups	Subcommittee	2 months
c. Design signs i. Draft sign contents ii. Get approval on sign contents from community and chamber iii. Select graphic artist iv. Review and approve design	Subcommittee Chamber	3 months
d. Have signs made and installed i. Get bids from sign manufacturers ii. Select manufacturer iii. Install signs in kiosk	 Me Chamber Contractor	2 months
5. Sell ads		
a. Identify businesses	Chamber, Me	1 month

b. Set ad fees i. Research other kiosks and public ad venues ii. Determine fees	 Me Chamber	2 months
c. Approach businesses i. Draft outreach letter ii. Follow-up with businesses iii. Assist businesses in finding ad designers	 Me Me Subcommittee	3 months
d. Create ads and install i. Find graphic artist to combine ads into attractive display ii. Have display printed on durable but inexpensive medium iii. Install in Kiosk	 Subcommittee Subcommittee Contractor	2 months
6. Maintain Kiosk and update information		
a. Find a group to take responsibility for update b. Find group to take responsibility for maintenance	Chamber Chamber	2 months

Whew! That was a piece of work! But we're still not completely done. The individual times required to complete all tasks should be put in consecutive order to give us information about the overall timeline. Some of these tasks can't be started before other tasks are complete, whereas other tasks can proceed in parallel. Here's the final format for the timeline. (If you have long enough paper you can combine it with the work plan to have one continuous document, otherwise you can abbreviate the tasks as I did below.)

TASK/MONTH	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
1. Permission for County land																		
a. Key County stakeholders																		
b. Permission from Board																		
c. Agreement on kiosk ownership																		
2. Design Kiosk																		
a. Create design subcommittee																		
b. Select designer/architect																		
c. Agree on design																		
3. Build Kiosk																		
a. Architect - detailed designs																		
b. Designs submitted to County																		
c. Make modifications																		
d. Select contractor																		
e. Build Kiosk																		
4. Create Informational Signage																		
a. Signage design subcommittee																		
b. Gather relevant information																		
c. Design signs																		
d. Signs made and installed																		
5. Sell ads																		
a. Identify businesses																		
b. Set ad fees																		
c. Approach businesses																		
d. Create ads and install																		
6. Maintain and update																		
a. Find a group for updating																		
b. Find group for maintenance																		

Let's face it, this is a lengthy and difficult process. You'll run into a lot of unknowns – you may have no idea what steps are involved in some of the tasks and how long they will take. And, as I noted before, many things are likely to change as your project moves forward. So you may be asking yourself, why do it? Why not just plunge into the project and deal with issues as they come up?

Because it's good to 'know what you don't know'. That way you'll know what you need to learn. And the things you don't know can definitely hurt you. You may find out, for instance, that putting the kiosk on public land triggers a requirement for an environmental review. And even though your project is environmentally benign, the costs for even a simple review can be thousands of dollars. If you found this out as you were moving forward with the project you would all of the sudden be looking at delays that could threaten the entire project. But if you know this ahead of time you could look for some other location for your project, ask for a waiver of fees, or raise additional money. Creating a detailed work plan for your own project will raise questions and issues at the beginning of the process. Not that you'll never be taken by surprise, but you definitely will be more prepared and less likely to hit a roadblock.

Take a stab at creating a work plan for your project, including the first two levels of detail.

e. Budget

STEPS TO PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION			
VISIONING	PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT/ PLANNING	DESIGN	IMPLEMENTATION

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT/PLANNING			
Goals & Objectives	Community Need	Program Description	
Work Plan & Timeline	Budget	Outcomes	Organizational Capacity

Another reason why it is valuable to do a work plan is that it greatly assists with the process of preparing a budget for your project. The work plan will give you a better idea of what the general materials, expert assistance and other costs items will be. Once you know what these items are, you need to determine what the actual costs will be. This will require research. Here is a guide on how to get this information:

<u>Expert assistance</u> - technical assistance such as design work, environmental studies, architectural drawings, web page development, building and contracting, evaluation, etc. These costs can best be determined by finding friendly experts in your community and asking them for a little time and advice. Take them out to coffee and describe your project. Ask them how much they think it would cost to complete the technical work and if there are any things you can do or prepare that would minimize these costs. It is best if you can get details on these costs, such as hourly rates and estimated number of hours, and any other expenses that may be involved. Then you will have a basis of comparison when you talk to other experts.

<u>Materials</u> – building supplies, printing, equipment, etc. Use the same process – find someone who knows about this type of project and have them work through an estimate with you. If you

do this with more than one supplier you will get better information. Once you've talked to three knowledgeable people, you are practically an expert yourself!

Permits and fees – To find out about these costs you need to talk to the appropriate department in your city or county. The good news is that you don't have to buy the staff person coffee – they are there to answer your questions. The bad news is that you often don't get the full answer from any one staff person. If you go back on another day you may talk to another person who gives you entirely different information. This is such a common problem in dealing with bureaucracies that it's not even worth it to get frustrated. Go down and talk to the staff. Then disguise your voice and call the next day. If you get different answers, ask to talk to a supervisor. Do everything possible to communicate clearly the scope and details of your project. If you are willing to go the extra mile for accuracy, you can outline the project in writing and give it to the staff to review and respond. Then write up what you understand they said and send it back to them, asking them to correct any misunderstandings. Copy this message to the division supervisor, the department head, and your city councilperson (or county supervisor). This kind of professional process will get a little more attention and give you more assurance that the information you obtain is accurate.

Staffing/volunteers – project management, advisory committees, program staff, helpers, etc. You may need to budget funding to pay project staff. For many community projects, however, almost all of the program management, staffing and other work is done by volunteers. (This was the case in the work plan example above). But even if you are not paying these folks, you need to include them in the budget. Their assistance is technically called 'in-kind match'. When you are asking for funding from foundations, grants and other organizations, this match will be an important element in the success of your application. Such match shows that the community supports your project, to the extent that they will spend their own precious time cleaning, painting, building, planning, tutoring, etc.

So how do you value volunteer time? The basic policy is that volunteers can be counted as match to a project if their services are an integral and necessary part of the program. If there is a similar program in the community that has paid staff doing the things your volunteers are doing, you can use the real salaries to figure out comparable volunteer rates. Don't forget to add a percentage for benefits, 12% is a good conservative figure. Sometimes you can't get information on similar paid positions, or you may have 'general' volunteer time that is not tied to a specific job or position. In that case it is suggested that you use the 'average hourly wage for nonagricultural workers, as published in the Economic Report of the President'. This report is on-line.   Go to the section on 'hours and earnings in private nonagricultural industries'. Look at the column for 'average hourly earnings in current dollars'. Find the most recent figure. Then add 12% for benefits and you've got your rate!

Administration/Overhead – bookkeeping and accounting, insurance, office expense, reports, etc. This category is often called 'indirect costs', as opposed to the 'direct costs' involved in actually implementing your project. If you have a small project and are working out of your home or your workplace, there may not be any costs in this area. However it is important to consider this category. First so that you remember that these tasks are going to be a part of your project. If you are taking responsibility for the project, that means that you'll need to have the time and the expertise to complete them yourself, or you're going to have to find someone else to do it, either on a volunteer or a paid basis. Another option, and in many ways a better one, is to find a non-profit organization which will take the project under its wing. That means that they are willing to act as administrator or 'fiscal agent'[1] for the project. This has the added advantage that the organization's insurance policies might be extended to cover your activities. Of course, most organizations will require some compensation for this administrative oversight; they may charge 5 – 10% of the project cost to act in this capacity. In any case, as you prepare your budget, you should remember to include this category of costs. If you don't have any specific information, 10% of 'direct costs' is a good rule of thumb.

Now let's give an example of how you put this budget together. A good way is to start with your task list from the work plan. Some of these tasks are going to have to be modified somewhat so they reflect cost items as opposed to work items, but it is still a good starting place.

Instead of looking at who will do the work and how much time it will take, we will look at the costs. The chart below is a little more detailed than you might think necessary, but it's a very good way to approach a budget. Some grants, in fact, require this type of analysis. Even if they don't, this is a good way to create an accurate estimate.

Let's go through the columns.

- 'Task' is the work plan item broken down as much as possible into individual components.
- 'Units' are how you will measure what is needed. A common unit is 'hours', if you are paying for a professional, but it can also be materials, supplies or mileage (if travel is involved). Sometimes a cost item is impossible to break down into units. You might, for instance, get a bid for work which includes both material and labor. In that case just put the whole item down as 'the unit'.
- 'Unit Cost' is the cost per unit (per hour, per item, per mile, etc.)
- Number (#) of units is how many of the unit you will need. Note that in this example there are sometimes tasks for a committee to complete. The committee is estimated to include 5 members. So the number of hours it will take to do the task is multiplied by five. In other words, if the task will take 5 hours and the subcommittee has 5 members, the '# unit' is 25.
- Total Cost is determined by multiplying the unit cost by the number of units.

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[1] Fiscal Agent: A nonprofit organization that will legally hold money for another organization. The Fiscal Agent receives and monitors grant project funding.

- Match – in this column put everything that will be donated or which you have already obtained resources. If some of the things that are donated are goods and services, you need to determine their monetary value.
- Funding needed – this equals the Total Cost minus the Match. This is the total amount of funding that you need to raise.

Here's a sample budget using the Kiosk project:

TASK	Units	Unit cost	# unit	Total cost	Match (in-kind)	Funding needed
1. Permission for County land						
a. Identify County stakeholders	Hours (volunteers)	$20	3	$60	$60	
b. Permission from Board	Hours (volunteers)	$20	10	$200	$200	
c. Agreement on kiosk ownership	Hours (volunteers)	$20	5	$100	$100	
2. Design Kiosk						
a. Create design subcommittee	Hours (volunteers)	$20	3	$60	$60	
b. Select designer/architect	Hours (committee volunteers – estimate 5 members)	$20	25	$500	$500	
c. Agree on design	Hours (committee volunteers – estimate 5 members)	$20	50	$1000	$1000	
3. Build Kiosk						
a. Architect - detailed designs	Hours (architect)	$100	10	$1000		$1000
b. Designs submitted to County for permits	Permit fees	$500	1	$500		$500
c. Make modifications	Hours (architect)	$100	5	$500		$500
d. Select contractor	Hours (committee volunteers – estimate 5 members)	$20	50	$1000	$1000	
e. Build Kiosk	Bid	$4500	1	$4500		$4500
4. Create Informational Signage						
a. Signage design subcommittee gathers relevant information	Hours (committee volunteers – estimate 5 members)	$20	25	$500	$500	
b. Design signs	Hours (designer)	$50	10	$500		$500
c. Signs made and installed	(materials)	$100	4	$400		$400
d. Signs made and installed	(labor)	$150	4	$600		$600
5. Sell ads						
a. Identify businesses	Hours (volunteers)	$20	5	$100	$100	
b. Set ad fees	Hours (volunteers)	$20	5	$100	$100	
c. Approach businesses	Hours (volunteers)	$20	10	$200	$200	

d. Create ads and install	Hours (designer)	$50	10	$500		$500
6. Maintain and update						
a. Group updates signs	Hours (volunteers)	$20	20	$400	$400	
b. Group maintains signs	Hours (volunteers)	$20	40	$800	$800	
7. Administration/Indirect	Percentage of total grant costs	5%		$425		$425
8. Program Income.						
a. Program Income. Ad fees	Yearly Estimate	$500	1	($500)	($500)	
TOTAL				**$13,945**	**$5,020**	**$8,925**

Breaking down the costs by task like this is painstaking (and painful!) but really helps in projecting costs as accurately as will be possible at this stage of your planning. Once you have this detailed information you can consolidate like items and put your budget in any format that a funder requests. A common budget format is:

Item	Subtotal	Category Total	Match	Funding needed
Salaries and benefits (& volunteers) -volunteers	$3500	$3500	$3500	$0
Contractors/Consultants -Architect -Kiosk Contractor -Sign/Ad designer -Sign maker	$1500 $4500 $1000 $600	$7600	$0	$7600
Materials and supplies -signs	$400	$400	$0	$400
Operations and Maintenance (yearly est.)	$500	$500		$500
Administration (5% of direct)	$425	$425	$0	$425
Subtotal	**$12,425**	**$12,425**	**$3500**	**$8925**
Program Income (yearly est.)	($500)	($500)		($500)
Total	**11,925**	**11,925**	**$3500**	**$8,425**

Now that we've slogged through that mud puddle we have something that look pretty professional! Of course, it is going to go through many changes as the project progresses. But it is vastly easier to work with these changes if we have a draft budget in front of us. And we'll be able to understand the implications of the changes on the bottom line, since we can see the bottom line in front of us and notice how it is changing.

f. Outcomes and Evaluation

STEPS TO PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION			
VISIONING	PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT/ PLANNING	DESIGN	IMPLEMENTATION

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT/PLANNING			
Goals & Objectives	Community Need	Program Description	
Work Plan & Timeline	Budget	Outcomes	Organizational Capacity

This is the section where you analyze the specific benefits that will result from your project. You may think that these benefits are so clear, so obvious and so innumerable that this type of analysis is unnecessary. Everyone call tell that this town needs a (fill in blank)! Having a (fill in blank) will be great! It will cause all sorts of benefits! I can't possible start listing the fantastic benefits that will come from the (fill in blank)!

Well, your friends and your family might buy that. But town officials will probably want you to put a little more thought into it. You see, everyone that comes to them with a project thinks it will be fantastic, important, just what the town needs, and incredibly beneficial. And funders are even more picky, darn them. You are asking them to give you money and they'll want to know just what benefits they will get for that money. They have to meet their goals too, and they are accountable to their boards (or to the general public if they are government agency,) for how wisely they spend their resources.

So how do we measure these benefits? Program benefits are measured in two ways, 'outputs' and 'outcomes'. Outputs are a measure of the actual activities that you undertake. Outcomes are the results of those activities on the lives of the participants and/or the surrounding community. ***Both outputs and outcomes should be measurable.*** Let's look at some examples:

Program: After-school tutoring program

- Outputs: number of students attending program, number of tutoring hours provided
- Outcomes: increase in grade point levels for participating students, increased high school graduation rates, improved self-esteem

Program: Meals-on-Wheels program for low-income seniors

- Outputs: number of meals delivered
- Outcomes: improved health of participants, reduced percentage of senior population with inadequate nutrition

Program: Development of 'tot lot' park for pre-school-age children in low-income community

- Outputs: increased square footage (or acreage) of park facilities for the community
- Outcomes: number of children or families utilizing the park, improved quality of life in community, reduced accidents among pre-school children from playing in the streets.

Okay, so now you're getting more of a picture of outputs and outcomes and you're ready to start analyzing these for your own program. Where do you start? With some programs or projects it is easy to identify the benefits. These are generally programs that are meant to improve something that is already measured, such as test scores, grade point average, homeownership, etc. But with other types of projects the benefits are not so clear. You know that your project will benefit the community, but how can you gauge these benefits? Can you really connect your wonderful community program to concrete results? Think of Dr. Harold Hill in <u>The Music Man</u> dancing around the town square and lecturing the town-folk about how a big brass band is what they need to save their children from the sinful temptations that have come to town in the form of pool tables. Will a marching band really change outcomes for at-risk youth? How would we measure this?

Let's take on this challenge and give it a try. The first thing to do is to go back to the Community Need section. Notice how Dr. Hill starts his song, ('Ya Got Trouble…'[1]) by talking about the problems threatening the town's youth – truancy, tobacco use, etc. That is his 'need' statement. The solution to this problem, his proposed 'program', is a youth marching band. He's not very precise about his expected outcomes. He implies that the band will lead to increased self-esteem and socialization, but those aren't very specific and they are also difficult to measure. Let's give him a hand…

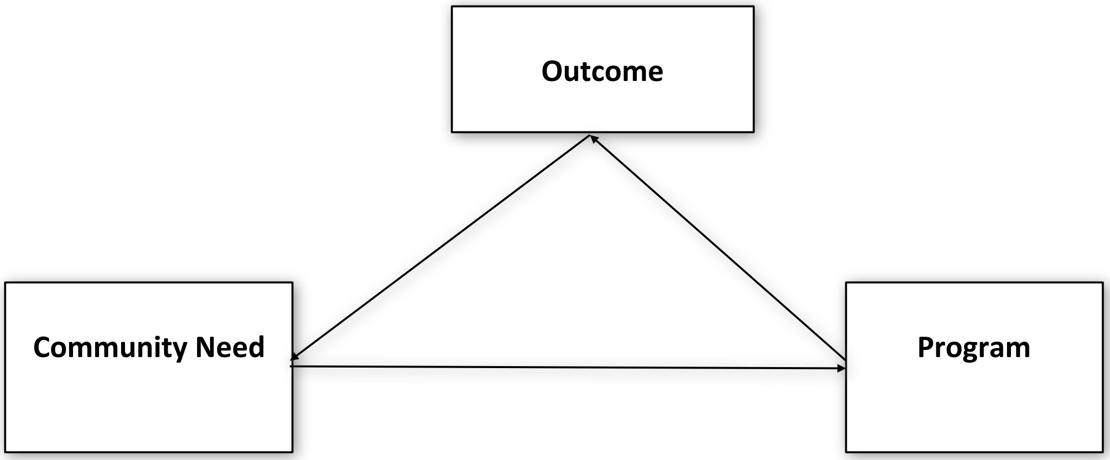
<u>Project: River City Youth Marching Band</u>

- Community Need – Youth in River City are suffering from increasing anti-social behavior, poor educational outcomes and at-risk activities. High School truancy rate is 30% higher than the Iowa state average and high school graduation rates are 15% lower. There is a lack of positive afterschool activities for youth, who are increasingly being drawn into gang activities and hanging out at pool halls. Youth crime rates are 10% higher than in the nearby metropolitan area, where youth have access to a variety of education and recreational programs.
- Proposed Program – River City Youth Marching Band. Under the direction of Dr. Harold Hill, this program will recruit at-risk youth, provide band instruments, uniforms and musical training, and engage the participants in marching band activities, including parades, sports events and regional competitions. Additional instruction, equipment and uniforms will be provided in baton twirling and other marching band auxiliary functions for non-musical youth.
- Outputs – number of youth participating in the marching band program.
- Outcomes – Improved school attendance and graduation rates among program participants. Reduction in youth crime rates in the community.

You may have noticed that we helped the Music Man's with his outcomes by going back to his community need statement. This is part of the logical flow of a project. The community need

[1] "My friend, you are not aware of the caliber of disaster indicated by the presence of a pool table in your community…"

should dictate the program, and the program should provide outcomes that address the community need.



And remember, your Community Need helped you determine your program's Goals and Objectives. No surprise, then, that the Outputs and Outcomes should be closely related to the Goals and Objectives of your program.

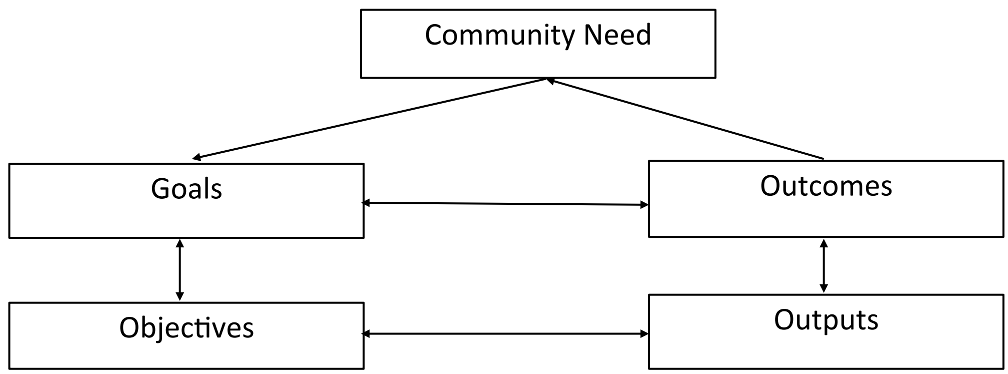
Do you remember this example from the Goals and Objectives section of this chapter?

Goal: Reduce AIDS in rural populations
Objectives: Provide information and counseling programs on high-risk behaviors to middle-school and high-school students.

In this example, the Outputs and Outcomes could be as follows:

Outputs: Provide information on high-risk behaviors to 250 middle and high-school students. Provide individual counseling to 50 youth who are most at-risk for engaging in high-risk behaviors.
Outcomes: Reduce HIV infection rate among teenagers by 10% over the next five years.

Do you notice a correlation between the Objectives and the Outputs, and between the Goal and the Outcome? Generally, your Outcomes should further your Goal, and your Outputs should related closely to your Objectives. In this example the correlation is particularly close; sometimes it doesn't work out quite as neatly. But in general, these program elements should be closely related to each other and to the community need:



Evaluation
It is not enough to propose outputs and outcomes for your project or program. In order to inspire confidence among your program funders and supporters, you will also have to outline what you are going to do to measure these benefits. Remember, we said that both outputs and outcomes should be measurable. Your <u>evaluation plan</u> will outline how you will measure these results. More specifically, it sets forth:

- The types of records you will keep to show participation,
- The evaluation tools or instruments (such as surveys and interviews) you will use,
- When and by whom the evaluations will be conducted, and
- How you will share the results of your evaluation so that you and others can learn from your program.

<u>When</u> should you conduct your evaluation? Evaluations are not just useful at the end of a program. You can employ various types of evaluations to gauge how well your program is doing and to make any needed corrections while it is still underway. This is called a 'Process Evaluation'.

<u>Process Evaluation</u>: The ongoing examination of the implementation of a program. It focuses on the effectiveness and efficiency of the program's activities and interventions (for example, methods of recruiting participants, quality of training activities, or usefulness of follow-up procedures.) It should answer the questions such as: Who is receiving what services and are the services being delivered as planned? It is also known as formative evaluation, because it gathers information that can be used as a management tool to improve the way a program operates while the program is in progress. It should also identify problems that occurred, how the problems were resolved and what recommendations are needed for future implementation.

An evaluation done at the end of a program or project is called an 'Outcome Evaluation'.

<u>Outcome Evaluation:</u> An assessment of project results as measured by collected data that define the net effects of the interventions applied in the project. An outcome evaluation will produce and interpret findings related to whether the interventions produced desirable changes and their potential for being replicated. It should answer the question: Did this program work?

<u>Evaluation Instruments:</u> Some outputs and outcomes (like participation, grade point average, etc.) are easy to measure, while others are more difficult (like quality of life, improved health, increased understanding of environmental issues, etc.). Here are some evaluation instruments you might use and what kinds of things they can measure:

- Sign-in sheets – These can measure the number of people that participate in your program, whether it is a community meeting or a daily after-school program. State how the sign-in sheets will be kept and by whom.
- Community statistics (crime, census, homeownership, business sales, etc.). If you can use these statistics in your evaluation you are lucky. These are items that are tracked independently of your grant program and the results are readily available to the public. Some of the statistics (such as census data on income) are not tracked very often, so they may be less useful. But most are kept on a yearly basis by the County or State government and you can use them to evaluate whether your program has had an impact. Another common problem is that these statistics are often kept on a large scale and your program impact may be on a smaller scale. In other words, you may have an impact on your immediate neighborhood, but the results are only shown for the entire town, or maybe even the county. Research these statistics carefully before you propose them as part of your evaluation plan.
- Personal records – grades, health records, credit records, etc. These records are protected by privacy laws and may be difficult to obtain. If you need these types of records to show your program success you can either ask for program participants to give you a waiver, or see if the data from an entire community has been lumped together such that individual results are not revealed. This community level data is available to the public because it doesn't infringe on individual privacy. This is why census data is only available for a large area (a census tract or block group) instead of a block or street.
- Surveys – Surveys are written instruments given to participants in your program, community members who have used your project or service, or the public at large whom you hope to have impacted through your activities. Drafting surveys is an art, or maybe a science. At any rate, it is something that requires some training and expertise. You can propose using an existing survey that was developed for this general type of program or service, or you can try to obtain some technical expertise from local universities or colleges. Social work, health and planning schools often offer classes in survey design, and students may be interested in designing a survey for your project as

part of their class work. Note that in order to show the impact of your program on changing knowledge or attitudes you will need to give the survey before the program and after the program. These are called a pre- and post-surveys.

- Interviews – Interviews are used like surveys to judge the impact of your program on individuals, but they can be more powerful because they involve person-to-person interaction. In order to be effective, interviews should be developed by people with knowledge of evaluation. Ideally, they should be implemented by individuals who were not involved in providing programs or services in order to keep bias out of the results. This makes them quite costly. Think about this as you propose your evaluation strategy.

A note about time: Many outcome evaluations involve tracking the impact of your program on people or on the community over a long period of time. For instance, if you were giving a teen-pregnancy prevention program to middle-school students ages 12-13, you would have to track the participants for six to eight years to find out if your program was successful. You could also give them surveys or interview them in the year or two after the program to see if they remembered the information or if their attitudes had changed, but you will have to wait a long time before you really know that your program was a success. This is an extreme example, but it is also a common problem. It can take many years for the results of a program to manifest, but most program funding does not last that long, and funders want to know what the results of their program are very soon after the program is implemented. What can you do about this? You need to acknowledge the limitations of the program funding to support a complete evaluation, but come up with some reasonable alternatives. Search the literature and see how other such programs monitor their results. Perhaps an attitude survey which can be given right after the program has been shown to correlate with long-term results. You may also be able to show that an institution in the community tracks these issues anyway, independent of this grant funding, and the funder will be able to have access to these data in the future for their own program evaluation.

Now let's try a little exercise. Find a non-transparent piece of paper. DO NOT READ AHEAD AFTER THIS PARAGRAPH! I've given some examples of programs and their associated outputs, outcomes and evaluation methods. Cover the example with your piece of paper. Then carefully uncover just the program description. Try to guess what the outputs and outcomes are and what evaluation instruments you might use to measure them. Then uncover the rest of the example and compare your ideas to mine.

Program: Develop a recreational trail leading from the school to a nearby creek.

- Outputs: Miles of trails developed.
- Outcomes: Number of people using the trail for exercise. Number of groups using the trail for environmental education. Improved community health. Increased understanding of environmental issues and better attitudes towards environmental stewardship.

- Evaluation options: Count number of people using the trail for walking/jogging during different periods of time (mornings, evenings, weekends). Give pre- and post surveys to students in classes that have organized educational fieldtrips using the trail.

<u>Program: Implement a work readiness program for foster care youth approaching adulthood.</u>

- Outputs: Number of youth participating in program.
- Outcomes: Increased work readiness. Improved attitudes towards work. Higher employment rates.
- Evaluation options: Give participants work readiness skills assessments before and after the program. Give surveys or interviews gauging attitudes toward work (also pre-and post). Do a process evaluation during the program to get feedback on the components that are working well and those that don't seem to be effective. Follow-up with participants one year after program completion to assess employment participation.

<u>Program: Create a community-based emergency evacuation plan for an area with high risk of forest fires.</u>

- Outputs: A completed plan. Number of people participating in public outreach and education meetings.
- Outcomes: Increased community knowledge of evacuation protocols and routes. Reduced loss of life during wildfire events.
- Evaluation options: Keep sign-in sheets from the meetings. Have plan adopted by local government. Implement surveys and/or interviews to assess community knowledge of evacuation routes and protocols. Interviews with fire personnel and community members after next wildfire event.

So how did that go? Are you starting to get the picture? Don't worry if your ideas were different from mine, there can be several 'right' ways to judge the benefits of a program. Your ideas may be better! The point of the exercise is to make sure you understand the difference between an output and an outcome and to make you more familiar with the options for using evaluation instruments.

Evaluation may feel like a luxury as you are trying to fit your program costs into the available resources. You want to use your money to get things done, not for a lot of studies and reports! But this is a key opportunity to add to the professionalism of your program design. Putting time and thought into how you will gauge the effectiveness of your program is extremely impressive for funders and others. It shows that you are thinking beyond your own project idea and becoming a part of the community development movement. Just as you were able to learn from similar projects in other communities, others will learn from your project. And an effective evaluation strategy will maximize the benefit of this knowledge, both for others and for your own future efforts.

