Government Funding Sources

by Beth Senger

While government funding can be a tremendous source of revenue in providing services to people in your community, there are a number of things to consider when it comes to seeking funding from federal, state, or local government entities. I've tried to cover some of the key information, based on my experience, that you will need moving forward:

- A basic understanding of some of the different levels of government funding (state, federal, and local)
- The good, bad, and ugly lessons learned, both from my experience and the experiences of others
- My "Top 10 Pointers" for writing government grant proposals
- Gauging your readiness level for pursuing government grants
- Specific advice on how to get started

It's impossible to be all-inclusive on this topic; most of what I've included is simply based on lessons learned (often through agonizing trial and error) in our program.

Why Would an Agency Choose To Seek Government Funding?

The better question is: Why not? You have almost nothing to lose by applying for these funds and so much to gain. Government funding can be a vital source of revenue, both for start-up efforts and for established programs that are looking to grow, expand, or try a new idea. Often, government funding provides the most substantive opportunities for multiyear revenue. If your resource development plan involves multiple funding streams, as it should, government funding should never be overlooked. There's plenty of diversity *within* the world of government funding—it's not unusual for a program to rely solely on government funding, yet consider itself quite diversified.

For example, in the first year of our program operations, I was fortunate enough to secure a three-year federal grant (JUMP), a three-year state grant (through our Department of Protective Services), a two-year state grant (through our Criminal Justice Division), and a one-year local grant through our Juvenile Probation Department. That seemed pretty diverse to me! Government funding sources provided 95 percent of our program's operating budget the first year. Six years later, those initial funding sources have ended, but

varied government funding continues to represent 90 percent of our operating budget.

There are three bottom-line requirements for a program to seek funding from *any* source:

1. A compelling need in the community
2. A well-structured and comprehensive plan for providing effective services
3. A passion for the mission

If any of these three elements is missing, securing government funding will be impossible. The first two are common elements required to be described in detail in government grant solicitations. The third is necessary to *prepare* a government grant proposal—especially if resources for researching and writing the grant are scarce. However, as daunting as many RFPs (Requests for Proposals) may seem at first glance, preparing proposals for government funding is quite manageable once the process is demystified.

Let's start by looking at the government funding landscape.

Levels of Government Funding

Whether you're getting support from your city council members' discretionary funds or accessing hundreds of thousands (or millions, if the project is large enough) of federal dollars, some of the same general rules and tips apply to *all* government funding. In the following section, you'll see information about state, federal, and local government opportunities, and I'll share what worked for us and some of the lessons learned in the process, both in writing the grant and carrying out the project.

State and Federal Government Opportunities

State and federal dollars are often very appealing. They can offer reasonable, even generous, project dollars, and for multiple years, making the proposal well worth the effort to apply. The challenge with state and federal dollars, at least in my experience, has been that finding replacement dollars after having a substantial government grant for three years can be a frightening struggle. Many federal funding streams require you to write a bit into the proposal about how you will sustain the program after the nonrenewable funding cycle is over.

As mentioned earlier, direct state and federal dollars have become our program's primary method of sustainability, and there are many government funding opportunities available at this level. Some may result in you partnering with others on the application and the work; others may be quite feasible to apply for on your own. Based on your mission, the target population you work with, and other factors, you should be able to identify a number of federal and state-level entities you will want to research for grant opportunities.

State and Federal Government Funding		
The Good	The Not-So-Good	The Concerns
Reasonable, sometimes generous, multiyear dollars for your program. Detailed guidelines for completing your proposal—a treasure map to the money. Unless your project is enormous, you're unlikely to have terribly burdensome accountability and evaluation requirements or monitoring visits—especially on federal grants. Completely impartial review process means your proposal is truly evaluated on its merits alone. Just the process of writing the proposal is a good exercise in defining and selling your program.	Once the project is finished, you're facing a big gap in your budget. Tailoring your program to their guidelines and requirements may mean you have to incorporate new elements into your project and revise forms, policies, and procedures accordingly. Sometimes require matching funds. It can be challenging coordinating your project with funding sources that are not local.	These proposals usually require tremendous amounts of paperwork and details. Putting together a winning proposal can be very time- consuming. If you're not very well prepared, you could find yourself struggling to maintain accountability and meet the project requirements. If you didn't have a lot of input into the grant proposal, you may find that the terms, the project design, or the government's demands are beyond your capacity.

