

Grant Preparation for Collaborative Efforts

Abstract

Significant reforms are taking place in human service delivery in America. However, training for grant writers, agency directors and fund developers, necessary to help initiate these reforms, has remained much the same during the past decade. This is particularly true with regard to working with diverse human service delivery groups. The growing consensus is such that issue-oriented human service providers cannot continue to pursue outcomes by themselves. This is significant in its call for all human service professionals to view their roles differently; to look carefully and critically at the relationships between and among their different agencies and at their collective response shifting community situations. Increasingly, funding agencies are acting as reformers and calling for services to be more consumer-driven, family-focused, community-based, flexible and prevention oriented. The wider community seeks more accountability for the investment and less duplication and fragmentation of efforts.

Because expectations regarding human service programs have changed, the role of the fundraiser has changed as well. Efforts which depend on collaborative resources to help strengthen families, for a variety of outcomes, present unique challenges for the fund-raiser, especially in grant preparation. When a collaborative group comes together, their main goal is usually to right a problem (as in disaster relief or creating literacy) or to assess needs (and hopefully strengths) and to get funding to address them (as in complex and integrated social service provision). This latter circumstance requires the biggest ideological shifts and presents the greatest role strain challenges among professionals.

In the past, the business of community-based non-profits has been driven by fairly unified boards of directors. As services shift to focus on a family or community that deals with a wide range of issues, agencies that feel passionately about drug addiction, literacy or housing for example must learn to work with each other to address complex needs. In theory, this is old news. But who turns these goals and the service re-design efforts attendant to them into plans and proposals? As Bruner notes "The thrust of these programs is not on families acquiring

specific knowledge (e.g., health, parenting or child development instruction and curricula) or being better assessed and referred to professional services (e.g., substance abuse treatment, mental health counseling). Instead, the focus is on helping families gain control over their lives through managing day-to-day stress, overcoming social isolation, and establishing goals and taking steps to meet them." (Bruner, 1994) Within this framework, human service is driven by multiple boards, staff and clients. Spoken or not, the challenges inherent to this situation arise during grant preparation.

The process of working through these challenges to help collaborative groups gain funding, as well as deeper insight into solution-making, is the topic of this article. While the strategies and perspectives presented here may be useful to all types of interdisciplinary work, they are particularly suited to facilitation and grant preparation for community-based collaborative efforts.¹ Often times, the grant writer is the only professional called upon to aid the group who is not bringing services or a service perspective. This situation has created a whole new set of expectations for today's fundraising professionals. These expectations include facilitation, mediation or strategic planning. The need for these activities is not remedied by the notion that facilitation, group process and program planning are supposed to be someone else's job. Often, the grant writer has the greatest degree of neutrality with which to bring about positive outcomes, through funding and through relationships as well. Many fund developers have not received training or had experience to prepare them for the expectations of developing grant proposals in the community-based collaborative setting.

Introduction

There is a necessary shift in process and focus that must take place for grant preparation to become more useful for collaborative efforts, as compared with grant writing for single agency or interagency partnerships. Traditionally, grant writers have been likely to work for an organization that has done well to document a specific issue on which they will work and about which they have amassed experience and credibility. For example, an elementary school district is assumed to know something about educating youngsters and has a group of internal experts with a recognized expertise in their particular field. The grant writer in this instance has a credible cause, a group of experts and presumably, solid programming on which to base

successful grant applications. Certainly, when groups cooperate with each other to serve common population, complexity increases. A drug abuse prevention program may work together with the elementary school district to adapt prevention activities, based upon their specific expertise and credibility and there may be staff who share some expertise and common perspectives about the work they undertake together. If they are true partners, not just contractor/sub-contractor, the person preparing the grant has to go a few steps further to demonstrate interrelationships and the logic involved in the partnership. The grant writer has more professionals with whom to discuss program approach, but still, the players are few.

While this example can almost be defined as inter-agency collaboration, it does not begin to approach the complexity of community-based collaboration that many funders are now expecting. Private funders such as the Pew Charitable Trusts and the Annie E. Casey Foundation along with some public funding sources such as California's Healthy Start and Hawaii's Healthy Families programs have forwarded an expectation that agencies look at family needs differently. This different perspective is not about adding up services for convenience and effectiveness based on service outcome expectations; it's about shifting the way human service goals are created in the first place to assess the family, neighborhood, community and population first, and then to see how agencies and systems can adapt to and blend with the community's inherent strengths to create longer lasting changes in conditions such as literacy, school achievement and health outcomes. These expectations often call for "systems change" and human services are scrambling rapidly to meet these expectations (or at least to look as if they are meeting these expectations.) Whether the traditional configuration of human service systems can adapt to these new strategies and continue adapting to shifting communities remains to be seen. Three challenges emerge in this scramble however, that should draw the special attention of those charged with writing for funding.

First, many funders want grantees to analyze systems and make changes that address the logic of community-based collaboration. These changes could include things like shared governance, joint supervision of staff, sharing of funds, de-categorization of funds, etc. These require not just structural shifts, though these are important. The changes require cultural shifts within helping organizations and a greater understanding of how our theories of change are

influenced. The most important aspects of these reforms are that they must make sense for the populations with which the collaborative group works and be rooted in best practice and reasonable theories. The sticky part is that communities are not homogenous blocks of people with the same views on what works and how money should best be spent toward the public good. Because there is no uniform map for these changes, a plan must be created and documented in such a way that there are clear steps to pursue. Often the only written documentation of how systems change is being affected is in grant proposals. This lays heavy burden on grant writers to engage with programs not just as fund-raisers, but as mapmakers, drawing out the specifics of the journey, not just answering the questions asked in the RFP.

