



Congratulations!

Congratulations to Bridges to Wellness on their fourth grant from the Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA)! Bridges to Wellness, based in Siloam Springs, Ark., is a rural health network.

They received a three-year Outreach grant from HRSA to implement healthy eating and exercise activities. Their initiative, called *Eat Better. Move More.*, takes a community-wide approach to making activity more fun, more accessible, and more . . . active! They are poised to be a model for other communities.

Congratulations on their grant of \$150,000 per year for three years.

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AFP Conference Highlights

Wow! This was the best AFP Conference I have attended yet.

It's true there are never enough grants sessions (the one we delivered was one of them), but we can still learn a LOT from our fundraising peers.

Take, for example, the best session of the conference by Peter Drury. His approach to benchmarking is extraordinary. He says: "Either you do accounting, or accounting gets done to you."

He has developed a FREE tool that can help redirect your board into asking the questions you need them to ask about performance, not the questions they usually ask.

You need the audio recording so you can use Peter's dashboard to the fullest. Follow this link:

<http://tinyurl.com/7rwut4p>

He tells us he's working on a version just for grants, but until then, you can download the dashboard free from

Slideshare at:

<http://tinyurl.com/88msjy4>

Other strong sessions covered mentoring younger staff into the profession, presented ethics case studies, and taught us how to improve communications with donors (including foundations).

For your colleagues in major and planned giving, pass along our recommendation to get a recording of the session, "Tips & Templates: Working Your Legacy Program."

This session contained excellent material presented by an engaging speaker on starting or improving your planned giving efforts.

The deadline for session proposals for the 2014 AFP Conference is April 27. If you are an experienced GPA speaker, I personally encourage you to submit a proposal for the 2014 AFP Conference in San Diego. Let's help them get more quality grants sessions on the agenda!



Can a Fifth-Grader Understand Your Proposal? By Cheryl L. Kester, CFRE

Remember how we learned to write in college? All of those long sentences? With strings of clauses separated by commas?

That's my default style. Complex sentences. Parenthetical expressions. Grammatically correct—I paid good money for those two English degrees!

Have you noticed anything different about this article? How about short sentences. Short paragraphs. Ohhh, how about sentence fragments for all of you out there with red pens in hand?

If you are in a hurry or if you are tired, which is easier to read? Quick sentences that each contain one idea, or complex paragraphs that force you to dig for the point? Ok, I guess I gave away my bias in that sentence.

Some experts say our writing should be at a fifth-grade reading level to be effective. “But,” you say, “my readers are better educated. They are sophisticated. I don’t want to look too informal or talk down to them.”

Yes they are. But they are also busy people with many decisions to make. You want the decision to fund your grant to be an easy one. You want your proposal to be the one that doesn’t make their head hurt. Maybe fifth grade shouldn’t be your target. Maybe it’s ninth grade. But have a target.

*Illustrate,
don't just
pontificate.*

*Tell your story.
Then show
your readers
proof. Add a
picture or a
quote.*

*Could a fifth
grader under-
stand your
proposal?*

Keeping it Simple

1. *Limit yourself to only one idea per sentence*
2. *Break down complex concepts into bite-sized pieces*
3. *Illustrate, don't just pontificate (charts or pictures)*
4. *Be ruthless — cut extra words that don't really add value*

I took my examples to the extreme in the first few paragraphs of this article to make a point. The best writers mix up sentence lengths for variety. For some reason, our brains find this an easier reading experience.

But most of us fall into the trap of endless sentences that drag on for five or six lines of text. When I am editing—whether my own proposals or my writers’ — I spend most of my time making the text less complex. I chop sentences, use bullets, and break up paragraphs.

Keeping it simple won’t get you a grant if you don’t have meaty content in the first place. Of course, you need inspiring stories and a great plan to change the world. But you need your readers to be able to grasp that vision quickly and fully.

