Where's the Money?

Strategies to Get Grants
for Community and Economic Development

Money's Tight

- State and federal funds is getting harder to access.
  - Grant programs have fewer funds
  - Granting requirements are getting harder to meet.
- Local governments finances are also very tight.
  - Difficult for them to undertake basic services (police, fire, etc.)
  - Economic and community development is a lower priority.

Get Ready

- Follow the Boy Scout Moto – "Be Prepared"
  - Communities that have some basic items in place are generally the ones that will receive funding, when it is available.
  - While the requirements of different programs will differ to some degree, there are some basics that you can prepare now.

What Do You Want?

- Develop a plan or "wish list"
  - Don't worry about the money (at this stage)
  - Involve the community and/or stakeholders in the "dream" stage
    - Develop a "strategic plan"
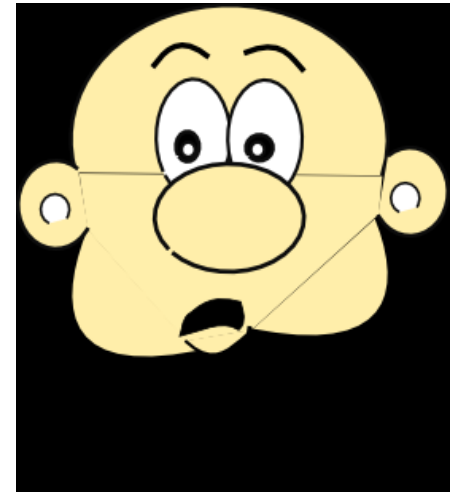 - Set project priorities – which project is most important?

Local "Buy In"

- Local support for the project is critical
  - Large (expensive) or controversial projects may generate public opposition
  - Early anticipation of possible opposition can be essential
  - Identify which projects are top priority
  - Show a united front to potential funders
  - Projects with a local "champion" and/or group of supporters have better chances of succeeding

The Basics

- Ideally you should have the following items determined before seeking funding:

  - Preliminary engineering
  - Cost estimate - budget
  - Property issues
  - Potential environmental issues
  - Local match
  - Who will own and maintain - costs

Special Requirements

- Some funding sources require certain things **before** the community can apply:
    - Plans (i.e. master or recreation plan)
        - Project listed as a priority in the planning document
    - Feasibility study
    - A DDA in place (or similar entity)
    - Be a "Main Street Community"
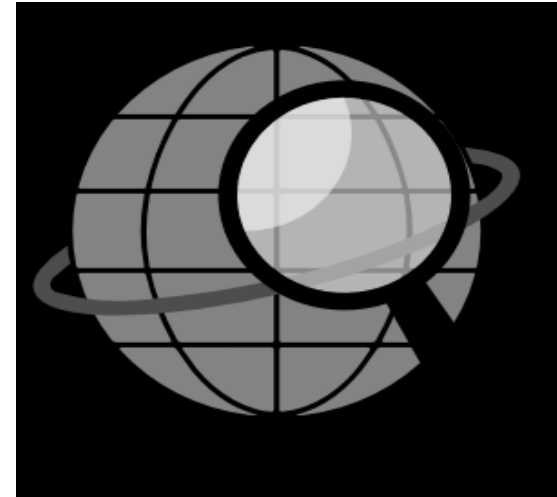   - Be certified as a Redevelopment Ready Community (RRC) (not yet, but on the horizon)

Where to Look for $

- The Web
- Associations' Newsletters, Magazines and Web Sites
- Networking with peers
- Contact with regional organizations, legislators and/or funding agencies

Searching on the Web

- Good place to start
- Can be very time consuming
- Different types of grants:
  - Public: Federal, State, Regional
  - Private Foundations: Private Companies, Private Families, Community Foundations, Utilities
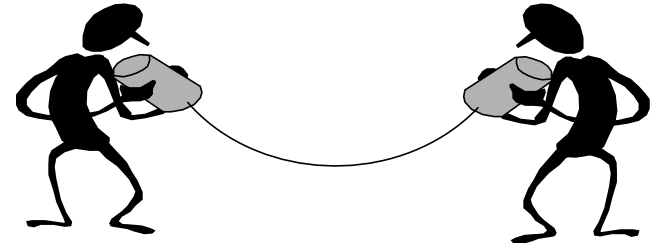
What to Look For