Second, interdisciplinary teams face challenges in their work together that are exacerbated by the fact that ideally, participants represent different views and resources and that their professional opinions on best practice are each embedded in the specific work they are trying to do. The move toward recognizing clients as colleagues in the work is an added ideological nightmare with an interdisciplinary group. When the fund-developer is truly focused on enabling the goals of the group, not just on the job of raising funds, that person brings a perspective to the facilitation process that can be invaluable. The facilitator/mediator role in this instance focuses heavily on helping groups to first recognize their professional and cultural biases and how to work respectfully with each other without stifling certain viewpoints in favor of others. Because the grant writer sometimes lacks a specific service perspective, or has worked on behalf of more than one service perspective in her career, she may be the ideal person to facilitate this shift.

The final challenge regards the ubiquity of "collaboration." Regardless of what this process is called, engaging local leadership and developing responsive multi-disciplinary approaches to human service issues is hard work. It is an approach that continues to compel researchers and providers alike, and it has many names, "collaboration" being only its most recent. When a method or approach becomes labeled and developed, an immediate danger emerges. It's easier to talk about it well, than do it well. This has certainly been the case with this type of human service work we are calling here "community-based collaboration." This is not to say that fund-raisers or other professionals fabricate their approaches, or lie in their

descriptions of the work being done. Rather, it becomes possible to understand the theories of collaboration without enacting pervasive systems-wide beliefs in them. It is possible to champion broad concepts, without knowledge of how to operationalize service delivery shifts, without commitment to changing systems deeply. This phenomenon presents special danger with regard to grantwriting. It is quite tempting at times to draw up a model that will get funding, but may not be implemented, or at the least, not implemented well and with enthusiasm. Similarly, it's become easy, within some experienced collaborative groups, to have certain members of the group who are keepers of the vision, but upon closer analysis, engaged stakeholders are few. For these reasons, the challenge of working with experienced collaborators also bears further examination.

While taking on these challenges may seem unrealistic for some fund-developers, let us also consider some responsibilities of our profession. First, it is improper for a grant writer to submit a proposal whose goals and objectives he feels cannot reasonably or successfully be enacted. And yet, his job is to rally what funding exists to his employer's reasonable and just cause. This conundrum leads to this conclusion (among many). Those preparing grants must prepare to do the facilitation and culture-building work that needs to be done and which seem to be in no one's job description. By raising our skill level in these areas and advocating for the time it takes to carry out these tasks well, we ensure that the grant writing process yields not just a fundable grant but a blueprint for organizational action. In some cases, it may be reasonable in the time allotted only to read the Request for Proposals and write for funding in as expedient manner as possible. If this is all we ever do, however, we ignore the dynamic role of fund-raising as a professional activity, and in effect, become drones, rather than participants in the philanthropic process. The second responsibility to the profession lies in the fact that grant writers and fund development professionals are usually (rightfully or not) among the most highly valued human service professionals. They command some of the highest salaries within human service organizations and, because chief executive jobs are often considered fund-raising positions, they ascend the ranks toward leadership with greater speed and frequency than staff with program experience alone. If fund-raisers as a professional group do not develop a strong ability to build clarity of vision among program staff and to engender the strengths of all partners, then the future success of human service will not be as bright as it could be.

Facilitation of Interdisciplinary Teams

Traditionally, when a grant writer facilitates a meeting in preparation for grantwriting, the focus is on how the group can give the writer the best information to enable her to build a winning proposal. The grant writer is charged with being an expert about the RFP, the proposal response and writing process and the group participants are charged with knowing the program. Even when one agency is involved, the program is not always clear. Even within an organization, staff may have a difficult time appreciating how the component for which they bear responsibility fits into the whole. Rather than being irritated by a lack of program clarity, the wise grant preparer can come to expect this lack of clarity and use it as an opportunity to gain more information about not only the program, but the soul of the effort. (Hedgepeth, 1994) Further, this lack of clarity should not be viewed as ineptitude. The language of fundable programs is not necessarily the language of community work. Until there is widespread training, and broader experience regarding comprehensive and community-driven service strategies it is not reasonable to expect complete competency in planning for these efforts. If the purpose of a meeting is to prepare for funding, it makes good sense for the grant writer to facilitate, and sometimes, the facilitation involves working on program and partnership building. The process by which these things can be facilitated includes, clarity about meeting structure, clarity about decision-making and the modeling of strategies that raise the group's skill level about facilitating these topics for themselves in other settings.

Resources abound for how to facilitate an effective meeting, write a useful agenda and encourage participants to follow through with assignments. (Auvine, 1978; Fink, 1991; Graham, 1991; Shelton, 1994; Weissinger, 1992; Woodrow, 1976; etc.) While the following paragraphs provide but a cursory overview, it behooves a grant writer to have some sense of how to manage the following process issues in a grant-writing/program planning meeting:

- Differences in the complexity and clarity of language with which participants explain their positions and needs
- Language and demeanor that blocks progress, or takes a fatalistic view of the matter at hand
- An uncomfortable "feeling" in the group.