Start listing the major outputs and outcomes from your program. How would you evaluate them?

g. Organizational Capacity

STEPS TO PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION			
VISIONING	PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT/ PLANNING	DESIGN	IMPLEMENTATION

<table>
<tr><th colspan="12">PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT/PLANNING</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Goals & Objectives</td><td colspan="4">Community Need</td><td colspan="4">Program Description</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Work Plan & Timeline</td><td colspan="3">Budget</td><td colspan="3">Outcomes</td><td colspan="3">Organizational Capacity</td></tr>
</table>

The organizational capacity section summarizes your capacity (or your organization's capacity) to successfully complete your project. This is something that people want to know before they invest time, money, or other resources in your project.

The easiest way to demonstrate capacity is to give examples of other, similar projects that you (or your organization) have successfully completed. Below is an example of an organizational capacity section of a grant. The applicant is a Fire Safe Council with a lot of experience in fuel breaks that is trying to get funding for another fuel break project:

The Mission of the Madera Fire Safe Council (FSC) is to conduct community outreach and education regarding fire safety and preparedness and to implement on-the-ground fuel reduction projects. The FSC successfully completed the North Fork fuel break funded by a grant from the Bureau of Land Management, and the Crooks Mountain Fuel Break, an 11 mile project that was funded by State bond funds. Both projects were completed in the time and under the budget estimated. In addition, the Madera FSC has managed several other local fuel reduction projects, as well as providing outreach, education, coordination and collaboration to community fire safety efforts. The Project Manager is a former State Fire Department Captain and has supervised and managed California Youth Authority projects. The organization's administrator has been effectively managing the Madera FSC's grants and contracts for the last 5 years.

That was easy. All this organization had to do was analyze the components of the project they were seeking to fund (fuel reduction work, public outreach, grant administration,) and show that they had successfully completed similar work in the past. But what if you haven't completed similar projects? What if you are new to this game? After all, there's got to be a first time for everything. How do you generate confidence that you'll be able to handle the project and see it through to a successful completion?

There are three ways to do this:

- Build on your transferrable skills
- Redefine who is 'the organization'
- Build partnerships

1. Build on Transferrable Skills: You may never have painted a mural, but you have been a portrait painter for 20 years. You may have never implemented a school garden project but you have decades of flower gardening behind your belt. You may have never administered grants but you have successfully run a small business. Your experience may not be exactly what is called for in this new situation, but it has probably given you many of the skills you will need to make a success of it. This is helpful, but it may not be quite enough to be convincing. Even when you have skills, there are special quirks and pitfalls involved with implementing community projects that you just don't know until you run into them. So learn! Certain skills such as grant administration are teachable in a regular classrooms setting. Look to see if any classes are offered in your area. If not, there may be distance learning options. Other, more specific skills or experience may not be available in the classroom. In that case, find someone who has this experience and get them to act as your mentor or advisor. Your organizational capacity statement should discuss your years of related experience and the fact that that you have taken steps to obtain the specific additional expertise required for this project.

2. Redefine who is 'the organization': At this point, the 'organization' in your 'organizational capacity' statement may consist of just you. This is bound to be limiting. Even if you are a highly skilled person, chances are that you will not have all the skills and experience it takes to make your project a success. It is time to consider expanding the entity that has ownership of this project. Even if a small group or organization is proposing the project, you still may want to expand. No, you don't have to expand your staff (if you are lucky enough to have staff), or even your Board of Directors. For purposes of 'organizational capacity', you can consider a lot of different categories of people who are connected with your project.

- Staff
- Board of Directors
- Committees and Subcommittees of the Board of Directors
- Advisory Board
- Key Volunteers

All of these people may contribute their skills and experience to the project, and this builds your organizational capacity. Of course, you need to make sure that they are actually willing to be a part of the project first. But once they have been recruited, their skills and backgrounds become part of the cornucopia of capacity you'll use to convince funders and other decision-makers that it is worthwhile to invest in your project.

3. Build Partnerships: Building partnerships and collaborations with other agencies is another good way to increase your capacity. In general, partnerships are looked upon with great favor by funders (remember the 'bonus points' from the Program section of this chapter) and may also help broaden your base of political support. They are particularly appropriate when you are proposing a project that requires specific expertise, such as housing construction, mental health, drug and alcohol counseling, special education, etc. If you can show that you are working with an organization that has a track record of success, you will in a very good position to obtain the funding and support you seek.

How do you go about recruiting these experienced partners? After all, they have the track record. They probably also have more money, staff, and volunteers. So why would they want to partner with you? Actually, you have a lot to offer. You are from this community, you have energy and enthusiasm. Hopefully by now you also have stakeholder support. Many larger non-profit organizations feel that it is their duty to act as mentors to newer groups. After all, they are dedicated to community improvement as well, that is why they are putting up with the lousy salaries and battered office furniture that are part of the non-profit world. Developing partnerships is part of the way that they expand their impact. And it looks good on their annual reports.

So let's say you live in a small town and you have several neighbors who have children with physical disabilities. And let's say that there are no playgrounds in the town that have play equipment that is appropriate for these 'special needs' kids. So you and your neighbors get together and decide that you are going to develop a disabled playground park. You've identified your stakeholders, developed an initial vision, and now you're trying to raise funds. Since you have read this book and you know it is important, you are going through the process of Program Development. You've gotten to this point, and you've realized that none of your neighbors or your other local supporters have experience designing and implementing recreational programs for children with special needs. You could read a book or look at a web site, but you know that that just won't be as impressive as having a project partner with this specific experience. So you do some research and find that there is an organization that specializes in promoting recreation for disabled youth in the city not far from your town. How do you approach them?

Well, since you have gone through almost all of the Program Development process, you have a lot already written down. Make a summary of your Goals, Objectives, Needs Statement, Proposed program, Budget, Timeline, etc. This will make a nice informational piece to give the group as an initial approach. In addition, do some thinking about the proposed partnership. What are the specific roles and tasks you would like them to take on? What responsibilities will you shoulder? Here is a possible list of the roles and responsibilities you could ask from them:

- Consult regarding suitable park design
- Help you find contractors and suppliers
- Help you with bidding and contracting
- Oversee construction

- Help you develop recreational programs
- Help with outreach and publicity
- Act as fiscal agent for the project (grant administration, etc.)

Some of these they may provide for free, since it may be part of their organization's mission to supply these resources to other agencies. For some of these roles the organization may need to be compensated. You can budget for this. Even though this adds to your budget, it is probably a good deal. Chances are you are more likely to get funding, even if it includes more costs, if you get their expertise and experience on board.

The next step, of course, is negotiation. Have some meetings and start discussing the options for a partnership. Look for ways to make this collaboration a win-win proposition for both of your groups. (See Part II, Chapter 4).

What are the critical capacities that you will need to complete your project? Which of them do you (or your organization) already have? Which will you need to acquire? What are some options for acquiring them?

Back to the North Fork Mill Site…. Here's the Organizational Capacity section of the Business Incubator grant discussed in the Needs section:

The CDC was incorporated in 1997. Since then it has built its capacity by creating a network of consultants, technical assistance organizations, partnering entities and local volunteers that has proven to be an extremely effective team. Over the last six years this team has successfully created a professional Master Plan for Mill Site Reuse (see Attachment 8), developed an engineering study for a sewer extension, completed a thorough environmental assessment of potential contamination on the site, put together an Environmental Impact Report for the master plan for reuse and completed major erosion control grading and re-vegetation work on the mill site. In addition, the CDC has worked collaboratively with a host of federal, state and local agency partners to secure the resources and cooperation necessary to accomplish the diverse and complex tasks required to prepare the mill site for development (see Attachment 9, list of Project Partners). It has a track record of successful grant-writing and administration. Additional team accomplishments are outlined in Attachment 4.

Most recently, the CDC designed and hosted a Sustainable Rural Redevelopment Symposium, funded in part by a HUD Capacity Building grant. This symposium brought together top practitioners in sustainable design, including green building, alternative energy, alternative waste-water disposal, grass-roots economic development strategies and other areas relevant to rural housing and economic development. (See Attachment 10: Materials from Sustainable Rural Redevelopment Symposium). Also participating were county planning and building officials, representatives of State and Federal agencies, technical assistance providers, university professors and students, local residents and representatives from other rural communities. Although the event focused on innovative techniques for development of the North Fork mill site, it was valuable and significant for all who attended and was an example of the CDC's capacity to effectively utilize partners, leverage resources and successfully implement major undertakings.

The proposed project relates directly to the organization's goals and experience. The organization has spent the last six years raising funds and developing the capacity to coordinate economic development and community projects on the Mill Site. As the site preparation has moved forward, the organization has successfully met more and more complex challenges and has become more and more proficient in collaboratively marshalling the resources necessary to take the next step. Although the organization did not previously see itself as the site developer, economic conditions and advice from experts attending the recent Rural Redevelopment Symposium have caused it to reconsider. Creating an incubator facility on the mill site is an excellent first development project. It is a modest construction project that responds directly to community needs for business opportunities. It will build the organization's capacity for further community-oriented development projects and will create a track record that will facilitate future funding from the public and private sectors.

Read this example carefully. Notice that the CDC doesn't really have any experience in the subject of the grant (planning and developing a business incubator project.) Our strategy was to throw so many impressive accomplishments in this section that the reviewers wouldn't notice, or if they did they would figure that we had done so many great things that we had sufficient skills to handle this project. A stronger approach would have been to partner with an organization that <u>did</u> have experience developing business incubators. But there weren't any in our area so we just did the best we could with what we had.

h. A breath of relief! Then, the real work begins….

You're done! Now you really do deserve a pat on the back. This is the hardest chapter of the book, but also it is probably the most valuable. Even just reading through it has greatly advanced your knowledge of program development and has probably helped refine your project concept.

But obviously, reading through the chapter is not enough. You need to actually write. The process of writing will develop and refine your ideas. It will help you identify areas where you need more information. It will clarify your intentions and make it easier to communicate these to others.

But let's face it, writing is not easy. So here are some strategies that I use:

<u>1. Start with an outline</u>. Go through each section of this chapter and write down the important headings for the section, such as:

- a. Goals and Objectives
    - i. Goals
    - ii. Objectives
- b. Community Need
    - i. Our community's story
    - ii. Demographics
    - iii. Resources for change

Etc.

<u>2.</u> <u>Scribble down notes</u> on what you already know. You can do this by hand, if you like. Even just a few key words will make it easier to start the actual writing process.

<u>3. Take it one paragraph at a time</u>. Start writing paragraphs one at a time. Write sloppy, you can edit it later. Just get the ideas out. If you reach a section where you have a knowledge gap, leave it blank with a few notes on what additional information you'll need.

4. Edit and fill in the gaps. Everyone has their own way of slogging through unpleasant tasks. Mine is to do an hour or so of good work and then call it a day. I give myself frequent rewards – a slice of apple, a game of computer solitaire- for finishing paragraphs or even sentences, when it really gets rough.

5. Recruit some reviewers. Find people to read what you've written and give you comments. This can be a painful process in itself, but it is better to have your friends tell you that your writing doesn't make sense than have grant funders toss your application in the circular file because they can't understand it.

Remember, through this process of writing the components of your program you are actually starting to build your vision. I'm not sure how, but writing seems to be some magical interface between thoughts and reality. If you write it, it will come. Writing never goes to waste. So get going - it will be worth it!

Part I: Chapter 4
Design

By now you have spent countless hours developing your project vision, contacting stakeholders and researching best practices. And after that you have spent enumerable additional hours wading through the steps to program development. How could there possibly be another phase of planning before implementation?

Well, there is. I'm calling it 'Design', for the lack of a better term. Your detailed planning during the Program Development phase has allowed you to apply for grants and obtain resources. In a few months you will start implementing your project. But first you need to make sure that you know exactly how to proceed and that your resources match your vision. It is important to get these final details worked out before you start implementation so you can avoid unpleasant surprises. The good news is that you can build upon and refine your previous work in the program development phase. The 'Design' phase is important but it should be relatively easy.

Think of it this way. Suppose you get the great idea to cook a fancy French dinner for six of your closest friends. You call them up, figure out a good day for the feast, and make sure you know about any important food preferences or limitations. Maybe you even enlist some of the friends to bring a part of the meal, like wine or dessert. (Visioning) Then you take down your Julia Childs cookbook and start looking through it to find out some good recipes that suit your tastes, your budget, and the season. Once you've decided on the menu and found the recipes (Program Development), you look through your pantry, make a shopping list, and figure out exactly when you need to start each recipe in order for it to all get done on time (Design). When the day comes, you have all the ingredients at hand and know exactly what you need to do and when you need to do it to make the dinner a fantastic success! If you tried to proceed to implementation without this last phase, you might start a recipe and realize you were lacking a critical ingredient, causing a delay while you run to the store. Or you might fail to soak the beans or marinate the meat the night before and ruin the whole dish.

This is the Design phase. It takes the decisions you have already made about your program elements and fills in final details, giving you assurance that your implementation stage will proceed smoothly and successfully.

The final details for a community project usually fall into a few categories:

1. Permits, Planning and Environmental Approvals. Before you can finalize your design you need to make sure that local laws will allow your project to proceed. This is particularly true if you are doing some sort of construction or making a physical change in your environment. In that case you may have to go through an analysis to make sure that the environment will not be negatively impacted. You will definitely need to make sure this use is allowed by the zoning, or get a special permit or variance if needed. If you are implementing a plan, program or activity which does not involve construction or some

type of physical change to the environment this is not usually a problem, but there can be exceptions. For instance, if you want to start a farmer's market, there are environmental health permits that may be required. You may also need to worry about zoning – in some areas an outdoor market may be allowable, in some areas they will be allowed if you get a special 'Conditional Use Permit', and in some cases they will not be allowed without a special variance that can only be approved by the City Council or Board of Supervisors.

2. <u>Detailed project budget.</u> This is a refinement of your project work plan and budget from the last section. Even though it was detailed, that exercise was more or less theoretical. For instance, if your project involves building a structure, your program design may have included research about the standard cost per square foot for that type of building. That research was good enough to create your fund-raising budget. But now you need a more detailed analysis to make sure that your funding is sufficient to cover the actual building costs. To do this, an experienced contractor takes your preliminary building plans and creates detailed 'construction drawings' that specify exactly what will be needed to build this structure, from the yards of concrete in the foundation to the gallons of paint on the walls. Even if your project doesn't involve construction it still involves costs, and you need to know that your resources will cover all of your costs. If you are implementing a study or a plan, you'll sit down and talk with the experts and figure out exactly the number of hours needed for each person involved, the cost per hour, the supplies, overhead, administration, contingency, etc.

3. <u>Scope of Work.</u> The companion piece to the detailed project budget is a detailed Scope of Work. This is the document you use to get bids from the people who are going to implement your project. The Scope of Work sets forth in detail the your expectation of what these people are going to do, when they are going to do it, the products they are expected to deliver and when they are expected to deliver them.

4. <u>Evaluation Plan and Instruments.</u> Once you have your detailed program plan, it is easier to figure out how you will evaluate its success. Your evaluation plan uses the Scope of Work to determine program outputs. Additional evaluation instruments are then put in place to measure the impact (outcomes) of the program.

a. Permits, Planning, and Environmental Approvals.

STEPS TO PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION			
VISIONING	PLANNING	DESIGN	IMPLEMENTATION

DESIGN			
Permits, Planning, and Approvals	Detailed Project Budget	Scope of Work	Evaluation Plan

lucky people have minimal contact with bureaucracy. They tend to have regular jobs, live in regular houses, and have regular hobbies. Once you step out of the mainstream and start trying to bring new things into the world, you will find that bureaucracy seems pop up everywhere. It feels like you can't take a step without having to get a permit or a license!

Dealing with bureaucracies is an occupational hazard when trying to create new projects for your community, particularly if the project involves some sort of physical construction or modification of the environment. Trying to find your way through a maze of regulations can be a very frustrating process. To be fair, there are good reasons for all these rules. We live so close together that our individual actions have an impact on all those around us. The rules we encounter when we try to build something are created to maintain safe buildings, pleasant communities and clean environments. But this doesn't make it any less frustrating when you are trying to reconcile contradictory advice or deal with what appear to be irrational requirements.

You may be tempted to skip the permitting stage of your project and just get it done. Don't. No matter how bad it is now, it will be worse if you are caught and forced to tear everything down and start afresh. And even though these permitting processes can be expensive and time consuming, they can often bring up issues or force you into reflections that help make your project better.

These permits and approvals are part of the design phase because they may impact the design of your project. They may require that you move things around, or do additional work that will help mitigate your impacts on the surrounding. These requirements have to be figured into your budget, timeline and scope of work, so it is best to get them all ironed out before you finalize this phase.

What kinds of permits and approvals might be required of your project?

<u>1. Environmental Approvals.</u> Projects that are built on government property, by government entities, with public funding (such as grant funding from government sources) or via public approvals require an analysis to make sure that they are not negatively impacting the environment. Basically if this funding, action, or approval comes from the federal government, the project is subject to the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA). If it comes from the State government, the project is subject to the equivalent State laws.

There are generally several layers or gradations of environmental review that might be applied to a project. If the project will create a big impact on the environment, it may be required to do a very complicated analysis of these impacts. For Federal Projects this is called an 'Environmental Impact Statement', or 'EIS'. This can cost over $100,000 to complete and can take several years[1]. If there are only a few minor impacts, most regulations will allow you to do a simpler analysis and a plan of how you will mitigate those few impacts caused by your project. If your project will have no impacts or if it is exempt from analysis (because it only involves creating a plan or a study and will not have any physical impact on the environment), then you may simply have to file a notice of exemption. Your project may not even be subject to any of these regulations. Your City or County Planning Department is the place to go for more information.

2. Planning/Zoning Approvals. Most cities and counties have rules about what types of activities can take place in various areas within the jurisdiction. The goal of these rules is to maximize people's enjoyment of their property by grouping compatible land uses in the same area. And although we may not like the government telling us what we can and cannot do on our property, we generally appreciate it when they apply these restrictions to folks who might suddenly decide to develop an outdoor concert stadium or a slaughterhouse next door.

The specific land uses allowed in each area are set forth in a General Plan, and each 'zone' has a specific designation. The zoning designation will tell you what types of use (residential, institutional, agricultural, commercial, industrial, open space, etc.) is designated for that area. Each zone has several 'permitted' uses (for instance, commercial zones may permit retail stores, food establishment, wholesale yards, etc.). As long as your use fits within the permitted uses for the zone, you don't need any special permit or approval. The zone will also have some 'conditionally permitted' uses (for instance, commercial zones may 'conditionally' allow day care centers, churches, and schools). This is where the special permits start to kick in. If you want to establish a conditionally permitted use in that zone, you need to get a 'Conditional Use Permit'. You have to submit an application showing that your use will be compatible with surrounding uses. The application may be approved by the Planning Department staff, or it may have to go in front of a Planning Commission or some other official body, who may approve this use subject to certain 'conditions' or requirements. In more extreme cases where your use does not match the zoning, you may have to apply for a zoning 'variance', or maybe even for a 'rezoning'. These are progressively more expensive and time consuming, so it is best to try to find a place for your project where the land use matches the zoning. Again, this is something to discuss with your City or County Planning Department.

3. Other Permits and Certificates. There are many other types of permits and certificates that might apply to your project. These include permits for day care centers, farmer's markets, commercial food preparation, etc. It would be impossible to list all of the possible permits, and they can vary based on jurisdiction. So the best thing is to make friends with the folks down at the Planning Department.

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[1] It is not likely that you will be subject to this type of analysis. If you are, my best advice is to implement your project in phases, and to make the environmental analysis Phase I. There are some grants that will pay for this type of work and many excellent consulting firms that can lead you through the process.

In general, it is a good idea to take the time and set up a meeting with your Planning Department staff. Sit down with them and explain what you are trying to do and where you would like to do it. Ask them for a list of all the permits and licenses which will be required for this project and any possible problems that might arise due to zoning or other issues. If your meeting was with someone who is fairly low on the totem pole, I suggest you go down and double check the information when someone else is working at the Planning Department counter. Unfortunately it is a very common experience to get two different stories on two different days. Alternatively, if you have done your homework and enlisted that support of your City Councilmember or County Supervisor, my suggestion is to bring them along to the meeting. Or even have them set the meeting up. That way you will probably get to meet with a very experienced staff person who will take special care to tell you everything you need. They may also be more inclined to go the extra mile and help you figure out how to avoid the most expensive and time consuming processes. After such meetings it is a good idea to write a letter or e-mail to the departmental staff setting forth all of the information they have told you. Ostensibly you are doing this to make sure there were no misunderstandings. But actually, you do this to make sure that they remain consistent to what they have said, and don't apply any new regulations or requirements at a later date.

Here's an example:

Sample Letter to Planning Department Confirming Information

Date:

Dear (Name)

Thank you so much for meeting with me yesterday and reviewing the requirements for my (describe project). I would like to confirm the following information. This is my understanding of all of the permits and approvals that will be needed to implement my project:

1. The area where I want to establish the (project) is zoned ______. You have told me that I must obtain a Conditional Use Permit to conduct a (type of project) in this zone. However you have also told me that this Conditional Use Permit will be reviewed by your staff and will not have to go in front of the Planning Commission. You informed me that this process will take 6 – 8 weeks from the submission of a completed CUP application.
2. (set forth any additional requirements discussed in the meeting.)
3. (etc.)

If this understanding is incorrect in any way, I request that you send me a written correction. I am relying on the information above in planning the timeline and budget for my project so it is important that I know exactly what the County (City) will require. If you are unable to tell me about requirements from some other department, please make that clear so that I can have a similar meeting with that department's staff.

Thank you so much for your assistance.

Sincerely,

This type of letter will help you avoid unexpected new hurdles by letting the staff know that they will be held to the information they have given you. Make sure that you copy this letter to your Supervisor or Councilmember. Even if they were not at the meeting, this puts the department staff on notice that your representative is supportive of the project and this will make them even more careful to give you correct and complete information.

Off the top of your head, what are the possible environmental impacts of your program or projects? Where do you think would be the best location for the program or project to be located? Why?

b. Detailed Project Budget

STEPS TO PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION			
VISIONING	PLANNING	DESIGN	IMPLEMENTATION

DESIGN			
Permits, Planning, and Approvals	Detailed Project Budget	Scope of Work	Evaluation Plan

As I said at the beginning of the section, this detailed project budget represents a refinement of your project work plan and budget from the last section. This is one more step in the journey from vision to reality. First you had a dream. Then in the program development section you analyzed the dream step-by-step to figure out every component that would be needed. You put a cost to each of these components to get an estimated project budget. That information was sufficiently detailed to write a good grant application and/or convince local agencies to give you resources to make your dream a reality.

At this stage you have your project funding and you are ready to take the next step – matching your resources with the realities of your project implementation costs. Perhaps you received funding but not as much as you expected, and you have to scale the project down. Or you have some modifications to the program design which will impact the budget. Or maybe the Planning Department told you about an unexpected requirement that will cost you a few thousand unanticipated dollars. At any rate it is time for a reality check and final adjustments.

In order to do this, you need to determine the accurate costs of implementing your program. This probably means doing some more research. If your project is simple, you can do this research yourself. Find people who are experienced in implementing similar projects and ask them a lot of questions. Look for similar projects and ask to see their budgets. Talk to the people who supply the goods and services needed. Show them what you have developed and ask them if it is realistic.

If you know that your program will rely on a particular consultant or group to be implemented, you should be talking to them. These conversations involve not only review of the budget, but also the scope of work (see next section) – the two are directly related. Basically, you will be working together to figure out exactly what you expect them to do and how much it is going to cost. This type of dialogue can take a while as you go back and forth. The consultant needs to learn more about your goals and expectations in order to make recommendations about the best way to proceed, and you need to learn even more about the processes involved in implementing the project in order to make decisions about how to realistically fulfill these goals and objectives.

Watershed Assessment Example

Here's an example of a lengthy budgeting process. I worked with the local Watershed Committee to write a successful watershed assessment grant for our area. The assessment involved studying five or six key issues which we thought were the main causes of environmental problems in our watershed. Several of these involved situations that we suspected might impact water quality, such as residential areas near to streams that were not served by sewers but instead had individual septic systems which might be leaching nitrates into the waterways. Or road culverts that were inadequately designed to keep sediment and pollutants on road surfaces from flowing into the creeks. Our grant proposed to hire some local professors from the nearby State University to study how these activities impacted water quality within the watershed. The professors would first do various types of geographic and land use analyses to identify the most likely sources of pollutants, they would then take water samples at various time throughout the year and analyze the contaminants. Finally they would draft a report setting forth the data and their conclusions about the biggest problems. The County would then use this study to support new policies and projects to reduce these watershed impacts. The professors planned to do some of the work themselves; other tasks would be delegated to graduate and undergraduate students.

When I was writing the grant I developed the budget by putting large chucks of money into each type of analysis. For instance, I estimated that the geographic analysis would take $10,000; the water sampling might require $35,000, attending community meetings would require $5,000 and writing a final report would require $2,500. These were ballpark figures and were based on my experience writing other grant budgets. Of course, I checked these with the professors and made whatever modifications they suggested.

Once we actually had the grant, I had to get much more specific about every single activity which would take place (the Scope of Work), and how much funding it would require. This was tricky, since the professors could not charge by the hour; University regulations required them to take a certain percentage of their classroom workload and replace it with the grant activities. Then the grant funding reimbursed the University for this classroom time. The graduate students did get paid an hourly wage, and the undergraduate students worked for free but were reimbursed for costs. Expenses such as travel, equipment and water sampling analyses had to be carefully figured. This was very complex and it took several meetings and conversations before I understood it at all. Then we had to decide how much of these activities could be fit into the funding that we had. But eventually we figured out how to represent all of the costs and came up with a good budget, which became the basis for our contract with the University.

In some cases, developing a detailed budget is a separate step in the process of program implementation and can be a cost item in itself. For instance, if your project involves building a structure, your program design may have included research about the standard cost per square foot for that type of building. That research was good enough to create your fund-raising budget. But now you need a more detailed analysis to make sure that your funding is sufficient to cover the actual building costs. To do this, an experienced contractor takes your preliminary building plans and creates detailed 'construction drawings' that specify exactly what will be needed to build this structure, from the yards of concrete in the foundation to the gallons of paint on the walls. This involves a substantial amount of work and the contractor will expect to be remunerated accordingly.

<u>A Note on Feasibility Studies:</u> As I noted above, creating the budget can be a cost item – the next step to the implementation process. In most cases the project is fairly well defined and it is possible to create detailed cost analysis with the amount of information you have already developed. The consultant may have to ask you some questions about the grade of materials or choices for types of hardware. But the process can be done reasonably quickly and will not involve a lot of budget uncertainty.

But what if you do have a lot of budget uncertainty? There are projects where it is impossible to easily estimate your costs unless you get experts involved in a detailed analysis. Such analyses are called 'feasibility studies', and they tend to be very expensive. Because of this, they are often handled as a separate phase in the implementation process. This is particularly true of projects which involve engineering, such as bridges, sewers, etc. In those cases it is common to 'phase' the project. The first phase will be the detailed analysis, which is funded by a smaller 'feasibility study' grant. This will help you review different develop design options for the project, choose the best one, and determine its costs. Once the study is completed, you are ready to apply for funding for the second phase - implementation.

It is unlikely that you will be dealing with this type of project. (If you are, make sure that you work closely with someone familiar with this type of project, such as the City or County public works staff.) But it still might be a good idea to think about 'phasing' your project. There may be some initial work that you can do with a small grant that will give you a much better idea for your final implementation process. It is easier to get these smaller 'feasibility study' grants than to plunge into a large project with a lot of unknowns. And you will be more likely to get implementation funding when you can show that you have spent the time to carefully study and design your project.

STEPS TO PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION			
VISIONING	PLANNING	DESIGN	IMPLEMENTATION

DESIGN			
Permits, Planning, and Approvals	Detailed Project Budget	Scope of Work	Evaluation Plan

c. Scope of Work.

