



ALL THINGS GRANTS! Q&A Call

Thursday, Nov. 15, 2018

Maryn:

Good morning everybody, it is Thursday, November 15, 2018. How did that happen? This is Maryn with GrantsMagic U, happy to welcome you to our monthly, All Things Grants, All Community Q and A call for November. If you haven't already done so, go ahead and chat a little brief introduction into the chat box down below. ...

A great big welcome to every single GrantsMagic U community member. We've been doing our All Things Grants community calls for a couple of years now, and many of you have been with the community since we began, three years ago this month as a matter of fact, and many of you are brand new to the GrantsMagic U community too, including yesterday. And we have special guests joining us today as well. Those of you who joined because of one of our recent free webinars may not be a community member just yet, but I hope you will become a member soon. In fact if you do so within the next 24 hours you will get a replay and a transcript of this call. So you might not want to miss that opportunity, it's really, really simple.

We've got a brand new sort of fresh placeholder website for GrantsMagic U, if you haven't seen it yet it's at <http://go.grantsmagic.org>, and that's where you'll go if you haven't yet joined the GrantsMagic U community. Way up on the top bar you see Join GMU Free, and that's your opportunity to pop on in. It's completely free. It means that you'll automatically get invitations to our monthly calls. You'll automatically get the replays and the transcripts, plus tons of other good stuff that's always happening for community members. So if you haven't yet joined or you're not sure whether you have or not, go ahead and hop over to go.grantsmagic.org/join and we'll be happy to get that taken care of for you.

Alright, so one of the things we do every month in our, it's All Things Grants, which means everything that's related to the work that we do out in the world as grants professionals, as grants warriors, as grants wizards, as grants magic makers, as the accidental grant writer as many of us describe ourselves. "Hey, I've become a nonprofit executive director. I had no idea I'd be writing grants as well." We really open up this hour to the things that are perplexing to you on the ground in your grants experience, but we also choose a hot topic every month. So it basically, to sort of organize some of our thinking around a particular topic of interest. And generally I put a little bit of teaching together around that topic and then open it up to questions around that as well.

Every once in a while I say, "Hey, let's just do a grants grab bag," and that means I'm not preparing any teaching. We're just working with the questions that you bring into the call, either via email ahead of time. I pick up questions from our community Facebook group. I sometimes pick up questions from our Ultimate Grant Proposal Blueprint students inside the course, and always really happy to take the questions that you bring to our call specifically.

So that's what you'll be doing. If you have a particular question that you'd like to bring into the call, go ahead and chat it into the chat box. We don't have ... Well, we've got quite a few people. 23 people on the call right now. Go ahead and chat it in. It's easiest if you put hashtag hashtag hashtag at the beginning of it so I can scroll through and quickly catch a question and make sure that we pick it up as well.

Today we're doing something a little extra special. This is called the GPA Edition. If you don't know what GPA is, you need to. It's the Grant Professionals Association. It is the premier, and by premier I mean not only the first and the largest but I think only professional association specifically for people like us who are involved in working with getting grants, securing grants, integrating grants practice into our organizations to support the work that we do through grant funding. There are others, the National Grants Management Association deals more with what happens to those grant dollars afterwards, but GPA is the only association that I'm aware of that is exclusively devoted to the work that we're doing up front in terms of bringing grant dollars in to support the mission driven work of our organizations.

I've personally been involved with GPA for many, many, many, many years in a number of active and leadership roles. I've pulled back a little bit. But what was really fun, why this is the GPA edition this time, is that last weekend GPA held its annual conference in Chicago. The largest gathering of grants magic makers in the world. We had over 800 people at the conference. I remember when we had 300 people members total, and our conferences were lucky if we got 50 or 60 people.

It was huge, it was fantastic, it was wonderful. And I recruited a few intrepid GrantsMagic U community members who were at the conference to come and share a few of their takeaways with us on the call today. So there was a nice crossover between GrantsMagic U and grant professionals associations, so we have three guests that are going to be joining us in just a few minutes to share some of their takeaways from the conference.

Just a little bit of a highlight there, it's no big deal, I shared this last month that I was really privileged to be able to share two sessions of a huge number of breakout sessions, a phenomenal agenda, just incredible, for everybody at every single level of the grants profession. And I was very, very pleased to share two sessions inside the Grantmaker's Black Box, "What Happens After You Push "Submit" on Your Grant Proposal," and one that I've only ever shared live, I don't have a way of really bringing it to a recorded version, called "The Mission

Centered Grant Professional: Connecting With the Power of Your Passion and Purpose." Two very different sessions.

So I'll share a little bit more later on how you can have access to this information. Actually I'm going to be working over the next several weeks between now and the end of the year to bring some additional pre recorded trainings to the GrantsMagic U training curriculum, and these two are part of that as well. So just a quick little peek at what was going on behind the scenes with the Grant Professional Association.

So our three speakers, I guess conversationalists, we're going to really open up and just have good conversation with each other, are Melanie Spencer, who works with Hellen Keller Foundation, organization, association, I don't know if that's the complete name of the organization, in Hampden, Maine, and I'll be bringing Melanie on the call in just a minute. She can tell you a little bit more about her work.

Carole Mangum, who's with the Partnership for Children of Cumberland County in North Carolina, and then all the way on the other coast from California, CeCe [Maslin 00:07:57], who is with the Community Foundation of San Luis Obispo, at least as far as I know.

