WRITING BETTER GRANT PROPOSALS:
TIPS TO HELP YOU GET FUNDED

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"**A grant is just a tool.** Money alone doesn't protect battered families, help children to read, fill the plates of the hungry, clean polluted lakes, or open museum doors. But when guided by a thoughtful plan from a committed organization, *a grant can be a powerful catalyst for change.*"

- The Grantsmanship Center, 2008

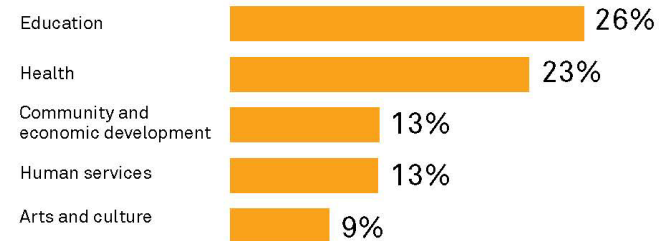# Philanthropic Giving Trends 2022 (GivingUSA)

- Strong Market = Strong Giving

- Increase in campaigns that were delayed in 2020,2021

- Fewer donors, larger gifts

- Continued decline in corporate giving
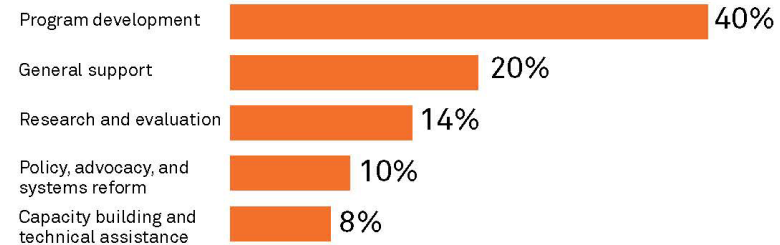
- Continued increase in Foundation giving

Grantmaking priorities

What do foundations fund most?

Top 5 subject areas by percentage of total funding

Education	26%
Health	23%
Community and economic development	13%
Human services	13%
Arts and culture	9%

Top 5 support strategies by percentage of total funding

Program development	40%
General support	20%
Research and evaluation	14%
Policy, advocacy, and systems reform	10%
Capacity building and technical assistance	8%

Top 5 populations served by percentage of total funding

Economically disadvantaged people	29%
Children and youth	21%
Ethnic and racial groups	8%
Women and girls	7%
Religious groups	3%

23% of grant dollars from U.S. funders were awarded for international purposes

The median number of grants awarded by foundations was **73**

1% of recipient organizations captured nearly half of grant dollars

3 of the top **10** grants recipients by dollars were providers of donor-advised funds*

Source (for all figures on this page): 2018. Subject, population, and support strategy categories are based on the Philanthropy Classification System. The full value of each grant is counted toward each applicable category.

*A donor-advised fund (DAF) is a charitable giving account that is established at a public charity. DAFs allow donors to receive an immediate tax deduction, but allow grants to be awarded over time to eligible nonprofits.

Grant Funding Supports:

- Innovative Approaches/Programs

- Replication and Scaling

- Capital Projects

- Capacity Building

- Feasibility Studies

Why Do Foundations Give?

- Original **donor's interest**

- Make an **impact** on issue and/or region

- **Capacity building** of successful orgs

- Support for **pre-selected** orgs

- Dissemination of **information**

- Legal **requirements** (5% payout)