The scope of work sets out the detailed steps which need be done to implement the program and what results, or 'deliverables', will be expected as you go through the process. This is a companion piece to the detailed project budget work above; the two are usually done together. The detailed project budget and scope of work together represent the information needed to enter into a contract with the people or businesses that will implement your project.
Even if you won't need to deal with contracts because you are implementing the project yourself or with volunteers it is still important to go through this exercise. This is the detailed planning that makes sure you know all of the resources you will need and all of the steps it will take to get your project done.

A Note on Contracts

Contracts are important documents. They set down on paper the agreements that we make for all kinds of situations, from building a house to buying a car to a pre-nuptial agreement. If you are not a lawyer you may feel a little overwhelmed when faced with a contract – all those words! All that fine print!

It's true that contract language tends to be a lot more complicated and formalized than everyday English. This is an unfortunate side effect to our legal system – if a lawsuit in the past determined that a particular kind of language was needed to protect a party, all the lawyers in the future will tend use that same language in order to protect their clients.

But complex language aside, most contracts follow a specific structure. This structure consists of three parts – <u>Recitals</u>, <u>Terms and conditions</u>, and <u>Attachments/Exhibits</u>:

- The <u>Recitals</u> are what you see at the start of the contract. They explain the context– why these parties are entering into an agreement and what do they intend to do. In traditional contracts the term 'Whereas', is used frequently. (Whereas, the 'contractor' is a licensed builder of commercial structures and the 'owner' wishes to build a particular commercial structure…).
- The <u>Terms and conditions</u> are what govern the administration of the contract: how and when payments will be made, responsibilities for insurance, what will happen in case of a dispute, etc.
- The <u>Attachments or Exhibits</u> generally contain the details of the scope of work and remuneration.

In fact, many entities have a standard contract (sometimes called a 'Professional Services Agreement'), which they use over and over again. The only changes are in the recitals and the scope of work and the budget, which become the Attachments or Exhibits. If your project is going to involve hiring consultants or contractors it is best to get an attorney to help you with the contract language to make sure that you are fully protected. But in order to complete that contract, you will need the scope of work and budget which we are discussing in this chapter.

If your project consists of creating a building or structure and you have prepared your detailed construction drawings, your scope of work is simple. You just attached the construction drawings and say 'build this'. Of course, you may need to add some details, such as the timeline for the project and the deliverables (the foundation sign-off by the County shall be obtained by May, structural approvals by June, electrical and HVAC by July, and Certificate of Occupancy by October.)

But usually your project will not be this simple. It will probably involve several types of work – some done by contractors and some done by you and your community project team. In that case it is good to create a detailed scope of work with timeline and deliverables. If you have obtained grant funding, this scope of work may be useful as a timeline and deliverables for the grant agreement. Even if you don't use it in any other document, this scope of work and timeline will be a critical document for project management. It will allow you to track the progress of all of the various components of your project and to see where there are problems that need extra attention.

We have already discussed that the scope of work can become an exhibit to a contract for implementation services. But it is also frequently used for another type of contract – a grant contract. When a funder decides to provide resources to your project, they want to make sure that the project will be implemented as you described it in your grant application. They will ask for your organization to enter into a Grant Agreement (or Contract) with them to make sure that everything is set forth in black and white. This includes not only the final product, but also the timelines, the various steps to implementation, and the 'deliverables' which will show that you have completed these steps.

The next page gives and example of a scope of work and timeline for a project that involves several different types of activities and multiple groups involved with implementation:

- trail construction (Forest Service and Boy Scouts),
- building an informational kiosk (Contractor 1, who works with Community Design Committee),
- creating informational materials for the kiosk (Contractor 2, who works with Forest Service, Historical Society and Watershed Committee), and
- developing a nature education curriculum for the local schools (Contractor 3, who works with Watershed Committee and School District).

Each activity has its own timeline and its own deliverables. This is the type of detailed project plan which might be used in a Grant Agreement:

Task	Responsible	Start (month)	Complete (month)	Deliverable
1. Trail Construction				
1a. Written agreements with Boy Scouts and Forest Service	Project Manager	1	3	Approved agreement with Forest Service and Boy Scouts setting forth their responsibilities
1b. Detailed Trail Mapping and flag	Boy Scouts with help of Forest Service	3	5	GPS trail map
1c. Final archeological review per Environmental Approval	Archeological consultant – Forest Service	4	6	Archeology sign-off on trail.
1d. Purchase and stage trail materials	Forest Service	6	7	Invoices for purchased materials
1e. Clear and grade trail route	Forest Service	6	8	
1f. Construct culverts and bridges, set and stake edging logs	Boy Scouts with help of Forest Service	6	9	
1g. Publicize Volunteer days	Boy Scouts	8	9	Newspaper articles about trail-building opportunities
1h. Complete trail surface with Boy Scouts and volunteers	Boy Scouts with help of Forest Service	9	12	Forest Service final trail approval
2. Build Informational Kiosk				
2a. Draft, approve, and publish RFP for Contractor	Project Manager and Community Design Comm.	1	2	RFP approved, copies of publication in local newspapers
2b. Select Contractor and complete Construction Agreement	Project Manager and Community Design Comm	2	3	Signed Construction Agreement
2c. Purchase Materials	Contractor 1	3	4	Invoices for purchased materials
2d. Construct Kiosk per detailed construction drawings	Contractor 1	4	6	
2e. Final approval of Kiosk	Community Design Comm., County, Project Manager	6	7	Design Committee sign-off, County Approval Certificate
3. Create Informational Materials for Kiosk				
3a. Create Design Committee for Materials including Forest Service, Historical Society and Watershed Committee	Project Manager	1	3	Committee Member Roster
3b. Design Committee creates initial materials and design specifications	Materials Design Committee	3	6	Preliminary materials signed off by Design Committee
3c. Draft, approve, and publish RFP for Contractor	Project Manager	6	7	RFP approved, copies of publication in local newspapers
3d. Select Contractor 2	Project Manager and Materials Design Committee	8	9	Signed Professional Services Agreement

3e. Design and Approve Informational Materials	Contractor 2 and Materials Design Committee	9	12	Design Committee approval of Informational Materials Design
3f. Fabricate Informational Materials	Contractor 2	12	14	Design Committee approval of Informational Materials
3g. Install Informational Materials	Contractor 2	14	15	Informational materials installed
4. Develop and Evaluate Nature Education Curriculum				
4a. Create Curriculum Committee including School District and Watershed Committee	Project Manager	1	3	Committee Member Roster
4b. Curriculum Committee creates initial materials and specifications	Curriculum Committee	3	9	Preliminary materials signed off by Curriculum Committee
4c. Draft, approve, and publish RFP for Contractor	Project Manager and Curriculum Committee	9	11	RFP approved, copies of publication in local newspapers
4d. Select Contractor 3	Project Manager and Curriculum Committee	11	12	Signed Professional Services Agreement
4e. Work with University to create evaluation instruments	Project Manager, University, Contractor 3	9	15	Evaluation Instruments
4f. Design and approve draft curriculum materials	Contractor 3, Curriculum Committee	12	15	Design Committee approval of draft curriculum
4g. Implement trial educational session and apply evaluation instruments	Curriculum Committee, Project Manager	15	16	Documentation of trial sessions (photos, essays, etc.)
4h. Evaluation of initial session and modifications to materials	Project Manager, University	16	18	Trial session evaluations
4i. Approve and distribute final materials	School District, Project Manager	18	20	Final curriculum materials
5. Grant Administration				
5a. Process invoices and send to grantor	Project Manager	2	22	Completed grantor invoices
5b. Pay invoices	Project Manager	4	24	Completed contractor payments
5c. Quarterly reports	Project Manager	Quarterly		Quarterly reports
5d. Project Newsletter	Project Manager and Steering Committee	Quarterly		Quarterly newsletters
5e. Project Completion Event	Project Manager and Steering Committee	14	16	Newspaper articles, attendance records, photos
5f. Evaluation and Final Report	Project Manager	20	24	Evaluation and Final report

GANTT Charts: Project plans can alternately be displayed as a timeline, or GANTT chart. This type of chart allows you see visually how all the components of the project related to each other in terms of time and causality. There are fancy project management software packages that can create these charts, or you can just us a Word table or Excel spreadsheet to create a simple timeline. Here is a simplified version that is easy to create. Because of space considerations I've used quarters instead of months.

Note how much easier it is to see when things need to begin and what needs to be done before other tasks can get started:

Task Quarters	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1a. Written agreements with Boy Scouts and Forest Service								
1b. Detailed Trail Mapping and flag								
1c. Final archeological review per Environmental Approval								
1d. Purchase and stage trail materials								
1e. Clear and grade trail route								
1f. Construct culverts and bridges, set and stake edging logs								
1g. Publicize Volunteer days								
1h. Complete trail surface with Boy Scouts and volunteers								
2a. Draft, approve, and publish RFP for Contractor								
2b. Select Contractor and complete Construction Agreement								
2c. Purchase Materials								
2d. Construct Kiosk per detailed construction drawings								
2e. Final approval of Kiosk								
3a. Create Design Committee for Materials								
3b. Design Committee creates initial materials and design specifications								
3c. Draft, approve, and publish RFP for Contractor								
3d. Select Contractor 2								
3e. Design and Approve Informational Materials								
3f. Fabricate Informational Materials								
3g. Install Informational Materials								
4a. Create Curriculum Committee								
4b. Curriculum Committee creates initial materials and specifications								
4c. Draft, approve, and publish RFP for Contractor								
4d. Select Contractor 3								
4e. Work with University to create evaluation instruments								
4f. Design and approve draft curriculum materials								

4g. Implement trial educational session and apply evaluation instruments								
4h. Evaluation of initial session and modifications to materials								
4i. Approve and distribute final materials								
5a. Process invoices and send to grantor								
5b. Pay invoices								
5c. Quarterly reports								
5d. Project Newsletter								
5e. Project Completion Event								
5f. Evaluation and Final Report								

This type of document can be difficult to complete. But once you're done, seeing it in front of you with all the little squares filled in can create a sense of security and well-being. Now you are in control! You know just what is going to happen. Right?

Well, not really. In reality monkey wrenches seem to rain from the sky to mess up your beautifully planned project. There is almost always something that will take longer than expected. People and organizations can suddenly throw unexpected demands at the project. Contractors can fail to deliver. In one instance we started a project only to be forced to put it on hold for over a year because the State was in a fiscal crisis and froze all grant funding.

The point of having this type of plan is not that you expect everything to happen just as written out. It is that if there is a delay, you can gauge the consequences and make adjustments. If you have submitted this plan as the scope of work for your grant agreement, then you will have to modify that grant agreement, but this can be a simple process if you have the whole project set out in front of you. As soon as you realize that you won't be able to meet your deadlines, contact the grantor. Write them a letter explaining what has caused the delay and (hopefully) why it is not your fault. Then submit a revised scope of work showing new project deadlines and deliverables. The grantor will be impressed with your clear project oversight and your responsibility in keeping them up to date on these changes.

d. Evaluation Plan

STEPS TO PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION			
VISIONING	PLANNING	DESIGN	IMPLEMENTATION

DESIGN			
Permits, Planning, and Approvals	Detailed Project Budget	Scope of Work	Evaluation Plan

Earlier in these chapters I talked about why it was important to include evaluation in your program development. Evaluation helps you get past your pride and ego ('Of course this program was a success! It was the best program this town has ever seen!') and get some objective information about what worked and what didn't work. Why? Because eventually you will get over the exhaustion from completing this project, realize how much fun it was, and decide to do something else in your community. Your program evaluation will help you do better next time. The fact that you took the time and effort to learn from your mistakes will also impress potential funders for your new venture.

So as you are working through the Design phase, don't forget about evaluation. Just as you created a more detailed plan for your program implementation, now is a good time to develop more details about your evaluation plan.

You have already started this process in the Program Development section. In Part I Chapter 3 we recommended that you start thinking about:

- The types of records you will keep to show participation,
- The evaluation tools or instruments (such as surveys and interviews) you will use,
- When and by whom the evaluations will be conducted, and
- How you will share the results of your evaluation so that you and others can learn from your program.

During this stage of the process you may want to work on refining your initial evaluation plans. This will help you no matter what kind of evaluation will be needed for your program.

For instance, your project may be simple to evaluate. (Did the trail get completed? How many people use it? Are they happy about having it in the community?) You might be handling the evaluation yourself as the program manager or the steering committee may take care of it. If this is the case, now would be a good time to start drawing up your evaluation instruments and planning how and when you will give them to the public. If you add this to the detailed project plan/scope of work, you'll make sure that it doesn't get left out.

On the other hand, your program evaluation may require professional involvement. This is more likely to be the case if you are trying to change people's attitudes, understanding, or habits. In that case you are going to have to develop the scope of work for the evaluation consultant. If you are going out with a Request for Proposal to find such a consultant, this scope of work will be important to communicate the objectives of the evaluation and any important priorities or constraints.

Evaluation may feel like a luxury as you are trying to fit your program costs into the available resources. You want to use your money to get things done, not for a lot of studies and reports! But this is a key opportunity to add to the professionalism of your program design. Putting time and thought into how you will gauge the effectiveness of your program is extremely impressive for funders and others. It shows that you are thinking beyond your own project idea and becoming a part of the community development movement. Just as you were able to learn from similar projects in other communities, others will learn from your project. And an effective evaluation strategy will maximize the benefit of this knowledge, both for others and for your own future efforts.

Part I: Chapter 5
Implementation

STEPS TO PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION			
VISIONING	PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT/ PLANNING	DESIGN	IMPLEMENTATION

IMPLEMENTATION			
Project Management and Oversight	Hiring Consultants	Administration/ Record-keeping	
Modifications	Final Approvals	Celebrate!	Evaluate

Finally you are ready to start implementing your project. This is an exciting time but it is also fraught with peril. If you have the bad fortune or bad judgment to hire an unscrupulous or incompetent contractor, you could lose both the project and your reputation. If proper records are not kept, your organization may find itself in hot water. In the worst of cases this might mean that individuals come under investigation, but even if this nightmare doesn't come to pass your group can still find itself with a 'black mark' which makes it impossible to get any funding in the future.

Normally I don't stoop to horror stories, but it is important to strongly emphasize the need for following rules and proper administrative procedures during the implementation phase. Unfortunately these are not always obvious or simple and it is very easy to make a slip or two. If you have documented your efforts to follow guidelines and proper procedures, such slips will likely be forgiven in the face of your 'good faith' efforts. But laziness or sloppiness can lead to big trouble. And 'ignorance is no excuse', as they say. If you are fortunate enough to have gotten to the implementation stage you have a responsibility to make sure that you do things the right way. Take it seriously!

"Okay!" you say "I will! Tell me what to do!" Well, that's the problem. We are dealing with such a range of projects and situations that it is impossible to cover all the rules that might apply. So this chapter will just list the major areas of concern when you are implementing a project. My goal is to give you enough information so that you realize just how much you don't know and have some idea of where and how to find out.

a. Project Management and Oversight

STEPS TO PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION			
VISIONING	PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT/ PLANNING	DESIGN	IMPLEMENTATION

IMPLEMENTATION			
Project Management and Oversight	Hiring Consultants, and Contractors	Staff and Volunteers	
Administration/ Record-keeping	Final Approvals	Celebrate!	Evaluate

Project management involves three main tasks:

1. Oversee completion of the project (construction of the building, completion of the study, implementation of the program);
2. Follow all the required rules for record-keeping, invoices, payments, reports, etc.; and
3. Keep your project stakeholders and supporters informed and involved.

Chances are that you will not be able to do all of these three functions yourself. Does that mean that you can't be the project manager? Maybe yes and maybe no. Let's look at these functions separately.

1. <u>Completion of the project.</u> If your project involves construction and you are not a professional construction project manager, you should hire someone with this expertise to provide project management. If you do not you are putting the project at risk for cost overruns, unnecessary delays and substandard work. This is true of other technical areas as well, such as feasibility studies, scientific research, and programs involving other specialized expertise. If your project is not technical and if you have strong organizational skills, some knowledge of the field and the ability to learn as you go you may be able to act as a manager over this aspect of the project even if this is not your normal line of work.
2. <u>Administration and record-keeping.</u> We will go more into the details of this area later on in the chapter. But this is a very important aspect of project management. If you are not familiar with accounting, invoicing and reporting then you need to make sure that this task is handled or at least overseen by someone who is.
3. <u>Community relations.</u> This function involves keeping your stakeholders in the loop. If any councils or committees have been given oversight over any area of implementation, they need to be involved in any decisions that come up regarding that area. Group decisions can be complicated, like the proverbial 'herding cats'. If cat wrangling is not your forte, a professional facilitator might be helpful. Even if they are not decision-makers, political bodies, granting agencies, and the community at large also need to be kept informed and allowed to give input where appropriate. If you have gotten to this point in the process you probably have the expertise to handle these 'public relations'

functions, but if you are too busy or just not inclined toward this it is certainly possible to find someone else to do it.

All of these functions can be delegated to another person or a group of people. But if that happens, which one is the project manager? The best answer I've heard is this: the project manager is the person who wakes up in the morning and asks themselves: "What do I need to do today to make sure this project gets implemented." You (or someone else) can be the project manager even though the responsibility for the technical, administrative and communication areas has been delegated to someone else. The project manager is the person who takes responsibility to make sure that everyone involved in the process is doing their work and doing it well. The project manager is the person who cares.

I like to think of a project as having one individual as the overall 'project manager', but there are other models. A project can be managed by an oversight committee. Or there can be a project manager and an oversight committee. In some ways this last option is the most preferable. I believe that an individual is more likely to have the passion and commitment necessary to push a project through obstacles and on to success. But it can be helpful for that individual to be able to spread the responsibility and decision-making around a bit. A small, responsive and supportive oversight committee can be very helpful in making good decisions and finding ways to get things done. And if, despite everyone's best efforts, problems arise, the responsibility doesn't all fall on the poor project manager.

Before you start project implementation, get buy-in on your organizational structure. Designate project managers and other responsibilities. Appoint members of the oversight committee and any other decision-making councils that are part of the process. Brief everyone on the project (goals, objectives, timelines) and make sure that they are all clear about their responsibilities and authority. An organization chart can be helpful here.

b. Consultants and Contractors

STEPS TO PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION			
VISIONING	PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT/ PLANNING	DESIGN	IMPLEMENTATION

IMPLEMENTATION			
Project Management and Oversight	Hiring Consultants, and Contractors	Staff and Volunteers	
Administration/ Record-keeping	Final Approvals	Celebrate!	Evaluate

<u>1. Bidding process.</u> If you are planning to build or develop your project all by yourself or with your closest friends, you could skip this section. But such self-reliance is rare. Usually you will need to hire at least one contractor or consultant to finalize your project. This process may seem simple; in many small towns there is one contractor who always helps out with projects, who bills only for supplies and donates his or her labor. Why would you choose anyone else? Well, if this is the case and if your donors don't mind – I'd say go ahead! But you may not be this fortunate. Perhaps you have a choice between several contractors, all of whom want to be paid for their work. Perhaps your funding source requires that you go through a fair and impartial process to select your contractor. In this case you need to follow the formalities of a bidding process.

In most cases a bidding process is not very complicated. Some government entities or established nonprofit organizations have set procedures (called 'procurement policies') and if you are in a partnership with one of these it is best to let their administrative staff handle it to make sure these procedures are followed. But you can handle a simple bidding process yourself. Here are some guidelines:

<u>Step 1 – develop a 'Request for Bid'.</u> This is sometimes also known as a Request for Proposals (RFP). This document will:

- Describe the project scope and background;
- Set out a fairly detailed description of the work you need done and the deliverables you expect, including any information such as applicable standards or requirements that will help the bidders produce an accurate estimate of the time and materials needed to complete the project;
- Communicate any requirements for qualifications, certifications, or experience so potential bidders will know whether they will be competitive;
- Explain how you are going to evaluate bids (factors can include cost, qualifications, relevant experience, understanding of the project, approach, etc.);

- Set forth the contents of the bid (budget, timeline, resumes, description of similar projects completed, letters of reference, etc.) and how the bid can be submitted (by mail, electronically, etc.);
- State how the bidder can get more information (contact information for project manager, time and place of bidders' conference, etc.);
- Designate the contact person (name and address) to whom the bid should be submitted; and
- Give the deadline for submissions of bids.

Here's a sample format you can use to request bids. We'll assume you are looking for someone to build a bandstand in your new park.

Request for Bids
Happy Valley Community Art Park Bandstand

The Happy Valley Community Park Committee is seeking qualified construction firms to construct a community bandstand in Happy Valley Community Art Park. This Request for Bids sets forth the background, scope of work, and response criteria for such bids.

<u>BACKGROUND</u>:
The town of Happy Valley is an unincorporated community located in Jolly County. Happy Valley used to be the site of a large manufacturing company, which went out of business several years ago. The manufacturing plant was purchased by a housing development corporation and has been converted into artists' lofts. The 5-acre open space in front of this building was transferred to the Happy Valley Community Development Council and is being developed as an 'Art Park' for use by the resident artists, Happy Valley residents, and visitors.

The Community Development Council has formed the Happy Valley Community Park Committee (the Committee), consisting of diverse residents and stakeholders who are responsible for development of this project. This park has been approved by the Jolly County Planning Committee and a park site plan, including the bandstand, has been adopted by the County Board of Supervisors as part of the Happy Valley Community Design Plan.

This request is for bids for the construction of a bandstand within the park. Construction drawings and specifications for the bandstand are attached as Exhibit A.

PROPOSED TASKS (Scope of Work)
The scope of work includes all of the permitting and work to construct the bandstand to the attached specifications, as well as oversight of painting and decoration of the bandstand by volunteer community members and artists. Specific tasks include:

1. Applications for all required construction permits, including (but not limited to) grading, environmental health, and building.
2. All grading and concrete work for the bandstand foundation.
3. Construction of the bandstand in accordance with the specifications attached in Exhibit A.
4. Oversight of community painting and decoration of the bandstand. This will include preparation of the bandstand for painting (sanding, primer, etc.), and oversight of volunteers to assure that they safely and completely paint and decorate the bandstand in accordance with a decoration design to be adopted by the Committee.
5. Complete painting project by applying a coat of finish glaze (as set forth in the specifications) to prevent bandstand graffiti.

The successful bidder will be required to maintain a performance bond in the amount of $250,000 and liability/personal injury insurance that covers the project, the bidder's employees and subcontractors, and all project volunteers.

Bidders Conference: A bidder's conference to explain the project will be held on (date) at (location). Interested firms are encouraged but not required to attend. Follow up questions may be address to Project Manager (contact information).

Bids must include the following information:

- Itemized budget for all phases of the scope of work, along with any potential contingencies foreseen by bidder
- Hourly rates of all employees and subcontractors
- Estimated timeline for completion of project.
- Proposed approach to management of volunteer painters/decorators
- Description of similar projects completed within proposed timeline and budget
- Three references.

The above information must be received by 5 pm on (date). Bidders should include three copies of the above information plus a cover letter. Response packages should be mailed to Blissful Organizer, (address). Any questions about the submission of this bid should be directed to Blissful Organizer at (contact information).

The Happy Valley Community Development Council reserves the right to reject all bids, extend the time period for responses, or otherwise modify this Request.

Step 2: Send the bid out to a list of appropriate contractors or consultants. How will you find this list? The best way is to ask someone else who has developed a similar project recently and had to go through a bidding process. They should have a list you can use. If this isn't possible, you can try to locate the local chapter of a professional association that would have names of appropriate contractors or consultants. Mail or e-mail the request out to the individuals or companies on this list. Give them an appropriate amount of time to respond. Three weeks is the minimum, and five or six weeks is probably better, depending on how complex it will be to put together the required bid information.

Step 3. Create a committee to evaluate the bids. This committee should include both people who have a good understanding of the project and people who have a good understanding of the type of work to be done.

Step 4. Evaluate bids. This step needs to be taken carefully to avoid any challenges to your bidding process. The evaluation committee should meet ahead of time to develop a rating sheet. This sheet allows you to rate each submission on the criteria which is important to your selection of a contractor. Here's a sample evaluation sheet that you might use for the above bid:

Happy Valley Art Park Bandstand Bid Evaluations				
Criteria	**Contractor 1**	**Contractor 2**	**Contractor 3**	**Contractor 4**
Cost				
Timeline				
Approach				
Relevant Experience				
References				
TOTAL SCORE				

If you like, you can have someone review the bids before they go to the evaluation committee to make sure that they meet certain baseline criteria (such as licensing and certification, completeness of information provided, etc. The qualifying bids can be distributed to the evaluation committee ahead of time for review, or at the meeting. The committee members each fill out an evaluation sheet giving each contractor a score (1-5 or 1-10) based on how that contractor rates on that factor. It is common for the group to discuss their evaluations. The group does not absolutely have to select the highest scoring contractor, but if it doesn't it should document why not. The proceedings of this committee should be recorded and all of the rating sheets retained in case a disgruntled bidder challenges the process as unfair or biased.

Step 5. Complete a contract with the selected bidder. Since you already have a detailed scope of work and budget for the project, completing the contract will be fairly simple. Find a standard contract for this type of work and attach the budget, scope, and timeline. Make sure that the contract specifies the penalties if the work is not completed according to the time, budget, or quality requirements. This will give you a good contract draft, which you should then send to an attorney for review.

If everything goes smoothly, this contracting process (from drafting the bid to completing the contract with the selected consultant) will take about 2-3 months. It can easily take longer, so make sure that you keep this in mind as you estimate when your project will be completed.

2. Modifications

Everything changes. Even after all of your planning and analysis, as you start to implement your project you will find new problems that need to be addressed, new conditions that need to be considered, and even (if you are lucky), new resources that can help you succeed. If they are big, these changes may require you to revisit your plans. If small, you may just need to modify a contract. Each change will require its own response, so there's not a lot of general guidance I can give except to be patient and persistent. Such roadblocks happen all the time – they are not necessarily a reflection on your project or planning. Take the time to make it right, then move ahead!

c. Staff and Volunteers

STEPS TO PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION			
VISIONING	PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT/ PLANNING	DESIGN	IMPLEMENTATION

IMPLEMENTATION			
Project Management and Oversight	Hiring Consultants, and Contractors	Staff and Volunteers	
Administration/ Record-keeping	Final Approvals	Celebrate!	Evaluate

1. Staff: Implementing your project may require hiring staff as well as contractors. Selecting staff is similar to selecting contractors. It has to be done fairly and in conformance with certain procedures. These procedures depend on your project partners and the entities that have provided funding or resources. Some partners or funders may require you to adopt and follow personnel policies. And then there are issues of taxes, workers compensation employment, benefits… It can get very sticky very quickly. If possible, try to run your project's staffing through an existing agency that has the staffing and expertise to make good and fair decisions. If no such partners are available, it is sometime possible to hire staff through a temp agency.

They will costs you more for hourly wages but if you take into account all of the administrative work involved it could work out to be a savings.

2. Volunteers: If you are relying on this book for advice, you are much more likely to be in a situation where you are using volunteers to implement your program. And that should be easy, right? If there is no money changing hands, how could there be a problem? Unfortunately, in our litigious society, there can always be a problem. Some volunteer problems can be minor, but some could land you in so much trouble that it puts your project at risk. So even when folks aren't getting paid, you need to make sure that you've taken the necessary precautions.