Methods for dealing with these three facilitation concerns vary, but some basic tenets of conflict resolution and avoidance apply broadly. First, when dealing with differences in language ability (which may stem from different professional or educational backgrounds, cultural issues or the English language itself), the facilitator who is skilled at reframing issues is quite useful to the group. The necessity to forge a common language is not unique to collaborative efforts. In almost any human service setting where people with different backgrounds must work and negotiate together, facilitators must deal with the possibility of participants using language that focuses on conquest rather than congruence. While it's helpful to assume that collaborators in human service settings are together because they are seeking congruence, the individual participants do not always know how to work from an integrative paradigm. Language holds some of the simplest and yet most profound tools and clues for how to work with people of different backgrounds. As Leonard Marcus and his colleagues point out in *Renegotiating Health Care*,

"Nurses speak nurse. Doctors speak doctor. Health administrators speak administrator and so on through the other disciplines. These languages refer not only to the distinct vocabulary of each specialty -- the analogy also denotes the unique cognitive framework used to process information, make decisions and assess value.... When presented with the same information, each deliberates differently." (p. 88, 1995)

When decisions must be made quickly regarding program and allocation of funds, these differences in deliberation must be taken very seriously. The first step is to acknowledge that these differences exist and that they are absolutely necessary to collaborative work. The second step is to acknowledge that the work of collaboration requires shifts in not only thinking, but in feeling about the work we do. Verbal modeling of an integrative approach is one way that facilitator can work with language to model expedient decision-making.

Establishing a sound meeting framework that includes active introspection on the part of the facilitator/grant-writer allows for responsiveness to not only the grant process but to the individuals involved in program success. The grant-writer must acknowledge that reading the request for applications and becoming familiar with the program, has framed that application in

some way for him. The frame may be negative or positive regarding certain components of the funding request, but it is likely a complex frame that will affect the collaborative members. More importantly, when the grant preparer understands his own frame, he will be better able to ask the kinds of questions that solicit information that will be useful to the proposal and the ultimate functioning of the program. He will be better able to help participants re-frame issues that may be contentious, or simply unclear.

Verbally reframing an issue, by using different language to express the same or similar concept can serve to clarify issues, open options, encourage diverse viewpoints and identify the issues beneath the positions. The facilitator can reframe plans and approaches to better fit with the proposal guidelines helps the group understand what is being asked of them from the funder. It also helps stakeholders to clarify what they are able to do and not do. More general forms of re-framing, for clarity and meeting momentum can also be useful. (See Appendix One for a worksheet on re-framing in collaborative settings.) The ability to identify the source of confusion or discomfort and re-frame an issue as systemic, rather than personal moves group planning along more quickly and more effectively.

When dealing with negativity in a meeting, reframing the issue as a question or a positive statement often diffuses this energy. One example of re-statement to diffuse negativity is the use of the word "and" instead of "but." Often times, the assumption of limited funding and profound need in human services creates adversarial conditions. When the statement "We want to have community dinners every other month to work on cohesion, but the medical care piece of our plan uses up all of our money," can be reframed, options are opened. The re-frame might sound like this. "I'm hearing that you want community dinners every other month, and that the medical piece of the plan is costly. How would you like to enable both of those programs?" This shift helps participants move toward seeking congruence in their own thinking and verbal patterns, while leaving options open. Polarization of issues is a danger in collaboration. If this negativity were to become entrenched, the discussion could degenerate into factioning regarding the value of either medical services or community dinners. In this instance, the issue with the most entrenched perspective is likely to win out. It's difficult to argue about a need for medical care, when children are missing school due to untreated ear-infections, for example. The more

innovative, community-building approach is likely to be dropped, if the facilitator does nothing to open options regarding solutions. It's important to note that the facilitator, as grant-writer, doesn't have the solutions. She merely frames the discussion so that solutions emerge.

Another important tactic is to help group members develop a systems perspective and a "negative capability." The poet Keats spoke about this concept of individuals being able to contain uncomfortable feelings without anyone feeling the need to "reach out" in irritability. Of course, uncomfortable feelings cannot be maintained forever, and within a clear collaborative process, time should be allocated (often after the grant is submitted) to air discomfort in a productive fashion.

Because we are human in our work settings, participant's feelings speak through their professional perspectives. In particular, feelings of inefficacy, burn-out and disbelief that change can occur in the organization, are not to be ignored. This is not to say that during a grant-writing process all of these things can be addressed fully. Rather, it helps to assist meeting participants in identifying which issues they need to work through later, and which need to be resolved before a reasonable grant application can be submitted. Putting words to discomfort is an important way to do this. Whether the discomfort is stated or otherwise palpable in the process is irrelevant. The facilitator can still raise the issue of what she feels is going on and ask for confirmation. During the grant-writing process, the writer can keep a list of issues she feels are still unclear, to be presented to the group once the grant is finished. By not losing sight of these issues, she models a balance of appropriate time management and a refusal to subvert difficult, long-term issues. This also helps re-define dissent and occasional conflict as methods for furthering the group's purpose. Because grant writing is a specific task, often separate from program delivery, moving a group through this kind of process requires strong partnerships with the program staff who will be working with the collaborative group in the future. An agreement must be reached that when one person makes a commitment to revisit things later, others can and will follow through with that intention.