Recent Trends in
Corporate and Foundation Giving

Strategic Philanthropy	Pilot projects/ seed money	Partnerships and challenge grants	Pre-selected organizations
Bigger grants to fewer organizations	Capacity-building	Corps: Less dollars, more in-kind	Corps: Employee involvement
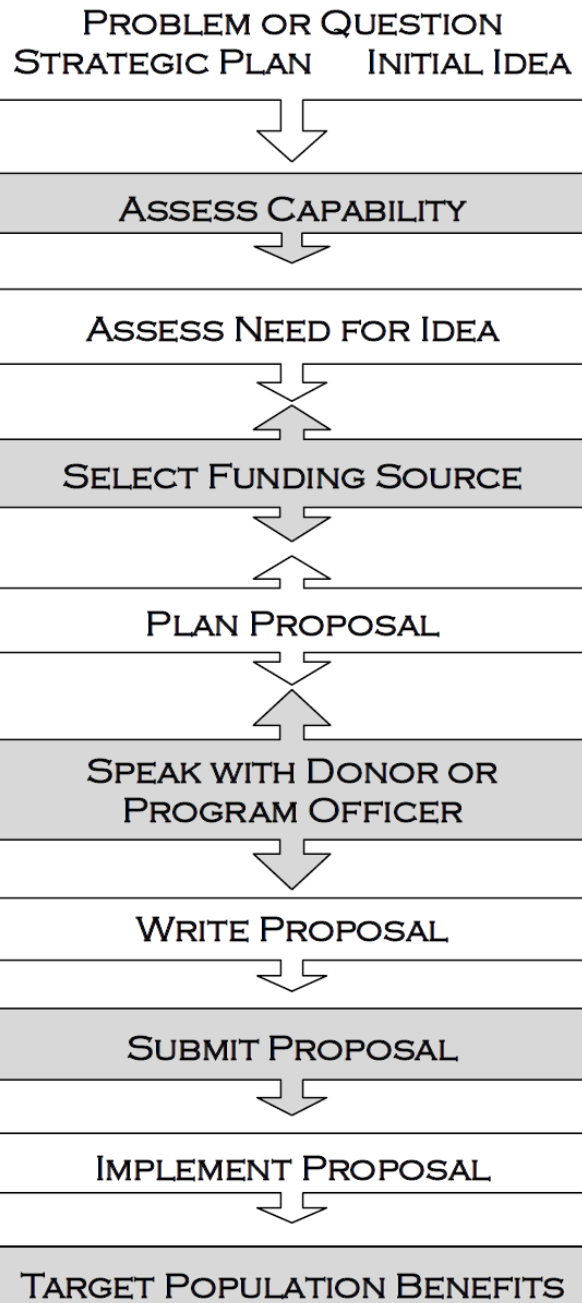
Grant Readiness

Or, getting all your ducks in a row...

Is Your Organization Ready?

1. Are you eligible?

2. Do you have a clear purpose and vision?

3. Do you have impactful programs and good standing in the community?

4. Do you have adequate resources and infrastructure?

5. Are your finances in order?

GRANT READINESS CHECKLIST

Organization Name

PURPOSE
Streamline essential documents and details that are regularly/commonly requested by grantors. Review all and prepare, locate, or create those that you do not have currently or available.

ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND
- ☐ Address, Phone, Web Address
- ☐ History of Organization (narrative)
- ☐ Year Established
- ☐ Mission, Vision, & Values Statements
- ☐ Service Area/Location Addresses/ Contact Information
- ☐ Target Population
- ☐ Current Programs/Services Descriptions
- ☐ Number Served in Previous Year
- ☐ Number FTE
- ☐ Other/Notes

TAX DOCUMENTS
- ☐ Tax Exempt Status Letter
- ☐ IRS Form 990
- ☐ W-9
- ☐ Dun & Bradstreet Number (DUNS)
- ☐ SAM Registration
- ☐ Other Registrations as necessary

FINANCIAL INFORMATION
- ☐ Detailed Organizational Budget
- ☐ Financial Statement (recent)
- ☐ Most Recent Audit
- ☐ Program/Project Budgets
- ☐ Sources of Funding
- ☐ Other/Notes

GOVERNANCE
- ☐ Board of Directors (including affiliations & contact information)
- ☐ Organizational Chart
- ☐ Current Strategic Plan
- ☐ Articles of Incorporation
- ☐ Executive Director/President/CEO Bio
- ☐ Executive Director/President/CEO Compensation

PROGRAM/PROJECT INFORMATION
- ☐ Detailed Program/ Project Description
- ☐ Year Established
- ☐ Location Address
- ☐ Contact Information
- ☐ Target Population
- ☐ Number Served in Previous Year
- ☐ Current Outcome Measures
- ☐ Outcomes from Previous Year
- ☐ Staffing Structure/Org Chart(s)
- ☐ Job Descriptions
- ☐ Resumes/Bios of Key Staff
- ☐ Success Story