- Policies and Agreements: Some projects involve volunteers working on a regular basis, such as museum docents, tutors, interpretive nature guides. In this case you should develop volunteer policies that clearly set forth expectations and guidelines for behavior, dress, training, and other important criteria. The policy should also address what could result from failure to comply with the criteria. Each volunteer should be given a copy of these policies and should sign a document stating that they have read the policies and agree to comply with them. This sounds like a tall order, but there is no need to start from scratch. Find an established program similar to yours and ask for a copy of their volunteer policies. Then modify them to fit your own program's particularities. As always with legal documents, it is a good idea to create a draft and then get an attorney to look it over and make recommendations.
- Releases: Suppose you just need volunteers for a short time, such as river clean-up or a bandstand painting project. In that case you usually won't need any elaborate training or policies. But it is still good to have the volunteer sign a release, stating that they will be responsible for any problem or injury that arises during the project. These releases vary based on the type of project, but it is easy to find multiple samples on the Internet. Find a sample release that is for a project similar to your own, and modify it as needed. Then send it to the lawyer!
- Adequate Supervision: Volunteers represent your organization or your project! Their actions – and even their attitudes - can create unfavorable impressions that will be very hard to undo. No agreement that you make them sign will completely control these actions. You are responsible to make sure that your volunteers are properly screened, trained, and supervised. Don't leave a volunteer alone to represent your project until you are very confident of their understanding, their qualifications, and their reliability.
- Background checks: In some cases it is even more important that you screen your volunteers. If your project involves providing services or programs for children, you need to take serious precautions. These can include background checks and possibly even running fingerprints through criminal databases. All of this can be expensive, which is a good reason why you should consider forming a partnership with an agency (like the local school district) that can run these checks for you.
- Insurance: If all of this is starting to scare you, good! It is important to treat these issues seriously and take adequate precautions. But even if you follow all of the rules, things happen. That is why we have insurance. Talk to your insurance agent about volunteer

insurance coverage for your project. This is often available at a modest cost, and will help you relax and enjoy all the good work you are doing!

d. Administration/ Record-keeping

STEPS TO PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION			
VISIONING	PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT/ PLANNING	DESIGN	IMPLEMENTATION

IMPLEMENTATION			
Project Management and Oversight	Hiring Consultants, and Contractors	Staff and Volunteers	
Administration/ Record-keeping	Final Approvals	Celebrate!	Evaluate

Some very fortunate people enjoy administration and record-keeping. Most of us don't. But if you have gone to your funders and asked them for money for your project, they have a right to know how you spent it. And in addition to financial records, you may need to produce documentation of events, people served, volunteer hours, etc. All of this means that you need to document all of your transactions and activities, and you need to organize that documentation so that you can answer questions and compile reports about your project.

In general, your files should include:

<u>1. Activities files:</u> Every meeting you have and every event you sponsor should have a sign-in sheet. Keep these! Create agendas and minutes for your meetings. Take pictures of events. Clip the sign-in sheets, agendas, minutes and other documentation of each meeting together and keep them in a 'Meetings' file. Do the same for events. If anyone ever challenges your project saying that you didn't involve the public, you can pull this file out and prove them wrong.

<u>2. Financial files:</u> Keep accurate books of income and expenditures. Keep your receipts. Send out thank you letters for all donations and keep copies in a 'Donor' file. Each grant you receive should have its own file where you keep the grant contract, copies of grant expenditures, reports, correspondence, and other relevant documentation.

<u>3. Media and Publicity:</u> Keep track of all the articles about your project. Keep all 'thank you' letters received for the services you provided.

4. <u>Products:</u> Does you project involve producing booklets, reports or plans? Keep them! Keep drafts, keep the final versions. Keep multiple copies so you can give them to potential funders or supporters.

There is more to project administration than just keeping files. Depending on your organization and your project you may have to prepare tax returns, grant reports, balance sheets, even newsletters. These may be difficult to produce, but if you don't develop and maintain an organized filing system they will be impossible. Even if you create a wonderful project in the community you can still be facing big trouble if you don't spend the time on administration. It's not really that hard. A few dollars invested in office supplies and a few minutes each week file that stack of papers on your desk is all you really need.

e. Final Approvals – "It ain't done until I say it's done!"

STEPS TO PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION			
VISIONING	PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT/ PLANNING	DESIGN	IMPLEMENTATION

IMPLEMENTATION			
Project Management and Oversight	Hiring Consultants, and Contractors	Staff and Volunteers	
Administration/ Record-keeping	Final Approvals	Celebrate!	Evaluate

Don't start partying yet! Many projects require final approvals in order to be completely finished. If your project involves construction, check with the building department about getting your permit 'finaled' or getting a certificate of occupancy. If you have a grant, you'll need to send in a final report with all necessary documentation and wait until the project has completed 'close-out'. Don't leave these hanging! Finish it up and celebrate!

f. Celebrate!

STEPS TO PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION			
VISIONING	PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT/ PLANNING	DESIGN	IMPLEMENTATION

IMPLEMENTATION			
Project Management and Oversight	Hiring Consultants, and Contractors	Staff and Volunteers	
Administration/ Record-keeping	Final Approvals	Celebrate!	Evaluate

Successes and even intermediate milestones (such as ground-breakings) should be celebrated. Such events don't just give you a good feeling; they bring needed joy and energy to your project, your supporters, and the community. They encourage people to keep up their involvement in your project, or to support your next venture.

It's up to you how you want to organize this celebration. Usually these events involve some general publicity, specific invitations to key supporters and funders, a ribbon cutting or some other symbolic gesture, a media photo-op for local dignitaries and politicians, some refreshments, a few speeches thanking everyone who deserves to be thanked, and maybe some music. Try to be creative and make your celebration special. These events are functional but they can also be fun!

g. Evaluate

STEPS TO PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION			
VISIONING	PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT/ PLANNING	DESIGN	IMPLEMENTATION

IMPLEMENTATION			
Project Management and Oversight	Hiring Consultants, and Contractors	Staff and Volunteers	
Administration/ Record-keeping	Final Approvals	Celebrate!	Evaluate

In earlier chapters I have explored the importance of evaluation and encouraged you to develop an evaluation plan. Now is the time to implement that plan! This may mean interviews of people who are participating in your program, surveys of folks who use the facility you have built, even general assessments of whether public knowledge and understanding has increased as regards the important issues your program addresses.

Evaluation can take place during several points in your program and the results can be used in a variety of ways. You can use the 'process evaluation' reports to fine-tune your program or make corrections to the program structure or services. Final evaluation reports should be sent to your funders, even if your grant has been closed out. It will make them feel good about their choice to fund your program and will incline them towards doing it again, if you should ask. You can send evaluations to new potential funders. The reports will not only showcase your program's early effectiveness, but will also demonstrate that your organization completes its projects and cares about the quality of its services.

PART II: USEFUL SKILLS

Introduction to Part II

In Part I of this book we examined the path from vision to reality. One of the main points we made, over and over again, was that you will not be able to travel this path alone. As you proceed you will gather stakeholders, partners, funders, volunteers, and many other individuals and groups to walk with you. These folks will assist you, support you, and (at times) drive you crazy. They will encourage your ideas and contribute suggestions of their own. They are <u>essential</u> for your success. But they are not <u>sufficient</u> for your success.

Even if a lot of people become involved, a project needs a leader. If you are the person with passion, energy and commitment to the project, you probably are that leader. And a leader needs skills. The 'Getting Things Done' process will require you to communicate, facilitate, administrate, coordinate, and maybe even incorporate. You will certainly be able to get help with some of these tasks, but the more skills you yourself have the better your likelihood of success.

Now I'm going to get all philosophical and "new age-y". In my experience, it is all about energy. A leader needs to gather energy, weave it together, put it in the right forms, and keep it moving forward. If you have good facilitation skills, your community meetings will gather up the energy and enthusiasm in the room and put it to use moving the project on to the next step. If you don't, people will grow frustrated or cynical and you'll lose your momentum. If you can build on this enthusiasm by writing grant proposals for funding, your project will move forward. If you can't, it will stall. If disputes and conflicts arise, good mediation skills can overcome the obstacle and make your team stronger. If nothing is done, the acrimony can kill the project. If you display good administration and follow-through skills, you will attract more and more energy in the form of grants and other resources. If not, funders will drop you like a hot potato.

This section of the book will introduce you to some of the skills you will need to move your project forward and succeed. These include meeting facilitation, grant writing, dispute resolution, communication, project management, and others. Each chapter will provide an overview of the skill area with basic principles and some important tips. WARNING: THESE CHAPTERS ARE ONLY AN INTRODUCTION! Each skill area deserves whole book to cover it properly. Actually, each skill area does have a book, in fact several books, which discuss the skill in detail. And even if you read them all, you would still benefit from the practical experience and individual coaching available through classes, seminars, and workshops with expert practitioners.

But, let's face it. You are passionate about getting your project done. You've got enough commitment to get yourself a book on how to make it happen. You didn't sign up to become a professional community project developer. You probably won't drop everything to start taking classes and reading textbooks. Somewhere down the road you might do some more formal skill-building, but now what you need is just some basic information on how to get started. That's what you'll get in this section of the book. Hopefully it will give you enough knowledge and confidence to move forward. However, if training opportunities come your way, I do encourage you to take advantage of them. It will be well worth it.

For now, though, let's go through the basics….

Part II - Chapter 1. Meeting Design and Facilitation

When you facilitate a meeting you are an artist whose work is to engage the energy of the people in the room. You are not trying to make everyone think what you think, or feel what you feel. You are there to welcome them, as individual people with their own thoughts, feelings and views, into the project. Your job is to weave these disparate ideas and views together with your own ideas and views, to infect others with your excitement and commitment, and to move the project forward. It takes strength, confidence and emotional maturity to do this well. These are not things that you can learn from reading a book, but probably you don't need to learn them. You just need to remember to use them. Getting a proper perspective on your role of meeting facilitator will help you remember.

So now let's get down to more practical business. Here are some basic principles of successful meetings and some tips to help you avoid pitfalls.

<u>Principle 1 – You Must Prepare for your Meeting.</u>

Meetings do not run themselves, and the participants will not, of their own accord, stay on the subject, reach decisions, or agree on next steps. It is up to you to structure a meeting that will be useful for yourself, your project, and all the participants. You need to take into consideration:

- *What stage is the project at currently and what are the next steps.* For instance an initial 'pitch' meeting to bounce the project off some of the stakeholders is likely to be more casual than a meeting later on in the planning process when you have to nail down some of the project details.
- *Who will be coming to the meeting and what is the most effective way to have them participate.* If it is a small meeting you can all talk as a group. If you expect a larger crowd, it will be more difficult to encourage everyone to participate unless you break into small groups or structure some other special kind of arrangement.
- *How much time do you have and what can be accomplished within that time*. A short presentation to a PTA or Board of Directors is going to be organized differently than a day-long planning workshop.

All of these factors will help you decide on your meeting design.

Components of Effective Meetings – There are several specific types of activities or components that you can structure into your meeting design:

- Presentations – You or someone else gives an overview of the project or discuss details of one of the issues involved. Questions and answers can be included, either during the presentation or after it is done.
- Discussions – Free exchanges with anyone piping up who wants to say something. This is a causal way to share information and ideas, appropriate for smaller groups and informal settings. As the facilitator you will still have to make sure that one person does not dominate and encourage the quieter participants to share.
- 'Go-rounds' from person to person in the group and give everyone a turn to share their opinions (or their background, or their experience with similar projects, etc.). This is a good way to allow participants to contribute in a way that keeps maximum control.
- Brainstorming –This is an exercise which encourages creativity. Participants just throw out ideas, whatever comes into their heads. These ideas can be crazy or wild – that's okay. People are allowed to elaborate or spin-off of one-another's ideas but no criticism or evaluation is allowed. This is a quick, lively process and often a great deal of fun. The hope is that among the impractical ideas there will be great new approaches to explore. Usually, the brainstorming process is recorded on big sheets of paper so people can see the ideas that have emerged. If you are going to proceed to a 'prioritization' process (see below), you might want to combine similar ideas after the brainstorming has concluded. This is done by facilitator suggestion with participant agreement: ("Well, in our fundraising ideas brainstorm we came up with 'sell cookies' and 'sell cakes', 'sell salsa', and 'sell hand-made marshmallows'. Can we combine those into a 'bake sale' and make them one item?")
- Small Group Break-out Sessions – When there are a lot of people in the meeting and you want smaller groups for discussions, go-rounds, or brainstorming. You can appoint people to small groups in several different ways. In a meeting most people will sit with people they already know. If you want the small groups to consist of people who already know one another, just group them by area. But usually you want to encourage people to get to know new people and the small groups are a good opportunity. Have people count off (1-2-3-4) and then put all the 1's together, all the 2's, etc. That usually gives a good mix. In the small group session you can engage in any sort of exercise that you can in the large group. But it is a good idea to have pre-trained one person per group as a mini-facilitator and to ask the group to appoint a 'note-taker' or 'reporter'. When the small groups have had sufficient time for their exercise, bring everyone back together and have one person from each group report on the small group discussion, ideas and outcomes.
- Prioritization - When you have a lot of ideas or choices and want to identify the most popular items. One way to do this is to hold a vote and take the top vote-getters. Another way which is essentially the same thing but more fun is called a 'dots exercise'. You write all of the options on a big sheet of paper on the wall (you can do this during your brainstorming process). For simplicity's sake, combine any similar options into one choice. Then you give all the participants a fixed number of colored sticky-back dots.

You can find these in office supply stores. I suggest brightly colored dots about 1 inch diameter. After the choices have been properly recorded and combined, you invite the participants to wander around and put dots on the sheets of paper next to their favorite choices. The rules can be different; either they can only put one dot for each idea they like, or they can be allowed to put all their dots on one item if they want. The resulting priorities are easily distinguished – they have the most dots next to them. This exercise provides a good visual representation of the group's priorities. And it gets people out of their chairs and physically participating, adding to their sense of involvement.

- Decision-making – When you need to make a decision which direction to go. This can be done in a number of ways. The most common is to have people vote, either by show of hand or by ballot. The option with the majority vote wins. This method takes the shortest time, but it can also leave the minority feeling disgruntled and disinclined to continue their participation. Another option is to try to reach consensus. This is a longer process and can get very involved, but it can also help build the group's cohesion by allowing people to understand one another and work through differences. There are a lot of options available for how to manage consensus building, and if you are new to the process you would be wise to get more detailed information on the subject.

Bring this list of meeting components to the next few meetings you attend and start to observe the meeting structure and facilitation with a critical eye. Which of these components were used? How successful were they at reaching the meeting's goals? What do you think could have made the meeting more effective? What was a particularly good facilitation strategy? Also note how the facilitator controls the meeting. Is he or she too lax? Too controlling?

When you start planning your own meetings, it is good to work with someone else – possibly a partner in the project or an experienced meeting facilitator. Start by determining how long the meeting should take and what you want to accomplish. Then consider the various possible meeting components - which ones will best fit your goals? Write out the agenda with times for each item. Meet again with your advisor after the meeting to get feedback and suggestions on how to improve your meeting planning.

<u>Principle 2 – You Are Responsible For Getting People to the Meeting.</u>

Meeting planning includes outreach and publicity. Getting people to come to your meetings is essential for a variety of reasons. If only a few people show up, the meeting will lack energy and the participants may lose confidence in the project. Also, having lots of participants gives you access to ideas, input and assistance. At some point this project is going to have to expand beyond your family and friends, and approaching people one-by-one is very burdensome. Getting potential participants together for a meeting is an effective way to communicate about your project and entice people to get involved.

Another major reason to get people to your meeting is to avoid future unpleasantness, particularly if you are relying on meetings to communicate the details of the project to stakeholders who are likely to have some concerns. Including these folks in your meeting will give you an opportunity to listen to their concerns or objections and respond, either by giving more information or considering changes to the program. If these stakeholders don't come to your meetings you can find yourself in a vulnerable position. These people, particularly those in opposition to your project, have a tendency to pop up and start making a fuss just when you are making an important presentation and want to look good. When this happens it will do no good to describe all of the meetings you've had and all of the outreach you did. You'll still look like you were trying to shut out stakeholders with dissenting opinions.

The only way to protect yourself from this type of unpleasant surprise is to get the stakeholders to your meetings, particularly those who may be opposed to the project. If they have attended a meeting and brought up their objections, this gives you a chance to try to address them or modify the program. Even if this can't be done, at least you'll be able to talk about how you've tried to accommodate the objections. If stakeholders attend a meeting and don't bring up their objections until a later (and usually more public) setting, it can still be uncomfortable but you are in a much better position. Since your opponents had an opportunity to speak but choose not to do so, they have lost the high moral ground and you are in a more sympathetic position.

So it is crucial that you get people to meetings. This can be difficult. Think of how many meetings you hear about. And how many do you attend, even the ones that seem like they'll be interesting and important? It takes a lot of effort to get people to meetings. Passive outreach is not enough! You can make meeting fliers, put entries into community calendars, call or visit key stakeholders, and still not be successful. So what do you do? Here are a few ideas:

- Be Strategic. Put up flyers or notices in calendars where your stakeholders (both pro and con) are likely to see them. This could include church bulletins, grocery stores, even bars (no sacrifice too great….).
- Go to meetings where your stakeholders are likely to be and invite them in person. Explain why it is important that they attend - even if they object to the project you want to hear what they have to say so that you can address their issues as much as possible.
- Where necessary, go door-to-door.
- Get a key leader from their community to assist with outreach.
- Make your meetings inviting. Offer them in a familiar and comfortable setting. Provide refreshments. Have the meeting at a time convenient to your stakeholders. If at all possible, make some provision for child-care (child-friendly movies in the next room) or make it clear that children are welcome.
- If language is an issue, provide a translator. Many schools have staff with this capability and may allow them to help you out, particularly if there is a connection between your project and some benefit to the school.

These strategies may or may not do the trick. If they don't work it is up to you to find ones that do. It is your responsibility to get people to your meetings. If at first you don't succeed, you have to try, try again. Persistence pays.

<u>Principle 3 – A Good Meeting Facilitator Controls the Flow.</u>

The best facilitators I've seen don't talk a lot. They listen, keep people on track, and synthesize what has been said. But they don't dominate the meeting and if they do give their opinions they do it in a gentle, non-argumentative fashion. Okay, that's a great goal, but who's going to advocate for your project or your point of view if you are just sitting back being nice?

That's a tricky one. In the facilitation workshops I've attended, it was always strongly emphasized that the meeting facilitator should be a neutral third party without their own agenda. If you can find a neutral third party to facilitate your meeting, then you (the project leader) can actively participate in the discussion. This is indeed the best situation. If you happen to have a friend with facilitation skills and experience who offers to fill this role in your meetings, take advantage of it, by all means! Trading facilitation duties with someone else who is trying to get a project done is another option. But in my many years of developing projects, these opportunities have not arisen very frequently. I almost always end up facilitating my own project meetings.

So do the best you can to communicate your information and still maximize the participation of others. It is very important for most people that they get an opportunity to share their knowledge, their perspective, or even unrelated information. And, at the same time, it is very important that your meeting proceed in an efficient manner without a lot of unrelated side-tracks, otherwise the rest of the participants will get frustrated and/or bored.

Here are some suggestions:

- Time your agenda. Assign an adequate but not excessive amount of time to each item. Write the time allotted next to the item on the agenda so people can see when you are running out of time. As the deadline approaches you can point it out…"We have to cut this a little short because we're running out of time. Are there any final comments about this issue?" Even if you go over the timeline a little, this will be a valuable tool in moving the agenda forward.
- Provide structured opportunities for input. Many people feel extremely agitated in meetings until they have 'had their say'. Schedule a 'go round' early in the meeting where participants get the chance to talk – preferably about something positive. For instance, in a meeting to discuss the possibility of developing a new park, you might start by going around the room and asking people to take 1-2 minutes to share their favorite park-related experience or memory. Then later in the meeting you can have another 'go round' or discussion where people can provide input on your proposed project. Try to avoid open questions like 'what do you think?' Instead ask something

that will direct their input into a constructive mode, such as: 'What do you like best about the project and what do you think will be the biggest problem?'

- If at all possible, do not get into arguments with meeting participants. Also try not to let them get into arguments with one another. Express appreciation for the diversity of opinions. (It is true, actually, that when people of different ideas and perspectives work together this can result in the richest, most interesting projects.) Allow people to air their opinions, but when the conversation gets repetitive or overly argumentative, ask if you can take the discussion 'off line' since there are several other things you want to cover in the meeting and this conversation will need more time than you have. Offer to continue the discussion after the meeting. Or tell them it is so important that you would like to make a special time to discuss it one-on-one or in a separate meeting.
- Do let others talk, but don't let them hijack the meeting. At times, in spite of your efforts to keep the discussion organized, you will run into someone who just does not want to stop talking[1]. Even supporters can hijack a meeting if they get too enthusiastic about details that are not central to what you are trying to achieve at the meeting. Be kind but firm. Don't let people ramble on for too long on issues that divert attention away from the main point, or that bore, frustrate or anger the other participants. Thank them for their ideas and point out that you have a lot to accomplish by the end of the meeting and you want to let everyone go home on time. If they have a lot to say, suggest that they put it in writing and send it to you so you can fully understand their suggestion or concerns or offer to meet with them separately so you can really explore these great ideas. All these extra discussions and meetings may seem like a lot to ask on top of all the work you are already doing. But it is a wise investment. Such people appreciate the attention and can become valuable supporters of your project.

Meeting facilitation is like all skills – it requires practice and feedback. After the meeting, ask your friends for constructive criticism on your facilitation. Consider yourself in learning mode; this will make it less painful to hear that you weren't perfect. Then do better next time!

Principle 4 – Allow ideas to expand, then bring them back to a few strategies to move forward.

Just as the facilitator must direct the dynamics of a meeting (who is speaking, how long, etc.) he or she must also direct the flow of ideas. Keeping on track is important. But it can also be valuable to spend a few minutes wandering off the track, through the meadow, into the woods, and up a hill or two. In other words, there are times during a meeting where it is okay for things to get confusing and chaotic. It is even a good idea to structure in some chaos. It can lead to creative new ideas and directions. But you don't want things to stay chaotic. At some point you need to summarize, focus and direct the ideas toward a practical next step. This allows people to end the meeting with a feeling of excitement, participation and confidence in the project.

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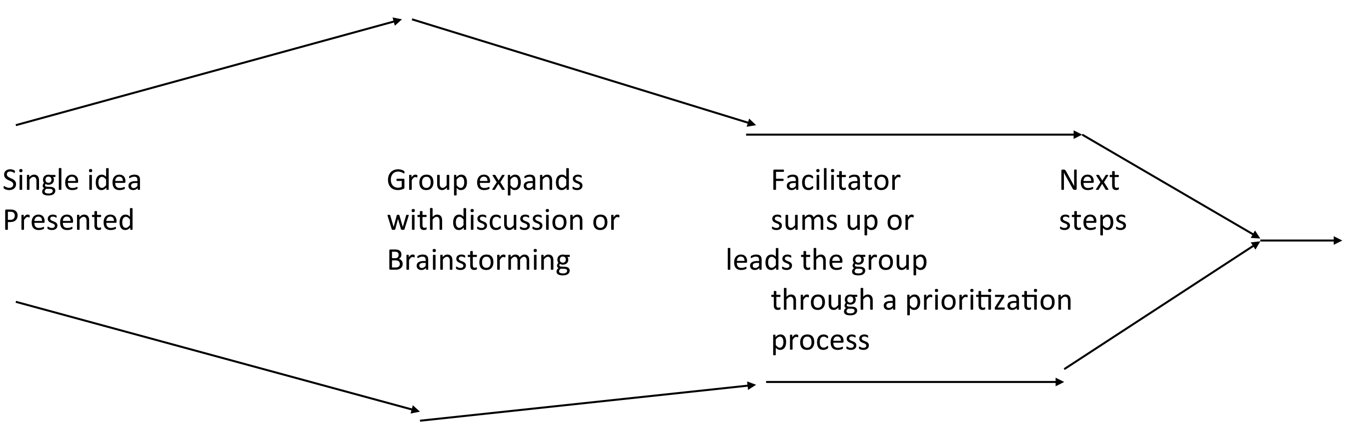
[1] I suffer from this affliction myself on occasion so I encourage you to treat such people gently, no matter how annoying they might be.

Many meetings go through a similar pattern. The facilitator starts the discussion off with one vision of the project or issue. Then the group is allowed to expand the discussion, bring up alternative visions, or play around with the complications involved in the issue. The facilitator then brings the conversation back to some main points by summing up the main ideas generated, prioritizing options, and suggesting next steps. Here is a visual representation:



As you plan your meeting agenda, think in terms of this expansion and contraction. Utilize meeting components that will facilitate this group dynamic. The case studies at the end of this chapter will give you a more concrete idea on how this can be done.

<u>A Few More Helpful Tips:</u>

a. Do Not Be Late! Being late to your own meeting is a show of disrespect to people who come on time and can have all sorts of negative consequences. Arrive early to set up the room and greet participants.
b. Refreshments are good. They don't need to be extensive, just something light and easy to eat. This gives the message that you care about the participants. I don't know if there is any research on the subject but I'd be willing to bet that people are less likely to yell at you if you feed them cookies and ice tea.
c. Create a written agenda – type it up and pass out copies or write it on a large sheet and post it on the wall. This helps participants feel oriented and stay on topic.
d. Place a sign-in sheet on a table next to the door and ask people to sign it when they walk in – that way you can get in touch with people later. Keep the sheets; they are helpful in showing funders and others that you have community participation.
e. A good way to start is by welcoming people and putting the meeting in context
    a. Briefly describe the project

    b. What stage are you at?
    c. What is the purpose of this meeting.
    d. Then go around the room for introductions. You can do this pretty quickly, even if it is a large room.

f. Facilitation tip - When a free discussion is going on and a lot of people want to speak, take charge and keep track of who has raised their hands. Actually point to people and say, OK, you're next, then you, then you…. This calms people down and creates an orderly opportunity to share. It can cut down on the opportunities for clarification or back and forth dialogues, which can be problematic. But this is balanced by the fact that you don't get stuck in one argument. Everyone just has their say and moves on.
g. Record! Select someone to take notes, preferably up on a large wall pad. When participants see that their concerns have been recorded, they tend to repeat themselves less.
h. It doesn't pay to get mad at people who come in late. Smile at them, ask their names, welcome them and bring them up to speed briefly as to what you are discussing. This will save time in the long run.
i. Try to get agreement on something – anything! This reduces tension in the room and will generate some hope that you can all work out differences.
j. Conclude with 'next steps'. Let people know how they can stay involved.

<u>Case Study 1: Small meeting of core participants in North Fork 'Local Currency' Project.</u>

A few community leaders in North Fork decided they wanted to launch a 'local currency'. This is a medium of exchange for community members to buy and sell goods and services that they otherwise might not share. It builds the local economy and community, and is generally a fun thing to do. The project had been going on for about nine months. We had printed the 'money' (called 'North Fork Shares'), and made decisions as to its value. We had adopted bylaws, dispute resolution policies and other important paperwork. We had a website where people could list their services and request services. We even had a 'soft launch' of the currency where the NF Shares were distributed. But nothing was happening. People weren't trading the shares. Josh, the project leader, decided that we needed to have a meeting and try to move the project forward. He set a meeting time and sent out an e-mail to the core participants. I offered to facilitate the meeting and he gratefully accepted.

The meeting was held on a Sunday evening, which was our usual time for North Fork Shares meetings. Josh and I got together that afternoon to plan the meeting agenda. I asked him what he wanted to accomplish at the meeting. The biggest goal was to get people to start using the shares. If the core members would start trading shares the word would spread, more people would want to participate and the momentum would grow. If we didn't use the shares, the whole program would stall. Josh wanted to set up a phone tree to call participants and help them figure out how to spend their currency. He also wanted to introduce the new website and show people how to put in their listings. We agreed that it would also help if people got a chance to talk about the services they were willing to offer and to ask for services they needed. This could remind people that they actually needed some of the services available or could provide services that others needed.