Creating clarity about meeting structure is not just about choosing the most effective methods. Ideally, it's about helping the group to understand why some methods are more appropriate than others to further certain goals. If one of the group's goals is to consciously

value under-valued perspectives (like that of the mother on public assistance, the homeless father, the teenager with the blue hair) then it also makes sense to spend some time deconstructing the vague discomfort some participants may feel with certain facilitation methods. People who have not had experience with Robert's Rules of Order, for example, are likely to feel intimidated if others begin their comments with phrases like "I move to..." or "Point of order..." Also, the extent to which these methods have been used specifically to limit input from certain people or groups is within our historical memory and cannot be ignored. While there is likely not time to discuss these topics fully in advance of a grant deadline, raising the issue of appropriate facilitation can sometimes push this dialogue in other settings, which is also very useful to the aims of the group. At the least, the facilitator will best serve the goals of the group by enacting a facilitation method that offers both adequate structure and appropriate flexibility. Structure is vital to ensuring that participants each feel safe in giving their input. If it is specific in the meeting structure that each person have an opportunity for input and everyone knows that it is part of the facilitator's job to ensure that this happens, then more participants are likely to simply take that "right" without being prodded for input. If times are provided on the agenda and it's clear who'll be talking about what, then participants are more likely to include their input at appropriate times and to re-direct the conversation when it seems necessary to do so. Flexibility is also vital. The ability for the group to act autonomously to re-direct itself is important to collaborative decision-making. The facilitator has to be a clear vessel for the will of the group, however, always offering information about the grant process, without forcing direction. This can be difficult, since each of us operates from our own biases. This can also feel awkward for the grant writer as consultant to step back from the stance of "expert." These tactics require conscious presence to the group's process and practice, and some prescience regarding frame.

The same set of considerations applies to decision-making methods. Often times, consensus is assumed to be the method of choice for collaborative groups and yet, the facilitator should expect few participants to know how to decide and close issues via consensus, let alone be comfortable with outcomes. Consensus seems to be the decision-making method from which we expect the most and about which we understand the least. Operating by consensus, depending on who is asked, is supposed to dissolve hierarchy, take years to decide simple things, encourage

everyone's input, ensure a decision that pleases no one, drive everyone crazy and be the only fair way to do things. Now how can all of that be true?

Groups must understand that different methods of decision making are appropriate for different types of decisions and that they should choose one that makes sense for the meetings at hand. It's not possible to "do everything by consensus" as some well-meaning groups will claim. The important thing is to be clear about how decisions will be made. A group may want to decide, by consensus, which goals and objectives should command their attention during the next three years. At the same time, they may discuss two different options for a case management plan and empower a small group to make the final decision next week. It may be left up to the grant writer to decide on her own how to structure, format and present the application for mailing.

The most important things to help the group understand about consensus are what it means and that it doesn't make sense to use it for every decision. Consensus is not unanimity. Consensus is also not "the informal way" to make decisions. It is a specific method that must be called, just as a vote is called. It can be called by active assertion ("Are we in consensus?") or it can be called passively ("Anyone opposed to this decision speak up now."), but it must be documented so that later, everyone knows what decisions have been made. Ideally, each participant should be able to see and understand his own position within consensus, so that the process itself is not a tool for increasing or enforcing conformity. (Lakin, 1975) This becomes more possible, when the decision-making process is explicit. The participant becomes more able to say something to himself such as "I understand that the funder requires this type of case management system and that we are all in agreement about our community needs. I'd prefer to see more emphasis on frequency of home visiting, but I understand the funding constraints and I don't see other flaws with this approach for our families." When the goals of consensus are unarticulated, the danger is that the participant could feel that his concerns regarding frequency of home visiting are unimportant, given what the funder needs, because the rest of the group seems to go along. This press toward agreement in group process involves members continually comparing interpretations of issues so that they can establish meanings for themselves, in the context of the group. (Lakin, 1975) Unexamined, this natural response to group planning can be

crippling to a collaborative group as norms are created around rigid values and attitudes regarding service delivery. On the other hand, norm development around process issues such as openness, emotional expressiveness, curiosity about difference, etc. can serve the group as it strives toward to new solutions and shifting needs.

One pitfall in using consensus is that we fail to recognize the power of our indoctrination into majority-rules decision-making. This is one of the most drastic displays of our inclination toward conformity and cohesion in groups. As long as everyone agrees that one vote for one person means that the decision is fair, then true agreement or even exploration of different ideas is not needed. Inherently, community-based collaborative planning philosophy runs counter to this idea, and yet this method of decision-making may be more comfortable when group members begin to feel pressed by change and urgency. Additionally, it may be uncomfortable for people to have a divergent opinion, but still remain faithful to the majority's desire to use a not-bad solution. With consensus, members must each take responsibility for the decision, rather than being able to define themselves as opposers to the plan, if something goes awry. It may also be tempting, in a time crunch, for group members to call a vote and go with the majority. If this is allowed to happen, it's vital that a conscious decision be called to change the decision-making process. Wiping out opposing viewpoints with a vote is not acceptable if a decision has been made to use consensus.

Handling these facilitation issues calls upon the relative neutrality of the person writing the grant. Whether spoken or not, a group often assumes that the grant writer has the facilitation skill set with which to assist the grant-writing process. Helping people to see the causes and consequences of their different perspectives is a powerful tool in moving an agenda forward and in ensuring the future success of a funded program. While it is not likely that a grant writer has the time, under deadline, to move a group through a process that deconstructs each of these issues, it is ignorant to assume that they won't arise anyway. Having the ability to anticipate these issues, name them and offer solutions helps to ensure that deadlines are met and programs are successful.