OTHER DOCUMENTATION
- ☐ Corporate Compliance Plan
- ☐ Performance Improvement Plan
- ☐ Policies/Procedures
- ☐ Best Practices Utilized
- ☐ MOAs/MOUs
- ☐ Letters of Support
- ☐ Collaborating Partners
- ☐ Contracts
- ☐ % of Board Giving Financially
- ☐ History of grants received and denied
- ☐ Solicitation License (where applicable)
- ☐ Articles of Incorporation & By-Laws, including year established

https://fundingforgood.org/

Reset

What Makes a Good Prospect?

- **Capability-** Can they…?
- **Inclination-** Will they…?

Be mindful of:
Priorities
Geography (local vs. national)
Types of Support
Range in Giving
The "Hook"

Foundation & Corporate Grant Resources

FREE
- Foundation Center-Philanthropy News Digest

- Foundation Directory Online

- GrantStation, GrantScape

Free to use at the Central Library

FREE
- Foundation IRS Form 990-PF (Guidestar)

FREE
- Nonprofit Organization Annual Reports

FREE
- Funder websites

Project Development

- **Why?** – needs statement, landscape

- **Who?** – organizational description, qualifications, personnel

- **What?** – goals and expected outcomes

- **How?** - project description

- **Where?/ When?** – timeline and geography

- **With What?** – required resources, budget, partnerships, etc.

Defining Your Project

- What is the **idea**?

- Does it **align** with your mission?

- What/Who is **driving** the project?

- What are the project **goals**?

- What are your expected:

  - Outputs?

  - Outcomes?

  - IMPACT?

Statement of Need

- **Who** is affected by the problem?

- **What factors contribute** to problem?

- **What can be done** to fix the problem?

- **What your organization is doing** to address the problem, what others are doing, what remains to be done?

- **Why** does it matter?

- **Quantify** if possible

Effective Needs Statements

- Relate to your **mission**

- Relate to **funder's priorities**

- Focus on **beneficiaries**

- Are well <u>supported with cited evidence</u> (statistics, research, trends)

- Are directly connected to your **organization's ability to respond** to that need

Great Needs Statements…

- Avoid **circular reasoning**

- Use **stories** anchored in **hard facts**

- Show **knowledge of similar organizations and efforts**.

- Convey **urgency**

An Effective Needs Statement?

"Our youth have limited access to educational resources. They are mostly from low-income households, and the neighborhood in general is very distressed. We have one after-school program that is well attended, but we need more resources to reach more of our students. Please help us educate our youth."

Project Methods

- Goals and Objectives

- Project Description

- Timeline

- Outcomes/Evaluation

- Sustainability Plan

- **S**pecific – target a specific area for improvement.

- **M**easurable – quantify or at least suggest an indicator of progress.

- **A**ttainable – assuring that an end can be achieved.

- **R**ealistic – state what results can realistically be achieved, given available resources.