This is the agenda we developed:

North Fork Shares
Meeting Agenda

1. Project Update: Where are we and where are we going
   (Josh – Presentation – 10 minutes)
2. Phone Tree: Get volunteers
   (Dan – Free discussion – 15 minutes)
   - Purpose of phone tree
   - Ask for volunteers
   - ideas for what phone tree callers will say
3. How to register on Website and add listings
   (Josh – Presentation with Q&A throughout – 20 minutes)

(Break for Refreshments)

4. What are folks offering in exchange for shares, what do folks need?
   (Elissa – 'go round' – 25 minutes
5. Next Steps
   (Josh – discussion, 5 minutes)
   - Date for a 'formal community launch' of currency
   - Date for next meeting

This agenda was written on a large piece of paper and posted on the wall. Josh came to the meeting 20 minutes early to set up. The rest of participants showed up more or less on time – we had 14 in all. The participants had all been involved in the project previously so we skipped introductions.

The project update was easy and efficient. As the overall facilitator I kept Josh on track and reminded him of the items he wanted to cover. Then I turned the meeting over to Dan to discuss the phone tree. Josh could actually have talked about that item as well, but it is good to have a change in voices every so often; it helps people maintain attention. Dan described the purpose of the phone tree and invited people to have a free discussion about what the callers might say or do to help promote the actual use of the local currency. After a few minutes people started to repeat themselves, so I summed up the discussion suggested that the phone tree folks have a separate meeting to work out the details.

Then I turned the meeting over to Josh to give a presentation on the web site and how to add new listings. He had a computer and projector set up so he could show us how to register, get passwords, scan the current listings and create a new 'ad' for services. This was a casual presentation, so questions and answers, as well as admiring exclamations and witty (or snide) remarks were allowed. Of course, this stretched the timeline of the item out and we went over a few minutes. Josh wrapped up and we all took a break for refreshments and chatter. Seeing as North Fork is a small town and we all know each other we could have chatted for hours, so after a few minutes I called everyone back together to continue the meeting.

The next item was a go-round where everyone got a couple minutes to say what they were offering in exchange for shares, and what services they needed. Each time someone presented, it gave the rest of the group more ideas and some back and forth conversations started. The process threatened to become very lengthy, so I kept the ball moving, mostly by thanking people after they had spent a minute or so and nodding at the next person in line. I also encouraged people to engage in private conversations about possible exchanges after the meeting was over. This was not entirely successful, but it did help keep the agenda item more or less on time. We ended with a quick discussion of next steps and a feeling of great enthusiasm.

Case Study 2: Economic Development and Tourism Planning Meeting

Here's the background: The County where I live only has resources for minimal economic development planning. The official Economic Development Plan they had in place only listed projects in the more urbanized areas. The rural foothill areas where I live didn't get much attention. This was problematic, since there is a big need for funding and assistance to promote tourism, the major industry for the foothill area.

Economic Development is an interest of mine, and I got myself appointed to the Economic Development Commission to try to encourage more planning and get better representation for the rural areas of the County. One of the first things I did was to propose a planning workshop for the tourism industry. The planning session would cover tourism businesses throughout the County, but it would be held in the foothills. Since I offered to do most of the work myself, I got approval to move forward.

The primary goal of the workshop was to come up with a list of projects that would support the tourism industry in the County. These projects would be added to the County's Economic Development Plan. Being listed in this plan would add to the competitiveness of any funding applications we submitted for these projects. But a secondary goal was to bring people together from various tourism businesses, county departments, and other local agencies and groups. Just having these folks talk about the projects they had on the drawing board could bring about collaboration and sharing of resources. This could make a difference in itself, outside of any funding opportunities.

The first thing I did was to find a professional facilitator – Diane - who was willing to facilitate the meeting for free, just because she lived in the area and thought it sounded like fun. This was a real coup, but getting this type of free assistance it is not a rare as it might sound. A lot of professionals are willing to assist in efforts that benefit their own communities. I also recruited the head of the local tourism board – Dan -and the planning director from the local National Park – Kristina - to help with the planning and the facilitation. We set a date for the workshop and I sent out a 'save the date' e-mail notice to the everyone I could think of - groups, chambers of commerce, tribes, relevant agencies, and anyone else I thought would be interested.

The four of us met about a month in advance of the meeting to plan the agenda. We decided that the session should include small-group brainstorming so that everyone had a chance to contribute followed by a prioritization session so we could choose the top ideas. The brainstorming question we decided on (The 'Question') was:

"Let's suppose the Government has decided to stimulate the economy through the Tourism Industry. They are giving grants – up to $5 million – for tourism projects that will spur economic development. ***What tourism projects should Madera County propose for these grants?***

Projects can be:

- Infrastructure projects (road widening, sewers, parking lots, etc.)
- Facilities to attract visitors (museums, visitor's centers, etc.)
- Informational/Educational projects that help promote existing resources (web sites, visitor guides, etc.)"

We figured that this would spur the participants' imaginations while keeping them focused on the type of projects that would be most useful for inclusion in the County's plan. We also wanted to encourage informal interaction among the participants, so we scheduled a nice long break after the small group discussions.

Dan, through his contact on the tourism board, persuaded a local lakeside resort to donate a beautiful meeting room plus refreshments. I made sure to visit the room before the meeting to check that there would be adequate tables, chairs, and wall space for notes. As the meeting date approached I worked with Diane and Kristina on finalizing the agenda. I also took care of some last minute outreach. We had made a flyer, so I asked the Chambers and the Tourism Board to pass it out to their members, and post it at appropriate businesses. I called many of the major stakeholders personally to make sure that they would attend.

Here is the working agenda for the meeting created by Diane:

Economic Development Planning for the Tourism Industry

September 30th 2009 - 2:00 - 5:00 p.m.	
2:00	Sign in - Name Tags - Coffee
2:10	Welcome by County Supervisor Why We are Here - What Happens in the National Park - Kristina Goals & Information, Q &A's - Elissa Agenda for the Afternoon - Diane Participant Introductions - Quick Go-Round
2:45	Instructions for Group Discussion - Brainstorming "rules" - Diane "The Question" - Individual response time (5 min. max) Examples - Elissa Break into groups (5-6 table groups with flip charts - written instructions on each table) Round robin of individual responses to the question, group brainstorming, discussion, record project ideas on flip charts for presentation to the overall group (45 min.)
3:45	Group Presentations Explanation of prioritization "dot process" - Diane
4:00	Break (dot process)
4:15	Overview of dot results – Diane Next Steps - Where do go from here? – Process for moving forward with planning. Elissa - (what will be done with this information) County Speaker (Ray/Norm) Process for selecting projects.

4:55	Final overview & Thank you

Materials/Equipment Checklist

- ☐ 6-7 Flip Chart Stands (Diane & Kristina)
- ☐ 6-7 Flip Chart Pads (Diane & Kristina?)
- ☐ Flip Chart Pens (Diane & Kristina)
- ☐ Tape (Diane)
- ☐ Dots (Elissa/EDC)
- ☐ 2 Decks of Playing Cards (Diane)
- ☐ Name Tags (EDC)
- ☐ Sign-in Sheet (EDC)
- ☐ "The Question" sheet for each participant (Elissa/EDC)
- ☐ Extra pens or pencils for tables (EDC)
- ☐ Instructions for Small Group Work (written for each table) (Diane)

On the day before the meeting, Kristina, Diane and I had lunch together to go over the process one more time. Then we went to the room and started setting up. We had written out an agenda on large sheets of paper and affixed this to the wall. We set up the round tables with 8-10 chairs for the small groups, and set a flip chart up next to each table to record the small group sessions. We set up a table just inside the entry door with sign in sheets and name tags. We distributed the 'Rules for Brainstorming' and 'The Question' sheets at every place.

As people came into the room we greeted them, asked them to sign in and make themselves a name tag, and gave them a card from a deck. We had removed all of the 2's – 9's, keeping only the aces, kings, queens, jacks and 10s. This was how we planned to divide up the participants into small groups, but we didn't tell folks this, we just gave them the cards and looked mysterious.

We planned to start the meeting with the County Supervisor making some welcoming remarks, but he couldn't make it so his staff person did the welcome. Then Kristina helped put the meeting in context by talking about how important it was for the National Park to plan ahead for the types of projects they wanted to implement. They never knew, she said, when there might be some extra funding that suddenly became available. They would only have a few weeks to prepare an application for this funding. So it was vital that they had prepared in advance a list of projects in the Park they wanted to get funded, along with as much details on each project as they could get together. That way they were prepared to take advantage of all of the funding that they could.

I followed this up with a description of the types of grants that might be available for the tourism industry if we planned ahead. I explained the function of the County's Economic Development Plan, and how important it was that the Tourism industry was represented. I asked for questions and had a short discussion on some areas of concern. Then I turned it over to Diane. She went over the agenda for the afternoon. Then she invited people to introduce themselves. They were asked to give their names, their organizations, and to tell us which playing card they had. Strangely enough, the playing cards started taking on a mysterious significance. Participants would announce that they were the Queen of Clubs, or the 10 of Hearts with great feeling in their voices, and the rest of the room responded, murmuring 'ooh', and 'ah.' It added a touch of fun to the proceedings.

After the introductions, Diane explained that we were going to engage in a brainstorming session and described briefly the 'Rules for Brainstorming'. (See below).   I explained the brainstorming question (The 'Question') and we invited the participants to move to tables based on their card (all the kings at one table, all the queens at another, etc.) Each table was set up with a flip chart and pens, and we had already arranged for a recorder to take notes for each group. We asked the recorder to also help with facilitation. First we did a 'go round' in the groups, with each person in turn answering the question – what infrastructure or project did they think would benefit the tourism industry in the county. Then we encouraged a free-for-all discussion about the issue. As usual, group did not stay strictly to the brainstorming rules. There were back and forth discussions, questions and answers about existing projects, digressions, etc. But in the end each group had a substantial list.

We spent about an hour on the brainstorming session, giving folks a 5 minute warning before the end of the period. Then we each group to 'report out' by going through their brainstorming list and providing a little detail on each proposed project. The groups had already established identifies ("We are the JACKS group") and spoke with evident pride about the ideas they generated. After all of the reports, Diane described the 'dots' process. The group reporting sheets were pasted to the wall. Each person was given six dots and could put them next to any of the ideas on the sheets. This would help us determine which ideas had the most support. We combined this 'dots' process with the break so people could take their time walking around and looking at the various ideas while munching cookies or sipping tea.

Finally we got everyone back in their seats and Diane went from sheet to sheet pointing out those ideas which had the most support. Most of the top items were infrastructure or development projects but there were some interesting alternatives. One of the top vote-getters was to hold 'star parties' up in the high-country meadows during meteor showers. This wouldn't take any money at all, just some coordination.   This was important to note, since one of our goals with this meeting was to encourage the organizations to start working together on projects, building collaborations and developing an enthusiasm for getting things done.

Finally we wrapped up with ‘next step’. I told the group that I would be compiling list of the ideas generated. Those ideas that were appropriate for the County’s Economic Development Plan would be put together and submitted to the Economic Development Commission. If grants became available we might be able to put our project forward for funding. But I also noted that a lot of the ideas didn’t take funding, just working together for coordination. We ended the meeting with the inspiration to keep working together.

Rules for Brainstorming

I. The purpose is to generate ideas.
II. Invite and encourage each other to participate.
III. All ideas are accepted and recorded.
IV. No criticism, assessing, judging, “yes buts,” or debating.

These case studies show how different components and exercises can be used to achieve the goals of the meeting. The first meeting was informal, but it was still important to plan an effective format. The second meeting involved much greater stakes and the planning and preparation were more extensive. You can scale your meeting planning effort up and down depending on the nature of the session. But don’t skip it! If your participants feel that their time was well used, they are more likely to come again.

Practice makes perfect. No one is going to be a perfect facilitator their first time out. But people will appreciate your obvious efforts to plan an effective meeting. And you will be building a valuable skill.

Part II - Chapter 2: Grant Writing

Grant writing is the process of asking an organization or agency for funding. This process ranges from tossing off a two paragraph appeal to the local Rotary Club for $500 to sweating over a 50-page technical document asking the federal government for $5 million.

Many types of organizations give grants. The major ones are government (State and federal mostly, but sometimes cities and counties as well), foundations and local service organizations. (This is discussed more in Part II, Chapter 3). For purposes of this book, I'm going to focus on the types of grants you write when seeking funding from foundations and State programs, since these are the most likely sources of funding for community projects. Submitting a funding application to these programs is not particularly daunting. Usually it involves a narrative of 5 to 15 pages, a budget and work plan, and some other supporting documents. If you have reasonable writing skills, you shouldn't have a problem completing these applications. The trick is to complete the applications in such a way that you will be awarded the funding!

Grant writing is a special type of writing. To be successful you need detailed information about your program and you need to know how to communicate that information in a way that is persuasive to granting organizations. There are tips and tricks of the trade. The good news is YOU'VE ALREADY DONE MOST OF THE WORK!!!!

Assuming that you already worked through Chapter 3 in Part I (Program Development), you have already done 90% of the work involved with grant writing. Grant writing is, primarily, program development. The granting organizations want to know:

a. What are the project's goals and objectives
b. What is the community need that the project is addressing
c. How your proposed project or program will meet this need
d. What is the step-by-step work plan you will follow to implement your program and how much time will each step take?
e. What is your budget for implementing the program?
f. What will be the immediate and long-range benefits and how will you measure them?
g. What capacity do you and your partners have to succeed in this effort?

If you have already taken the time to think this through and write it out, you have very little left to do. It is the quality of a program that convinces the granting organizations to give you money, not perfect writing or fancy graphics. If you have done your program development work you will already know how to document your community's needs and how perfectly your proposed program or project will meet these needs. You will have done your outreach and gathered your partners. You will know the main steps to implementing your program and will have started on a work plan, budget and timeline. You will have defined your outputs and outcomes and you'll have a plan for evaluating them.

The only thing you really need now are some 'tricks of the trade', and these can be taught. So here goes…..

There are four main principals to remember when writing grants:

1. **Grant writing is persuasive writing, not descriptive writing**. Contrary to what you might think, grant writing does not involve simply describing your program and what you are going to do with the funding. Instead you must make a logically sound and persuasive argument, section by section, that your organization is the most deserving of funding. Show the funder that you are the most needy community, that you have the most creative and practical solution to your problems, that your organization is the most competent to implement the program, that you have planned your activities and thought it all through. Imagine yourself a lawyer trying to 'make your case'. Provide all the evidence they need to be convinced that you are professional, thoughtful and competent.

*Here is an example of **descriptive** writing for a project called the Native Oak Education Center*

"The proposed Native Oak Education Center will provide educational exhibits, materials, and programs in a small interpretive center adjacent to the Ahwahnee Hills Regional Park parking lot. The natural resources that will be interpreted will include the various species of native oaks and the ecosystems that are dependent upon them. A particular focus will be given to blue oak woodlands and interior live oak woodlands which constitute over 75% of the San Joaquin Region's oak woodland resources, as well as oak forests. Also interpreted will be the historical and cultural importance of the oak trees to the regional Native American populations.

Visitors will utilize the Center for formal and informal educational experiences, then will have an opportunity to wander through the surrounding oak woodlands to have a direct experience of the resource. A small arboretum with interpretive signage will act as a buffer, helping them connect their new knowledge with actual trees. Visitors will be provided with 'take home' messages about their opportunities to contribute to the preservation of these important resources. They will also have an opportunity to participate in classes and programs that will give them a more detailed understanding of oak ecosystems and the issues involved in oak woodland preservation."

Not too bad, but check this out -

*Here is an example of **persuasive** writing for the same project:*

"In a State with an astounding diversity of ecosystems, oak woodlands are central to California's image. Oceans and mountains are ubiquitous, but an image of golden hills dotted with gnarled trees brings California irresistibly to mind. The oak has been culturally and historically important to the indigenous population and to settlers alike, providing fuel and food. As an ecosystem, it is essential. More than half of the 662 species of terrestrial vertebrates in California utilize oak woodlands for food and/or shelter. Oak trees anchor soil, preventing erosion and sedimentation of the streams which flow from the mountain snowpacks to the urban and agricultural areas. Environmentally, historically and culturally, oak woodlands are among the State's most vital and valuable natural resources.

California's oak woodland resources are at risk from many sources, including agricultural conversions, intensive grazing, firewood harvesting, and, most seriously, development. The San Joaquin Valley population is expected to double over the next 40 years. The expansion of many urban areas will directly impinge upon and into oak woodland open space. In the San Joaquin region alone, it is estimated that approximately 10% of the oak woodlands, almost 250,000 acres, are at high risk of development by 2040. Many oak species are also at risk from low regeneration rates. Once overtaken by urban development or other uses, these oak woodlands cannot be restored. As a cultural, historical, and environmental resource, they need to be protected for future generations.

Visitors to the Native Oak Education Center will receive information and materials providing individual and collective actions that will help preserve oak woodlands. These will focus on direct actions such as information about preserving and regenerating oak trees on private property, and examples of city and county ordinances which preserve individual trees and oak woodlands. Information will also be provided on how to minimize human impact on the earth, since the ultimate impact of these activities, including climate change, threaten oak woodlands and many other natural resources."

Do you see how much more lively and compelling it is to read persuasive writing? The difference is that you focus less on describing the program and more on telling the story – This is the resource, this is the problem, and this is what we're trying to do about it!

Don't carry this too far. Your grant will probably contain both persuasive <u>and</u> descriptive writing. You have to have some sections where you are just describing what you are planning to do. But it is the persuasive writing that 'packs the punch'.

2. Grant writing is competitive – go the extra mile! It is a lot of work to write a grant and not really worth it if you don't win. Most grant applications are rated on point scales, section by section. The application guidelines will often tell you what information they need to award the maximum points. To win the grant, you have to get the points. To get points, you must include all the information in each section that will allow you to get maximum score. And you need to back up that information with the necessary documentation. This can be a lot of work. But if you are going to invest time into grant writing, you've got to be prepared to go the extra mile.

Do the best job you can in providing the requested information, and do it exactly as they ask you to do it. For example, if a grant application asks you to document community poverty using census statistics, then use census statistics. If it asks you to compare your community to the state or federal statistics, do it! If you can't figure out where to get the information, ask someone.

Here's an example of extremely precise guidelines from HUD for a Rural Housing and Economic Development grant, along with my response. I wrote this grant proposal many years ago and at this point I can hardly read it without falling asleep. But at the time I did what was needed to respond to the guidelines and get the funding. I'm including it as an example of the extreme lengths to which you sometimes have to go in order to produce a successful funding proposal.

HUD Application Guidelines:
Rating Factor 2 - Need and Extent of the Problem (25 points).

The Rural Housing and Economic Development program has been designed to address the problems of rural poverty, inadequate housing and lack of economic opportunity. This Factor addresses the extent to which there is need for funding the proposed activities based on levels of distress, and an indication of the urgency of meeting the need/distress in the applicant's target area. In responding to this Factor, applications will be evaluated on the extent to which the level of need for the proposed activity and the urgency in meeting the need are documented and compared, vis-à-vis, the target area, and national data.

(1) In applying this Factor, HUD will compare current levels of need in the area (i.e. Census Tract(s) or Block Groups), immediately surrounding the project site or the target area to be served by the proposed project and in the national level of need. This means that an application that provides data that show levels of need in the project area expressed as a percent greater than the national average, will be rated higher under this Factor. Notwithstanding the above, an applicant proposing a project to be located outside the target area could still receive points under the Need Factor if a clear rationale and linkage is provided linking the proposed project location and the benefits to be derived by persons living in more distressed area(s) of the applicant's target area.

(2) Applicants should provide data that address indicators of need as follows:

(a) <u>Poverty Rate</u> **(5 points)** – data should be provided in both absolute and percentage form (i.e., whole numbers and percents) for the target area(s). An application that compares the local poverty rate in the following manner to the national average at the time of submission will receive points under this section as follows:

(b) <u>Unemployment</u> **(5 points)**

(c) Other indicators of social and/or economic decline that best capture the applicant's local situation **(5 points)** –Examples that could be provided under this section are information on the community's stagnant or falling tax base, including recent commercial or industrial closings, housing conditions, such as the number and percentage of substandard and/or overcrowded units, rent burden (defined as average housing cost divided by average income) for the target area, local crime statistics, etc. To the extent that the applicant's statewide or local Consolidated Plan, its Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing choice (AI), and/or its Anti-Poverty Strategy identify the level of distress in the community and the neighborhood in which the project is to be carried out, references to such documents should be included in preparing the response to this Factor.

HUD requires use of sound and reliable data (e.g., U.S. Census data, State statistical reports, university studies/reports that are verifiable) to support distress levels cited in each application. A source for all information along with the publication or origination date must also be provided.

Application Response – Proposal for North Fork Economic Development Funding
FACTOR 2: NEED AND EXTENT OF THE PROBLEM

Poverty Rate: The current poverty rate for the United States is 12.4%, and the most recent figures for Madera County indicate a rate of 21.4%.[Mark] The Census Bureau does not have figures on the poverty rate for the rural target area of North Fork, but in 1998 the CDC conducted a survey, which was certified by an independent Certified Public Accountant, of 39 households or 192 residents in the area targeted to benefit from this project adjacent to the mill site[Mark]. According to the results of this survey, 87.25% (168 out of 192) of the residents in this area were living below the 1998 poverty rate of $8,316. [Mark]

Unemployment : The unemployment rate for the United States in April, '03 was 6.0, while unemployment for Madera County where the proposed project is located is 14.7%.[Mark] Although the Census Bureau does not break out unemployment statistics for the unincorporated area of North Fork, a formal economic analysis done in 1998 by Swan & Associates, an economic development consulting firm, estimated the town's unemployment rate at 17 %. According to the Bureau of Indian Affairs 1995 data the community represented by the North Fork Mono Rancheria, which is the target population for the low-income housing project assisted by this grant, has an unemployment rate 41% with 56% of the population earning less than $9,050.

Other Indicators of Social and/or Economic Decline: As a result of the closing of the mill in 1994, North Fork has experienced severe economic dislocation. Out of a labor force of 1,158 individuals,[Mark] approximately 120 jobs were lost. The Native American Mono community, which had many people employed by the mill or in associated logging businesses, was particularly hard hit by the mill closure and has been very slow to recover. Several local businesses closed their doors. Most of the businesses remaining in the downtown area continue to experience no growth or a decline in sales.

In addition, there is a critical need for upgrade and rehabilitation of affordable housing in North Fork. Although there are no statistics on North Fork with regard to the housing situation (Madera County has no housing authority or department), a 1992 survey conducted by Self Help Enterprises, a respected nonprofit housing provider, found 67% of the housing stock in the downtown area was substandard.

According to the North Fork Rancheria Indian Housing Authority there are 8800 Native Americans living in the service area of Fresno and Madera Counties, with 6058 families, 3485 or 57% are low-income. 3,000 of the Native Americans are elderly, of these 1072 or 36% are low-income. Of the 8800 population, 1112 (13%) are in substandard housing, and 509 (6%) are in overcrowded housing. This indicator confirms the California's Statewide Consolidated plan, which focuses on the need to provide housing for low-income Native Americans.

[Mark] U. S. Census Bureau, 3/02

[Mark] The respondents to this survey constitute approximately 10% of the target area population. In whole numbers, 1,550 out of 1,776 individuals would be below the poverty rate.

[Mark] U. S. Census Bureau, 3/01

[Mark] California Employment Development Department 5/03

[Mark] U.S. Census Bureau, 1990 Census

3. Grant writing is following directions. Each grant application must be approached individually according to the guidelines established by the funding organization. If you have already put together a neat package giving all of the information about your project, that's just too bad. You will have to undo that package, take out the individual bits of information, and re-package them according to the instructions. If the guidelines say use 12 point Arial font, then do it. If they say to double space the narrative and don't go over 10 pages, do it. If they ask you to attach documentation and letters of support, attach them. If they tell you not to include any attachments, don't include them. Provide them with exactly the information requested in the exact format they specify. Following directions will make it easier for the grant reviewers to find what they are looking for, and this maximizes your chances of getting good scores.

A really good strategy which I use ALL the time is to use the grant guidelines as an outline for my proposal. The guidelines will ask you a variety of questions. Take each of those questions, turn it into a statement, and use it as a paragraph heading. Then fill in the information for each paragraph and you have a great chance at a winning proposal.

Here's an example of a grant application I submitted to the National Park Service Rivers and Trail Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program. The grant was not for money; instead it offered a consultant to provide technical assistance which was needed for a local park that the County was in the process of developing in collaboration with a community group. I've given the complete application guidelines along with my narrative response.

Application Guidelines

Applications for RTCA assistance are competitively evaluated by our regional offices, based on how well the applications meet the following criteria:

1) A clear anticipated outcome leading to on-the-ground success;
2) Commitment, cooperation, and cost-sharing by interested public agencies and non-profit organizations;
3) Opportunity for significant public involvement;
4) Protection of significant natural and/or cultural resources and enhancement of outdoor recreational opportunities; and
5) Consistency with the National Park Service mission and RTCA goals (see box).

Application letters (one to three pages) should include the following information:

1. Project Title and Description

- Provide the name of the project and project location.
- Note who is taking responsibility for the implementation of the project.
- Describe briefly what will be done, why the project is important, the proposed schedule, and who will be involved.
- Identify what populations in your community will be served by the project.
- Outline the background or prior activity on the project (if any) and the current status.

2. Resource Importance

- Describe the most important natural, cultural, historic, scenic, and recreational resources within the project area.

3. Anticipated Results

- On-the-ground results: What specific resource will be created, conserved, enhanced or made available to the public? For Instance: How many river miles will be improved by restoration projects? How many river miles will be conserved with enhanced protection status? How many miles of multi-use trail will be created? How many acres of parkland will be created and where? How many acres of wildlife habitat will be restored?
- Other accomplishments: For example: an increased community commitment to stewardship, a new conservation organization, or the development of a concept plan for a trail.

4. Support for the Project

- Describe the support you anticipate from interested stakeholders, such as public agencies, nonprofit organizations, and landowners.
- List the project partners and describe their role(s) and contributions.

5. Rivers & Trails Program Role

- Describe what kind of technical assistance or role you are seeking from the RTCA program.

NPS Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program

Application for Assistance

1. Project Description. Project Title: Ahwahnee Hills Park Project.
Lead Agency: Madera County Resource Management Agency.

This project involves creation of a 250 acre regional park in the Sierra Nevada foothills south of Yosemite National Park. This land is currently owned by the County and was the former site of a tuberculosis sanitarium, and then a boy's school. The land has been sought for development purposes, but is currently undeveloped. Madera County received a $417,000 Sierra Nevada Cascade grant from the California Resources Agency to make this area into a regional park by improving necessary infrastructure and cleaning-up trash and hazards on the site. This grant will also rehabilitate two abandoned buildings into a Visitor's Center and an Interpretive Center for the areas' historic, natural and cultural resources. Additional funding has been obtained to "deconstruct" unwanted buildings on the site, recycle the building materials, and clean up environmental hazards.

This park area, which includes a riparian corridor, a small lake, meadows with specimen oaks and wooded hillsides, is an important recreation resource for Madera County. The County currently has only 15 acres of parkland, and many low-income residents lack the resources to travel to the other regional recreational activities, such as the expensive Yosemite Valley. It will also be an important resource for the region in general, which is in need of an area for hiking, picnicking and other recreational activities.

Madera County is one of California's poorer counties, and is experiencing further financial difficulties because of the State budget crisis. In order to accept the $417,000 grant, the County must commit to providing operations and maintenance for a minimum of 20 years. Fiscal prudence makes it impossible for the Supervisors to commit County General Funds for that purpose. The surrounding community is very enthusiastic about this park opportunity, and has lobbied the County to accept the funding. Local residents indicate a willingness to take responsibility for some of the operations and maintenance tasks, however the process of organizing committees, engaging the public in a constructive way and comprehensively planning park uses and activities is challenging, and the County has little experience and resources in this area. It is hoped that with assistance from the RTCA program, a partnership can be developed between the community residents, local nonprofit organizations and the County to comprehensively plan for park activities, leverage the resources necessary to secure the property as parkland, and successfully implement the desired recreation programs.