Organizational Culture: Cultivating an group that views clients as colleagues and recognizes different theories of change at work.

Defining organizational culture is not an easy task under the simplest of circumstances because it is an experiential and socially embedded concept. Organizational culture has to do with a set of shared assumptions, priorities, meanings and values by which group members operate, but this set of factors is also embedded in the larger societal cultural issues, and sometimes these meanings are at odds. (Conners, 1997; Frost, 1985) Indeed, the whole concept of culture itself has myriad meanings, depending on how it has been experienced and defined in the past by individuals and groups. Ultimately it may be better not to use the word at all in its broadest sense. Organizational culture for community-based collaboratives should be understood by organizers and participants alike as a story of multiple embeddedness and as a constant exercise in parallel process. It is imperative to note that one of the reasons that collaborative services affect systems change at all, is that social/organizational/cultural change is not linear and hierarchical. (Hallinan, 1997) Shifts within large bureaucracies are often slow and slower still are shifts within the large social context of races, nations, genders, etc. But change at the micro level can also, sporadically, slowly, quickly or dramatically, effect larger systems as well. A related bit of discomfort that we face in doing collaborative work is the fact that we may not be able to generalize methods and outcomes that are effective in one setting or community to those that occur in another place or time. Nor can we reinvent the entire work of human service in every different setting. This balance among responsiveness to community needs, theory and best practice in human service may be best addressed by attention to organizational culture.

In dealing with the multiple embeddedness of collaborative culture, a few important issues breathe just beneath the surface of discussions about organizational culture. First, the concepts that we seek to promote in communities: trust, openness, mutual respect and caring and global responsibility for children, must be reflected in the organizational process of the collaborative workplace. This means that, at some point in collaborative development, issues such as low wages for female-dominated tasks, suspicion among different disciplines or groups in the collaborative and rigidity of professional/personal boundaries must be examined from a cultural standpoint. Second, each participant in a collaborative, as anywhere else in life, operates

within multiple cultures (ethnic, spiritual, familial, etc.) that must accommodate the norms and behaviors of the collaborative group. Much analysis has been done of organizational culture however, precisely because we spend so much time in the workplace. The struggle to create balance between the organizational culture of an employing agency and the community-as-home (in the case of parents and community members) must open toward a viable collaborative culture. Systems thinking, that encourages analysis of "the probabilities of interconnections" (Schaffer and Anundsen, 1993) can help mitigate the role strain that occurs when a collaborative participant is both neighbor and social worker for example, or student and administrator. The gift in negotiating these relationships is the systems change effect garnered when participants apply learning from one area of their lives within others. This is one way that organizational change can be seen in some views as one cog turning the rest in an interconnected mechanism, and in other cases, as wine diffusing through water, slowly, perhaps imperceptibly, at some instances becoming consumed, and at others changing the hue of the whole.

Often times, multi-disciplinary groups forge ahead with complex systems change and community based leadership plans without first acknowledging that the very act of working together involves huge shifts in understanding about human service for each participant. Especially with informal associations such as community-based collaborative groups, individuals are the primary unit of change.

The new organizational culture of collaborative work involves three primary shifts in process of which grant preparers should be aware. First, the collaborative does not represent one organizational or professional culture. School staff, who have learned to operate within school district systems must learn to work with health care staff, who have been trained in a medical model, must learn to work with housing specialists who may never have gotten comfortable on school sites, and so on. The bigger issue is not learning to work together, however. In order to work together, professionals can hang onto their areas of expertise and respect each other for their differences. The bigger challenge is when multi-disciplinary teams must plan together and share resources. Turf and ideological issues don't only emerge because funds are short and individuals are territorial and combative. The multiplicity of our cultural paradigms come into play. University education and professional training programs often position disciplines against

each other in critical analysis. Many professionals become quite comfortable, through their schooling, at arguing their service perspectives, sometimes with great righteousness. Additional factors such as race, gender and class affect participants meta-theoretical perspectives on service delivery as well. Conflicts in this arena arise under a number of different circumstances, and often, it is not clear to participants that fundamental differences in perspectives have emerged. For example, in planning a "mental health" program, the term "assessment" can mean a number of different things. For the school psychologist assessment may mean a specific battery of tests related to mental ability. For the agency case manager, it could mean a discussion to get at needs and strengths in the family, for the medical professional, it could mean medical exam and possible dispensing of medication. Indeed, the assumed unit of study may differ as well. In a medical setting, patients are individuals, in other settings the "client" may be the family, or for the community organizer in the group, may be neighborhoods. When program planning, these perspectives have tremendous bearing on what it is assumed that people need with regard to mental health services and how success will be measured. Unless these differences in perspectives (which can be presented as deep-seeded values about what is right and wrong) are explored and consciously valued, the grant writer can find himself trying to write on behalf of a very disorganized program, or perhaps worse, synthesizing a program that no one is really invested in delivering.