***Our articles are now part of our blog, usually with bonus content.
Respond at kestergroup.com/blog***

Readability Tips and Tools



This month's article was inspired by Meredith Hilt's blog post "How Readable is Your Grant Proposal?" Read it here at <http://tinyurl.com/83e44wp>.

She gives real examples from actual grant proposals she has read as a reviewer, plus more tips on keeping your text simple.

She also gives links to on-line readability tools. You paste your text in and a "readability score" comes out. Word even has a readability test built in, but mine only seems to work erratically.

We tested before and after versions of a foundation cover letter edited before we knew about the readability test. Just following our own editing best practices, readability went up from 28 to 34.6.

Microsoft says we should aim for a score of 60-70.

The grade level went down from 14.6 to 12.7. Hmm. Nowhere near Grade 5, but we did improve our scores. It seems we have more work to do.

You can also try the StoryToolz free readability calculator. Find it at <http://tinyurl.com/83e44wp>.

Other low-tech approaches include eliminating passive voice, removing adjectives, and considering a new sentence every time you see a comma.

Basically, pull that old copy of Strunk & White's *Elements of Style* off the shelf and give yourself a refresher. If you don't have a copy, it's the world's least intimidating style guide. Get a copy today.

At what grade level do you think your proposals should be?

Tell us at kestergroup.com

Grants Questions Answered

Q: What in the world are those Tiny URL things?

A: OK, this is not really a grant question. If you have followed a link from our newsletter to a grant funding opportunity or to a resource like the readability tool talked about in the article above, you have seen web addresses that look like this: <http://tinyurl.com/7jwwdmt>

Free services like TinyURL (there are several) take really long web addresses like this link to Peter Drury's AFP session that we told you about on p. 1:

<http://afp.peachnewmedia.com/store/seminar/seminar.php?seminar=11804>

and turn them into something short like this: <http://tinyurl.com/7rwut4p> that will fit in a Tweet. Or, in our case, in the narrow columns of our newsletter. Both links go exactly the same place.

The address we gave you in the first paragraph of this Q&A takes you to the Kester Group website. This is really just one more tool to make your communications more readable and user-friendly. Try it out. Just go to tinyurl.com and paste into the screen any URL that you want shortened.

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The Kester Group, LLC has helped clients raise more than \$55.9 million in grants and contracts. The principals and associates have been employed by non-profits, schools, colleges, arts and healthare organizations. We know you and are committed to your mission.

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Upcoming Grant Opportunities

Women in Nontraditional Occupations Grants

<http://tinyurl.com/7ed8oae>

Tel: (202) 693-3703

Deadline: May 21

Grant size: \$300,000

The Labor Department will make six awards to consortia working with one-stop centers, unions and other groups to help women enter apprenticeships or jobs in certain fields. Very competitive.

CANADA: Key to Living Grants

<http://tinyurl.com/3q7rc5e>

Tel: (204) 946-7146

Email: community.relations@gwl.ca

Deadlines: Rolling

Grant Sizes: varies

Corporate Giving program of Great West Life in Canada to Canadian organizations in the areas of arts/culture, education, health/wellness, civic activities and social services.

Plum Creek

<http://tinyurl.com/3tf6eog>

Tel. (206) 467-3664

Email: foundation@plumcreek.com

Deadlines: Quarterly (Jan, Apr, Jun, Oct)

Grant Sizes: Up to \$10,000; usually less than \$5k

Giving only in counties where the company operates; list of eligible counties in AR, GA, FL, LA, ME, MI, MS, MO, OR, and WI is at:

<http://tinyurl.com/7psjech>. *Giving to social services, education, environment and arts.*

Farmer's Market Promotion Grants

<http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/FMPP>

Deadline: May 21, 2012

Grants: \$5,000 to \$100,000; NO match required

Grants to increase consumption of local healthy foods. Priority points awarded if programs are implemented in a food desert or low-income area. Will fund new farmer's markets, roadside stands, agri-tourism, and community-supported programs.