2. Resource Importance. The following benefits will result from the development of this park:

- Increased public access to streams and lake: The property contains both a stream and a small lake that are accessible by a short hike from the park entrance.
- Recreational open space and trails: Trails for hiking and jogging are not otherwise available in the area, residents are known to run along the highway for exercise. This

project will make five miles of improved hiking and jogging trails available for the public. In addition, the project is located along historic Route 49, and will provide picnic areas, natural interpretive viewing and recreational opportunities for local, regional and visiting individuals.

- Interpretive programs: Buildings on the site will provide interpretive information on historic and natural resources of the area. In addition, a historic barn on the site will be renovated by volunteers to be used as an interpretive facility for local youth.
- Preservation of ecosystems and watersheds: The property includes an important tributary to the Fresno River, a watershed that is currently undergoing restoration efforts by the local Central Sierra Watershed Committee. Through this project, the stream and the lake on the property will be preserved from development which might otherwise occur in the nearby meadow area if the area is not maintained as open space, thus protecting and enhancing water quantity and quality for the area.
- Cultural Benefits: The area is significant for Native American history and culture. The area is the site of one of the last Indian battles in California. In addition, the property is right next to the Wasuma Round House, a Native American religious site that is still in use by local tribes, as well as being open to the public.
- Historic Benefits: This property is located on what used to be the main road to Yosemite. Mail and passenger horse drawn stages made regular trips to the valley. A traveler's hotel used to be located on the potential park site, which was visited by a number of distinguished persons. Information about this area's history will be presented in the Visitor's Center.

3. Anticipated Results.

This project will bring about the following results:

- Conservation and preservation of 250 acres of historic and culturally significant open space, including native oak woodland, a small lake and a riparian corridor;
- Development of 5-10 miles of multi-use trails;
- Creation of a vision for park uses and activities;
- Leveraging of resources necessary to implement this vision;
- Demonstration of a collaborative partnership between local government, nonprofit organizations and community residents that can be replicated in future projects.

4. Support for the Project.

This project already has a significant amount of financial and community resources. The $417,000 grant can be supplemented by the State “Per Capita” park funds coming to the County. The Madera County Board of Supervisors has already indicated its support for the project and has directed County staff to be involved. The Ahwahnee Community Council and other local nonprofit organizations have held numerous meetings about this project, and residents throughout the County are being asked to participate on a Park Planning Committee.

With the addition of skilled planners and facilitators from RTCA, a successful project is very likely.

Project Partners:

- CA Resources Agency – providing $417,000 grant
- Madera County – lead agency for project, providing staffing for project implementation and grant writing services for resource development
- Madera Park Planning Committee – currently being formed, will help plan park uses and activities and try to determine how to cover maintenance and operations costs
- Ahwahnee Community Council – advocates for the park, will help coordinate volunteer assistance from community residents

5. RTCA Program Role

We hope that the RTCA team can offer the following assistance, which is critical for the project's success:

- Engage public participation and facilitate collaborative efforts to implement the project;
- Help define and realize a vision for park uses and activities;
- Help leverage resources as needed for implementation.

We expect that the main facilitation and planning assistance will take place over one-year's time, and hope that follow-up assistance will be available as necessary.

6. Contact Information
(deleted)

Support letters will be sent under separate cover and will be received by July 15.
Thank you very much for your consideration of this project.

Sincerely,

Did you read it carefully? Read it again, noting what the application guidelines requested and how I structured my response. In what way did I carefully follow their exact directions? In what way did I depart from the guidelines?

You may notice that I departed from the guidelines a little in the first section. This is because I am a firm believer in Putting the Program in Context.

4. Put the Program in Context. This is another 'trick of the trade'. If at all possible, I try to start my grant narratives with a very strong introduction. Usually grant guidelines will make this easy for me, by asking for a brief outline of the project, either in a separate summary or at the start of the narrative. This section is usually called "Introduction", "Executive Summary", or "Brief Project Description". But even if the guidelines don't ask for this, I will find a way to start my grant application by putting the proposal in context. This means that I don't just give a dry description of my project. I add items from the 'need' section and any other sections that will help paint a short but compelling picture of why this program is exciting and innovative, how much it is needed and how it will make a huge difference for the community.

Why is this important? Imagine a grant reviewer about to score your proposal. They've read dozens of proposals and they have dozens more to read. They are doing their best to be fair, to score the applications according to the scoring criteria that has been set forth in the grant guidelines. But they are human <u>and</u> they like to see positive things happening in communities – they wouldn't be grant reviewers otherwise! They get excited about interesting, innovative projects. They get inspired by small communities that decide to take on their problems and make a difference. And when they are excited and inspired, they may just want to give you the benefit of the doubt when scoring your application.

So writing an inspiring introduction can make a real difference in your application's success. This is your opportunity to get the reviewers excited about your project, your organization and your community. Use this short space to tell the story and win the reviewers sympathy and respect. Remember, no-one loves a whiner. The most compelling proposals present a situation that is very challenging, but show that your community is bravely meeting the challenge and pulling yourselves up by your bootstraps.

Do you remember the 'bonus points' from the 'Program Description' section of Section I Chapter 3 (Program Development)? These are characteristics that are considered very desirable in program development:

- <u>Collaboration</u> - are you working with other organizations, local government, schools and colleges, etc.?
- <u>Leverage</u> – are there other resources available for the proposed program including local talent and volunteers?
- <u>Community Involvement</u> – have you involved the community in your project planning or do you intend to involve them in project implementation? It is particularly effective if this involvement includes a diverse cross-section of the community, and specifically representatives from the target group(s) that you seek to serve.
- <u>Sustainability</u> - will your project be able to financially support itself in the future?
- <u>Special Populations</u> – does your project meet the needs of any special group, (ethnic, rural, low-income, senior, youth, etc.)?
- <u>Replicability</u> – could this project be a model for other communities?
- <u>Track record of success</u> – Are you involving community partners who have a track record of successfully implementing other projects?

To the extent you've been able to integrate these characteristics in your program design, include them in your introduction statement.

Now, a test….

The application to the National Park Service Rivers and Trails grant reproduced above was not only successful, I was told by the grant reviewer that it tied for first place among all the applications. So here's the test. Read the application guidelines and the responding narrative again. Why was it rated so highly? What did I do right?

How did I 'beef up' the program description to get the reviewer's sympathy and interest? How many 'bonus points' did I include?

More Grant Writing Information….

Who is the 'Applicant'? You may have decided to take the lead in a community project, but that does not make you an eligible applicant for funding. Most government and foundation funders will only provide grants to local government agencies or nonprofit corporations with tax-exempt status. So should you set up a nonprofit corporation of your own? Maybe, or maybe not, I'll talk about that more in Chapter 6. But even if you decide that is a good idea, it is a lengthy procedure. You and your team may not want to wait for six to nine months while the paperwork to be reviewed and processed. You could get your funding and be developing your project by then!

Often a good strategy for new groups is to append their program to an existing agency or nonprofit corporation. It is common for established organizations to act as 'fiscal agents' for new programs. Usually there is some logical relationship between the new program and the established organization's mission and goals. The fiscal agent helps with the grant paperwork and financial requirements and your team does the actual work. The fiscal agent will take a small but reasonable percentage of the grant funding to compensate them for their responsibilities.

I'll talk about this more in subsequent chapters, but for the purpose of grant applications it is important to be clear about the relationship between the organization asking for the funding (the 'applicant') and the group that will be implementing the project (the 'project proponent' or 'project team').   Hopefully the two entities are a good match and have a logical connection. If appropriate, you can present your project as one of the applicant's new programs. It is attractive for funders to work with experienced applicants with an impressive track record that continue to respond to community needs by helping to work with new groups and launch new projects.

Letters of Inquiry

At this point you may be feeling a little overwhelmed. One reason is that you are being presented with a skill set out of context of your own experience. When you start writing your own grants everything will fall into place and this information will make more sense. Another reason is that you are seeing examples from pretty sophisticated grant programs. I've given you samples from my own grant writing files – as a professional grant writer I tackle larger and more complicated projects that a layperson/beginner can be expected to handle. It's good for you to see them, but don't feel like you have to be able to do this level of work right away.

Actually the process is often gentler and more gradual, particularly if you are applying for funding from a foundation. That is because these funders often request a 'Letter of Inquiry' (LOI) before they will accept a full proposal for funding. A Letter of Inquiry (or 'Letter of Intent', or 'Letter of Interest', the initials are the same so they tend to be used interchangeably) is a short introduction to your program giving the funder enough information to determine whether it may be a good fit for their funding program. If the elements of your proposal meet their grant program requirements they will then ask you for a more complete application.

The contents of a LOI are fairly standard. You briefly describe your community's need and your proposed program to address the need, you state how much funds you are seeking and how they will be used, and you give a little background on your organization. Some foundations will ask for other items, but this is very general information. Foundations will often give a page limit of two to three pages. Remember to follow directions, provide the information requested and stay within the page limit. Here is an example from a health foundation website:

Requesting a Grant

An organization must first write a one- or two-page letter of interest. We do not use application forms, and we do not accept formal proposals at this preliminary stage. Please note that submissions beyond two pages will not be accepted. The letter should include:

- information about the organization's mission and activities;
- the region and population(s) served;
- an explanation of how the funds will be used;
- the total amount of funding requested from the Foundation;
- program area within which you want your request considered; and
- project goals, leadership and duration.

In writing a LOI it is good to try for a simple, straightforward writing style. This is not the place to be overly dramatic. Tell your story briefly, explain why you need the proposed program, and try to sound as professional and competent as possible. Judicious use of facts and figures can help you with this.

One of the nice things about LOIs is that you can use them over and over. If your grant research (see the next chapter) results in 20 foundations that might be potential funders, you can write the basic LOI and use it again and again. You may need to make minor modifications, adding additional requested information or shortening the length to fit the specific foundation guidelines.

When can you expect a response to a LOI? This depends on the foundation, but don't expect to hear back in less than a month. Two or three months is a more realistic timeline for a response.

For those of you who have a little hesitation starting a writing project…

For some of you, the thought of sitting down and writing a grant, even a simple LOI, has about as much attraction as jumping off a waterfall. I write grants professionally, which means that almost every day I sit down and work on a writing project. Nevertheless, taking the first plunge into a new grant is inevitably uncomfortable, even for me.

So here's a tool to make it easier. This is a template Letter of Inquiry. Just fill in the blanks with information about your community and your proposal. Once you are done it will probably look awkward and will read about as well as a computer manual written in Chinese and translated by a 4th grader. But it will be a start. You will have written something. Edit it, add a sentence or paragraph where needed, and you will have a workable LOI. If you can get a friend or colleague to read it and make suggestions, you will really be on your way to a quality product.

****

FILL IN THE BLANKS LETTER OF INQUIRY

<u>(Name of Applicant)</u> has provided <u>(type of services/programs)</u> to the community of <u>(name of community)</u> since <u>(date of formation)</u>. *[Note: if you are using a fiscal agent, put in their information].* The organization's mission statement is: <u>(Applicant's mission statement.)</u> Activities include <u>(list Applicant's activities).</u>

<u>(Name of community)</u> is a <u>(briefly describe community, including physical and population characteristics that support your 'need' statement)</u>. <u>(Name of community)</u> suffers from (<u>briefly describe problem</u>). <u>(Describe why the problem is worse in your community than in other areas, or how you have fewer resources to deal with it.)</u>

Recently, a group of community residents have come together to try to address this problem. This group (use your group's name if you have one), has worked with other groups (list a few) and held extensive community meetings to design a (program or project) that will meet this need. *(If needed:)* The group has approached (Applicant) to be a fiscal agent for this project since it meets (Applicant's) goals and mission statement.

(Applicant) is seeking funding to assist (group) with the development of a (program or project). The funds will be used to (explain briefly). Additional resources, including (describe) from (source) will leverage the requested funding. The amount requested from (Funder) is ($________). *(If appropriate:)*This project will meet the goals of (Funder's) program area: (state program area).

The proposed (project or program) will take place over (length of project). Direct outcomes from the project will be (list outputs, or short-term outcomes). Over time, the expected long term impacts of the project will be (list long-term outcomes).

Thank you for your consideration of this request. The following individual may be contacted for more information: (Contact person's name and information).

Sincerely,

(Name and Title)
****

This LOI may need to be revised based on the specific information requested by a particular funder, but that shouldn't create a problem. Once you start writing and produce a first draft it is easy to add additional information.

Conclusion

Remember, this is just an introduction to a new skill. You can take classes on grant writing at most colleges and universities. Local agencies such as the United Way often give classes as well. And of course there are many on-line classes and tutorials.

But you won't learn unless you are willing to get in there and start writing. It is difficult, but even small grant can move a project forward. And even if it takes 25 hours (which it probably won't), to write a small grant for $5,000, so what! How else could you make $5,000 in 25 hours?

Chapter 3: How to Find Funding

One of the first things people ask me is, "Where can I get a grant for my project?" Getting things done does take resources, but grants may not be the first place to look. You can get volunteers, materials and offers of support from your own friends and community. You might even be able to raise a few thousand dollars from local benefits (bake sales, community dinners) or from requests to your town's service organizations. This is a good way to start, but it is true that if your project moves forward eventually you'll be looking for grants. So how do you find them?

Like everything else nowadays, there are ways to search on-line for funding opportunities. We'll go over them briefly in this chapter. I won't go into a lot of details because new and better search tools keep being developed and any descriptions of current programs will soon be obsolete. But I can share some general strategies that will be helpful in your search.

a. Researching Government Grants

Your project can receive government grants from the federal, state, or local government. Federal grants are nation-wide unless otherwise specified in the grant (some grants are targeted to specific regions where need is high). State grants are only given to projects within that state. Local government grants are rare, but can happen occasionally when the city or county receives large pots of money from their own grant application, settlement of a lawsuit, or entitlement program.

Federal Grants:

With a few exceptions, federal government grants are usually the larger, more serious sources of funding. It is difficult, though not impossible, for small, inexperienced non-profits to successfully apply for these grants by themselves. A better approach is to develop partnerships with local government or other agencies (see Chapter 4). That said, how do you find these grants?

There is a searchable federal database called grants.gov (www.grants.gov). You can browse the database for grants opportunities and perform a variety of searches. For instance, when a grant is issued from a federal department, it is assigned a Funding Opportunity Number and a CFDA (Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance) number. If you happen to have the federal register announcement that publicizes and describes the grant opportunity you can find these numbers and you can use them to search the grants.gov database for other information about the grant, such as the application materials, any modifications of the grant announcement, etc. You can also search by the name of the grant, if you know it. If you don't know any specific grants to search for, a simple keyword search is the best way to go.

To do a keyword search you have to play around a little. Let's say you want to develop a community park in your town. Start with one word that best describes your project, in this case it might be 'Park'. If you put that in as the key word, you're likely to get a list of results including thousands of grant programs. So you need to define it further. Let's say you add the word 'Community', so your entry would be 'Community AND Park'. (If you just put the words 'community park' your entry could be construed as asking for any grant that had the word 'community' or 'park', which would broaden your search instead of narrowing it. The way you ask for the more narrow list is by using the Boolean connector AND. Boolean connectors are generally capitalized.) Let's say that this search criteria results in a list of only 850 grants. Well, you're going in the right direction, but that is still too many grant programs to read. So let's add the word 'Youth' to the entry: 'Community AND Park AND Youth'. Now maybe we only get 250 grants. That's still a lot, but then we notice that the grants are listed by the date the applications are due, and only 30 of the programs have due dates that haven't already passed. This is a reasonable number. You do a quick scan of the grant summaries and find four that seem relevant. That is a good search.

You may find, as I have, that the federal government search tool is less than ideal. If you start finding grants popping up in your community park searches that seem to be focused on promoting civic engagement in Namibia, chances are that the system may not give you what you're looking for. In that case, try the appropriate federal department's websites. If we are looking for park funding, for instance, we could search the web for 'federal funding for parks' and we would come up with the National Park Service. Great! Their website, like many other government departmental sites, has a link for Funding Sources. This resource not only lists the NPS grant programs, but also directs you to other funding databases that might be more user-friendly and effective than the one which recently frustrated you.

State Grants:

If you have a medium-sized project, State grants are likely to be an appropriate source of funding. Some states have state-wide listings of grant opportunities, which you can find by a simple search (i.e. California state grants). If not, do a search for the appropriate department, (parks California state) and look for the Resources or Grants or Local Assistance page.

Local Government Grants:

As I mentioned, these are rare. I have never heard of a City or County running a grant program out of its own general fund. When local governments give grants, it is because either

1. They have received a large grant or entitlement from the state or federal government which is meant to be re-granted to smaller community organizations, or
2. They have settled a lawsuit or reached an agreement with a business enterprise (such as a Tribal casino) that includes some funding for local community organizations.

So how do you stay informed of these opportunities? First, read the local newspapers. Cities and counties that have these programs have to provide public notice of the funding opportunities. Second, make friends with your councilmember or supervisor. Let them know about your project and that you're interested in any funding information they might have. Finally, get involved! Other community organizations will hear about these funding opportunities and the word will spread. If you're hanging out with the people who are working on community projects, you'll hear about it.

Grant Locator Services: Commercial services provide web-based grant notification on a paid basis. These are generally very expensive; however your city or county may already be a subscriber. Ask someone; librarians are a good place to start. The most useful of these send regular e-mails with new grants and updated grant information. Some of the services specialize in government grants and others in foundation grants, though most of them will include some of both.

b. Researching Foundation Grants.

If you are a nonprofit organization, your best bet for funding will be foundations. Foundations are also nonprofit, tax-exempt organizations. Their tax-exempt function is to provide funding to other nonprofit tax-exempt organizations. Foundations range from obscure, small family foundations set up to honor a deceased parent, to huge behemoths that everyone has heard of, like the Ford Foundation. Foundation grants range from $500 to $5 million or more.

With a few exceptions, foundations do not provide grants to government entities. As a community organization this works in your favor, since local governments are not in competition for foundation funding. It also works in your favor in encouraging local government entities to form partnerships with nonprofit organizations. Such partnerships provide the maximum opportunities for funding; when the opportunity is a state or federal grant restricted to local governments then the government entity can be the applicant and when it is foundation funding then the nonprofit organization can be the applicant.

The best way I've found to research foundation grants is through the Foundation Center database (http://www.fdncenter.org)[1]. This is a searchable database of all U.S. foundations that provide grants, and includes information on the target activities funded, the amount of funding provided each year, how to apply for funding, and contact information. The database is on-line at the Foundation Center's web-site for a charge. It is also available free of charge at "cooperating collections", which can be found on their website at http://www.fdncenter.org/collections/. Most of these locations will provide training or will help you in your database search.

[1] I'm taking a risk that the Foundation Center will continue to exist into the future, but it is a venerable institution that has been around for a long time so I think the risk is justified. If you search for it and it doesn't exist anymore, just search for 'foundation funding database' and see what comes up.

So how do you search? Usually the search engine will include both 'category' and 'keyword' options. Start with categories and find the one which most resembles your project. If you find hundreds of foundations come up, narrow your search geographically (either by a geographic criteria or by using the name of your State as a 'keyword'.) If the results are still too broad, try using a keyword that will further define your type of project. You are trying to get 10-60 results for your search. You have to read through detailed information on these foundations to see if you think they would be good prospects for funding. If so, find out how to approach them (usually this is by a 2-3 page letter of intent) and start making contact.

Let's run through a sample search. Say you want to get solar lighting for a local park in Idaho which includes a historical cave. You would first look at the categories. They have one for <parks and recreation>, but that has over 3000 foundations. The <outdoor recreation> category has 250 foundations. Good, let's start with that. Narrow these down by using the keyword, or a 'contains the word' category and type in the name of your State <Idaho>. You will then get all of the foundations that have given outdoor recreation grants in Idaho. Let's say this is 75. You could read them all, but if you want to further refine the search, add another 'keyword' or 'contains the word' <cave>. This results in only 6 foundations, but chances are that they'll all be very good prospects.

Of course, this is just one way to go about a search. You'll have to use your own judgment and keep modifying the search based on your project and the results that you get. Do it a few times and you'll get the hang of it.

Community or Regional Foundations

Many counties or regions have a county, community, or regional foundation. (Large cities can have their own community foundations as well, but we're talking small town here.) If your area has one of these, you may have gotten lucky. These foundations are set up to give small grants to local community organizations. They generally have very easy application processes, and since they are so local the competition can be much lighter. They are also more likely to provide 'seed funding' to new organizations that fill unmet community needs. Of course, if they want to give funding to the arts and you want funding for your gay, lesbian and transgendered youth center, it may not be a good fit. But I strongly recommend that you start your search for funding by investigating whether any of these great institutions serve your area.

Another thing that community foundations can do is to give 'donor advised gifts'. If you are so lucky to have very rich friends, they can give a donation to the community foundation and direct that it be used for specific purposes, such as to fund your fledgling effort. The community foundation will take care of all the legalities and all the paperwork and make it easy on everyone. That may not happen very often, but it is good to know of this useful tool.

e. HOW TO APPROACH A GRANT OPPORTUNITY

Let's suppose that you've done your search and you've uncovered several grant opportunities that look like they might fit your needs. When you find such a grant opportunity, what do you do? Here are some good steps to follow:

1. Look at eligibility.

- Is your project an eligible project for the grant? Some grants are only for planning or studies. Some are only for implementation of projects. Some grants require that your project serve a particular target audience (low-income, minorities, disabled, etc.). Don't try to twist your project around to meet these criteria, it won't work. Look for opportunities that are a good match for your project.

- Is your organization an eligible applicant? As I mentioned, some grants are only for local government, some are only for community organizations. Sometimes other criteria apply. If your organization is not eligible, can you collaborate with one that is?

2. Look at the deadline. Even an expert like me needs an average of 6 weeks to put a grant application together. I've done it in less, but it is a stretch. This is not because I'm a slow writer. The time is needed to work with your partners on program development, get letters of support, resolutions from public bodies or other required documentation. This is one of the reasons that I strongly recommend that you work through the 'program development' steps before you look for funding.

3. Look at the match requirement Many government grants have a match requirement. Generally this is a percentage of the total project, such as 25% matching funds. Often these matching requirements have restrictions: i.e., state grants will require non-State match, federal grants will require non-Federal funds, etc. Some grants require a cash match; some will allow 'in-kind'. Read this section carefully and make sure you can document all of the resources that you will use to meet the match requirements.

4. If all of the above are suitable, print out all of the grant materials. Read all of them carefully and highlight important points.

5. Look for any sample grant applications that might be posted on the website or projects that have won previous grants.

6. Outline the grant. Go through the application materials point by point. If they have a scoring section, use this to help you outline the points you are going to make. (For more information on grant writing strategies, see Part II, Chapter 2)

8. Make a checklist of what is required in the application (this can also be your table of contents). Keep track of what you have already and what you need to get. Think ahead!

Getting a resolution from organizations or government agencies can take a number of weeks. Make sure you note how many copies you need to send, as well as the original. If the grant is submitted electronically, start the process early to make sure that you are properly registered and understand how to enter and upload information.

Finding good grant opportunities is a combination of hard work and good luck. Like many of the other skills in this section, the more you do it the easier it gets. Many grant sources allow you to sign up for a list serve of funding opportunities. As you do more research, you'll get more connected. Eventually, the grant opportunities will be coming to you!

Chapter 4: Partnerships and Collaborations

Let's say Mary wants to get something done in her town. The kids ride their skateboards on the downtown sidewalks and cause all sorts of havoc and accidents, and she thinks they should have a skateboard park. She is full of enthusiasm and energy; she has time to work on the project and the support of her friends and neighbors. Great! But she doesn't have experience doing this kind of project, she doesn't have an organization, she doesn't have administrative expertise, she lacks some key skills (like park design), resources (like land and money), etc. What should she do? Give up?

By no means!   If you find yourself in this position, the best thing to do is develop a partnership or collaboration. You bring resources to the table, others bring resources to the table, and together you make something happen. It is normal to need help in getting your project done. People form a variety of partnerships and collaborations to pool their ideas, experience, and resources. You can get good advice, learn new skills and make new friends. These partnerships have the added value of increasing community and political support. Politicians, funders and press love to hear about a wide variety of people and groups that decide to work together toward a common goal. The more diversity you can include in the partnership, the better!

In this chapter I'll introduce you to various types of partnerships and collaborations, how you develop and document them, and how to avoid pitfalls.

A. What are they?

Partnerships and collaborations are just relationships that you enter into to get something done. In both cases the relationship is more than just a letter of support, but less than a complete merger. There are a lot of different ways to define partnerships and collaborations, but without getting technical, here are basic definitions:

A Partnership is an enterprise where two or more individuals or organizations agree to work together on a specific project. The participants are going into business together. Partnerships tend to be focused on a specific project or problem, and they can be either long or short-term. For instance, say you own a computer store and you want to start a computer training center for seniors so they can take advantage of social media to stay in touch with their families. The local nonprofit senior services group, the Golden Bears, operates a senior center and provides free lunches and activities. They don't know much about computers, though. So you create a partnership. Your store donates trade-in computers to the Golden Bears so the store gets a tax deduction. You work with the local high school volunteer center to recruit students to come to the senior center after school to train the seniors, which they are glad to do because they need to fulfill their community service requirements and what better way to do that then to play with computers! You and your staff provide training and supervision for the high school students and get the satisfaction of knowing that you are helping your community's elders live happier lives. Also, the students are inspired to shop for their computers in your store. The seniors bring cookies and drinks for the high school students and get to keep track of all the silly pictures their grandchildren post on Facebook. Everyone gives something and everyone gets something!

A Collaboration is a gathering of individuals, organizations and (sometimes) agencies who agree to work together on a particular issue. This relationship involves less of a commitment then a partnership. The participants are not going into business together, they have simply agreed to meet as a group and put their heads together to solve some difficult community problem. Collaborations are frequently used to create plans or to work on long-term, complex issues. They usually have more participants than a partnership; in fact it is often the goal of collaboration to get all of the stakeholders to join in. For instance, if you were worried about lack of positive activities for youth in your town and wanted to put together a strategy to create a youth-friendly community, you might start a YouthTown Collaborative. You would include the nonprofit organizations that serve youth (boys and girls club, boy scouts, girl scouts, youth sports leagues, etc.), appropriate public agencies (schools, social services, public safety), knowledgeable individuals and local philanthropists, and of course some youth. Your goal would be to make the community a great place for youth to live, learn, and play. Your specific objectives would be to develop a YouthTown plan and to support projects that are in alignment with your goal. The collaboration's activities might include long-range planning, seeking funding for youth projects, building capacity for the organizations that already serve youth, and encouraging new youth-oriented programs. In other words, the collaboration wouldn't enter into the projects itself, but it would support existing projects and try to encourage new ones.

<u>Other types of relationships:</u> There are a few other types of relationships that are common in community development:

A **Joint Venture** is like a partnership but just covers a specific, short term activity. For instance, let's say your fledgling arts organization wanted to put on a music festival featuring local musicians. You've gone to the County to ask them to use the park for the festival. Even though they were charmed by the idea and impressed with your energy and enthusiasm, the County won't let you use their facility because you don't have event insurance and besides they've never heard of you and they don't like to take risks. So you enter into a joint venture with a local youth organization that has been putting on public events for years to co-sponsor the festival. You'll do all the work, the youth organization will give you advice and the benefit of their insurance policy. You'll get some good experience and start developing a track record and they'll get their names on all the publicity and will get some of the credit for the excellent event.

A Fiscal Agent is an organization that takes on financial responsibility for a project but generally has no other relationship with it. For instance, if you and a group of friends wanted to get a grant to do a mural project but you weren't incorporated as a nonprofit organization, you could ask a the local arts council, a 501(c)(3) corporation, to act as your fiscal agent. You would list them as the fiscal agent in the grant. If you are successful and receive the grant, the funds will be sent to the Arts Council, which will use them to pay the bills that you submit to them. Fiscal Agents usually take a percentage of the grant (generally 5 – 10%) to cover their administrative work.

B. How do you develop a partnership or collaborative?

First, figure out what you need. If you are reading this book, chances are that you are rich in enthusiasm, inspiration and ideas but you may lack organizational experience or resources. Reading Part I of this book and going through the exercises will help you think through your project and identify the resources that you will need to get it completed.   You don't need to know every detail, just an overview of what it will take to get to implementation.