The crux of organizing a grant proposal on behalf of a coherent plan is that the theories of change at work in the group must match the proposed approaches, then finally, the approach must match the funder's interest. When a grant writer is working on framing and funding a program that seems exceptionally vague, it may be that the group has not moved beneath their understanding of how to best accomplish discreet activities, so that they can uncover why the program should be producing positive outcomes, if all goes well. Certainly, the grant writer should be familiar with the funder's acceptable theories of change; this falls into the traditional role of fund developer. For example, if a funder is willing to give money for parent involvement in the schools because the funder believes that's the primary thing that will increase student achievement, it's likely not useful to design a program for the betterment of student achievement that does not involve parent involvement. There are various formal tools available to help organizations uncover and analyze their collective and individual theories of change. For use

with community organizations, the Implicit Beliefs About Change Scale (IBACS) is one quantitative tool that has been used to uncover differing belief structures within organizations that work with children and families. (Silverberg 1996) While this scale has demonstrated good internal consistency and yields appropriate response variance, these type of tools are cumbersome with collaborative groups for precisely the reasons their use is warranted: diversity in organizational backgrounds, beliefs and skills. It's difficult to answer questions about "the collaborative" without imbedding those questions in the individual's own organizational experience with the collaborative. It may be more helpful, given the speed of shifting cultural content to use conscious facilitation that addresses theories of change verbally, thereby moving a group more gently through this understanding. Facilitation can be structured to include questions about how, whether and when successes can be achieved and shifts made, with client populations, within small organizational cultures and within larger systems. A process of prompting, engaged listening, documentation and story-telling, when imbedded in program planning and fund development, help collaborative groups discover their collective theories of change, and develop respect for their differences.

Adding the voices of those affected by the issues the grant seeks to ameliorate, to our discussion of culture, gives rise to an additional set of concerns. First, issues such as varying methods of participation, comfort in the group and valuing of diverse perspectives must be addressed. Second, deeper attitudes about fundamental causes of social problems are revealed. For example, what happens when those who believe that poverty (and other social problems) arise from independent behavior are placed together on a planning team with those who believe that poverty results from inadequate social systems? And those who believe that it results from poor educational opportunities? More specifically, how does the facilitator deal with those differences along with the power differences of those members and her own position of status relative to them? How is a group identity formed when professionals with these perspectives sit at the planning table with community members who are, themselves, currently poor and experiencing other challenges which, depending on perspective, are seen as either problems of personal deficit or social problems influenced by factors such as race, gender and age?

Some of the issues discussed in the previous section regarding meeting facilitation are relevant here. Putting words to the discomfort in the room is an important step. Some of these questions can literally be asked, as long as the grant writer is mindful of what must be handled now and what must be put on a later agenda to be dealt with outside the realm of fund development. It's important to note that the idea of embracing those with whom we work as colleagues, not just as clients, is theoretically sound from a social work perspective, and appealing to many human service providers. The process of actually enacting this intention requires careful planning and a conscious cultural shift on behalf of both professionals and community members. Particularly if the funding proposal says that this will occur, it makes sense to begin testing possible strategies during the program planning/grant-writing phase of service delivery. Strategies for accomplishing this type of shift can include mentoring for community members to be more active participants in planning, methods for peer professional support to enable shifts in language and attitude (Furlong, 1990) and identification of areas within each professional culture that do not nurture community leadership and inclusion of parents as "colleagues." Many times, human service providers talk about community and parent involvement and nurturing community leadership without regard to the outcome that "leaders" will (rightfully) want to take control of their own communities. The grant writer is in a position to further this dialogue and awareness by asking how that shift will take place. How are the various systems working together to ensure that grassroots leadership can be valued at the top of the system? This is appropriate questioning to further the aims of successful fund-development and appropriate program delivery. In the human services, we all do well to remind each other that the process of change is as personal to helping professionals, as crisis is to the families and individuals who need help.

And so what is the role and perspective of grant preparer in the organizational culture? Surely I don't mean to imply that this role is transparent, or somehow outside of the culture in which the work resides, especially if the grant writer is a staff-person. Beyond the obvious role of securing funds, the grant writer often has the unspoken role of organizational scribe and historical poet. This concept may seem a bit overdone, but let's consider the nature of collaborative roadmaps. Inherently, community-based collaboratives are designed to be flexible and meet changing needs. Because of this, implementation is never truly complete. There is

always a sense of being in process -- experienced at some things, fledging at others (Kagan, 1991; Knapp, 1995) Additionally, collaboratives are most often not formal entities; they are collections of agencies, individuals and institutions that operate by a broad, shared vision, but who likely lack legal glue. Because of this, along with the predictability of changing local circumstances, comprehensive written documentation of programs and strategies are rare. Grants themselves, so long as they are not works of fiction, become snapshots of the group's progress and history. When a collaborative budget is written to include either "good-faith" commitments via Memoranda of Understanding, or funding commitments via contractual agreements, that documentation is vital for the group to return to as programs shift and intentions are modified. There's no way to get the collaborative to stand still, but the grant, as historical document, arrests movement momentarily. When well written and richly descriptive, it helps collaborative members reconstruct not only what they said they'd do, but the feelings about why they felt so committed to doing it.

Working with experienced collaborators

Experience can be a positive or negative force in a group's dynamic. Experience can bring skill or cynicism; experience can bring enthusiasm or dread. In some ways, the easier task is to facilitate a group of people who have not worked together in the past. In that case, all of the questions associated with defining a group process can be raised without fear of boring or insulting participants. Participant's differing skills can be honored without referencing past foibles the group may have encountered. The facilitator can relegate past history to past projects and help the group create a new working agenda with greater ease.