To see what's coming down the pike, or what already has received federal funding, check out the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (http://www.cfda.gov). This enormous database lists all the programs being funded by the federal government, and some for which funding is anticipated in future budget cycles. Another "catch-all" Web site is grants.gov (http://www.grants.gov), which acts as a portal to many federal grants and their downloadable application packets.

You can also check for funding opportunities within the federal departments themselves. Even if you find an opportunity via grants.gov, sometimes the specific departments' Web sites have additional information. Specific departments and "offices" are usually housed within larger federal agencies, but most provide opportunities to check their sites individually for grant opportunities

Once you've found a source, download the guidelines and application forms. You can call to request hard copies if your agency doesn't have access to the Internet, but you're better off if you can find someone who will download all the materials for you. State and federal grant application guidelines are most commonly called RFPs (Request for Proposals) and are generally pretty substantial documents in themselves. The nice thing is you can use the RFP during breaks in writing to tone up with a few bicep curls! The other nice thing, though, is that the RFP gives you extremely detailed guidelines on preparing your proposal—it's really a treasure map to the money.

Local Government Opportunities

Local government funding comes in many varieties. Sometimes the dollars for local opportunities are actually pass-through dollars from the federal government. Sometimes they're truly generated locally, through taxes, levies, etc. Regardless of the originating cash source, local government opportunities are developed and cultivated through *relationships* in your community.

You'd be surprised how many organizations in your community have the potential for embracing you as a formal partner on their own government application or who might have government dollars to subcontract to your organization. In many cases, these organizations will be eligible to apply for dollars that you might be ineligible to access.

Based on the focus of your program, the target population you work with, and other factors, there may be a wide variety of local, educational, or nonprofit organizations you could approach for possible contracting on government projects for which they already have grants or new ones they intend to pursue.

Although there will be opportunities for applying for local government dollars on your own, the chart below is based on what I think is the more effective strategy for accessing those dollars: partnering and subcontracting with others.

Local Government Funding (through partnerships)

The Good	The Not-So-Good	The Concerns
If you partner, there will be time and money saved compared to pursuing a grant on your own. Partnering can also result in a strengthened proposal based on the assets of each contributing partner. Partnerships may yield other benefits that will make your life easier (larger infrastructure and community contacts for managing grants and accessing program participants, etc). Ultimately, you can access dollars from funding sources you would be ineligible to pursue on your own.	Awards are small compared to the federal or state grants. Partnering means less control over the final product/project. Your cut of an award may be less than you might get if you pursued funding individually. Sometimes finding local partners or local government funding is excruciatingly political.	Various partners may be unable to fulfill their commitments and those failures may jeopardize the success and potential continuation of the entire project. If partners mess up on their fiscal management of the grant, you could find yourself facing auditing trouble.

The Top 10 Tips for Responding to Government RFPs

People might think that working for an established organization like Big Brothers Big Sisters means that securing government funding is easy. The reality, as is often the case, is quite different. Every Big Brothers Big Sisters agency is an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization required to sustain itself. This means each BBBS agency is competing against other BBBS agencies, along with countless other similar organizations—most offering high-quality, comparable programming. When competition is so high, it's especially important to pay attention to the critical, small details that will help your application survive the process and receive the highest possible score.

Think of it this way: You work for the federal government and have to do a preliminary eligibility screening of proposals before divvying them up among dozens of grant reviewers. Your desk overflows with more than 1,500 three-inch sets (one original and two copies, please, from each applicant!) of grant proposals from well-meaning, and probably deserving, programs across the country. What to do? Well, you screen out as many as possible on technicalities! Missing a form? Margins too narrow? Forgot your page numbers? The RFPs makes no bones about this: If any of the requirements are not adhered to, your proposal will not be reviewed. It's the circular file for you. The good news about this? You may end up beating out one-third of your competition simply by playing by the rules.

Whether it's national, state, or local, the following are the most critical pointers I can think of for approaching your government proposals and getting those government dollars.