So these are people who are members of the GrantsMagic U community just like everybody on this call, and also were at this phenomenal GPA conference, this enormous gathering of people coming together to learn and share and practice for, I think it was four entire days. So we're going to have a conversation. Probably about 30 minutes of our call might involve talking with Melanie, Caroline, and CeCe to capture from them what some of their key learnings and takeaways were from the conference that they can share forward with everybody in the communication, those of you listening live and those of you who are listening via the replay, out there sometime in the future time.

And then the second half, maybe the last 30 to 20 minutes of our time, I have a few questions that I've prepped up that I can bring in, but we'll also check in with the chat box and see what questions you've brought into the call live and ready to go.

Maryn: Alright, so this is a bit of an experiment for us. And so what I need to do is, I think what I need to do is first of all move us ... There we go, that's what I want to do. And I think I want to do stop share, and I think when I do that ... Let me see how this works. I need to find ... Let's see, I have to scroll through here, and I'm going to find there, CeCe, CeCe your video is up already and I'm going to unmute you. CeCe, you want to say hi to everybody?

CeCe: Hello there. [crosstalk 00:09:30]

Maryn: I don't see a picture of you. Maybe you don't have a camera on?

CeCe: No, I don't have a camera on, no.

Maryn: Okay, that's fine. I wasn't sure if you were in a black room, inside the Grantmakers Black Box, maybe? Alright, could you turn your microphone up a little bit, is that possible?

CeCe: I can.

Maryn: Okay. Melanie, I'm going to unmute you as well. Can I turn your camera on? You're on ... Woops. Hold on. Oops. Melanie, I'm not able to unmute you, why is that? Oh, here we go.

Melanie: Can you hear me [crosstalk 00:10:03].

Maryn: Hi, I can. Do you want your camera turned on as well?

Melanie: Sure.

Maryn: Okay. I'll have to find you again. Oh dear, where did you go? There we go.

Melanie: How about that.

Maryn: Oh, there you are. See you, perfect. And I'm looking for Carole. Carole, I don't see you here yet this morning. I could have done roll call before we got started. Carole I don't see you, if you are here and I'm missing you, go ahead and unmute yourself and hop on in, we'd love to hear from you as well, and I'll keep an eye out for you as well.

Maryn: So CeCe, why don't you start with a little bit of an introduction of who you are, where you work, and a little bit about the work you do, and then Melanie I'll ask you to do the same, and then we'll just open up a conversation about the GPA conference, how does that sound?

Melanie: Sounds great.

CeCe: Sounds great.

Maryn: Perfect.

CeCe: Great. So again, my name is CeCe Maslin. I actually work for Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo County. We are a community action agency, so we do direct services, everything from Head Start to health clinics to a brand new homeless services center. I am, I work in the planning department so I do grant writing, but also do the community assessments that are part of our mission as a community action agency. I actually used to work for the community foundation, so that is a grantor, and now have moved over to being on the grantee side.

Maryn: I didn't realize that about you. I did not know, CeCe, that you had experience inside the Grantmakers Black Box as well.

Melanie: That's interesting.

Maryn: Yeah, we can have conversations about that. Perfect.

CeCe: It is, it is.

Maryn: Thank you for that. I learned something already, and I thought we had good conversations already.

CeCe: There you go.

Maryn: Melanie, how about you? Say hello and tell us a little bit about your work, present, and maybe a little bit about your background as well.

Melanie: Sure. Let me pull up my screen again. Here we go. So, it's interesting that you had me down under Helen Keller. Because in my signature line I have a quote that I adore by Helen Keller, and it is, "Alone we can do so little, but together we can do so much." That's from Helen Keller. So I do not work for Helen Keller Foundation. I am a consultant. So I have roughly 15 different clients across the country and also one in Canada and one in China, and I do also have a background in working with an educational foundation. I was their executive director at the foundation. So I have the other, experience on the other side of the world too, in the grants world, having developed a grants program with the foundation and managing that grants program for them. But primarily now I'm working as a consultant, and I'm based in Maine.

Maryn: You know, I just picked the Helen Keller out of ... I was looking for the business cards that I collected from everybody, and those are long gone. I don't know what happened to them. They fell out of my purse on the airplane back, or something like that. So I was just based on the emails, and I didn't see the quote from Helen Keller, I just saw that it said Helen Keller and then the city and the state, so ... oh well. That's a wonderful quote. I've seen it before and I absolutely love it.

Maryn: So my experience at the Grants Professional Association, and I'm going to just invite, just to really have a good back and forth conversation, was that no matter how long I've been in the grants world and no matter how many different roles and functions I've filled, no matter how many different organizations I've worked with, there is always so much more to learn. There's the actual tactical learning, the how to's, the check list and the fill in the blanks work sheets, and some really specific on the ground things about what's going on in the federal grants arena, compliance measures, things about budgeting, things about evaluation, all those things that we really live and die by in the grants world.