- **T**ime-related – specify when the result(s) can be achieved.
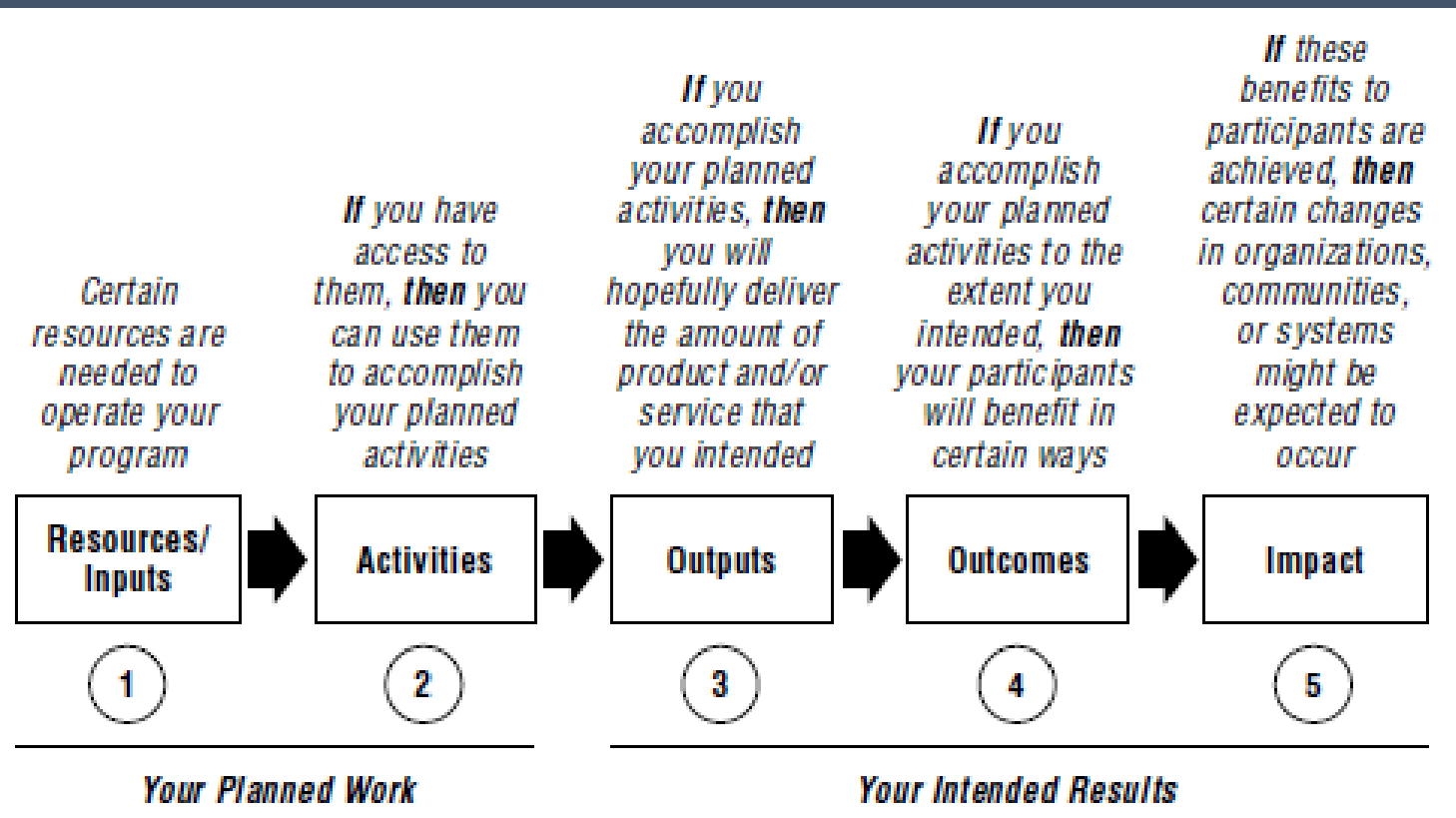
Measuring Success: Goals

What will you accomplish through this project?

Exercise Example:

YouthWrite will create and operate a two-hour after school program at two city elementary schools that improves writing skills for 25 fourth and fifth grade students who scored in Tier 1 on the state writing exam.

Measuring Success: Outputs

What will you produce?

Examples: # graduates, # classes, training materials

Exercise Examples:

- 25 students attend

- 123 Writing Curriculum purchased

- 1 teacher and 1 aide hired

Measuring Success: Outcomes

What change will occur as a direct result of the project?
    Examples: In behavior, knowledge, attitude.

Exercise Examples:
Short-Term
- 50% increase in student attitudes about writing by the end of the grant period.
- 50% improvement in written organizational structure...
- 50% increase in correct punctuation usage...

Mid-term
- 25% decrease in use of in-school remedial writing services over five years.

Measuring Success: Impact

What change will you effect over the long term?

Examples: Changes in organizations, communities, systems.

Exercise Examples:

- Lower drop-out rates at the high school

- Greater participation in secondary advanced ELA classes at the high school

- Higher post-secondary education access

Your Turn....