1. Seek and find

Generally speaking, anyone in a nonprofit organization can be the catalyst to seeking out and securing government grants. If you're reading this chapter, you probably have the passion for the mission that is so necessary to securing services for the people in your community.

In addition to the Web sites and listservs mentioned previously, ask yourself: "Who in our community cares about our clients? Who has an interest in the results our organization produces?" Once you answer those questions, you'll find a wealth of potential funders whose missions can be supported by your work. Also, be sure that you are tapped into other national resources that announce government dollars, such as listservs, e-newsletters, and state or local volunteerism message boards.

2. Carefully read the request for proposal

Reading, word for word, every page, every form, every footnote of the RFP has to be the single most important step you take before even thinking about researching or beginning to write your proposal. Many a time, I've downloaded an RFP that seemed just perfect only to find that on page 53, paragraph 3, there's a statement that either makes the grant unrealistic or my agency ineligible. So read it thoroughly. Highlight key points and develop an outline of required documents (don't trust the one they provide you— they miss things

Self-Assessment Questions

Are you ready to pursue government funding?

If you've found a government funding source you think is a good sustainability opportunity for your agency, here are some questions to ask yourself:

- Do you have the buy-in from the Executive Director and other team members for pursuing the grant?
- Is the deadline reasonable for completion of the application? Does your agency have the expertise to write the grant, or must it be outsourced?
- Is the project's scope realistic in your community and with the targeted population you intend to serve?
- Does the budget offer reasonable dollars for the services you intend to provide?
- Do you have the capacity and infrastructure to support the project in ways the budget will not stretch to cover?
- If you'll be facing a gap in time between major funding sources, do you have resources to sustain yourself in the interim?

sometimes). Innocent-looking forms can hold cleverly disguised requirements that may mean extra documentation, signatures, or other items that can't be taken care of at the last minute. Plus, honestly examine the scope and purpose of the grant. If it's not for you, don't put in for it. Stay true to your mission, even when the urge to build an octopus-like empire is overwhelming. Do what you do well, and stick with it.

By the way, if the deadline on a federal grant is in three days, don't even think about it—just put it down and walk away. It's too late. I will not be responsible for your hair loss if you decide to go for it less than three weeks before the deadline!

3. Talk about it

Open a dialogue with key people who will either be helping prepare or approve the proposal. If you're working within a larger organization, find out how the proposal fits within their mission and vision and try to find a way for the funding to benefit the larger organization and your program within. Talk to everyone who will have a potential stake in the project. If you have trusted key staff members who will have to implement the project, get them to help develop the scope, objectives, and other key elements. Discuss budget details like compensation levels, supplies needed, gaps in current funding, and how liability issues may affect your risk management costs.

As mentioned many times in this guide, be especially careful that the grant's focus and your own are compatible. Don't try to build an empire just because the money's available. When you hear about organizations having to "give back" dollars to the government, it's usually because whoever wrote the grant didn't have sufficient buy-in or knowledge of potential problems with how the project would actually be carried out. They knew how to write a good grant, but the organization simply wasn't adequately prepared to carry out the proposed work.

4. Get a sample

This is a simple tip, but many people don't bother to do it. Many funders will mention in the RFP that they have a sample available to download online or that you can request a print copy of a previously successful proposal. Absolutely, positively take the time to do this. It can save you many hours in trying to decipher and second-guess what the RFP is asking you to provide. However, when reviewing the sample I would strongly caution you to avoid thinking that it represents the ideal proposal and that you should follow it as closely as possible. The sample is not about *your* program. Write to your mission. You also must be aware that in the time between when that older grant application was approved and now, the RFP has probably changed a bit. A sample will not save you the trouble of painstakingly ensuring that your proposal meets the criteria outlined in the *current* RFP.

5. Divide and conquer

There are three functional areas to work on in most government proposals—the forms, the budget, and the narrative description of the services you'll be providing. This is detail-oriented work, so get some help. Unless you're

truly flying solo, everyone can help with some aspect of the proposal: filling in forms, gathering data and statistics, working on the budget, figuring out how to structure the project. The more buy-in and investment you have from those who help you prepare the grant, the more success you'll have when the project is funded. It also means that everyone on your team will have a better understanding of exactly what it means to write one of these proposals.