Maryn: But there were also tremendous sessions that opened perspectives up and gave us an opportunity to think differently about our place in the grants world, to come to understand other aspects, other elements in the ever shifting grants landscape. That's certainly part of what I wanted to bring to the conference in terms of the program, Inside the Grantmaker's Black Box, which was simply sort of a reality show version of what happened in our own most recent grant making process with all the, you know, the craziness [inaudible 00:15:06] involved there. [inaudible 00:15:08] and say, hey, we're working really hard as grant seekers, pushing things forward, filling in the blanks, getting things out the door, but we're doing it inside this bigger context of this ecosystem that's constantly changing and evolving and that we are part of that change and we're part of that evolution as well.

Maryn: So the learning that I always take back from the conference gatherings is really at multiple levels, the tactical we call that, the on the ground, fill in the blanks, get it out the door, push the levers and push the buttons, the relational, which is really an opportunity for grant professionals. We work in isolation in our own organizations so often. We come together to the GPA conference and it's like all these islands that have an opportunity to talk to all the other islands for the first time, and then there's also that higher level that helps us all see from a different perspective, sort of a fly over, eagle's view of this landscape that we are all such an integral part of.

Maryn: So that's just a frame for opening up our conversation about. CeCe and Melanie, what were some of the key takeaways that you brought forward that you think might be valuable for other people that are part of that ever changing, ever evolving ecosystem? And I'm just going to be quiet now and let the two of you talk for a bit.

CeCe: Alright, but this was my ... I'm brand new to grant writing, so this was my first conference, and I really enjoyed meeting other people within the industry. I actually found, just because I happened to sit next to them at different specials, found people who have given me context at some of our, some of the grants that we are researching to fund programs. They gave us contacts and different means of getting in the door at other agencies or different foundations, and I really enjoyed that in addition to what I learned in the sessions themselves. So, the networking was huge for me.

Maryn: [inaudible 00:17:23] Go ahead, Melanie.

Melanie: I think that was a real major takeaway for me as well. It was my first GPA conference, so that was new, but having the opportunity to mix and mingle with other grant makers from all over the country, and also with different niche, different specializations, was really useful to me. And I think another thing that was really useful to me was the resources that landed in my folder that I was carrying around with me just from the breakout sessions and ... I went to, let's see, eight breakout sessions. The GPCI reception, which is the Grant Professional Certification Institute reception for folks who are certified, and the

Consultants Special Interest group, and really brought a tremendous amount of resources back with me.

Melanie: One that I think I would mention specifically is the [grantsadvisor.org](https://www.grantsadvisor.org), which is a new project that was shared by one of the keynote speakers. And it's a resource for grant professionals to review and provide information on foundations or funders that they've worked with, so it's kind of like, it kind of works like when you rate an Uber driver, you know you give them stars, maybe you give them some comments, but this is an online resource for organizations or grant professionals to kind of comment back on their experience with a particular funder. And all of that data is collected and then provided in an open source way. So it's early in the project's beginning, but I think it's going to be a super resource and it really opens up the door that sometimes is a little immovable when you're trying to connect with potential funders and find out how they operate, what their interests are on a more intimate level. But it's called [grantsadvisor.org](https://www.grantsadvisor.org), and I think it was the Council of Nonprofits of Minnesota that's one of the project partners. But if you look up [grantsadvisor.org](https://www.grantsadvisor.org) you can take a look at that.

Melanie: And then some of the things I think were really important for me were to look at other opportunities as a grants professional, whether it's becoming a trainer and helping other people teach other people about aspects of grants, the grants world, or developing a certain specialization in terms of what types of grants or what type of grant services you might offer as a consultant, semi consultant. So those were really useful things for me.

Maryn: Thinking about your practice as a consultant in particular and how you can broaden the scope of resources that you can offer to the nonprofits that you're working with, and generalizing that beyond that, what were some of the resources or what were one or two of the resources that you might be able to think of that people who are not consultants necessarily but working inside nonprofits might be able to tie into?

Maryn: And by the way I didn't, I wasn't there in time for the keynote so I missed the reference to Grant Advisor, but by an amazing coincidence I actually have a slide for Grant Advisor that I want to share a little bit later on because it ties into a question. It's a phenomenal resource. I'll just go ahead and add the plug right now, because it is like Yelp for grant makers, meaning that as grant seekers we get to weigh in on what our experience is like in working with the grant makers. And the idea there is like, hey, they weren't nearly as transparent as they needed to be about what they were looking for, or you know their staff was fantastic to work with, don't hesitate to give them a call. And the way it works is that we submit our reviews after we've worked with an organization, and once five reviews have been submitted for a specific funder, then that funder actually gets a profile that pops up on brand advisor. So, there needs to be a certain body of five reviews at a minimum. But what I understand is that the foundations are taking it very seriously. This is perhaps the best way for them to get feedback about, what the experience is like for working with them. So, I've

got a question coming up as I said a little bit later on that will directly address that, but I'm fascinated and excited to know that that came up.

Maryn: It's phenomenal. It has the right support, the right organizations, and the right people are behind it, and it's a very robust resource. So, I'm delighted that you brought that up Melanie. So again, just backing up again, maybe one or two tips, or pointers in particular about the resources that you pulled forward beyond grant advisor, which is great.

Melanie: I would suggest if people have access to the documents from the handouts, and slides from the conference. People look at the breakout session, that's called ways to answer the sustainability question. For many folks, this is always the conundrum. And that's the question on the application that says, "How are you going to make this program sustainable after our funds are long gone." Could be a variety of ways, but it's always, I think challenging for people to think about an answer that is satisfying both to themselves, and potentially to the funder for that question.

