

NNIPCamp Oakland, Wednesday, November 8th, 2023

Session 1 – Diversifying Revenue Streams

Led by Katie Pritchard

Notes by Kathy Pettit and Emily Verburg

Present: Jason Schulist, Emily Verburg, Amanda Phillips de Lucas, Kira Morin, Kate Eikel, Nicole Williams, Katie Pritchard, Bob Gradeck, Charlie Eddy, Lori Thomas, Victor Amaya, Kathy Pettit, Steve Spiker, Geoff Smith, Alex Bautz, Laura McKieran, Jiaqui Dong

Amanda Phillips de Lucas – Is this about how to increase project funding or general funding? There are shallow funding pools in our cities, how to move beyond them to general operating support and with national funders/agencies (as local organizations). We need to diversify funds.

Kira Morin - +1 diversifying, we are trying to avoid “random portfolio.”

Kate Eikel – We are working to bring funders together in alignment with goals, especially with one funder who doesn’t want to collaborate.

Nicole Williams - As a university, we look at the federal: Natl endowment for the humanities, other federal agencies. What other areas/pots are people looking at for support?

Katie Pritchard - Curious about models that include coverage for TA in project proposals.

Requires good understanding of costs. Impact Memphis & Bob both have experience there.

Bob Gradeck – The question is how to get the core stuff funded sustainably, without tacking it onto program budgets. We need unrestricted funds for TA.

Lori Thomas – We need to refine the nature of project-based work - how to ensure that projects pay for themselves. Considering a new business model, how to structure projects in a community that doesn’t want to pay for research.

Victor Amaya - What funding opportunities have people had, other than operational funding? We are looking for sustainable & multi-year.

Kathy Pettit – we should be clear whether we are talking about general operating support vs flexible funds for TA/responsiveness? We are thinking about fielding the NNIP finance survey again next year. Another area is corporate funding, which is an area of growth at the Urban Institute.

Spike – I am at a non-profit that didn’t take grant funding for a long time (only took contract \$). Rebuilding funding relationships now.

Geoff Smith – TA is very fundable but it takes more time. How do we sustain it?

Jiaqui Dong - How do we allocate enough operating costs to cover the data maintenance side?

Kathy - Thinking about corporate funding – Other NNIP partners have gotten funding for banks that has earned them CRA credit; there’s also nonprofit hospitals that are required to provide community benefits.

Nicole – The key is project ideation - how long it takes to do something + shop rate for hourly contract/grant. + adding that into grant for operational technology.

Bob – we work to make ourselves indispensable; the city & county use our platform (\$80K from city/county).

Spike - AWS through their health equity fund gives you credits from Amazon for hosting.

Katie - pay attention to our language: funders v philanthropy v govt contracts v individual donors.

Kate - our conference has historically been free - we don’t get enough sponsorships to cover the cost. There’s controversy about asking people for donations/registration. It seems like a conflict with the goal of the conference being open access/a public service.

Katie - how to make the case for someone to fund it?

Spike - Think about your goals for the event - tech companies/businesses like to host events.

Katie – I spent a lot of time in United Way with donors/funders. Funders never want to be wrong & that they have a stake in it. We have to have a good idea of what the work costs.

Victor - we need to spend time to research and understand the priorities of corporations - need to do the connecting. We have had success with corporate sponsorship.

Nicole - at a prior organization, we had 2 major charity events per year. We targeted organizations – researched what that organization was and figured out how their story could fit into ours. “Be part of our story and here’s how you can fit.” It’s a way for them to get their name out

Bob - working with partners has gotten us corporate money (through an organization that addresses youth well-being issues – we partner with the organizations who have other stories).

Laura – We should think about how to be a line item in another person’s grant.

Jason – We are also looking at corporation foundations and our Chamber of Commerce. Looking at HR departments for data.

Katie – For corporations, sponsoring events comes from a different pool.

Lori – We put corporate people on our board to make connections.

Victor – we need to repackage what we do to be appealing.

Amanda – we need to know how funders think. The bigger the funding pools, the less flexible they are in their agenda. Scientists [in my former position] were not used to being told that they need to change.

Big fish funders - what are the alignments with programmatic goals and figure out where we align for the pitch. We have a case for technical assistance. How would our organizations work with NNIP to fit into their strategy? Many of the foundations have evaluations. Casey is different than other foundations, funding has to fit into their strategies. There are bigger fish that are happy to throw money at a problem. It could work if we collaborated.

Laura: We should also look at small fish foundations, always someone who cares about making local nonprofits stronger. They have capacity building programs - counted as program budgets, help with grant writing. Many local United Ways are trying to move out of the middleman role.

Bob – It has helped to be at the table (rather than thinking of a project to pitch) with coalitions.

Laura – We have basic functions to sustain – publishing/democratizing data, data literacy training. Local foundations are constrained by who set their priorities. They could fund youth, but not data literacy.

Katie – anyone tried getting help in a fund development plan?

Victor – contracted with someone to systemize all the processes. Allowed me to think about the future.

Kathy: Need to make sure that you’re aligned with any consultant. What are the right questions to ask on the consultant side?

Nicole - Start within a strategic plan, what are your goals and how do you break those down into actionable steps. Where do you want to be in 5, 10, 15 years & what sources of funding do you need to do that? Adding revolving costs into the budget, thinking about sustainability.

Kira – We are working with a consultant on a development plan - want to highlight to our funders what we can do. We are aligning with the program plan.

Bob – You need to find someone who can guide you through the process.

Spike - Your board has connections – You could set a goal for them to network on your behalf and each one has 5 conversations with possible funders.

Jiaqi – We brought a company on board for support - they give us data in-kind.

Katie – We sold data dreams to funders. We never covered costs but got funders acquainted with the work. Funders then upped their contribution the following year.

Victor- We are continuing to work on data dreams, it gives us opportunities to start the work and then continue. Good source of undesignated revenue.

Amanda- She has 1-pagers on the fly in case that conversation/moment comes. They include a description of the work + what it will take to do it + contact name. They help prepare people for the ask.

Katie - who is interested? The matching piece is important.

Bob - Are there national foundations that would be interested in the local work?

Kira - Anyone had other great ideas for events?

Victor – We have a quarterly health research event. It is a possible candidate for sponsorships.

Lori – Are there ethical rubs on corporate funding?

Kathy – Urban has funders principles & corporate review board that reviews proposals from corporations.

Amanda - need to set guidelines/guardrails to point to in the conversations.