6. Fill in forms first!

The forms—I can't emphasize this enough—are not to be left to the last minute. Of course, you would probably never dream of doing that, but I once did. In the first federal proposal I put together, I left the forms for the last two days before the deadline. After all, they were just simple fill-in-the-blank things and checkboxes—how hard could they be? I was so very wrong to make that assumption. Not only did one checkbox lead me to have to research and write three additional pages on how I was planning to approach the protection of the participants, another checkbox meant I had to include an attachment—an approved motion by my board of directors stating that they supported the proposal and would accept responsibility for financial accountability. Oops. Thank heavens for my background in research and a flexible and accessible board of directors or else the many, many hours of labor I'd already poured into the 25-page narrative would have been lost.

7. Create a realistic budget

The budget forms can also look deceptively simple—another case of filling in the blanks. But you may find that a detailed budget *narrative* often must accompany that simple, one-page fill-in-the-blanks budget. This was puzzling to me at first: how do you go about writing a narrative about numbers? Well, this cycles back to Tip 3—get a sample. Or call the point of contact listed on the proposal and get clarification. The level of detail required varies greatly from funder to funder. You may have to actually type out calculations for each line item or may only have to give a broad descriptor. For example, one grant I wrote required extensive detail and justification of the dollars spent on every position proposed for funding (see Sample 1 on page 8), while another allowed very little detail or description (see Sample 2, same page). In addition to the staffing budget, most grants require itemization of benefits, cost of living increases, and facilities. Many require a three-year budget.

8. Identify elements of the narrative

You've read the RFP, you have buy-in from stakeholders, and you've completed your forms and started the budget. Now the real writing of the proposal begins. The narrative is the heart and soul of your proposal; it's your sales pitch. In this section, you have to pull out all the stops and knock the socks off neutral grant reviewers, scattered all over the country, who have never heard of you.

Most narratives have numerous formatting and length requirements. One of the most common I've run across is a limitation of 25 pages, double-spaced in 12-point font. That sounds like a lot of space to fill … until you really start describing everything they want you to share with them!

Budget Narrative, Sample 1

Executive Director/CEO: This person is responsible for program oversight, program compliance, and administration of grants and fiscal matters. Additionally, the ED supervises the Case Managers and support staff to ensure that mentoring services meet minimum standards set by Big Brothers Big Sisters of America (BBBSA). The ED spends the vast majority of his/her time in direct grant-related activities including leadership and oversight of the at-risk mentoring program, program administration, financial management, sustainability, and accountability. The ED/CEO resolves case management and program problems as they arise. Although a portion of the ED/CEO's time is spent on financial development and fundraising, this is estimated to be less than 5 percent of his/her time and primarily consists of coordinating those initiatives, which are the primary responsibility of the Board of Directors.

There is a second program operating at Big Brothers Big Sisters of El Paso, as reflected on Form 2037. This program, entitled JUMP, has a full-time Project Director who works primarily off-site in schools around the El Paso area. Although this program is housed in our offices, the percentage of time spent on this program has historically been 7–8 percent for the ED/CEO. The individual who directs this grant works largely autonomously and seeks out his own mentors and youth participants; therefore, telephone and paperwork traffic in our office related to that grant is minimal. The ED/CEO must complete quarterly one-page reports on this grant and must maintain fiscal accountability. The JUMP program currently has 18 matches beginning in September and hopes to eventually have the projected 75 referenced on Form 2037; however, the ED/CEO's level of involvement in that grant will remain stable, as the growth in volunteers and youth enrolled in that program does not impact the reporting and accountability processes for that grant. These variables have all been taken into consideration in calculating the percentage of reimbursable salary allocated to TDPRS, which still provides our agency's single largest at-risk mentoring service to the community, from which hundreds of youth have benefited since April 1, 2000.

The salary for this position is calculated based on an average monthly salary of $3828.37 x 12 months = $45,940.44, 87.07 percent of which is TDPRS reimbursable. Calculation is 45940.44 x 87.07% = $40,000.34, 100% of which is TDPRS reimbursable (5940.10 other).