Second, figure out what you have. We mentioned ideas and enthusiasm earlier. I don't want to burst any bubbles, but the truth is that good ideas are a dime a dozen and people who approach organizations full of enthusiasm for an idea but with nothing else to offer are probably going to be disappointed. You'll have to approach potential partners with an attractive package that will give them incentive to take on this new program. But don't be discouraged, if you've been a good reader and done the exercises in Part I, you will have probably something to offer. This could include:

- Contacts with stakeholders
- Community and political support
- A cadre of volunteers
- Donations from local businesses
- A commitment of your own time and energy
- A thoughtful program design with a well-researched work plan, budget and timeline.

Third, think about who might have what you need. If you are new to the area or haven't had much contact with organizations and agencies, ask someone who has. This is part of your larger 'stakeholder analysis' (see Part I Chapter 2).

It might help to do a chart like this: Let's say you're a retired school teacher who is passionate about vegetable gardening.   You want to start a school garden at a local elementary school.

Project: **Small-Town School Garden** Goal: Increase healthy activities and eating habits in youth and develop their respect for nature Objectives: • Develop garden at local elementary school • Teach youth about gardening and nature • Set up cooking demonstrations and classes for youth and parents • Provide healthy and educational afterschool and summer activities for youth		
I have	**I need**	**Possible partners**
• Good ideas and enthusiasm • Gardening skills • Experience teaching youth • Time: 10-20 hours/week • Promise of donations of seeds and tools from seed companies and local garden supply stores • Writing skills – took grant writing class and wrote successful grants for the school • A few volunteers	• Gardening land at or near school with water source • Place for cooking classes • Soil amendments • Insurance • Authority to work with children (school or after-school program sponsorship) • Cooking equipment and other ingredients as needed. • More volunteers	• Local elementary schools • Local after-school program at community center • 4H or Future Farmers of America • Farm Bureau/Cooperative Extension • County public health department, WIC • High School Home Economics division • Local churches

Fourth, make contact. I've already give some advice on how to contact stakeholders (see Part I, Chapter 2.b.) The basic strategy is to approach key stakeholders individually and get their support. Then approach your potential partners, using the support of key stakeholders as leverage to get a hearing. Use your judgment on whether to present to a group as a whole to assess initial interest, or whether it would be better start with a one-on-one meeting with a representative of the group to feel the idea out and get suggestions on the right approach.

In your approach you want to try to keep a balance between ownership and openness. You don't want a powerful and persuasive partner to divert you from your original intent. But you do want to encourage the partner to make the project 'theirs'. Small modifications to your vision are worth it to create buy-in and enthusiasm.

Fifth, negotiate the partnership! This is where it is really helpful to have a well-developed work plan and budget (see Part I Chapter 3). If you are clear about the steps needed to implement the project and the resources needed for each step, you can just go down the work plan and divvy up the responsibilities. I'll do these steps, you do these. I'll be responsible for these resources, you'll be responsible for the other ones. This kind of negotiation can be done with as many entities as there are in the partnership.

D. How do you document these relationships?

Once you have negotiated a partnership, you should document that relationship in writing. The 'in writing' part is important! You are going to enter into a relationship where the failure of one party to keep its commitments could cause damage to the other parties, either to their finances or to their reputations. You need to be clear on what these commitments are. Verbal agreements are legally binding, but to rely on memory in such cases is a big mistake. When I went to law school they used to say that verbal agreements 'weren't worth the paper they weren't written on.'

In all of these cases the agreement sets forth the purpose, scope, and operation of the partnership or collaboration. In a partnership or joint venture this is usually (but not always) in the form of a Partnership (or Joint Venture) Agreement. Collaborations commonly use a Memorandum of Understanding (commonly referred to as a MOU) or Letters of Intent, which are more or less the same thing but in less formal language.

It is important to be careful and complete about what is contained in such a document. These documents are legally binding, and although we hope that this never happens they can become the basis for a lawsuit.   For this reason it is always a good idea to have an attorney review your agreement.

But do you need to have an attorney draft the agreement? Maybe. That depends on a lot of factors, including whether you can get free or low-cost legal assistance (such as when one of the organizations involved has a lawyer on their board of directors). But whether or not you have an attorney draft your partnership agreement, it is a good idea for you and your partners to put down in writing the goals, objectives, terms and conditions of your partnership. I'll give you some pointers on how to do that below. Such a document can be used as the agreement itself or you can give it to the attorney and ask him/her to use it as a basis for the more formal agreement.

Partnership Agreements, Memorandums of Understanding, Letters of Intent and Joint Venture Agreements are all pretty much the same. In fact, most such documents would be interchangeable except for their title. They contain the following elements:

- Introduction and Parties: List the parties to the agreement. Describe anything that you want to refer to by a nickname. Such as: Small Town Joint Unified Elementary School, hereafter called 'School'…
- Recitals: A statement of the purpose for the relationship. This sets out your common understanding of the goals and objectives of the project. It can also include a general statement of what each partner's interest is and/or what they bring to the partnership.

- Scope of the Project: Describe the joint project. What does it include? What doesn't it include? (For instance, what part of each organization's activities are outside the project and unaffected by the agreement.) How long will the partnership last, is it a one-time thing or will it continue on indefinitely until you decide otherwise?
- Responsibilities: State specifically what each party will contribute to the partnership and what their responsibilities will be in the development, implementation and on-going maintenance of the project.
- Communication and Notices: List the ways that you can send formal notices to one another. This could be mail, fax, e-mail, etc. If you want, you can also describe your intention to have regular partnership or collaboration meetings, including how the agendas and notices will be handled.
- Dispute Resolution: No-one wants to think about disputes when they're just starting an exciting partnership and everyone is happy and enthusiastic. But do it anyway. If you don't make provisions for dispute resolution then the back-up option is a lawsuit. These can be necessary in extreme cases, but it's much better to find less expensive and emotionally difficult alternatives, such as mediation or arbitration.
- Dissolution: How will the partnership be dissolved? If there are any assets of the partnership, where will they go?

Some of these items may not be applicable to all agreements. For instance, a collaboration that meets to coordinate efforts around a specific issue may not need a 'Dissolution' section.

Here's **a Sample Partnership Agreement** for the Senior Computer Tutoring Project:

I.Introduction and Parties: The Bright Lights Computer Store (Store), the Golden Bear Senior Center (Senior Center), and the Small Town High School Volunteer Center (High School), hereafter referred to as the 'Parties' are entering into an agreement to set forth the terms and conditions of their Senior Center Computer Program partnership (Partnership).

II.Recitals: The Parties are entering into the Partnership because:

- Many seniors in Small Town do not know how to use computers, and specifically social media. This knowledge would help them stay in touch with their families and friends and decrease the loneliness and isolation that many seniors experience.
- There are currently no classes on computer and social media use that would be appropriate and accessible by seniors.
- The Senior Center is interested in holding computer and social media classes at its facility and has an appropriate space.
- The Store is interested in assisting the senior community in becoming computer-literate. It has access to extra computers and expertise.
- The High School is interested in encouraging its students to contribute to the community and can recruit students to be tutors for the class through its Volunteer Center.

III.<u>Scope of the Partnership</u>: This partnership will consist of providing computer tutoring classes at the Senior Center from 3:30 – 5 pm each weekday except school holidays. The partnership will be for the current school year, but may be renewed by agreement of all parties for subsequent school years.

IV.<u>Responsibilities</u>:

a. The Senior Center will be responsible for the following
   - Providing a room for the computer classes, equipped with appropriate tables and chairs as well as electric outlets and internet access.
   - Publicizing the class on its bulletin board, in newsletters, and by word of mouth.
   - Providing all needed insurance for the class.
   - Encouraging participating seniors to bring refreshments for the class tutors.
   - Providing a 'Thank You' party for the tutors and the store staff at the end of the school year.
   - Providing a donation receipt to the Store for the market value of the donated computers and value of the supervising staff's time.

b. The Store will be responsible for the following:
   - Providing the computers, cabling and accessories needed for the class.
   - Providing a training manual and a 2-hour training program for student volunteers.
   - Providing at least one staff person per class to oversee the student volunteers.

c. The High School will be responsible for the following:
   - Recruiting students to act as tutors.
   - Making sure that there are at least two tutors for every class at the Senior Center.
   - Providing basic 'volunteer training' to the students to make sure their actions, speech and dress are appropriate for working with seniors.
   - Maintaining records of the students who volunteered so that they can be thanked at the end of the school year.
   - Handling any tutor discipline problems that might arise.

V.<u>Communication and Notices:</u> The Parties agree to hold check-in meetings the first Tuesday of every month from 5 – 6 pm to assess the progress of the classes and deal with any issues or problems which might have arisen. If any Party feels that a problem has arisen that should be addressed before this check-in meeting, that Party will send e-mail notices to the other parties at the following e-mail addresses and will request a special meeting:

Senior Center: goldenbears@smalltown.net
Store: Brightlights@smalltown.net
High School: STHSVC@smalltown.net

VI. Dispute Resolution: Any dispute that arises out of this partnership or any of its activities will be referred to the Small Town Mediation Service for non-binding mediation. If the dispute is not resolved through mediation, it shall be referred to the Small County Bar Association's Dispute Arbitration program for binding arbitration.

VII. Dissolution: This Partnership may be dissolved by any Party by giving 30-day notice to all other parties at the e-mail addresses above, or by agreement of all of the Parties. Upon dissolution of the Partnership, all of the computers donated to the Senior Center shall remain property of the Senior Center. If the Senior Center does not want the computers, it shall donate them to another nonprofit organization. All training materials developed by the Store shall remain the property of the Store.

Date:_________________

Signed:________________________ __________________________ ____________________

See, that wasn't so difficult. You can use this example as a model for your own draft agreements. Remember that it is a good idea to check your draft agreements with an attorney. In our litigious society this is a worthwhile investment.

Note that the parties to this agreement include a nonprofit organization (the senior center), a for-profit organization (the store) and a public agency (the school). This is called a 'public-private partnership'. Funders tend to regard these highly and like to give them money. The theory is that nonprofits that make these types of connections are reaching out and utilizing all of a community's resources. If the Senior Center needed a small grant to upgrade its wiring or internet connection for the class, it should emphasize that this effort is a public-private partnership to increase its chance of getting the funding.

D. A Note of Caution

Partnerships should be taken seriously. It is important not to enter into a partnership commitment unless you think you can keep it, and to make every effort to fulfill your commitments. If something unexpected comes up that will interfere with this commitment, make sure to communicate with your partners as soon as possible.

It is also important to be clear about the commitment that others have made to your project. You can get into big trouble announcing that an organization is a partner before they have actually decided to participate. Formal partnerships require written agreements, but even informal support needs to be taken seriously.

A recent event in good old North Fork illustrates the importance of partnerships and clarity:

A few months ago I started noticing signs for the 'North Fork Music Festival '. This was a surprise to me because I hadn't heard about this event. With my connections (and the small size of the town), I usually hear about these types of things particularly because most of the local musicians are friends of mine. The organizers were charging $10 for an all-day event which they billed as 'family friendly'. I didn't attend – I couldn't because I was busy that weekend, but even if I could have gone I had a deep suspicion of a music festival that didn't involve the local musicians. My house is down the road from the North Fork Town Hall where the event was held and as I was going to and from home I wasn't surprised to see that the attendance seemed sparse; in fact there were only 10 – 15 cars in the parking lot.

From hearsay I found out later that the event was indeed a flop. Word was the organizer had wanted to put on a music festival to showcase a musician that she was supporting. She hadn't contacted any of the local organizations that usually raise funds by selling drinks or desserts at these community functions. Without their support, and their word-of-mouth publicity, people didn't come. She didn't involve the local musicians, who would have brought their own fans and friends. She had billed the event as a fund-raiser for the 'North Fork Food Bank', but this agency didn't actually exist. The closest thing is a food program put on by a local church, and a representative of this church was peeved because the organizer had somehow used the church's name in the promotion but hadn't bothered to get their agreement. The idea wasn't a bad one, but without taking the time to develop partnerships it fell flat on its face and harmed the organizer's credibility for any future endeavors.

Conclusion:

If you are truly serious about getting things done in your community, chances are that you will have to engage in a partnership at one time or another. Partnerships are relationships and they come with benefits and risks, just like other relationships. You can maximize the benefits by being clear about what you have to offer and what you need from other partners. You can minimize the risks by choosing your partners carefully, taking the time to be clear about the partnership provisions, and documenting your relationship in writing. Don't expect everything to be perfect. Just like relationships, we learn from our partnership experiences, good and bad.

Chapter 5: Handling Difficult People

Introduction: Success breeds controversy!

You work so hard to try and make things better for the community. You don't ask to be paid. You don't even ask for praise or recognition. A little quiet appreciation is all that you expect, as well as the satisfaction of having made a difference. And then someone comes into your process who seems dedicated to making things difficult for you. They may disrupt meetings, write cynical and inaccurate letters to the local papers, tear down your flyers, even launch a public protest. 'Why?' you ask yourself. Why this project? Why me?

I remember my own disbelief and anger when this first happened to me. I was part of the Women's Club in my law school and we were raising funds for some good cause by having a bake sale. The day of the bake sale I arrived at school to find that posters had been put up everywhere saying: "Bake Sales are Lies about Women![1]" Asking around, I realized that these posters had been put up by another member of the Women's Club!   I found the woman responsible, yelled at her for taking such a negative action without even bothering to talk to me first, suggested she stuff a cookie down her throat, and went off to brood. Needless to say, this didn't really help matters.

Since that time I have seen the same thing happen again and again. It seems to be an unfortunate fact of life that when you are working tirelessly for the public good, someone will come in and start making things more difficult for you. These 'difficult people' are not necessarily crazy or malevolent, though that is likely to be your impression. In general, they sincerely feel they are doing the right thing by exposing some misdeed, or protecting the public from some danger. Over time, I've found better ways to deal with difficult people, and even (in some cases) to make them my allies.

Chances are very good that you will encounter difficult people during your efforts to make things happen in your small town. These encounters will never be pleasant, but if you know that they are likely to happen and have some strategies prepared, you should be able to deal with them successfully.

a. Difficult people in your meetings

The first place you are likely to encounter difficult people is in your meetings. As you are developing your ideas, I've encouraged you to make formal and informal presentations to various groups in your town, and/or to hold public meetings to get feedback. During this

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[1] This was the early 1980s and there were some feminists (my opponent among them) who felt that having a bake sale might imply that women should be relegated to the limited role of making treats for fund raising. Since we were all students at one of the top law schools in the country at the time this concern may have been a bit of an over-reaction. At least, I thought so.

process you are likely to encounter people who are cynical, doubtful, or negative, either about the project idea or of your chances to succeed. Obviously this isn't going to make you happy; we all crave universal approval and acclaim for our wonderful ideas. But even so, these situations don't have to present a big challenge. Here are some suggestions.

1. **Control your emotions.** The best way to respond is with calm interest and appreciation. But if you can't hide your hurt feelings, try making a small joke out of them. Put your hand over your heart and say "Ouch!", for instance. Do not roll your eyes, smirk, or in other ways denigrate the speaker. <u>Always</u> be respectful. If possible, look thoughtful as the person is speaking and nod seriously.

2. **Give the person respectful attention.** Ask for more details. Say, "Let me make sure I understand what you're saying", and paraphrase it back. Let's say, for instance, that in a meeting where you are presenting your idea someone says "That's been tried over the last 20 years and no-one has ever made it work. And if they can't, you sure as hell won't be able to." Possibly they add some reasons why you are inadequate to succeed in this task, such as you are new in town, you are young, old, a woman, a man, you are college educated, you aren't college educated, and so on.

   Your response might be: "Let me make sure I understand what you are saying. What I heard is that you don't think my chances of success are good because this has been tried in the past and was never accomplished. Right?" (Wait for nod or further diatribe.) Then ask for more details: "Tell me more about this. Who tried? What happened? What do you think is the real reason that this never succeeded? Can you think of some way we could make this happen? What would we need to do?"

   By this time, the speaker is basking in his or her importance and your attention. They will probably still be cranky, but their remarks are starting to shift to be a little more constructive. Explore the issue with the speaker for several minutes, enough for him or her to know they are being taken seriously, but not enough to frustrate the group's other participants. You can then politely end the discussion by saying "Thank you so much! I'll need to really give that some thought". If the person doesn't seem to want to leave it, you can humbly ask whether they would be willing to give you some time outside the meeting to talk about this further. Alternately, you can turn to the group and say "What do you all think? Do you think this is really impossible?" The opinions of other participants may neutralize the speaker, or may support their remarks. Either way, this is good information for you.

3. **If possible, make these difficult people into your friends.** Your natural instinct will probably be to avoid people who attack you and hope that they never come to any more of your meetings. Fight this instinct! Give these people sincere appreciation for their feedback and invite them to come to future meetings. Make sure they are on your mailing list. Tell them AND show them that you value their opinions. With this

evidence of your good sense they may change their minds about you and decide that you are a capable person after all. Even if they don't, you can establish a sort of good humored detente. They have their opinion and you have yours. They know that you have paid attention to them and choose to disagree, but you have listened respectfully and in return you have earned their grudging respect. If they continue to have outbursts in your meetings accept them gracefully. Acknowledge the difference of opinion and remind them that even though you disagree, you respect them and you think that they respect you. When you talk about these people to others, (as you inevitably will), do it with as much respect and affection as you can muster. Yes, they are difficult, but they have a lot of worldly experience and you value their involvement. It is tempting to complain about difficult people to your friends and supporters but try to avoid this as much as possible. Word gets around, and even if it doesn't this activity undermines your sincerity when you try to engage your difficult people in a friendly way. It is fair to talk to others about your frustration in trying to communicate with your difficult folks; that is your honest experience and you get to share it. But try to keep this within bounds. There is nothing to be lost by being tactful and respectful about people behind their backs as well as to their faces.

<u>Role Playing</u>

Some of the suggestions I make about dealing with difficult people in meetings can be hard to pull off if you haven't had a lot of similar experience (teaching elementary school, raising children, etc.) You can practice these skills outside of your actual meetings by engaging in 'role playing'. Ask a friend for assistance. The friend should play the role of the difficult person. You can give them a character, motivation, issues and concerns up front. Then pretend that you are making a presentation and let your friend improvise the difficult person role, interrupting you, challenging you, being obstreperous, sarcastic, etc. Try to respond with respectful interest. Do this several times and you will see your skills improve. Even if your friend tries to maintain the role, they will find themselves disarmed by your attention and good humor. Such practice sessions will build your confidence and prepare you for the real world of difficult people.

<u>b. The friend who turns into an enemy</u>

In the previous section we talked about turning an enemy into a friend. Sometime, though, it happens the other way around. People who have been friendly and supportive suddenly turn against you and start making trouble wherever they can. This can happen without any apparent cause or reason. Try as you might, you can't figure out what you've done to set the person against you.

This has happened to me. A friendly, bouncy, woman who worked in the same office building showed a great deal of interest in my projects. She became part of a close circle of consultant friends who met every month for lunch to talk about the problems and triumphs of our work. Occasionally she would disappear for a few months and we wouldn't hear from her, despite calling to check on how she was doing. But then she'd come back, as friendly and bouncy as ever. But one time, after some work difficulties, she left for a very long time. When she came back she didn't join in as she had before. Instead she started a campaign of negativity about a couple members of the group. She wrote nasty e-mails to us and about us. She challenged our capabilities, our integrity, and our work. The private consultants didn't have to respond but those who were funded from public funds were forced to spend many hours correcting misinformation, digging up documentation, etc. It was shocking, saddening and infuriating.

It doesn't do much good to speculate why these abrupt personality changes take place, though mental health and substance abuse issues are the most likely culprits. The best approach if such a situation arises is just to protect yourself and your project. Calmly correct misinformation. Do this as privately as possible, but you need to reach the same audience that was exposed to the accusations so sometime a public statement cannot be avoided. Try not to accuse the person of being crazy, except in your most private circle of trusted friends. The best public tone is one of calm integrity as you correct the facts. If you do have to discuss your accuser, strive for a note of grave compassion. This will deprive your new enemy of the satisfaction of knowing that he or she has disturbed your life. The accuser may escalate for a while, or may look for a more satisfying victim. Eventually this person's wild accusations and over-reactions will neutralize their statements and they will stop being taken seriously.

Real Life Example – These e-mails present a relatively mild example of how difficult people operate (slightly modified to protect the innocent):

> **From:** Difficult Person
> **To:** Watershed Committee Coordinator
> **Subject:** Addition to mailing list
>
> Ms. X,
> In playing "catch-up" with the hundreds of emails since my return back from travels, I notice that I have not been receiving XXXX Watershed Committee meeting agenda/minutes for many months. Please add my email to the distribution list to receive these items from this ad hoc group.
>
> Additionally, please forward meeting minutes for the months of August, Sept, Oct, Nov, and Dec.
>
> Signed,
> Difficult Person

From: Watershed Committee Coordinator
To: Difficult Person
Subject: RE: Addition to mailing list

Ms. Difficult Person:
Thank you for your interest in the XXXX Watershed Committee as it is an important networking group in the watersheds of the foothills. Your name has been added to the e-mail list. Attached are the minutes you have requested less the month of December. (Also keep in mind that the November and December meetings are combined for the holidays). Those will be released with the January Agenda in about a week. As always, you are welcome to attend any of the meetings as they are always open to the public. It may even be important to attend the meetings and be a part of the discussion to accurately understand all of the issues and projects.

From: Difficult Person
To: Watershed Committee Coordinator
Subject: RE: Addition to mailing list

Thanks for the invite Ms. X!
I doubt you'll ever see me at a XXXX Watershed Committee meeting in future, since this group serves no purpose. As to your condescending email: I used to attend Watershed Committee meetings (a part of my job) as you well know, since I used to hand you your payment checks. But since retirement, I have determined that I don't have the personal time to waste on this elementary school level "share time" group that has no official recognition, legal capacity, nor serves any purpose other than for the sake of trying to feel important. I'll spend my time elsewhere on matters of importance, like investigating the legally supported facts, rather than this group's "discussion to accurately understand" issues and projects. Thanks for again adding my name (again and again and again) to receive postings, since I seem to drop into a void periodically even though I have been on the recipient list for over 6 years.
Best,
Difficult Person

c. The 'watch dog'

Most communities have a 'watch dog'. This is a self-appointed person who works tirelessly for the public interest, exposing mistakes, malfeasance, waste, ignorance, and wrong-headedness among the unfortunate public and government representatives that come to their notice. To be fair, such people often bring important issues or problems to light. But many of them employ a scatter-shot approach which can hurl suspicion and scorn on many good projects and good people.

If a watch dogs starts saying negative things about you or your project, you need to take swift action. First of all, analyze the source of the negativity. If it is a result of misinformation about your project, that is fairly easy to correct. Treat the watchdog like you would a 'difficult person' and respectfully ask to meet with them to discuss the issues. Spend time listening to their objections and respond with as much clarity and documentation as possible. Sometime watch dogs are so attached to their righteous indignation that they are reluctant to be persuaded to change their minds. If this is the case, try to frame the conflict between you as a disagreement on approach, roles, or values. If the watchdog sees themselves as a neutral investigator into public misdeeds, you may be able to build a respectful relationship where you 'agree to disagree' and the watch dog will leave you alone and find a meatier bone elsewhere.

For example, suppose you are trying to organize funding and volunteers to build an equestrian trail through the nearby publicly-owned forest. A watch-dog starts attacking your project, saying that it is a waste of public funds. You make contact with this person and get them to agree to meet you for coffee to discuss the project. Over coffee, you talk about the many people you know in town who would be interested in the trail. You talk about the program that a local horse-owner's association would like to start to introduce low-income children to horseback riding. You talk about how much volunteer time is going into the project, reducing the public costs to a minimum. As you talk, the person opens up. They finally admit that they feel like equestrian activities are just for rich people who can own horses. Through your gentle and respectful probing the watchdog reveals that he grew up poor in a community of rich people and always felt left out when they were talking about their horses and their swimming pools. You let him know that you understand this perspective, and you acknowledge that most of the people using the trail will be fairly well-off, since they can afford to keep a horse. But you make it clear that you have thought about ways to allow lower-income residents to get benefit from the trail as well. And you feel that horse-owners, whether well-off or not, deserve to have a trail so they can enjoy nature, just like the hikers do. After such a discussion your watch dog may still not be a supporter of the project, but may stop having such a strong reaction against it. Hopefully this will be enough for him to leave you alone and find some other project to pick on.

On the other hand, if the watch dog is openly a strong proponent of some value system and they object to your project based on these values, your task is more difficult. A 'true believer' is not likely to respond to a different point of view, even if presented in a calm, rational manner. One such watch dog is bad enough, but it is even worse if they represent an entire group that is philosophically opposed to your project or activity.

If you are dealing with a 'lone wolf' (to switch metaphors) watchdog whose objections are based on strong beliefs, a good strategy is to try to get support from others who share this person's beliefs. If someone that they respect shows that they support your project, the lone wolf may back down. Even if they don't, you can use this strategy to isolate the person as an extremist and reduce their impact. For example, suppose that you are trying to organize a flower garden in front of the local town hall. There is one person who loudly objects to your project. They think this will be a waste of water, which is in short supply in your area. In fact, they don't believe in planting any non-native plants that need special soil or extra water. Everything should be as nature intends it for this spot! This person identifies as a strong environmental activist, so you approach some of your environmentalist friends to see if they can talk to the person. They try to explain to the person that this garden will help feed and shelter birds and insects that can have a beneficial effect on the native plants that are popping up in vacant lots and through the cracks in the concrete. This may be enough to quiet your opponent down. If it isn't, ask a few of the environmental crowd to publically support the project. Your opponent will no longer be seen as the voice of the environmental community and his or her power to harm your project will be greatly reduced.

If, on the other hand, you have an organized group that is philosophically opposed to your project, this is a much more serious situation. You probably won't be able to convince them to change their minds, and they will probably not go away. Even so it is not hopeless. There have been examples where groups of diametrically opposed interests or philosophies have found ways to peacefully move forward with projects or activities. This is probably not something that you should try to achieve on your own, however. Professional mediators or facilitators trained in collaborative dispute resolution are your best bet. If the issue is important enough, you may be able to find public funding for this type of facilitation. Most states have a mediation association that can help you explore these possibilities.

d. Document, Document, Document!

No matter how well you deal with difficult people, you cannot control how they respond. They may back off of their positions or they may not. They may leave you alone, or they may choose to make things very difficult. If they raise a fuss, you may find yourself having to justify your project, activities, expenditures, etc. This is yet another good reason why it is important to keep good records and documentation. For instance, if someone says that they haven't had an opportunity to comment on your proposal it would be great if you could pull up an e-mail showing that you sent them information about the project as well as a personal invitation to become involved. Or you could show that they are on your mailing list. Or you could show that they attended several of your meetings. But to do this, you'll have to keep your e-mails, mailing lists and sign-in sheets.

And there is always the chance that your difficult person will accuse you of even more serious malfeasance, such as failure to meet the conditions of a grant or even misuse of public funds. This possibility should always be at the back of your mind as you keep your records, submit your reports and set up your accounting systems. It is a temptation to shove all your paperwork in a file folder or all your receipts in a shoe box and get on with the real work of moving your project forward. But spending the time to set up your record-keeping systems up front can save you a lot of grief in the long run.

Conclusion: This is a test!

If during the process of implementing your project you find your plans disrupted by a difficult person, don't be surprised. Remember that this is a sign that you are succeeding, since they would probably not bother with you otherwise. As quickly as you can, transform your internal reaction of surprise, anger, and annoyance to the calm alert state that we associate with peaceful martial arts masters getting ready to face an opponent. This is a test. Remember, you will triumph through respect, compassion, good humor, and patience.

