



## If You Are Denied a Grant . . .

No organization receives funding for every grant proposal that is submitted--this is the reality of the nonprofit sector. There are many possible reasons why a grant is not funded. The funder simply may not have enough money for all the requests. Perhaps the organization does not fit the guidelines or the interests of the foundation (this can usually be avoided by reading the guidelines carefully and talking with a foundation staff member before applying). It could be that the grant didn't convey the most important messages. Whatever the reason, grants are denied. It is just a part of the work.

We recommend doing three things after a grant is denied.

### **Recommendation #1**

First (and, by far, the most important), call the funder. Many organizations do not make this call; it is a common practice at Casa de Esperanza, and it has made a great difference. Often funders have responded, "Oh, now that we talk more about this, I understand. Why don't you submit again during the next round?"

When calling a funder:

- Don't take the rejection personally. There are many reasons why grants are denied.
- Don't act defensive or angry. It will reflect poorly on you (and your organization).
- Remember that most program officers do not make the final decision. The board of directors or trustees of the foundation make funding decisions.
- The tone of your call should be inviting, friendly, and demonstrate a willingness to understand how you could do better in the future.

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A phone conversation with a funder might go like this. . . .

You:

*Good morning. May I speak with \_\_\_\_\_?*

Receptionist:

*Sure, may I ask who is calling and in reference to what?*

You:

*Sure, my name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I work at \_\_\_\_\_. I have a few questions about our grant request.*

The receptionist passes your call to the program officer.

You:

*Hi \_\_\_\_\_. This is \_\_\_\_\_, calling from \_\_\_\_\_. I have a few questions about our grant request. Is now a good time to talk for a few minutes?*

Program Officer:



*Sure. What are your questions?*

*You:*

*Well, we received a denial letter yesterday, and I was wondering if you could help me understand how we can be more competitive next year.*

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### Scenario One

*Program Officer:*

*Well, I read your request, and it was really good. I am glad to see the changes in your organization over the last few years. This year, however, we are focusing primarily on previous grantees. Unfortunately, there wasn't enough money this year. I am sorry.*

*You:*

*Thank you for clarifying this. Should I call you again next year, before submitting, to see if it is a better time to submit?*

*Program Officer:*

*Sure.*

*You:*

*Thanks for your time. I appreciate it. Goodbye.*

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### Scenario Two

*Program Officer:*

*Well, I read your request, and frankly I didn't think that it fit too well with our guidelines.*

*You:*

*Oh? Could you tell me more about this?*

*Program Officer:*

*You know that we fund systems change work. Your proposal was focused more on training.*

*You:*

*If you have the grant request in front of you, I would like to show you something that is on page 5. We talk in the 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph about our philosophy about trainings—they are not conducted just as “trainings.” We really emphasize how to integrate the learning from the training into the daily work of the participants. As you see, we provide follow-up consultation for up to six months after the training session to ensure that the workers within the system have the tools and support to make lasting change. If you look at our evaluation section, we have had good success in the area of systems change with over 80% of 250 participants stating that they have changed the way they work with Latino communities based on the training and support by our organizations.*



Program Officer:

*Oh, I guess that I was just focused on the training.*

You:

*Oh, I understand that. I think that we have all been to trainings that are a “one time shot,” and no true change really occurs.*

Program Officer:

*Yes.*

You:

*So, where should I go from here?*

Program Officer:

*I think that you should apply again in six months for this same program. It will be important for you to highlight your organizational philosophy and practice about training both in the cover letter as well as the short program description on the cover sheet. This will help a lot.*

*You: Thank you. This has really helped. I appreciate it.*

Program Officer:

*Sure. That is why I am here. Good to talk to you.*

You:

*Goodbye.*

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When talking with a program officer, remember *they are not the enemy*. Most program officers have worked in nonprofits in the past, and they understand your reality. They also understand how difficult it is to raise money. If you are respectful (even when you are arguing your point as in scenario two), program officers will be very helpful.

### **Recommendation #2**

Periodically check the funder’s guidelines for changes during the year. Be sure to download the most recent forms because they are often changed from year to year.

### **Recommendation #3**

Before submitting the next time, call the program officer with whom you spoke after the grant was denied (if at possible). The purpose of the call is to give her/him the “heads-up” that you will be submitting again and ask if there is anything else you should keep in mind.