Some special considerations apply when a grant writer (whether staff or consultant) is getting to know an experienced group. Often, this is the group that has been doing praiseworthy work for many years and may not have taken the time to analyze its own group process, or assess its partners since its inception. This group has high expectations of itself and others expect quality work from it. The grant writer is in a dangerous situation with this group because its data is old, relationships are unclear and yet, the track record for funding is strong. Often, this is the group that will call a grant-writing consultant and say "We just need money to sustain our work. We don't need any help with visioning, partnerships or collaborative culture. We've done that."

And yet, the recent documentation the group provides is not solid. Assessment data is three to five years old and evaluation has focused on discreet, family outcomes alone, not on the process functioning of the group which helped to enable those outcomes. Often, the group has even strayed away from some of the principles which guide them. Principles such as following the direction of various community constituents, maintaining a family, rather than individual focus in service delivery and bringing clients in as colleagues and consulting their expertise can be compromised when staff turns over and no one is minding the conveyance of collaborative culture.

In this case, experience "doing collaboration" does not necessarily translate into experienced collaborators. It is vital for the grant writer, whether a partner himself or not, to use his status as outsider to move the group from where they are to where they think they are. All of the previously noted facilitation methods apply and the grant writer must be clear that his goal is to help the group present their process along with their goals, objectives and triumphs, so that they can actually enact the strategies in which they believe so deeply. While it should never be assumed that a group just wants the money without doing what they say they will, it is also unethical for the grant writer to present goals and strategies that have no reasonable basis for being attainable.

By taking on the role of "outsider" or "newcomer" the grant preparer is in a position to suggest creative processes by which she can gain information. A creative or metaphoric approach allows the group to re-enact milestones important to the culture of the group, in their minds, before simply giving the writer a list of who did what and when. This approach also helps the grant writer or evaluator understand more clearly the group's theories of change. Specifically, how did the group come to believe that what they are trying to do will work with the population with whom they are trying to do it. Ascertaining the theory of change is very important to the logic of any grant proposal or evaluation design, but it can be arduous and irritating to ascertain these theories in a linear fashion from a multi-disciplinary group.

Any process that helps group members tie their experiences to outside factors, or allows them to think of their experiences with the group metaphorically can accomplish this. One strategy taught by the Institute for Cultural Affairs asks participants to think back over a certain

period of time about things that were happening in the world or in their communities that affected, and continue to affect the work they're trying to do. This assists the grant writer in building a sense of inter-connectedness for the program at hand, which is so vital to collaborative funding. Another activity called The River of Culture was developed by Idaho Department of Health and Welfare. This activity allows participants to think back through their history together and to chart it metaphorically as a river with landscape-like symbolism (blue skies, strong currents, peaceful pools etc.). It allows participants to capture not only what happened but how it felt to be part of the group. This interconnectedness within the group can be just as vital in explaining how programs will succeed and what "intangibles" will support the dollars the group is seeking. While getting permission to spend time on these kinds of strategies to finding out the history and successes of the group may be a tough sell at first, my experience has been that when well-facilitated they yield stronger partnerships and clearer vision to enable the programs the group wants the writer to fund.

Conclusion

The days when a good grant writer could be built with blocks of good writing skills, task orientation and clarity are over. Indeed, I doubt that this creature was ever so simplistic. While writing grants for collaborative efforts forces us to articulate the complexities of group process and complex interactions, these issues were never far beneath the surface. In the current environment, we have an opportunity to help human service organizations and community members clarify not only their program goals and needs, but to improve the parallel process of ameliorating human service settings. We come to be not just program specialists or fund-raisers, but champions of collaboration as well. This may seem a lofty goal for the grant writer, but if we take the broad view, the person preparing a grant holds an elevated vantage point because she must take the view of the funder and other outside constituents who judge programmatic approaches and successes by different criteria than those within the programmatic paradigm.

It is inherently difficult to train staff to work within a model of community-based collaborative human service delivery. Definitions of this work are ever shifting, as are the methods that local communities engage to achieve outcomes. Further, the work is inter-

disciplinary and while a fine body of work on collaboration has emerged in the field of social work, and another is emerging among evaluators, there is very little training available that is of true relevance to fund-developers and administrators working on collaboration.

An analysis of grant preparation in specific makes sense as a starting point for building this relevant literature. Grant preparation is most often a facilitated process that requires contact with collaborative members and program clarity, and it yields a tangible document that can be referenced later. One of the first steps in bettering professional expertise around what it takes to work effectively with collaborative groups is to assemble an understanding of what tools will be useful to the task, and how they can best be plied. That has been the purpose of this article. A fine array of resources regarding facilitation, conflict resolution and organizational culture has been cursorily referenced here. A good deal more work is needed to hone the application of these activities, and indeed, if done well, the applications will continue to shift. We can not expect the field of fund-raising for human services to stand still so that we can learn about it more concretely. It is affected by too many social, political, economic and cultural factors to keep from being dynamic and volatile. Of course, this is also the joy of our work.