Melanie: But that presentation had some great ideas of how to look at the question in terms of sustainability, that it's not just programmatic sustainability, but it may be organizational sustainability. It may be financial sustainability. And to take those parts and then dive into those, and provide an answer that maybe speaks to a component of sustainability. That grant maker is going to invest in propel for the organization.

Melanie: So, I would suggest that, another breakout session that I went, which was excellent, was called, let's see, it was by Mike [Wasthiski 00:24:34]. And it was called, "Do they do better demonstrating impact of your program or project?" And Mike is not a grant maker. He is actually a stem focused, a consultant based out of Arizona.

Melanie: But I think the big takeaway for me, from that session was how to think about measuring partnerships in the world where I operate. A lot of the funders are really excited about collaboration partnerships, or program for greater program impact. And what has been challenging for several of my clients is how to measure that. How do you measure a partnership over time? And Mike had some great, methods he suggested for using performance tasks, and rubrics.

Melanie: To figure out how you can change, how a partnership will evolve over time and how to mark that. So, that at the end of the day, you can say our partnership did go through this process. And we come to a new place and this demonstrates how we did that. So, that was very helpful to me too. So, I'd recommend those two documents if folks can access those, and I'm sure we can figure out a way to share some of that to [Erin 00:26:07].

Maryn: Well, that's what I was thinking. I was just taking notes because I know that in general, only GPA members can access the information that was posted to the

conference. But I'm already thinking, what I can get in touch with the presenters here. And ask if we can share that information forward as well.

Maryn: So, I can make that available to everybody is part of sending out the replay potentially. So, it might take a little bit of time, but those are two very, very big issues. And there's a whole lot of both tactical, and relational conversation around the sustainability issue. I really appreciate it that you bring out, Melanie, that we can be thoughtful about how we think about, what sustainability really means.

Maryn: That it doesn't necessarily just mean how is this specific project that we're funding right now going to be sustainable beyond our funding, but we can also think of it in terms of sustaining the health. And wellbeing of the organization as a whole, or the collaboration as a whole in moving forward. So, that alone I think is a really valuable takeaway might shift our[silence 00:27:13].

Maryn: That's a trickier response, such as authentic as we would like. So, I'm going to check into those resources for sure. Thanks for that. And then the partnership issue is huge. We teach partnership over and over again in Grants Magic U. So, I'm really happy to hear that it was coming forward, in this particular session and the question of measuring the partnership.

Maryn: It's just as tricky as measuring the impact of any program at all, but it's multiplied because you have even moving parts. Yeah, so thanks. So, I'm definitely going to check guys into seeing if I can, have permission to share those resources with you. So, stay tuned for that as well. Melanie, thank you so much. I'm going to turn to [CSC 00:28:10] right now, but Melanie, don't go away because we can come back, and see what else comes up for us. CSC, are you ready to take this on, and share for a few nuggets and tidbits from the conference.

CeCe: Sure. I actually went to those two sessions as well, and also very much enjoyed those. The other one that I went to which was helpful for me was talking about how to go from general to specific in grant writing. I believe it was called "X marks the spot." And I found it very helpful as far as really getting to the nitty gritty of understanding how to efficiently talk about your program.

CeCe: What I heard in that, since I'm relatively new to the process, I've been working a lot with online grants. And they limit your characters to a thousand. Well, when you're describing a very large ongoing projects such as the homeless services center, it's a little hard to get it. Compressed into a thousand characters, but I found that the speakers ... Suggestions for how to really go back to the beginning, and look at what is it that you want to talk about, what is it that you're trying to convey, and trying to go from a very general. This is the problem that we have, and this is our general program to the specifics was really helpful.

CeCe: I believe his name was Richard Redfern, and he was a very engaging speaker. And gave me a lot of useful tips as far as, going back to the basics of laying out things in a very logical way. So, I found that to be extremely helpful. The other one that I greatly enjoyed was the smarter tools for smarter prospecting. It was led by David Holmes and Dorothy Ho, from foundation center and I was familiar with them, through my work at a community foundation.

CeCe: I don't believe we have a subscription here, but just looking at the various ways, and different means of thinking about how to look for different grants was very interesting. Thinking outside the box so to speak. So, we have a program here, on tattoo removal, and he gave me different ways of thinking about how it is that I could find funders for that program. Whether, it's looking at geographically what are the populations, there was a lot of thinking outside the box. And I enjoyed that.

Maryn: So, what are some other examples? I love that, are you instantly say tattoo removal, and we're going why.

CeCe: Yeah.

Maryn: Is this story that I would come up with is I would have somebody in my workshop who would say, "How the heck do we find a funder who would support tattoo removal? I googled tattoo removal and no funders come up."

CeCe: Exactly.

Maryn: What were some of the tips? I know how we teach that in. We've got a program, a recorded program called Grants Research with a Twist. Which is all about going beyond the obvious mission match, to find some of those other ways that what we're doing is connecting with different groups of funders. I'm interested to know foundation directory online, being one of the key resources that we always recommend.

Maryn: Can you give me gifts, a little bit of a peak at the thought process behind what you would look at for a tattoo removal program? In terms of what are you actually connecting with? Obviously not tattoo removal specifically, because I think you can search the foundation directory online, and find out from there. So, what would you be-

CeCe: Definitely not.

