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### **Winning the Grant is One Thing – Spending it is Another**

*by Jane Kenyon, Director of Corporate and Foundation Relations*

The PowerBall lottery of a few weeks ago underscored the reality for many of us that we never feel as if we have enough money to do what we want to do – but what if the truth is that even if we had all that money we couldn't spend it? Sometimes receiving a grant seems a little like hitting the Jackpot – and while it initially feels exciting to receive the injection of funds, spending it can feel overwhelming. Some of you reading this have had difficulty spending grant funds, sometimes because you are so careful with funds and used to operating on a shoestring budget. Sometimes it's because you've made some fantastic plans, priced the cost of the equipment you need, secured the partners who are enthusiastic about the work you want to do, written a strong compelling proposal, and have begun to develop great ideas, but you've encountered unforeseen obstacles that slow your progress.

Before too long you receive an email from the Grants Office saying "Your report to XYZ Funder is due in six weeks' time. Could you please send me a budget summary and a few paragraphs about your grant progress ....?" Your eyes glaze over, your heart begins to beat faster and louder and you are certain your students can hear it. You've only spent \$2500 of that \$10,000 award. You had every intention of spending it in accordance with the plan but the student researcher who was going to help you got in an accident, more students enrolled in your lab than you were expecting, the enthusiasm of your research partners waned yet they seemed so committed before the grant was funded, the results haven't turned out the way you'd hoped. How can you possibly write a positive report on this grant?

Well, stop panicking and relax. The first thing to do is to stop and identify the obstacles and assess what progress you have made and how far off course you are. It's helpful to analyze why your plans have not materialized the way you envisioned them? Were you too ambitious to begin with? Were there environmental factors (a flood, a hurricane, broken equipment) that intervened in your success? Have you learned something new that you didn't previously know and based on that knowledge how would you like to re-shape the project? What adjustments do you need to make, large and small? Will this shift the nature of your work or simply help you to achieve better outcomes?

Grantmakers award grants to develop new realities. Private foundations are required by the IRS to give away 5 percent of the value of their assets each year. They do *not* want you to give the money back to them unless that is the only avenue left or unless you have violated the terms of the grant. The program officer will want to know what efforts you have made to achieve the results you set out to achieve, what obstacles you have encountered, what you have learned and what you want to do differently based on your new knowledge. Your job at this point is to develop a clear plan to move your project forward in spite of the obstacles, present it to the program officer and ask them to consider an adjustment to the grant agreement. Sometimes this becomes a negotiation. If your request is reasonable and is in keeping with the original intent of the grant, in the vast majority of cases they will work with you to make that change. Never give up!