

Money Talks: Four Ways To Help Fund Your Best Work

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1. Appeal to Local Foundations, Trusts and Businesses for Donations
2. Write a Small Formal Grant to an Educational Foundation
3. Negotiate for District Medicaid \$\$\$
4. Subcontract With a University to Participate in a Research Grant



ASHA's School Finance Committee

Speech-language pathologists and audiologists who successfully advocate for small sums of money to improve their practice are more likely to go on to negotiate big-ticket items such as salary increases and supplements, workload contract language, and value-added compensation. In the remainder of this paper, school-based speech-language pathologists and audiologists will learn four different ways they can find and obtain small amounts of money to purchase positions, equipment, and materials, and negotiate with district decision-makers about using Medicaid funds to pay for professional development.

For specific information about the examples given below, visit the School Funding Advocacy page at www.asha.org/advocacy/schoolfundadv/

How to Successfully Appeal for Donations

Find Several Likely Local Donors

Search (Google) for the names of local educational foundations and businesses that contribute to educational causes. Read their Web sites carefully and select the ones that best match your request. If your request is money, send a letter or proposal to at least eight places. Some donors will ask for evidence that you are acting on behalf of a non-profit agency.

Write a Letter of Inquiry

If there are no directions for making the request (e.g., Request for Proposal), then write a compelling one-page letter of inquiry on school letterhead that states:

1. Exactly what you are requesting and for whom you are asking it.
2. How you will use the equipment or materials to support the educational achievement of your students.
3. How the grantor(s) will know that you used the money, equipment, or material in the way you claimed.
4. Why you think the grantor might have a stake in supporting your students (based on the Web site information).

All steps, except #4, are generic and remain the same for each letter. Step 4 is personalized to the specific foundation or business and shows that you've done your homework and know how your potential grantor specifically supports the community.

Case Examples

Joanna Hornbeck, Speech-Language Pathologist, Wellington Exempted Village Schools in Ohio, successfully appealed to the local Lion's Club to fund two classroom amplification systems. The Club responded with the requested funds. Joanna also secured funds from a local donor, the McCormick Game Club, to establish an extra-curricular social language group.

The Kiwanis Club of Castle Rock awarded Dr. Donna Massine, Lead Audiologist, Douglas County School District in Colorado, \$2,800 to fund hearing aids for the district's loaner bank.

How to Write a Small Formal Grant to an Educational Foundation or Agency

Find Grants that Clearly Match Your Purpose

Locate a possible grant source and determine if there is a match between its mission, purpose and granting specifications and your request. It is very important that you check with your school and program supervisors before you begin this process. You may need special permission or action from the school board to apply for a grant.

Meticulously Follow the Grantor's Directions

Thoroughly answer the grant's request for proposal (RFP) questions and follow its required format. Read the proposal's directions carefully and follow them completely. Even small grants are very competitive and your good idea may go unfunded because you didn't follow directions.

General Tips: Try to find out who is reviewing your grant and who you can call for questions and assistance. Enlist colleagues at your site to help you develop, revise and edit your proposal. Be sure to have a district financial expert help you with the budget.

Specific Tips:

1. Most proposals require a needs statement. Collect demographic information about the district, your school, and the students you serve. Use measurable data to develop the statement.
2. Include 1-3 data points that show a gap between the way things are (your data) and the way things should be (your vision) when you describe your need.
3. Briefly describe how you will meet the described need. Present 1-2 goals with objectives and activities, including who will be responsible and how the outcomes will be evaluated.

Case Example: Kathy Wheat, MS, CCC-SLP, Chair, Speech-Language Pathology, Lawton Public Schools and adjunct faculty, University of Central Oklahoma drafted a proposal to the Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE) requesting \$150,000 to begin a pilot speech-language pathology assistant's program. OSDE agreed and the SLPA associate's degree program for the first cohort is slated to begin August 2011.

Questions:

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How to Negotiate for District Medicaid \$\$\$

Learn How Funding Flows from your State

Districts that recover certain health care costs for Medicaid eligible students receive funding that is distributed locally according to the state's plan. Plans vary greatly from state to state and each local agency/district establishes its own process within the state's parameters. Depending on the state and district, funds may be used for salaries, professional development, equipment and materials.

Influence How Your District Distributes Funds

Find how the funds are distributed in your district and who controls the purse strings. Ask your district's Medicaid expert some or all of the following questions:

- How does the district make decisions about distributing Medicaid funds?
- Is this request allowable within the state's plan?
- Is this request allowable within the district's plan? If not, are exceptions considered?

Some districts require that the speech-language pathologist or audiologist write a justification that shows how the request is consistent with Medicaid restrictions and how it will benefit the district, your colleagues, and your students.

How to Subcontract With a University to Participate in a Research Grant

Develop a Relationship with a University Researcher

These kinds of collaborative opportunities often develop as a result of an ongoing relationship between a university speech, language and hearing program, and a local district. University researchers who know school-based speech-language pathologists and audiologists typically approach a district in the hopes of gaining access to staff, parents, and students for their studies. These collaborations are of great educational and financial benefit to the university, the district, and the entire speech, language, and hearing community. Subcontracts often include money for positions, professional development, equipment, and materials.

Investigate Your District's Policies and Procedures in Advance

- Check with your school and program supervisors before you begin this process. You may need special permission or action from the school board to participate in the research and receive grant monies.
- Be prepared to write a Letter of Support. The process usually begins with a Letter of Support from the district that the researcher includes in the grant application. If the application is approved, the primary investigator then works with the district's contact to develop a subcontract.

Case Example: The U.S. Department of Education awarded a four-year, \$3 million grant to the Florida State University Autism Institute to study the effectiveness of the Social Communication, Emotional Regulation and Transactional Supports (SCERTS) curriculum with students with autism. San Diego Unified School District's Speech-Language Pathology Program is collaborating on this research project. SDUSD developed a subcontract with FSU that partially funds positions for an SLP, an SLPA, and a psychologist. It also provides stipends to participating classroom teachers and money for professional development, substitutes, equipment, and materials.