Maryn: Looking at instead?

CeCe: So, we looked at the geographic area. We looked at the population that we were serving. We looked, it could be anything from economically disadvantaged people, it could be the age group, it could be where they live geographically. It could be the fact that, some might be coming out of the prison system. It could

be getting kids out of gangs, it really gave us a broad way of thinking about the populations that we serve. So, it was everything from age group to community engagement to ... Again, the economics, the social aspects of who they are. That's really the avenues that we went down.

Maryn: Yeah.

CeCe: Yeah.

Maryn: So, the perspective there is to look at the different aspects of the project, and recognize that there are plenty of funders. Who even though, they're not specifically focused on tattoo removal, definitely want to provide the services for a particular age group in a particular community, experiencing a certain economic challenge. And the program that you offer hits on those three factors. Then that's what we call it Three Point Match.

CeCe: Exactly.

Maryn: Tattoo removal doesn't have to show up anywhere on that, because it's the context in which the work is being done. That really connects with the vision and the philanthropic mission of the funder.

CeCe: Exactly.

Maryn: Hear that they took that perspective. Foundation directories been really good at building. They just went through a massive restructuring of their front end user interface, and I took issue with it at first, the way they did it. Because it appeared that they had actually made it harder to do that. But in some ways I think it made it more accessible, and that's exactly how we teach, and recommend grants research.

Never go in with just one thing, don't go in looking for tattoo removal. Go in with a scavenger hunt list, that identifies the different aspects of your project that are going to connect with different groups of funders. And foundation directory is teaching exactly the same thing.

CeCe: I really like that term scavenger hunt, that really is, to a large extent what it is that we're trying to do. We're trying to find that one, as you said, that one nugget of treasure, and there can be many different ways of going about it. And it just takes some creative thinking, and especially with something like that isn't, inherently obvious as to which direction you're going to go.

Maryn: I think, again, there's an example, they're a part of I think an underlying theme in almost everything, if not everything that both of you that shared. And certainly what I share as well, is that it can be really challenging for us as grant magic makers. To step back far enough from the trees, to get a sense of the bigger forest. And not only the bigger forest, but sort of the bigger ecosystem,

that forest is a part of as well. And so thinking about partnerships, and how do we measure their effectiveness.

Thinking about how do we expand our focus in our grants research, away from the one specific thing that we do. How can we think differently, step back and think differently about the sustainability question? How can we demonstrating the impact of your project in the partnership? I see these as always of reminding us, that we need to have what we call a Grants Magic U, we call it Amped focus ANT.

The little crawly creature that's just focused on the next thing right in front. Getting that one crumb from here to there in the shortest possible distance. We need to do that. We need to be supremely attentive to all the fine detail, but we also need to be able to rise above the detail like an eagle. And be able to scope out and scan the bigger landscape as well, and be able to move back and forth between two perspectives. With a fair amount of fluidity and ease, not get so locked in one or the other that we can shift our perspective.

I think it's a very unique skill, and it's one that we don't talk about a whole lot, but what I love is that the things that we're bringing out here really talk about how we can do exactly that. Maintain the on the ground focus to get the task done inside the understanding of the bigger context, and supporting both the same time. So, great. All right, great. I really appreciate that. Any last comments that you'd like to share? Either of the two of you, before we sort of say goodbye to you, or at least let you settle back with your coffee, and listening to the rest of the call.

CeCe: Really, again, I just found it very interesting from the perspective of learning more about the industry, about the different niches that people were in. And also just meeting fellow grant makers.

Maryn: Grant seekers.

CeCe: All right grant seekers. Yeah, finding different people to talk to and make connections with. So, I found it very helpful to attend.

Maryn: Wonderful. Welcome you back the next time around. I think next year it's going to be in Washington DC. That'll be interesting.

Melanie: I guess I would just add here and that for me as a working as a consultant, in some ways, even though it's an investment of time. In some ways, it saves me a lot of time because I got so many leads on technology that might help me, from other consultants. That's part of what's overwhelming for me at times is to say I need these platforms to manage the work I do. But there's 100 choices to pick from what the heck, what's good, what works, what does. And being able to talk with people about what they use, what works for them, and how it works. Really is a tremendous time saver for me, than having research for myself.

Maryn: Okay.

Melanie: That was definitely a plus for me.

Maryn: Wonderful. Well, I will be sharing information about the grant professionals association. It might be right for you if you're not a member already. It attracts people who are full time grant writers in their organizations, grants managers as well. And also people for whom grant writing does not their primary role in their organization, for instance, in an executive director of a smaller organization as well.

So, I'll be sure to share that information in the email and you can all take a look at it [silence 00:39:34]. It will be highly recommend. With that, I'm going to go back to the share. Let's see if I can figure out how to do that. I wasn't right. Let me try that again. See this little thing, he was just behaving a little bit strangely for me here. Let's see if that works. I don't know why that did not work.

We'll just stop that share for now. Alright, I see questions. So, I'm going to go straight to the chat box, and see what we've got here. Thank you very much for your questions. Oh, some big questions. Oh my gosh. Russell, Russell says, **"What lifts the proposal above all the others?"** Well, that's everything we teach in Grants Magic U. That question right there is the underlying premise of the entire curriculum, and my years and years and years of experience to what I teach at Grants Magic U, as well as the Grant Professional Association.