- Does your project fit the funding source?
  - What types of projects and activities are eligible?
  - What types of entities are eligible to apply?
  - Are certain geographic areas targeted?
  - What are the min/max grant amounts?
  - Local match required?
  - Any special requirements (low income, population size, project listed in a plan, only in traditional downtowns, etc.)
  - Grant deadlines
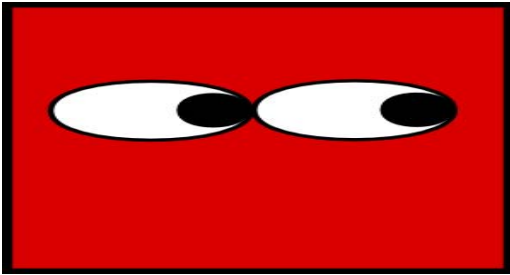
So Far, So Good….

- Look at examples of successful applicants
  - Does your project seem to be similar?
  - Is your community/organization similar to successful applicants?
  - Have they funded any projects in this general geographic area?
  - Is your project cost within the range of other projects?

Still Looking Good?

- Call the agency or foundation and describe your project to them.
  - See what they think about your chances of getting funding
  - Is the project "fundable"?
    - There's a difference between being "eligible" and being "fundable"
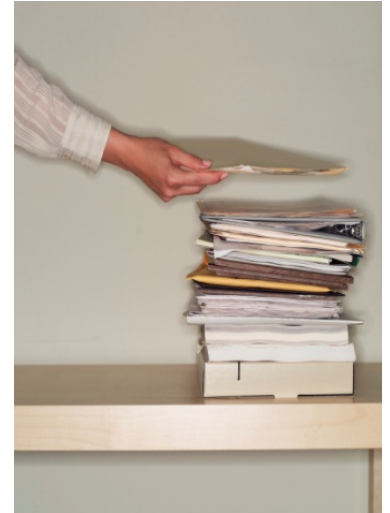 - Talk to peers/regional agencies/consultants too

- Look over grant program carefully:
  - How much time & effort will it take to complete application?
  - How will your project rate against other applicants?
  - How much funding is available?
  - What is the application deadline?
  - How long is the project review time?
  - When must the project be completed?
  - What is involved in grant administration?

Getting Started

- Get copies of the most up-to-date forms, guidelines and rating system
- Get to know funding agency contacts
- Tap into local support
  - Letters of support
  - Resolutions from local governments
- Get support from State/fed reps
- Get preliminary engineering/cost estimates
- Identify potential environmental issues
- Hold public hearings, if required

Documents you may need

- Organization's mission, history, operation and sources of revenue
- Organization's By-Laws, Articles of Incorporation
- Proof of 501(c)3 status (if applicable)
- List of Board members, staff
- DUNS and SAMS/CAGE Code numbers
- Current Audit

Make Your Case

- Explain everything
- Meet grant's goals
- Get maximum points
- Use the funding agency's terms
- Back it up with sources
  - Census data
  - Local Plans
  - Special Studies

Details, Details

- Read and follow directions
- Answer all questions
- Answer in the same order and same numbering system as asked
- Label all sections and attachments
- Sign all forms
- Make sure application is complete
- Check for errors or contradictions
- Get the application in on time

Standard Application

- Needs assessment
- Project description
  - Project timeline
- Project details
  - Engineering
  - Environmental
- Budget

Working with Foundations

- Start search closer to home

- Develop a relationship with foundation's director/board

- Understand the foundation's purpose - your project needs to fit what they support

- Sell your organization and/or project before applying

- Foundations can be more flexible than government, but can be harder to talk to.
  - Get an introduction through friends/acquaintances
- Foundation funds can be "local match" to State and federal funds

Private Sector Big Daddy

- When a private person/business takes on a troubled building or location – for the public good (but they still want to make a profit).
  - Seeing more of this lately
  - A forward thinking community could try to do some match-making between wealthy locals and buildings (locations) that they would like to see redeveloped.

If Application is Turned Down

- Ask why - nicely
- Find out how your proposal rated
- Find out what other projects were funded
- Learn from your mistakes and try again
- Be ready for other potential funding sources

If Application is Approved

- Keep your promises
- Comply with State/fed regulations
- Keep good records
- Submit complete reports on time
- Get project done on time
- Stay within budget
- Stay in touch with funding agency
- Get assistance along the way

It's Not Brain Surgery

- Be Ready
- Be Patient
- Make Contacts
- Follow Directions
- Keep on Trying