Take a few minutes to write

- Goal
- Outputs
- Outcomes
- Impacts

.........for *your* project

Bicycle Helmet Public Information Campaign

Situation	Inputs	Target Systems	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes - Impact		

Situation

Funding for an informational campaign to encourage bicyclists to use helmets has been received

Inputs

- Three full-time staff members
- Volunteers with traumatic brain injuries
- Space and equipment (donated by a local nonprofit agency)

Target Systems

- Individuals and organizations aligned with riding bicycles for recreation and / or transportation
- Journalists and publications covering disability, athletic, and mainstream issues
- Bicycle helmet and bicycle manufacturers conducting marketing/ public relations campaigns
- Community-based charities interested in bicycle helmet give-away programs
- Community and state chapters, and the national association on brain injury

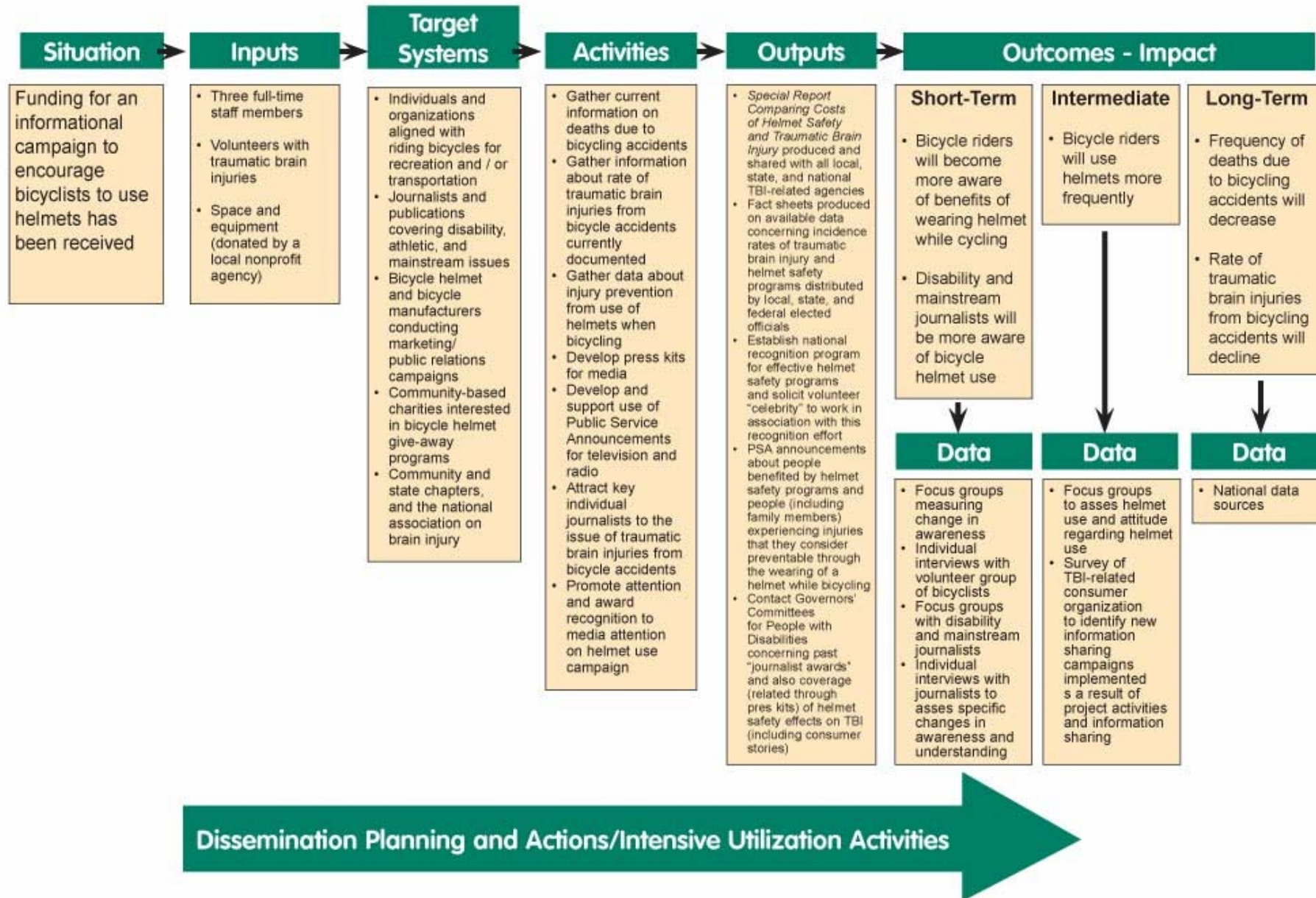**Activities**

- Gather current information on deaths due to bicycling accidents
- Gather information about rate of traumatic brain injuries from bicycle accidents currently documented
- Gather data about injury prevention from use of helmets when bicycling
- Develop press kits for media
- Develop and support use of Public Service Announcements for television and radio
- Attract key individual journalists to the issue of traumatic brain injuries from bicycle accidents
- Promote attention and award recognition to media attention on helmet use campaign

Outputs

- *Special Report Comparing Costs of Helmet Safety and Traumatic Brain Injury* produced and shared with all local, state, and national TBI-related agencies
- Fact sheets produced on available data concerning incidence rates of traumatic brain injury and helmet safety programs distributed by local, state, and federal elected officials
- Establish national recognition program for effective helmet safety programs and solicit volunteer "celebrity" to work in association with this recognition effort
- PSA announcements about people benefited by helmet safety programs and people (including family members) experiencing injuries that they consider preventable through the wearing of a helmet while bicycling
- Contact Governors' Committees for People with Disabilities concerning past "journalist awards" and also coverage (related through pres kits) of helmet safety effects on TBI (including consumer stories)

Outcomes - Impact

Short-Term

- Bicycle riders will become more aware of benefits of wearing helmet while cycling
- Disability and mainstream journalists will be more aware of bicycle helmet use