So, I'm just going to say right off the bat, huge question. He goes on to say, **"My understanding is only five to 10% of unsolicited grants are approved by funders. When I receive a rejection, I always call the funder to see if I can get more specific feedback. Sometimes I do, but mostly it's that the funder had more proposals than it could fund. Rarely, is something technically wrong with the grant. It's indecipherable, timeline is not realistic, et cetera. So, what puts a proposal into the five percent."**

First of all, that five percent is an illusion, because if you're saying that 95% of grants don't get funded. Most of those, disqualify themselves before they ever get into the finals round, Russell. So, a certain number of grant proposals submitted miss out because they don't meet the deadline. A certain number of proposals miss out because they miss a technical requirements.

So, it's a process of going from 100 proposals ultimately down to a more manageable number to actually review. And then inside that number that's going to actually be reviewed. The funder knows how much money they have, and their choice and decision is how to allocate that money among the proposals, that have passed all the obstacle course hurdles to that point.

This is exactly what we teach in the course inside the grant makers' black box. What are those hurdles that proposals have to pass through, to make it into

what we call the finals round. And then what actually does happen inside the finals round? So, what happens inside the finals round, is that the proposals are read and scored by reviewers typically on an individual basis. And then those scores are compiled, and there is some group decision making process, and this is very broad speaking.

Doesn't happen this way, but there's decision making that takes place inside that funder is black box, that may have less to do with the specific quality. The scoring points of a given proposal, and a lot more to do with the other proposals that showed up. And so, that's what gets to be frustrating. But when a funder tells you, the funder had more proposals than it could fund, that's good news for the funder.

They're saying, "Hey, we had 15 highly qualified proposals. We could have chosen to fund any of those 15. We could only fund five." So, our job was to pick the five that we were going to choose. That's good news for the funder. That means they've got a really robust selection to make, it sort of like an audition for America's Got Talent. You want to have really talented people to choose from, and that makes the final selection all the harder, but in the end we only have enough money to fund five.

So, how do you give feedback to the ones that weren't chosen? Your proposals were great. We don't have any feedback to offer. It was just that we had to choose five out of the 15, and we had to make our decisions based on factors that had nothing to do with the points scored, or the specific criteria in the grant writing process. It's terribly frustrating for us outside the black box, if we don't really understand that that's what's going on. So I'm just gonna have to set that question there for now, Russell, and let you know that you're opening question, what raises a proposal above all the others? That is the question that we're all here as members of the Grants Magic Community to learn more about. And the specific answer is going to be very specific to each and every funder, each and every grant making process. So thank you very much for bringing that up. You're doing exactly the right thing for asking for feedback, and you're absolutely right that once you make it through the technical review and you're in the finals round, there are a lot of other factors that come into play in making that final decision.

I'd like to say it's a lot more like an audition where the reviewers are, the final decision makers, are casting for an ensemble performance, than it is like an Olympic race where the first three runners across the finish line automatically win. It's not the top three scoring proposals that automatically win. It's [inaudible 00:45:07] out of the group of, this particular grouping of projects will best further the interest that we have as a funding organization in this funding round given these proposals. So I hope that helps a little bit. That's a talk I give very, very often.

Barbara asks, ***"Is there a way to share the program listing from the conference to see what types of sessions were offered?"*** I'm not sure, because again, the

conference materials are really specific for the people who paid for the conference, and so I don't know that I would have permission to share that. I can check. Can I share conference program? Actually that is available online at the Grant Professionals Association Annual Conference website, you can actually see the agenda. That won't give you access to the ...oh gosh, that must have sounded terrible, that was my microphone falling over ... to the program materials, but I'll check and see and I'll share that link. Barbara, thanks for that.

Okay, great.

Matt's question. ***Any tips for very small non-profits? We had no paid employees and limited resources, but we would like to dive more deeply into the grant world.*** Yeah. Take the Grants Magic U training. Start with our free training, the Quick Start Guide to the One Page Grant Proposal. Will you do that? It's at go.grantsmagic.org, and it's a three video series, very, very engaging videos. I think they're 45 minutes each. The first two talk about the inner structure of a grant proposal using our magic wand 10 question template. And then the last one gets more into the research, so the last one is a very abbreviated, very stripped down look at how you set yourself up to do the right kind of research to identify the funders that are most likely to be excited to hear from you.

So between those two bits, here's what the underlying structure of your grant proposal needs to be like with very specific fill in the blank steps and templates to work with, and the piece that's about here's what you do to create your scavenger hunt list, as CeCe said, and here are the resources you can go to to begin to research prospective funders. It's a great starter kit for you. So, it's totally free and I hope you'll take me up on that invitation, Matt. It's <http://go.grantsmagic.org> and you'll find the information there for the Quick Start Guide to the One Page Grant Proposal. I love working with small startup non-profits more than anything. Thank you for that.