One of the areas that has not been adequately developed in this article is the issue of evaluation design for collaborative efforts. This is of particular interest to fund-developers and directors of established programs. While most funders require an evaluation component, few have arrived at recommendations for evaluating collaborative process. The goal here is not to evaluate the methods as though they were outcomes, but rather to blend appropriate research methods to understand the program as it was constructed: holistically and collaboratively. It is necessary and understandable to focus on outcomes for the populations being served. Indeed, human services, as a whole, have been heavily criticized in the past for focusing only on process, and not enough on outcomes. The type of process evaluation I'm referencing here however, is neither the traditional form which counts how many people came to a group, or how many contacts they had with a provider, for example. In that model, the service provider and the funder accept that a certain activity yields a certain outcome, thereby rendering measurement of the outcome irrelevant. This old model represents a pact of agreement between the funder and the provider regarding the theory of change, but does little to justify program effectiveness

outside of that relationship. Similarly, many of the evaluation methodologies currently in use in human services focus only on the outcome within a population, not on how the outcome was achieved. This is a similarly short sighted approach because it does little to justify the methods of service delivery.

Particularly when the methods of service delivery engage family-centered, multi-disciplinary approaches, and those approaches require specific funding, evaluation that deals solely with family outcomes is inadequate evidence for sustainability. Evaluation is a topic that concerns the fund-developer in this instance, most profoundly. In matters of evaluation, human service providers often feel that they will do only what is proscribed by the funder, either welcoming the methodology's inherent simplicity or usefulness, or grouching about the cumbersome research design all the way.

The grant writer in this instance can be helpful in encouraging a broader view of evaluation as an ongoing activity that deals with structure, process and outcomes of the funded activity. Arguing the service modification benefit of this approach to evaluation is irrelevant; that is best demonstrated. The greater justification for revamping evaluation approaches in this case is that the approach, not just the program, will require funding in the future. The structure of the organization is represented by organizational capacity in almost every proposal, the process is represented in methodology (and if it is to be multi-disciplinary, is likely costlier) and of course, measurable outcomes are the ubiquitous requirement. While evaluation methodology for collaborative efforts has not been examined in this article, this is another area in which today's fund-raisers will do well to educate themselves.

While this type of education may seem formidable for professionals who are already prone to work more than a forty hour week (Duronio and Tempel, 1997), my hope is that fund-development and grant preparation for collaborative efforts in particular can be seen more and more as requiring a complex skill base and thereby additional time to pursue these nuances can be accorded. Grant preparers themselves must then take up the responsibility of writing truer and truer snapshots of current success and maps of future action. This is our contribution to collaborative work which synthesizes diverse viewpoints and engages diverse strength on behalf of community betterment.

- 1 For clarity within this article, I make a distinction between issue-based collaboration and community-based collaboration. This distinction is subtle in some cases, but important to the orientation of planning. When inter-disciplinary groups collaborate on behalf of an issue, such as domestic violence, they might bring together many different agencies who have varied services related to domestic violence. They might include survivors, victims or perpetrators or domestic violence in assessment and planning and they might modify approaches based on a multi-disciplinary model. Still, the orientation of activities is driven by the prevention and treatment of domestic violence. Funding is sought that supports those aims and participants know that they are involved in an effort which holds that goal primary. With community-based collaboration, the focus is a specific geographic area, affinity group or population, not a specific issue. Ideally, a community assessment is done to identify and prioritize which issues the community is ready and able to work on, as well as identifying intermediary steps which may move that community toward a set of agreed upon goals. In this case, the involvement of multiple disciplines along with those who have lived experience as group members is expected. Further, the range of activities is defined by the group, ideally in advance of grant-seeking. From this perspective, domestic violence may be an issue the community chooses to work on, but the activities chosen may have an indirect effect on the issue, rather than a direct effect.

APPENDIX

WORKSHEET ON RE-FRAMING ISSUES IN A COLLABORATIVE SETTING

Getting to the Issues Beneath the Position

Often times, when someone presents their position about a problem, they are speaking emotionally, based on their hurt, anger, frustration or any number of perspectives they may have brought with them to the Family Resource Center or Collaborative setting. One important step in diffusing conflict involves identifying the issues which require attention. Just about every conflict which has to do with a person or an agency or a group, can be re-framed so that we can generate solutions and engender full participation.

For each of the following positional statements, identify the issues that are being raised, and then re-frame the point in more neutral language.

Example:

1. *ABC Group Home doesn't provide adequate clinical assessment when they open a case for care coordination.*

Interests: how cases are opened for care coordination; providing adequate clinical assessment; how agencies provide clinical assessment

Neutral Statement: It's important that we discuss how agencies do clinical assessment and what happens when a case is opened for care coordination.

2. Sally never cleans up the office before she leaves on Tuesday. When I come in on Wednesday to use the office, it's always a mess.

Interests: _____

Neutral Statement: _____

3. I can't come here on weekends anymore; I've got a life too you know.

Interests: _____

Neutral Statement: _____

4. Jonathan thinks what he's got to do is more important than coming to staff meetings; I've got important things to do too, you know.

Interests: _____

Neutral Statement: _____

5. Shelly doesn't come to meetings on time. Why should we have to stop to fill her in?

Interests: _____

Neutral Statement: _____

6. It's not my fault I didn't come to the meeting. No one ever tells me anything around here.

Interests: _____

Neutral Statement: _____

7. Blanca doesn't even live in this community. Why does she get to come to our stake-holder meetings?

Interests: _____

Neutral Statement: _____

8. If they cared about this community, the staff from XYZ Agency would be at the retreat.

Interests: _____

Neutral Statement: _____

9. I can't support an approach that provides screenings, but no follow-up services. I don't want to spend time on this at all if that's what we're going to do.

Interests: _____

Neutral Statement: _____

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This article was written with support from Indiana University's Dove Fellowship Program.