

Paper 1: Research- INDS 6412

Cesar Caballero

Southern Utah University

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Professor Lexie Grant

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Introduction

The nonprofit organization I chose for this assignment is called: RGV Helping Hands.

RGV Helping Hands is a nonprofit organization that operates in South Texas, all along the Rio Grande Valley (Hence the RGV from their name). The Rio Grande Valley is a mini metroplex all along the Mexican border including the cities of McAllen, Edinburg, Harlingen, Weslaco, among others. The organization's mission reads: "To help the disabled (Veterans) in our local community to meet the minimum of ADA requirements for their homes to be safer and a happier establishment" (<https://www.open990.org/org/471771568/rgv-helping-hands-inc/>). This nonprofit organization helps people in need in several different ways including but not limited to rebuilding houses for Veterans and their families. Additional examples of what they have done in the past is help disadvantaged people when natural disasters have occurred along the Rio Grande Valley as well as helping with food banks/ drives during holidays, fundraisers, and taking part in school or community activities (<https://www.facebook.com/rgvhelpinghands>). Another reason why I chose them is because they have some highly creative ways of raising money, including hosting a haunted house attraction throughout the year (<http://tolucaranch.com>).

Some of the needs for this nonprofit are greater now than ever before due to the impact COVID-19 had on its main source of income: the haunted house attraction fundraiser. Based on some of the suggestions from my peers, I did research on 'Emergency COVID-19 Grants,' Texas Foundation Fund (TFF), Texas Commission on the Arts (TCA), and Greater Good. Out of all of those, I found that my chosen nonprofit could qualify for two of them: Emergency COVID-19 Grants and TFF. With that in mind, I started to do research on potential Grantmakers that would benefit my nonprofit organization and for which a partnership with our organization would be

beneficial as well. I would of course pursue the suggestions from my peers and then mention them to any potential Grantmakers once I was able to secure them.

Prospective Grantors

As found on the website <http://snpo.org> , RGV Helping Hands could potentially benefit by collaborating or seeking grants from the following foundations/ Grantmakers:

1. CVS Caremark Corporation- As an arm of the popular drugstore chain, they help organizations that aid disabled individuals live independent lives. They give special consideration to the uninsured and to children younger than 21 years old.
2. Disabled American Veterans Charitable Service Trust- They support physical and psychological rehabilitation programs; in addition, they also focus on helping specific disabilities (blindness, amputees, psychological, and aids).
3. Milbank Foundation for Rehabilitation- Created in 1995, this foundation has the mission of “Integrating people with disabilities into all aspects of American life” so that they can lead independent lives within their communities.
4. Paralyzed Veterans of America Education and Training Foundation- This foundation mainly supports educational projects that help enhance the quality of life of veterans with spinal cord injuries or disease as well their families.
5. People with Disabilities Foundation- They concentrate on serving people who have psychiatric or developmental disabilities. Furthermore, they also provide education and advocacy programs so that the disabled can achieve similar opportunities to those of their peers in daily life.
6. The Ethel Louise Armstrong Foundation – Their mission reads: “To change the face of disability on the planet.” This foundation seeks to support organizations that are

advocating for inclusion of people with disabilities in different programs such as education and the arts.

7. The Wounded Warrior Project – This project is aimed specifically to help veterans and service members who were victim of a physical or mental injury/ illness during their military service on or after September 11, 2001.
8. The Kessler Foundation – They focus on increasing employment opportunities for people with disabilities, mainly in New Jersey and usually by invitation only.
9. Anne J. Caudal Foundation – Established in 2007, they aim to help disabled veterans from any branch of the United States Armed Forces. They also continue to support ways through which veterans can be recognized and rewarded throughout their communities.
10. Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation –This foundation focuses on awarding grants to nonprofit organizations that empower people who live with paralysis, as well as their families or caregivers.