Okay, so Sue. Oh my goodness. Sue says, ***Re grantadvisor.org, I'm in a position where I'm working with a group whose face is a descendant of one of Portland's founding families. I may know who you're talking about. As such, he's connected, I think I know who you're talking about, as such he's connected through family history and friendships with board members of the largest family foundations in town. For the project I'm working on with him he's calling his cronies, his associates, were walking proposals straight through the review without having to go through the usual channels with a reasonable amount of assurance for funding. It's driving me crazy. All the fabulous other groups I've worked for who have more meritorious projects, in my humble opinion, are left in the dust. Would it be insane to share these practices on grantadvisor.org?***

No, not at all. And, I guess what I get to say is every single grant making organization operates under its own protocols, practices, preferences, has it's own personality, it's own pet peeves. Family foundations can be very

methodical in their grant making, and they can also be very mercurial in their grant making. So methodical and mercurial. Mercurial doesn't mean whimsical, mercurial simply means that the family members have every right to direct where the dollars go, and they have a process set up for most of the dollars, maybe because they want hands off, it's like we don't really wanna get down in the weeds, we just wanna get the money out there in the community. Every once in a while, it may be more often than every once in a while, a family member or a group of family members can decide that they want to take a special interest in a particular project or bring other people into the decision making. It's completely ethical for them to do that. It may not be quote unquote best practices in terms of advancing the social impact cause, but it's completely ethical. That is, that's donor choice, it really is. Family foundations often operate a lot like individual donors in that.

I have a daughter-in-law who works for a family foundation, not in our community here. I love that, she's only been working with them for a couple of years, and I said, "So tell me, because I've got my particular perspective on grant making, I teach it a particular way, what are the protocols that your family foundation follows when it makes its grants?" It's a very large regional foundation, much like Sue's example, it's a family that's extremely well known in its community. She said, "Well it's two things, really. It's whim, and it's ego." So whim simply means we get to decide what we're going to do and when we're going to do it and how we're going to do it, because we're in a family, it's our money. And so maybe that means we're going to be really strategic about connecting with the community and having great community conversations, and making sure that the funding flows into the highest impact areas. Maybe it simply means that we get to choose where those dollars go, and we're going to support the things that we care about, and we don't need to justify that. And then ego has something to do with, again, because we can. I'm really saying this without judgment. You can't say whim and ego without sounding judgey. I'm not being judgey about it, I'm simply saying it's their game and those are the rules that they have chosen in their game.

It's not unadvisable to make notes like this on Grant Advisor but I would suggest that you do it in a non-judgey fashion, which I know, Sue, you would do definitely. Which is simply to say, "If you're looking for a foundation that really has clear guidelines and follows those guidelines for maximizing the social impact for their funding, this is not that. This is one of those family foundations where it's the relationships between and among and with the family members that really drives the funding." And those relationships, guys, are almost never with the grant writer or even the executive director of the organization. The family foundation level, the relationships that Sue's talking about, is she calls them cronies. They're really peer associates, part of the family's peer group. Families of wealth if that's the way you want to think about that. So, yes, it's frustrating, but I hope my explanation helps a little bit. It's just how that family foundation chooses to engage with the grants ecosystem. What did I say, meritorious and mercurial. No judgment one way or the other, at all, at least not from me, as frustrating as it can be.

Okay, great. Let me see here. Let's see.

One thing I can suggest, guys, is if I can't take your question up here, if I decide that it seems to be pretty specific to your organization, what I'd love for you to do is [inaudible 00:53:29] as a whole, and then people who have a wider range and better context of experience than I have can weigh in on the question, as well. So it looks like the question that I'm looking at right now might fit that bill. So I suggest that you bring that into the Facebook group and see what kind of feedback you get on that. Thanks very much for bringing that in.

Melanie says, **"For anyone interested, here's a link to the GPA page that has the conference agenda and a listing of the breakout sessions,"** and then she gives that link for you in the chat box, so you might wanna grab that. I'll make sure that I include that in the followup detail, as well. Sue, thank you for the thank you back. It's very open, I know you've been doing grants work for a long, long time. That's just one of the pieces, that information about how family foundations can work, there's this huge continuum of how family foundations can work. There's a huge continuum of how government organizations can work as grant makers, as well, and so anytime we think that there is a track and a midline of practice in the grant making world, we're confusing it with something where there are rules that apply across the board. That just simply isn't true. Sue, maybe privately you'd be willing to let me know what foundation it is, because I might have some additional insights for you there.

I know we're coming right up to the top of the hour. I wanted to get us into ... I'm just trying to see how I can share, I'm still having a hard time ... let me see if this will work. For some reason I'm not coming up, for some reason you're not able to see my PowerPoint. You're not seeing my PowerPoint right now, are you? You're probably seeing my other screen. That's the weird thing that's been going on. I'm not gonna worry about that.

I had a couple of other questions. Let me see what I wanted to run past you here. Let me see here. Well here's one that came in specifically from Toni, and I promised her I'd take it up on the call today if I could. Toni said, **"Have you ever had anyone deny a grant because they wanted to give money to organizations that made a bigger impact. If so, should I be looking for some special wording that implies we're too small for them, because they're certainly wasn't anything in there that I saw. They didn't give a size or amount of money that an organization gave out or anything of that nature, but she said straight out that's why they denied it. So of course I will never apply to them again, but I was just curious if you'd come across this because that's the first time that's ever happened to us."**

This is a two part answer, as a matter of fact. The answer to Toni's question is yeah. Decision makers, one of the decisions that happens inside the grant makers black box is a comparison between the impact that this program is going to have and the impact that another program is going to have. And making the decision if we want to fund the program with the greater scope of impact or

maybe we wanna fund the program instead that not necessarily is serving more people but is maybe serving them at a deeper level. That's where we get into the conversation about the distinction between competitive grant making and thinking about the competitive factors, and comparative grant making. I don't think grant making is competitive, I don't think the choices that happen inside the grant makers black box are competitive anywhere near as much as they are comparative. Meaning, again, we've got 15 proposals that are all perfectly well qualified. We could choose any one of them, we have to choose five. How do we do that? So inside the grant makers black box one thing they might be looking at is the scope versus step of impact. So again, some funders would choose to say, "Let's choose the project that's going to touch the lives of the most people," and another funder would say, "Let's choose the project that's going to touch the lives of people more deeply." Which is rarely one in the same.