Budget Narrative, Sample 2

Personnel: The total expenditure for personnel salaries is $120,000. The costs include salaries for the Project Director, Match Support Specialists, and the CEO. Managing a highly structured mentoring program and providing direct, comprehensive services to those children with the greatest need in our community takes trained, experienced professionals. All employees on this grant are high-caliber degreed and/or licensed professionals who have the organizational and interpersonal skills to construct and carry out this project.

The CEO will be the Project Director and will allocate 50 percent of her time to general administrative oversight and management of this project and the financial requirements.

The Development Director will allocate 100 percent of her time to fulfilling the requirements of this project, supervising staff, and coordinating with the school districts. She has managed similar projects with the school districts in the past.

Two Match Support Specialists will dedicate 80 percent and 100 percent of their time to this project. Both have years of experience working with families, youth, school personnel, and volunteer mentors in our organization.

My first step before I start writing the narrative is to build an outline based on their description of what is required. That way I have a skeleton and all I have to do is flesh it out. I use the RFP's own words and phrases as much as possible. For example, if the RFP says that the mission in providing funding is to "improve academic opportunities for marginal, underprivileged, or underserved youth," well, I say that our program is going to "improve academic opportunities for marginal, underprivileged, or underserved youth by …." That way the grant reviewer can simply check off that box on their checklist. The less you make the grant reviewers dig through or have to read between the lines of your proposal for the key elements, the more likely you are to receive maximum points. This is not about simply jumping through verbal hoops to get dollars; it just means that you are working *with* the grant reviewer in a sense, focusing your information in a way that facilitates a positive review process.

There are several common elements you can expect to find in virtually every government grant you prepare. You should be able to recycle at least some of what you write over and over again—even for other purposes, such as your agency's marketing materials. The length of the sections, sometimes even the number of words you can use is often dictated by the RFP. Stick within their guidelines or you'll get rejected. The five most common elements to the narrative are the:

- Statement of need
- Goals and objectives
- Program design
- Key staff qualifications/agency's capability
- Plan for evaluation

Each section generally has a different weight assigned out of 100 points. As a general rule of thumb, you'll probably want to give more space in the 25 pages to those categories with more weight. Here are my suggestions regarding each of these sections (the starter questions on page 12 can also help guide your content).

Statement of Need: Base this on the focus of the funder (academics, violence prevention, etc.), and conduct research to find the most compelling statistics related to that focus. Get information that demonstrates your impact to build a compelling picture of need for services in your community.

Goals, Objectives, and Outcomes: Often, the funder has established these for you in the RFP. You have to decide how your program can address the funder's needs and quantify the results you anticipate. Discuss these with your staff and make sure you come up with measurable goals that they feel they can achieve if the project is funded. Don't overextend or overinflate your projections. Shooting for the moon means you'll have to reach the moon on a shoestring budget.

Goals in an RFP represent the big picture; the objectives are the steps you'll take toward achieving them; and the outcomes are the impact you anticipate having on the target population by virtue of achieving the goal:

Goal: *Mentored youth will demonstrate improved academic performance.*

Objectives:

- *Mentors will be briefed regarding the specific core academic subjects in which his/her mentee needs support and assistance.*
- *Incentives and rewards will be provided for mentees whose academic performance progresses.*
- *Match Support Specialists will ensure youth struggling with core academic subjects are aware of and encouraged to attend tutoring opportunities.*

Outcome: *Seventy percent of youth mentored for at least six months will demonstrate an improvement in academic performance in core subjects.*

Program Design: Usually the section with the most points and requiring the most space in your narrative, the program design is your opportunity to demonstrate that you have a tight system for providing services. The RFP will generally lead you to tell the funder what they want to hear. Commonly, it will ask you to describe your system for recruiting and screening volunteers, supporting clients, providing services, etc.

Key Staff Qualifications/Agency's Capability for Carrying out the Project: This section is your chance to brag about the terrific people who will be working on this project—or the type of staff you will hire. Write a succinct agency description that focuses on your proven record in complying with grants and handling projects similar in scope. If you're still new enough not to have those bragging rights, focus on the mission and vision the agency has for itself and the reasons it came into being.