Three Top Grantors

When trying to find more information on the three top grantors, I focused on how they could help the nonprofit and how I could help them as well; I believe collaboration is of the outmost importance. I also looked at the requirements or their main goal/ focus and areas of service as well as grant requirements. Furthermore, I selected these three because their missions/ visions align to the mission/ vision of my nonprofit. Guided by all of the previous information, individual web pages and the website <http://snpo.org> , I selected the following:

1. Milbank Foundation for Rehabilitation- Their vision includes to make sure Veterans have fulfilling independent lives and seamlessly integrate with their community. Our

nonprofit wants the same. Our goal is to make sure our Veterans are not only respected and honored but also have what they need to live independent lives and be part of their community in all possible ways. Our visions integrate perfectly so that brought this particular foundation to the top. They award grants based on several criteria and they require nonprofits to submit a Letter of Inquiry before being able to apply (<https://fdnweb.org/milbank/>).

2. Disabled American Veterans Charitable Service Trust- This belongs as my second Grantmaker for the fact that they also want to help Veterans be part of their community. They are especially attracted to nonprofit organizations that can prove they are making a difference in both the nation's Veterans' lives and on the communities where they live. In addition, they also want them to be independent and live quality-based lives they can be proud of. One of their main goals is to make sure Veterans participate in community-led activities. Finally, something else to consider here would be the fact that they are open to submissions four times a year during the months of: January, April, July, and October (<https://cst.dav.org/>).
3. Anne J. Caudal Foundation – I think they belong as one of the top three Grantmakers because their focus is on helping Veterans and making sure they are rewarded and honored in their local communities. While they offer special consideration to organizations that serve the greater New Jersey area and the tri-state area (New York and Connecticut as well), they do consider all other states as long as they can prove their need and their impact on Veterans' lives. Finally, they have Bank of America act as their co-trustee and also offer different opportunities to apply for their grants throughout the year (<http://www.bankofamerica.com/grantmaking>).

Engagement Strategies

I think the way to engage these top grantors or Grantmakers would be to first of all host a virtual 'Open House,' through which we would basically explain to them what we have done in the past. Besides from our achievements, we would highlight how the Veterans we have helped continued to collaborate with us after we helped them. Many go on to become volunteers at our haunted house attraction fundraiser and on building, remodeling houses for other Veterans while also helping us on our food drives and our holiday events. So, in other words, we would show how these Veterans have become part of their community and how they help others after having been helped by our organization themselves. After our virtual open house, some of the other engagement strategies we could do with our different Grantmakers could be as follow:

1. Send them a newsletter (especially to those who cannot attend our open house). In this newsletter, we would showcase the same we would during our open house. Another alternative here would be a Welcome Website, through which we can introduce them to all the good we have done and all the good we intend to keep doing. In addition, we would also include our Strategic Plan, budget, SWOT, videos/ slideshows (highlighting our organization, staff, and the people we have helped along with relationships with the community), and a list of all the different donors/ Grantmakers we have so that they see they are not the only prospective ones. We ultimately want them to see they will be part of a whole and not our 'only hope.'
2. We could also do a 'tour' of all the families/ Veterans we have impacted in our community and invite the prospective Grantmakers to accompany us. Again, we could also do this digitally and send to them, especially with the current situation with COVID-19.

3. We could offer to have a representative meet with them for any questions they may have for us during the grant process. We could do this via Zoom or in person. The idea would be to send someone who is an expert in not only our organization but in theirs as well so that they see that we 'mean business.'
4. If COVID-19 were under control, we could invite them to attend our haunted attraction fundraiser so they can see our volunteers (community) and also the Veteran volunteers working together for a common goal. We could host a special event just for prospective donors and Grantmakers and integrate some of the other strategies together so that we could present what we have done, what we want to do and what we will do with their support.
5. Again, if COVID-19 were under control, we could host community events or festivals where we showcase our relationships with the community and their relationships with our Veterans. We have good relationships/ partnerships with local businesses, restaurants and school districts so this could be a feasible idea.

Asides from these engagement strategies, the key thing here would be to make sure that when we fill out any proposals/ applications, we do our best to seem appealing and to show how close our visions are to those of their organization, without changing anything ('Mission Creep').

Conclusion

I think this research will greatly help the nonprofit I chose because I can actually go after these grants on their behalf in the near future. More than anything else, I think we can get these Grantmakers' support by having them see that we want the same thing: To make sure our Veterans are respected and honored; we want our Veterans to be independent and be part of our community.

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