So my response back to Toni, my first response back to Toni, said basically, that means final decision are almost always as much about quote unquote what other proposals showed up as they are about the qualities of your own proposals. The funders don't set guidelines for these comparative factors. In other words, they don't necessarily say, "To be eligible your proposal must directly impact at least 500 people." I just never see that. So it's all in the mix of the proposals that are being considered at the same time. They might say we prefer proposals that impact larger numbers of people, but again, that's very comparative, isn't it? In any given funding round your proposal impacting 100 people may be the highest impact or it may be the lowest impact. It all depends on the other proposals that show up.

And then I went on to say, "That said, I was taken by your comment, but of course I will never reply to them again." Let me propose another way of thinking about this. Next time you get asked for more clarification, "What would you need to see in a proposal from us by way of impact? Was this a matter of other proposals simply showing more impact than we did, or is there a firm preference you can share that we can use as a guideline in future proposals to you?"

And so what she said back, I got an email back from her this morning, I don't have it available right now, but she's basically saying, ***The issue was she definitely said, "We just simply don't fund proposals for projects that have impact at the level that you're showing. You're just too small for us, and we just wouldn't consider a proposal from an organization with impact at the level that you're showing."***

Toni said, ***"We're a small organization, we're never going to grow to the level that they're talking about. So it wouldn't do any good at all to have a conversation with them."*** And I said, "You're absolutely right. So what you do is you cross them off the list and say, 'Well until further notice, until either they change or we change, they're no longer a prospect for us.'" Pure and simple. And in her email to me this morning she said, "We did have another funder that

specifically funds smaller organizations and we've gotten a grant from them." I said, "Bingo!" Scavenger hunt, right? So, great, you know where your lane is.

This is a process of doing our due diligence to the degree that we can and learning from each experience. I'm really delighted that Toni didn't say, "Obviously we have to grow in order to get money." She said, "No, we will never be that large, we're not intended to be that large." But she's learning there's a funder over here that only funds larger projects, and there are funders over here who like to support smaller projects. These are our people over here. And the other thing I said, this circles back to Melanie's information, was it Melanie or was it CeCe? About Grant Advisor, because that's the slide that I pulled up because I said to Toni, "Toni this is the kind of thing that you can post on Grant Advisor about this foundation and what you would say is, be careful if you're a small organizations because the guidelines for this foundation don't make it clear that they only support projects with a scope of impact that they define as large. We're a small organization, we submitted a proposal that would impact 50 people, they came right back and said that's too small for us.

Said it would be useful if they would be more transparent in their out front guidelines to keep us small, struggling nonprofits from investing time and putting together a proposal that's gonna be dismissed summarily because it simply doesn't have the scope of impact. They need to be upfront about the scope that they're looking for, so that they only attract proposals from organizations that can meet that criteria."

That's the kind of thing that Grant Advisor is perfect for. So we now have a tool via Grant Advisor that we don't just have to tear our hair out and say, "Oh my gosh, why can't they do this, why wouldn't they do that?" Because you have a tool now you can actually go to to say, "Here's what my experience was with them, here's why they are making it harder for us to do our job which is to put together proposals that represent the best of what we have to do that connect with what they want to be doing with their dollars, as well." So that was the slide I was going to share with Grant Advisor, to say to Toni, "That happens, you've learned from it. Now you know that they definitely are not your funder." And you can also share, benefit the community as a whole, by sharing that experience on Grant Advisor, too. That's the way that goes.

Alright well we've come past the top of the hour, I'm a little frustrated that my own slides didn't show up for you. I had a nice thank you slide with a big face of Mickey Mouse that said thank you, thank you, thank you, so you can just be imagining that. Imagine me with Mickey ears with a great bit thank you over my face or some such nonsense as that. Thank you so much for being with us this hour, this day in this very busy season. Thank you so much to CeCe Masaline and to Melanie Spencer for showing up and bringing forth your insights, inspirations and ideas from the Grant Professional Association Conference.

We'll be back again, I think my date for next time around was December 20, we're gonna call that the Santa hat edition. That's the one time every year I get

to wear my sparkly Santa hat on our All Things Grants Community call, and there is a huge story, I don't just do it because it's fun, there is a huge life story behind it that I always like to share in our December call, as well. So, thanks again. Watch for the replay if you are not yet a Grants Magic U community member, remember you've got 24 hours to join and you will automatically get the replay and the transcript, as well. That's [go.grantsmagic.org slash join](http://go.grantsmagic.org/join), J-O-I-N. I hope you become part of the community, and until next time guys, we'll be staying in touch. Go out and do a ton of wonderful magic today, this week, this month, this year, this lifetime. See you all soon, bye-bye.