The process of neutralizing the attacks of difficult people is a public one. A calm, rational and respectful public response will build confidence in your leadership. Even in private conversations, try to maintain your respectful and compassionate approach to the problem. I don't want to sound like an insufferable prig, but I really believe that what you put out in the universe comes back to you. If you make the extra effort to neutralize negativity within yourself, this positive energy will come back around, eventually!

Chapter 6: Organizing and Managing a Non-Profit Corporation

a. Should you start a new organization?

Throughout this book there have been references to community organizations and non-profit corporations as the entities that usually take on projects in communities. If you are just an individual trying to make things better in your community you may be feeling an urge to start your own organization. Should you? Maybe, maybe not. There are a lot of considerations to ponder before you take that step.

Most people who are launching new community projects assume that they should start an organization to carry them out. After all, they are launching something new. They have the idea, the enthusiasm, and the commitment. They need a vehicle to move things forward, one that is pointed in the direction they want to go! If they get in someone else's vehicle by trying to complete their project under another organization's umbrella, there will be delays and detours. They won't be in the driver's seat. They may even get hijacked!

All this is true; but let's think about it a little. Taking the analogy a little further, can you really afford a whole new car? In addition to purchasing it, you have to supply it with oil, gas, and repairs. You have to pay registration fees every year. If you only need the car for one or two trips, it might be better to try and make arrangements with someone who already owns a vehicle and covers these expenses. Maybe you'll have to pay a little for the use of the vehicle, but those expenses will be more reasonable for your project. And maybe there will be a few delays, but you are likely to run into even more of these if you are trying to get your own wheels under you.

My recommendation for those who want to start new projects is to seriously consider teaming up with an existing organization. This, like much of the advice in this book, is based on experience. At one point in my career I was responsible for a network of nonprofit and community organizations that served the low-income and minority residents of a mid-sized city. And there were plenty of these organizations; over 150 joined the network at its peak. Even for a city with a great deal of poverty and distress, this was a lot of organizations! Even so, it seemed like every few weeks another person would come into my office with an idea of how to make their community better and say that they wanted to start a new organization. I would almost always discourage them from doing so. "Look for other organizations already in place in your neighborhood", I would advise. "Ask them if you can join forces. See if you can run your program through an existing agency." As I see it, the over-proliferation of organizations is detrimental to all. It fragments and increases competition for resources. It discourages like-minded individuals from joining forces. And community projects undertaken by new organizations lose the benefit of the experience and credibility of existing organizations. In a situation where you can team up with an existing organization, my advice is to do so.

Suppose you decide to take this advice. How do you team up with an existing organization? First, read the chapter of this book on Partnerships and Collaborations. Then look for an appropriate organization in your community. Your friends and acquaintances should be able to help. Try to find someone who you know who works with or for the organization, and set up an exploratory meeting. Does this organization have an interest in your project idea? Is it in alignment with their mission? Would it help them meet their objectives? Do they have a successful track record of assisting new other new efforts in the community? If things look positive, explore the best way to represent the relationship. The most common arrangement for operating a program under the umbrella of an existing organization is to have that organization be the 'fiscal agent'. It is also possible that you could enter into a partnership, if you have a fledgling organization or if your project is associated with a business, educational institution, church, or other existing entity. Follow the instructions in this book on creating a written agreement to document the terms and conditions of your relationship.

But what if you do have to start your own organization? Suppose you can't find an organization to work with. Maybe your town doesn't have very many organizations, or the ones that are there are just not appropriate. How do you do this?

<u>b. What kind of community organization should you start?</u>

Theoretically, it is not hard to start a community organization. Bottom line, you just make up a name and throw it on some stationary and you've done the basics. BUT, if you want your organization to be able to function at all independently, things get more complex. Do you want to have an organizational checking account, for instance? Or do you want to involve other people in running the organization? Most importantly, do you want to be able to attract grants and donations? In that case, you're in for a little work.

The most flexible and robust organizations for engaging in community projects are tax-exempt nonprofit corporations. These organizations can get grants and loans; they can offer tax deductions to donors; they protect their staff and directors from personal liability; and they have the potential to become an on-going force for good in your community even after you have gone. They can even own and operate businesses, within some limitations. But such organizations also require a lot of work to organize and maintain. There are other, less formal options. How to decide what is right for you?

First, there are three basic concepts that we should explore:

1. 'Nonprofit' (as opposed to profit-making enterprises)
2. 'Corporation' (as opposed to unincorporated association)
3. 'Tax Exempt', also referred to as 501(c)(3) organizations

1. Nonprofit entities: There are many definitions of 'nonprofit', but for the sake of this book this means that an entity is organized to do educational, charitable, or public work as opposed to running a business. This line can get kind of blurry. For instance, suppose you are organizing a housecleaning business that is set up to train poor and uneducated refugees in skills that they can use to become independent, productive members of our society. Even though this is a business, you may be able to call yourself a 'nonprofit'. On the other hand, if you are organizing a nature-oriented book store with the goal of educating the public so they will be better stewards of the land, but you are in competition with other regular bookstores, you may not be able to call yourself a 'nonprofit', even though your key objective is educational. And, contrary to a very common subject for jokes, if you are running a real business but it is not making a profit, you cannot call yourself 'nonprofit'.

We won't split hairs in this book. Basically, if you see your organization as a way to do good work in the community and don't intend for it to be a source of income for yourself, you are probably safe in calling it a nonprofit.

But what about me?

Sometimes the concepts of businesses and community work are merged together in people's mind. Yes, they want to benefit their community, but they also want to get paid for it. After all, they will be doing legitimate work! Why shouldn't they get paid?

If you plan to make this organization a vehicle for a new career in do-gooding and expect to support yourself in any way from its activities, you are entering dangerous territory. Yes, it is true that nonprofit organizations do have paid staff. And you may be the best qualified staff for your proposed nonprofit organization. But there are two problems with this:

1. If your nonprofit organization receives public funds or even private donations, it must be run by a board of directors. These directors represent the public interests, not your interests. So they will make the decision of what staff to hire. They may or may not choose you to do the work. In other words, once you turn this work over to a nonprofit organization, you lose control.
2. If you are receiving financial benefit from this organization, you lose a great deal of credibility. Even if you are doing good work at a reasonable pay, there is a very good chance that some people will see you as an opportunist and will spread negativity about your organization.

This is not to say that you can't have any self-interest in the community activities you are pursuing. Naturally they will be important to you; otherwise you wouldn't have the passion and commitment to take them on! You are developing a park because you want a park to walk in. You are feeding the hungry because it pains you to see hungry people in your community. There is nothing wrong or unnatural about this. But if the self-interest takes a financial form, you should probably reconsider. If you want to do this kind of work in your community, try to get a job with an existing public or nonprofit entity. Starting your own nonprofit organization to create a job for yourself is not a good idea.

2. Corporations: Corporations are legally structured entities that allow those involved with an organization to remove themselves from personal liability.[1] If you incorporate an organization, it becomes a separate entity which is governed by a board of directors under a set of rules called 'bylaws'. You may be one of the directors or you may not. But the organization is no longer yours and yours alone.

This is not to say that once a corporation is formed the person who forms it (usually called the 'incorporator') instantly loses control. Since the incorporator generally selects the initial board of directors and drafts the bylaws, he or she has a great influence, at least on the early years of the organization. But eventually the terms of office of the initial directors will end and new directors will be selected. Gradually, the corporation will take on its own life and its own direction.

In a profit-making corporation, it is the responsibility of the directors to maximize benefits to the corporate shareholders. In a non-profit corporation, there are no shareholders. The purpose of the corporation is to benefit the public at large (or some charity-worthy subset of the public) and the responsibility of the directors is to make sure that the activities of the organization will provide maximum benefit to the public. The directors have what is called a 'fiduciary' duty to do this, and they can be penalized for failing to fulfill this duty. But if they do fulfill this duty, they are (in general), shielded from any corporate liabilities. If the corporation has debts that it can't pay, or if its employees perform actions that cause harm and are sued, the directors are not (in general) held personally liable. All liabilities must be met out of the corporate assets. Of course, we're talking about the law here, so nothing is cut and dried. But this protection of directors from the corporation's liability is one of the key characteristics of this legal structure.

This independent, dutiful, yet disinterested board of directors is one of the reasons that many grants (and many donors) require that an organization be a corporation before they will give it funding. Other reasons include the paperwork and tax forms required of corporations, nonprofit or otherwise. Corporations are held to a high and visible standard of accountability. You can register as a nonprofit organization even if you are not a corporation. You can even get tax-exemption as an unincorporated association. But your opportunities for obtaining funding will be greatly reduced.

So the decision on whether or not to incorporate depends largely on whether you intend to seek charitable funding. Remember, you can form a partnership, joint venture, or fiscal agent relationship with an existing nonprofit corporation and use their status to get grants, if an appropriate corporation is available. But if you can't find such an organization or if you have other reasons to go it alone, you are probably best off with the corporate structure.

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[1] The rights of corporations and the protections that they offer are subject to a lot of legal wrangling. Since this book only offers an overview of the subject, I suggest that you seek needed additional information from some of the excellent do-it-yourself incorporation manuals that have been published for each state. Look for books that give you information on organizing non-profit corporations.

Corporate paperwork [2]is filed with state governments. Each state has different filing requirements and different fees. But you can expect to need a document called 'articles of incorporation', and a document called 'bylaws'. The articles of incorporation set forth the purpose for your corporation. This is a very technical document that requires very little creativity on your part. Most states have websites that will give you appropriate models. Bylaws set forth how the corporation will be run. Where will the corporate office be? How many directors will there be and how will they be selected? How often will the board of directors meet? How will notices be given? Will the corporation have members? If so, what are their powers? These issues have a little more flexibility and require more decisions on your part, though most corporations use a fairly standard set of bylaws.

The process of incorporating is not extremely complex, but it is technical and you want to make sure that it is done correctly. My best advice is to find a reputable how-to book that addresses incorporation in your state and follow their recommendations. Find one that particularly addresses the formation of a nonprofit corporation, since these are special creatures. Such a book will give you a lot more information about the formation and management of nonprofit corporations which is beyond the scope of this book. Usually, it will also cover the issue of obtaining tax exempt status as well, which is another important step in becoming a grant-ready organization.

<u>3. Tax-exempt Status:</u> Tax-exempt status is a designation that allows corporations freedom of tax from their income[3] received and from any base-line corporate tax imposed by your State's laws. Corporations must file for tax-exempt status with their State's tax department for exemption from State taxes and with the federal government (more specifically with the Internal Revenue Service) for exemption from federal taxes. Your jurisdiction may also have local income or property taxes for which you can get an exemption, which means filing exemption paperwork with the local revenue office (usually the County Assessor and/or Tax Collector).

There are several kinds of federal tax-exempt status. At the writing of this book, they are codified in the Internal Revenue Code under Section 501 (c) and information about them can be found in IRS Publication 557.

When we think of tax-exempt organizations (if we think of them at all), we generally expect them to be charitable or educational organizations. These organizations are listed under 501 (c) (3) of the tax code, and include educational organizations (including schools, public education

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[2] I am referring here to the paperwork that registers your organization as a corporation, and the subsequent informational filings that are necessary to maintain that status. I am not referring to tax filings. Taxes need to be filed with the State government and the Federal government unless you meet very specific requirements which exempt you from such filings.

[3]Usually, at least. Remember, this is the law we're talking about.

organizations, museums, zoos, orchestras, day-care centers) and organizations with charitable purposes (including relief of the poor, the distressed, or the underprivileged; advancement of religion, education or science, erection of public works, lessening of neighborhood tensions, elimination of prejudice and discrimination, combating community deterioration and juvenile delinquency[4].) But there are also 501(c)(4) organizations [civic leagues and social welfare organizations], 501(c)(5) organizations [labor, agricultural and horticultural organizations], 501 (c)(6) organizations [business leagues, etc.], and all the way up to 501(c)(27) [state-sponsored worker's compensation reinsurance organizations]. Usually, though, tax exemption under 501 (c)(3) is required for grants and donations. This is because this category of exemption allows donors to take a charitable deduction. Most foundations and government sources of grants also have legal or tax requirements to confine their donations to recipients with 501 (c)(3) status.

c. How do you go about getting tax exempt status?

First, (assuming that you are forming a non-profit corporation) you file the paperwork to create your corporate status (see section 2). You will need copies of your certified Articles of Incorporation and your bylaws to submit with your tax forms. Once you have completed this step, you can start on the tax-exemption application forms. These must be completed on State, federal, and local levels. This sounds like a lot of work, but usually states and local jurisdictions will rely on the federal tax exemption paperwork status to make their decision, so your first stop in this process should be the IRS.

The IRS requirements change over time – they provide publications that cover their current regulations and explain how to complete the paperwork. In general you will need to know the following:

- What is/are the charitable purposes(s) of the organization?
- What activities to you expect to undertake and how do they further your charitable purpose(s)?
- How do you expect to raise funds? Will you charge fees for your events and services?
- What is the general nature of your projected income and expenses over the next several years?

Once again, I advise you to purchase a 'how to' book on forming a non-profit corporation that is specific to your state. Such a book will lead you step-by-step through the requirements of incorporating and obtaining your state and federal tax exempt status. Nolo Press is a good publisher to turn to for this type of how-to manual. If you don't have time and you do have money, you can hire a lawyer or paralegal to complete the paperwork for you. But if possible I recommend that you take care of the process yourself. It is not overly complicated and it will give you a fine sense of ownership and a detailed understanding of your organizational foundation.

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[4] These are some examples of charitable purposes that are included in the IRS publication about tax exempt status.

d. What are the requirements for management and upkeep?

Once you have your tax-exempt status, you generally do not need to file any additional paperwork to maintain that status. You will, however, probably need to file yearly tax returns for your organization, even if you have very little economic activity. And some states require forms with current corporation information (corporate address, names of officers, agent for service of process, etc.) be filed yearly or biennially.

But in order to maintain the legal protection of being a corporation, your organization has to act like a corporation. That means that you have to have a board of directors which oversees activities and takes responsibility for important decisions. This board must meet regularly and these meeting must be documented with agendas and minutes. The board doesn't actually have to follow Roberts Rules of Order, but it does have to determine a decision-making process and make sure that the requirements of this process are met and documented when important decisions (such as whether or not to apply for a grant) are made. The corporation needs its own address, phone, bank account, stationery. Financial reports should be prepared, distributed and accepted. If you do receive grants, you should plan to undergo a financial audit. A corporate web site is not essential, but most funders will want to see that one is in place and the more informative and transparent, the better.

<u>e. Conclusion</u>

Going back to the analogy we used at the beginning of this chapter, it's nice to have your own corporate vehicle. It gives you a certain amount of freedom and autonomy. But it is not a free ride! It takes time and money to establish and maintain a nonprofit corporation. Having your own nonprofit organization can help others (and you!) take your projects and activities more seriously. But if your goals are modest and you want to devote your resources to actual project activities, you do have other options. Consider catching a ride on someone else's organization for a while.

Chapter 7: PR and Media

If you want to succeed in creating a community project, you need to connect with the community. This connection should start with your friends and partners when the project is just beginning, and should gradually reach out to wider and wider circles of the potentially interested audience as you move into implementation. The tools of media can help you expand the circle of people who know and care about your project. Public Relations (PR) strategies will help you control the breadth and pace of this expansion so that your message is appropriate and timely.

Here's an example from North Fork about media that was successful but not particularly strategic.   A bunch of creative, community-minded folks in town (the usual suspects) decided to create a 'local currency'. This is a local medium of exchange that allows the community to sell and buy locally available goods and services. In our case, we called the currency 'North Fork Shares', and set an initial value of $12 per share, which was meant to be the equivalent of one hour of work. Local currencies can be handled electronically, but we decided to be old fashioned and print our currency. In fact, we went all the way back and printed our shares using a classic hand-cranked letterpress printer. It took a couple dozen volunteers to create the currency – each note was printed one at a time and had to have two printings (one black and one color) per side. A local artist donated original artwork and a printing company donated the paper-cutting. After the notes were printed we had a lot of work to do creating bylaws, developing agreements, and planning our economic policies.

For these initial stages of the project we recruited a small group of volunteers and used a simple e-mail list to invite folks to the printing parties and policy meetings. As the project progressed, we set up a web page that would allow folks to list or search for goods and services. At that point we scheduled a kick-off meeting and used an existing community e-mail list serve to publicize it.

Somehow, the word got around.   The Fresno Bee (the closest city newspaper) did a front page article on the North Fork shares. Then we caught the attention of the local ABC news affiliate, who sent a reporter up to film the town's defunct mill site (symbol of the economic problem), a community member's garden, a woodworking shop, and my husband's home-made olive bread (symbols of our local economic solution). Several months later, we found ourselves featured in the business section of the Los Angeles Times. This was jaw-dropping enough, but a few months later I got a call from the local spokesperson for the project that brought the PR situation into the realm of the surreal. Starting the conversation with a question whether or not his voice was shaking, he went on to say that he had just received a call from a reporter from the Los Angeles office of Al Jazeera, the major news agency for the Arab world. The reporter had read the LA Times article and wanted to do a story on North Fork Shares. Given the political situation at the time, we needed to discuss this among ourselves to balance the value of the publicity with concerns that it might cause animosity among members of the community. Fortunately during this delay revolutions broke out in the Arab world and all the Al Jazeera reporters were busy elsewhere, so we never had to make that decision. But this wasn't the end; CNN's financial reporter also contacted us, and we were mentioned in an article in Money magazine.

This was a PR freak and probably will never happen again. But here's the funny thing about all that publicity. It had almost no impact on the actual program. People read the articles and saw the news shows. We all had a good laugh. We got inquiries from residents of neighboring communities who wanted to join, but we had to turn them away, since we wanted the network to be strictly local. But all of this publicity only attracted one or two local people to use the NF shares system. It was like using a machine gun to ring a door bell; a whole lot of wasted energy and not a particularly good connection. It turns out that the most effective way of publicizing the local currency was 1) person-to-person contact, and 2) a user-friendly web site.

The point of this example (other than my pleasure in sharing another funny story about North Fork), is to show that PR and media outreach is only effective if it is appropriate for your audience. You can get national or even international coverage that is pretty much worthless except to fill your scrapbook.

But what kind of PR will be appropriate for your audience? Nowadays this has become somewhat complex. Media outreach used to mean press releases, adding your event to the calendar section of local newspapers and newsletters, and possibly (if you were lucky), getting an interview on a local radio show. Now your project may need a webpage (probably), a Facebook page (maybe), an e-mail list serve, or a Twitter account to connect with its target audience, particularly if that audience is younger. At the same time, it may be important to reach that rare (but still existing) segment of the population that doesn't even use e-mail, particularly if your target audience is older.

What this means in practical terms is that your project will probably need access to all of these media tools. This requires a broad set of skills and it is reasonable to spread them over several people. For instance, you may write a stellar press release but have no idea how to craft a 'tweet'. You may have a young friend or relative whose writing skills are minimal, but who can set up a Facebook page with ease and can design a multi-functional website in a single evening. Even if you can find these skills, there are certain formats or structures that are expected for each of these media. Here are some of the basic rules.

<u>a. Traditional media</u>

<u>1. Newspapers</u> - Good old fashioned newspapers are still found pretty much everywhere. The major outlets that serve larger cities may scoff at your informational outreach, meeting notices, and celebrations, but these kinds of stories are the bread and butter of smaller and more rural newspapers.

If you want to get a story in your local newspaper you can either contact news reporters directly or you can send out a press release. A press release is just the basic information about your project, event, or news, submitted in a specific format. It is used to capture the attention of journalists and entice them to write an article on the subject. They will use the information in the press release as the basis for the article, but will add information from other sources and their own research.

Here's a sample press release (with comments on the format in RED):

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
North Fork Digital Homework Center Seeks Volunteer Tutors (The headline should be short, in bold, and in Title Case format, which means that you capitalize every word except prepositions and articles.)

*Students who lack internet access at home will now be able to do their homework at a new tutoring center in the North Fork Studio. The organizers invite potential volunteer tutors to attend a training session next Saturday at North Fork School. (*A summary paragraph in italics provides a brief synopsis of the press release.)

North Fork, California – The new Minarets high school prides itself on bringing rural students into the digital age. In fact, Minarets provides students with their own laptop computers. Yet in the low-income community of North Fork, half of the Minarets students lack internet access at home. A new homework center is trying to support these students by offering wireless internet – and tutoring – in their own community. The only thing the center needs now is the tutors. (The lead paragraph should grab your reader's attention and give them the most important information. The following paragraphs just provide the detail – who, what, where, when, and why.)

The Homework Center was organized by the North Fork Studio, a non-profit organization that owns and runs the local community center. Dan Rosenberg, chairman of the Studio's board of directors, worked for the planning firm that helped design Minarets High School and learned of the need from the school's officials. "If we don't provide internet access, some of our youth will be left behind at school and in life", Rosenberg said. "As a community we have the resources to support all of our young people so that they can get the best benefit from the excellent programs offered at Minarets." (Quotes are good, but should be brief.) Rosenberg noted that tutoring can be challenging, but very rewarding. The Studio will provide volunteers with the training and support.

The first informational meeting for potential tutors will be held (date, time, place). All interested residents are welcome!

Contact information: (this is the person to reporters to contact for more information on the story.

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(for some reason, press releases are always concluded with three 'hatch marks'.

2. Radio – Local interest radio programs still exist and can provide the opportunity for on-the-air interviews. In addition, many stations will also announce community events. This radio exposure can be particularly useful for disseminating information in small towns.

Interviews can be a good opportunity to provide in-depth information about your project. Unless you have a very unique and interesting program, you're story is not likely to be picked up by regional stations. But if there is a local interest radio program you may have a shot. Contact the radio station and ask the best way to approach the host or reporter about a possible story. You may be able to use a press release, or the radio host may want more in-depth information about your project and its importance to the community. If you are lucky enough to obtain a spot on the show, prepare yourself carefully. Listen to several shows to get a sense of how the interviewer likes to conduct the interview. Prepare a list of 'talking points' – important information about your project's purpose, history, and future vision. Like everything else, practice helps. So get a friend to do a rehearsal interview for the same time period as your actual interview will be. Record the interview, listen to the recording, and take notes. Do you have annoying speech habits that can be corrected? Did you start to ramble and miss the important points you wanted to make? Try again until you are satisfied with the results.

If you can't arrange for an interview, or if you just have a short announcement, Public Service Announcements (PSAs) are the way to go. All radio stations are required to donate a certain amount of airtime to serve the public and the community. Most radio stations have a community calendar which provides short announcements about public events. These stations will read your Public Service Announcement during their community calendar section. You probably won't know in advance how much time they will give, so provide scripts for 10-second and 30-second spots. (Read your announcement aloud and use a stopwatch to time it to ensure correct length.) Your time is short, so you need to give the 'where, when, why, what, and who' information in a compressed format. The scripts should be double-spaced and in all caps. Write a PSA exactly as you want it to be read – do not uses dashes or abbreviations.

The traditional format to submit a PSA is as follows:

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

DATE FOR USE: *(Date that you would like your announcement to air)*

Contact Information:
name,
phone,
email,
fax

LENGTH: 0:10
SUBJECT: Happytown Crafts Fair and Fundraiser
The Happytown crafts fair will be held Saturday, December 2nd at the Grange Hall on East W Street. Find unique holiday gifts and seasonal goodies! Proceeds support the Happytown Art Center.

LENGTH: 0:30
SUBJECT: Happytown Crafts Fair and Fundraiser
The Happytown crafts fair will be held Saturday, December 2nd at the Grange Hall on East W Street. Enjoy holiday music and treats while you shop for unique gifts! You'll find everything here from hand-carved rocking horses to home-made fudge. Proceeds support the Happytown Art Center, which offers classes, lectures and gallery space to the artistic children and adults of Happytown.

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You need to plan ahead so you can send your PSA to the proper person or department. Send your PSA in advance – three weeks before your event is good timing. If you are targeting a single station, call them and get the proper name of the Department head and address it to her or him. If you are sending your PSA to several media outlets, then you can address your PSA to the Public Service Director.

These are just a few basic suggestions. If radio media is important in your area, try some other ways to get the word out. Some radio programs do live broadcasts from events, like a charity rodeo. Others will sponsor different types of activities, such as community food drives, and provide regular reminders and updates. Be creative! Inspire your local station to get involved.

3. Television – Local TV stations can also run PSAs. These can take the form of advertisements and can range from a simple image and script to an intense short video which communicates an essential message. It is beyond the scope of this book (and frankly, beyond my own experience) to guide you on how to make these videos or how to get the placed on the air. If you feel this would be a good fit for your message, my suggestion is to contact the media department of your local college or university. Explain what you are after and ask whether this could be a class or individual project. This can be a win-win situation. Students are often happy to have real subjects for their class projects, there is often a professional media lab which is available for their use, and you get the added advantage of having the professor, (presumably an experienced professional), to give expert advice. Plus, student work is usually free.

4. Newsletters and Community Calendars – If your community has a local newspaper with a community calendar, this can be the easiest way to get exposure. Just call the paper and ask how they want the items submitted. Create an event description that meets their guidelines and submit it in a timely fashion. Many local organizations, such as the Chamber of Commerce, the Boosters, or other service organizations, will also put out a regular newsletter with a calendar or 'notices' section. Start reading these newsletters and keep a list of good venues for your event notices.

b. Electronic Media

1. Websites - The communications field has radically changed in the recent past. It is pretty much the standard for a nonprofit organization, or even an unincorporated association or a community project, to have its own website. Websites are extremely helpful. They can provide information about your project, and make documents (such as meeting notes, plans, studies, etc.) easily available. You can use them to recruit memberships or take donations. You can offer an on-line survey or a discussion section for feedback on your ideas.

Websites are also getting easier to create. On-line giants like Google offer free website hosting and provide templates that make it easy to create your own site. Or if you want something more sophisticated, you can go to a friendly neighborhood website designer for help. As these skills are now more and more common, it isn't difficult to find someone in your community who will create a custom website for free or low-cost. Actually, the challenge is not really creating your initial website, it is keeping it up to date. This isn't difficult or expensive – it is easy to create websites which give selected people the authority to change and update the content. The challenge is finding people who feel comfortable doing this and making sure it happens on a regular basis.

2. E-mail groups and list-serves – E-mail makes communication so easy! Almost everyone has an e-mail address now, though not everyone checks their e-mails on a daily basis. Make sure that your e-mail messages are timed appropriately so that people getting the information have time to respond. There may also be some folks who stubbornly refuse to use e-mail – it's their prerogative! If you have important stakeholders in this category, take the time to call them or send them a letter to let them know about events and meetings.

One tool that is extremely helpful and easy to use is e-mail list-serves. This function is also offered for free from on-line giants, like Yahoo. Participants and supporters subscribe to the list-serve for your project. Any subscriber can then send an e-mail to the entire list of subscribers. There is no way of editing these so you need to make sure that you trust all of your participants to be appropriate. If you would prefer to have control over all of the e-mails, you can create your own project e-mail group and be send out the e-mails yourself. Make sure that you do this in a way that maintains the confidentiality of the e-mail recipients (using the 'bcc' function, for instance), as many people do not like to distribute their e-mail address widely.

3. Social media – Social media tools (at this writing Facebook and Twitter are the major ones) can be another important way to stay in touch and provide information about your project. This is a constantly changing landscape, and another area in which I am not an expert, so my advice will be brief. If you are a social media user, look for community project pages/accounts that keep provide enough information to keep you engaged and up to date on activities and use them as a model. If you are not a social media user, you have a choice of asking someone else for help in maintaining a project site or learning enough to do it yourself. I recommend the latter choice. None of these tools are that difficult – if they were they wouldn't catch on so quickly. And it is good to learn new things.

Conclusion

Effective public relations and media strategies depend on your audience. The best way to communicate could be the latest sophisticated web-based social-media network. Or it could be old fashioned press releases or a newsletter that is mailed monthly to your members or supporters. It could be that the best way to get the word out is to just call your friends, put up posters in shop windows or stand up and make an announcement at community meetings. Don't think that you have to get all fancy and complicated. You know your audience – reach them!