Intermediate

- Bicycle riders will use helmets more frequently

Long-Term

- Frequency of deaths due to bicycling accidents will decrease
- Rate of traumatic brain injuries from bicycling accidents will decline

Data (Short-Term)

- Focus groups measuring change in awareness
- Individual interviews with volunteer group of bicyclists
- Focus groups with disability and mainstream journalists
- Individual interviews with journalists to asses specific changes in awareness and understanding

Data (Intermediate)

- Focus groups to asses helmet use and attitude regarding helmet use
- Survey of TBI-related consumer organization to identify new information sharing campaigns implemented s a result of project activities and information sharing

Data (Long-Term)

- National data sources

Dissemination Planning and Actions/Intensive Utilization Activities

Budget

- Make sure that your budget aligns with your narrative / goals

- Calculating **costs**

- What is **allowable**? (indirect, capital)

- Is your organization contributing?

- What if you have a **partner**?

- Need help?

Tips for Writing a Strong Proposal

Funders Want a....

- Capable partner

- Clear rationale for support

- Shared values

- Link between your request and their focus.

More Tips….

Length, Style, Flow

- Be attuned to **funder's style** and **language**

- Use any **feedback** they have given

- Maintain a **positive, hopeful** tone

- Find your organization's **'voice'**

Even More Tips….

- **Tell a good story** supported by facts and statistics.

- **Be transparent**:

  - **Don't** hide organizational challenges

  - **Do** outline solutions implemented or to be implemented

- **Be specific** about your intended outcomes and how you will get there.

Things to Watch out for

- **Mission Creep**
  - Don't let the tail wag the dog:
  - Stay true to your organization's mission.
- **Unrealistic Expectations**
  - Grant writing isn't magic.
  - Grant funding won't solve organizational revenue issues.
- **Proposal Submissions**
  - Boilerplate Proposals
  - "Cold" Proposals- unless via RFP

After the Decision

- **Proposal tracking-** projects in pipeline, deadlines, decisions

- **Follow-up on your proposal**- who? Any further questions? Ask about next steps, provide additional info

- **Reply to funder's decision-** for both award and denial!

- **Say thank you-** acknowledgement and personal thanks

Funders don't fund activities, they fund *trusted competent partners* to accomplish *specific outcomes and impacts.*

Questions?

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