Let's Talk About Grants: Grants & Funders Transcript

Slide 1:   Welcome to Part 1 of the webinar series Let's Talk About Grants: Grants and Funders from the Erie County Office of Health Equity. This series of videos is intended to be an introduction to grants and grant writing, covering the basics.

Slide 2:   In Part 1, we'll be talking about grants and funders.

Slide 3:   What is a grant? A grant is an award of money that can be used to fund your ideas, projects and programs to reach your goals and help the community you serve. Grant awards generally do not need to be paid back. However, there are usually specific rules for applying for grants and for how grant funding can be used.

Slide 4:   What is grant writing? Grant writing is the process of applying for grant funding. Someone who researches, writes, and submits grant proposals is a grant writer. There's often a misconception that you have to have a specific background or experience to be a grant writer, but grant writing is something anyone can do if you have tools, resources, and an idea of how grants work and what to include in a grant application. This video series is designed to provide you with some of the basic tools, resources, and information you will need to apply for grants.

Slide 5:   Grants are a very common source of funding for organizations, but one of the challenging things about applying for grants is that funders use a lot of grant-specific language and terms. Here are some common terms used to talk about grants, including who gives them and who receives them. We'll keep coming back to terminology throughout this video series. A grantor or funder is an organization, group, or person that is offering funding in the form of a grant. A grantee or recipient is the organization, group, or person that receives the grant. A Request for Applications or RFA is a funder's written invitation for organizations to apply for available grant funding. It may also be called a solicitation, a request for proposal or RFP, a notice of funding opportunity or NOFO, or a funding opportunity announcement or FOA. An application or proposal is your formal request for funding, often using a special form provided by the funder. The organization, group or person who completes the application or proposal is the applicant. We'll talk more about each of these concepts as we go along. For the purposes of this video series, we will mostly use the terms funder and recipient.

Slide 6:   Let's talk about grant funders. Government grants are one of the main sources of grant funding in the U.S. Many levels of government may offer grant funding opportunities, including federal governments; state governments; and local governments like the county government and the government of specific cities, towns, or other municipalities. Here in Erie County, the source of federal grants would be the U.S. government, state grants would be the New York State government, and local government funders would include Erie County and municipal governments like the City of Buffalo, Town of Amherst, or Village of East Aurora.

Slide 7: Government grants tend to have more requirements and more complicated applications. The type of grant, who can apply and how to apply depends on the funder. Here are a few places to start searching for government grant funding opportunities. For federal grants, the best site to search is grants.gov, which lists all federal grant funding opportunities and is searchable. For New York State grant funding, there was previously a similar database called Grants Gateway that has now been moved to SFS, the Statewide Financial system. Just like with grants.gov, you can browse opportunities and sign up for email alerts by going to SFS.ny.gov and selecting "Vendor portal login." To find available local government funding, you can use the municipality's official government website to search, for example, using the search bar at erie.gov for grant funding opportunities from Erie County. The Erie County website also has a specific page where RFPs are posted: erie.gov/purchasing. You can also try using keyword searches. Try searching a location plus the phrase "grant funding." For example, you could search for "City of Buffalo, NY grant funding."

Slide 8: Foundations are another major source of grant funding. Foundations are organizations that provide funding to other organizations. Types of foundation funders include: Community foundations like the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo, corporate foundations like the M&T Charitable Foundation, family foundations like the Tower Foundation, and private foundations like the Oishei Foundation Local foundations, like the ones listed on this slide, are typically more likely to fund local organizations. Other local foundations include: United Way of Buffalo & Erie County, the Highmark Blue Fund, the Health Foundation of Western and Central New York, the Western New York Foundation, and the East Hill Foundation.

Slide 9: Some foundations exist mostly to fund their own organization's work, like the UB Foundation that funds the University at Buffalo. Typically, foundations that provide grants will have a section of their website that describes their funding opportunities or the organizations they have funded in the past. For example, on the United Way of Buffalo & Erie County website shown here, you can find information about the funding they provide by clicking "for nonprofits" at the top or finding "funded programs" in the dropdown menu under "our impact."

Slide 10: Foundation grants tend to be more specific and are based on the funder's preferences and priorities. Some foundations only accept applications for specific grant opportunities they have posted. Some foundations also accept unsolicited grant proposals, meaning they may read and consider grant proposals even if they do not have an open opportunity posted. If you find a foundation that accepts unsolicited grant proposals, you can send a letter of inquiry (LOI) to see if they want to hear your grant proposal.

Slide 11: Most foundations post their opportunities on their website, and many notify other organizations and groups. If you would like to search through available foundation funding opportunities all in one place, Candid.org has a foundation directory that is

searchable. If you go to Candid.org and try to access the directory from your phone or computer, you will be asked to pay to access it. However, you can access the Candid.org foundation directory for free from any of the computers at the Central Library branch in downtown Buffalo (this branch only-- no other branches). Ask a librarian for assistance. You can also access Candid.org from your own device if you are connected to the downtown library's wifi.

Slide 12: We've already talked about unsolicited grant proposals, which are sometimes accepted by grant funders when there is not an open grant opportunity. Posted grant opportunities, those written invitations for organizations to apply for available grant funding can also be organized into different types of opportunities. Grant opportunities may be organized by who is eligible, and whether the grant opportunity is new or has been funded before. A competitive grant is a funding opportunity that is available and open to any organization that is eligible. Grants are awarded to applicants who plan a project and complete an application. Competitive grants are also called discretionary grants. A continuation grant is an extension or renewal of a grant that has been awarded before for a new grant period. Continuation grants are usually only available if you have received the grant before.

Slide 13: Grant opportunities may also be organized by the types of activities that can be funded. For a planning grant, funding to create a plan for new project is included. Funding to carry out the project may or may not be included in a planning grant. A program grant is funding to carry out a new project or expand an existing project. Program grants are called implementation grants, or may not be labeled at all. Program grants may include a planning period. Planning grants are less common and program grants are more common, but it's important to read grant opportunities closely, because most funders will not consider applicants whose grant proposals do not match the funding opportunity.

Slide 14: The Let's Talk About Grants video series is meant to be an introductory overview of grants. Each of your organizations is unique and each grant opportunity is different. The Erie County Office of Health Equity provides free, personalized grant technical assistance for community organizations and groups serving minority, marginalized, and underserved communities in Erie County. We can help with finding grants that are a good fit for your organization and applying for grants including planning and editing. We can provide free templates for grant documents including letters of commitment and support and workplans, and examples of grant documents like budgets and budget narratives. We can also assist with grant reporting and with data and evaluation with the help of our epidemiology team. Scan the QR code or use the contact information on this slide to get in touch with our office.

Slide 15: Thank you for watching Part 1 of the webinar series Let's Talk About Grants: Grants and Funders, a production of the Erie County Office of Health Equity. To download a PDF copy of the slides from this video with clickable links or a video transcript, visit erie.gov/grantsupport. Parts 2-7 of the Let's Talk About Grants video series cover: Eligibility and finding the right grant, Parts of an application, What to include in a

grant proposal, Budget basics, Timelines from start to finish, and Resources. To watch another video in the series or for more information, visit erie.gov/healthequity.