

# FINDING FUNDING

Kim Klein, *Fundraising for the Long Haul* (Oakland, CA: Chardon Press, 2000) 161 pp. \$20

Jane C. Geever & Patricia McNeill, *Guide to Proposal Writing, revised ed.* (New York: The Foundation Center, 1997) 191 pp. \$34.95

Reviewed by Frank Lindenfeld

Progressive nonprofit organizations, struggling to build a better world, are also constantly engaged in another struggle—finding funds to pay for staff and other organizational expenses. These two books, written by longtime fund raising professionals, are among the best of dozens of practical guides to raising money. Groups opposed to corporate globalization and others committed to radical change cannot expect to receive government or corporate grants. Nor can they expect to obtain large grants from major foundations that are part of the same establishment we are struggling against. Social change groups must depend, instead, on private donations and occasional grants from progressive foundations. In theory, it is preferable for groups engaged in building a more democratic society to obtain funding through small donations from many people. In practice, this is also the best source of money. Individual donations account for about 85% of all charitable giving in the U.S. Another 5% comes from individual bequests, 4% from corporations and 6% from foundations.

## Individual Donations

Kim Klein provides lots of practical advice about how to raise money from private donors. She writes clearly, addressing the major issues. Financial stability, she notes, depends on having a diversity of funding sources.

What are the ingredients of a healthy fundraising program? Klein reminds us that such a program

- is mission driven, no compromises of mission in order to obtain more dollars
- has an annual fundraising goal
- has an ongoing program to acquire, retain and upgrade donors
- includes donations from board members and active participation in fundraising by board members
- is based on a detailed knowledge of the group's history and past record of accomplishments.

One of the obstacles to successful fund raising from individual donors is excessive dependence on foundation grants. The saddest groups, Klein reminds us, are those that have survived and grown over the years, only to have sold their souls and veered away from their progressive missions in the continuing search for operating money. Of the more than 42,000 foundations in the U.S., there are at most only several hundred liberal to progressive ones, even including donor-advised programs of local community foundations.

## Grant Funding

For those interested in obtaining grants from one of the more progressive foundations, the *Guide to Proposal Writing* will be invaluable. Concisely and clearly written, this book provides very practical step by step instructions for preparing winning grant proposals. One

of the strengths of this book is that it includes comments from foundation staff that review funding proposals. The authors remind us that the grant proposal is part of a process of developing a relationship between your group and foundation funders. Geever & McNeil outline 6 basic steps in foundation fundraising:

- 1. Setting funding priorities.** Review your organization's priorities, decide which project(s) to include in foundation funding proposals.
- 2. Drafting a generic or master proposal** that includes specific projects for which you are requesting support, including an executive summary; a statement of need; a project description; budget; organizational information; and a brief conclusion.
- 3. Tailoring the proposal for specific funders** by getting and following their guidelines. This includes getting and following their guidelines, and preparing a cover letter. The cover letter should indicate the size of the request, why you are approaching this particular funder, mention of any prior discussion of the project with foundation staff, description of contents of proposal package, brief explanation of the project and an offer to set up a meeting to provide additional information.  
What you send to the foundation should be a cover letter, a proposal, usually no more than 10 pages, and an appendix with such additional information as the IRS tax exemption letter, financial statements, annual report, and list of other major contributors.
- 4. Researching potential funders.** Included in the book are various resources, including the Foundation Center itself, which has libraries in several major cities, and which provides computer access to its database.
- 5. Contacting and cultivating potential funders:** phone contacts, face to face meetings, board contacts and written updates and program reports. This is probably one of the most difficult steps, since it is often difficult or impossible to get foundation staff to talk with you by phone.
- 6. Follow-up.** If you receive a "yes", contact the foundation to begin next step of turning a mere grant into a true partnership. If you are turned down, contact the foundation to learn whether you might want to try again with another proposal and to learn how to improve your chances of getting your proposal funded by others.

Taken together, these two books provide a very useful compendium of basic information on raising money from both individuals and foundations. They are worth the money, and should be especially useful for progressive organizations. Additional resource information from both sources is listed below.

## RESOURCES

*Two part video by Kim Klein, (The Grassroots Fundraising Series), available from the Headwaters Fund in Minneapolis. Phone: 612-879-0602. Cost of video depends on organization's budget size.*

*The Foundation Center provides electronic access to its data base for \$19.95 per month and up. Website: [www.fdncenter.org](http://www.fdncenter.org) or call 800-478-4661. Foundation Center, 79 Fifth Ave, NY, NY 10003.*