Plan for Evaluation: For some people, anything to do with program evaluation is pretty scary—nightmares from your college research courses may surface as you write this section of the grant. If you don't have a background in program evaluation, it's a good idea to get some help on this section, just to make sure you don't bite off more than you can chew. In fact, you may want to find a contractor you can write into the proposal as an evaluator if the grant is funded.

Whether you're planning to hire someone to do evaluation or not, the plain and simple fact is that your evaluation methods are directly linked to your goals, objectives, and outcomes. In fact, I try to only project outcomes I feel pretty confident I can evaluate without having to contract out. Here's an example from one of the evaluation plans I had to write for a federal proposal:

> *Goal accomplishment will be measured via methodology employed and developed by Big Brothers Big Sisters of America and/or those required by the Department. The methods will include the employment of 1) the*

Program Outcome Evaluation (POE) tool, a Likert-scale questionnaire administered to mentors, teachers, parents, and match support specialists to assess the individual progress of each child on 21 asset indicators at the 6 and 12 month point of their match, 2) compilation of program assessment surveys administered in conjunction with the POE form, 3) compilation of baseline data through records reviews of enrolled youth to include historical data of tardiness/absenteeism, academic performance, disciplinary referrals, etc., and 4) periodic collection of the same data at the grading intervals of each school district. Project professionals will meet quarterly to review quantitative and qualitative data collected. Plans for strengthening project implementation will be devised as necessary, as implicated by the performance feedback.

9. Know what you do well and prove it

A big piece of successfully applying for government funding is knowing your program. Young programs sometimes struggle with really knowing and "owning" what they do. It's impossible to argue effectively for dollars unless you've truly spent time thoroughly examining your capacity and ability to carry out services. Once you know what you do well, prove it. In our first year of operations, I knew I wanted to be able to say what *our* agency did well—not just what other similar agencies did well. I wanted to be able to personalize our grant applications with local findings. To help your program get started building your case, take the time to come up with even a simple survey instrument or questionnaire that your staff can easily administer to program participants. Keep track of how many people attend activities and events. Write down quotes from participants that are particularly meaningful. Take time to write anecdotes about your most touching stories. Keep a file with the results of all these things so you can pull out personal quotes.

Not every grant proposal will lend itself to a personal touch, but you can often find ways to integrate customer satisfaction survey results and meaningful scenarios to help your proposal "come alive."

10. Proofread, proofread, proofread!

I list this three times because that is the minimum number of readers who should go through your full proposal and checklist before you stick it in the mail. Tell them you want them to verify the following:

- Grammar and spelling are correct
- Page numbering is sequential
- Forms are completed
- Table of contents matches the correct page numbers
- All attachments are accounted for
- Narrative flow makes sense and reads well
- Budget is calculated correctly and the budget narrative matches the forms
- Budget is feasible
- Goals, objectives, and outcomes make sense and are livable

Starter Questions for the Key Elements to Most Proposal Narratives	
Heading	Ask Yourself
Statement of Need	What meaningful statistics can I find to persuade them that we need this project in our community? What are the needs of the community as a whole and those we plan to serve?
Goals and Objectives	What can we realistically say we'll accomplish based on past experience or research on programs similar to ours? What goals are being dictated by the funder? Is it feasible to believe we can make those happen? What steps will we take to do so?
Program Design	What do we do and how do we go about it? Who are we partnering with who will help the program work? How broad will the RFP allow us to be in our approach? Are we putting in enough elements to satisfy their goals in providing funding, yet not box us into a corner programmatically?
Key Staff Qualifications	Will someone from our existing staff be heading this project? If not, or if their qualifications aren't very strong, what will we require the key qualifications of the Program Director to be? What about the key qualifications of any partners we plan to work with on this project?
Plan for Evaluation	Do we have the in-house skills to conduct the evaluation of the outcomes for our participants? Who could we contract with to manage the evaluation process? What evaluation requirements does the funder have for the project? How much will we have to modify our current way of doing business to collect the data they want to see? Who will we have to partner with to make sure we can access the data, if we're not collecting it ourselves?

Do NOT do this yourself! It makes no sense to proofread the proposal you've sweated and worked on until you're cross-eyed. If you've looked at something long enough, it becomes almost impossible to see mistakes.

At some level, writing a government grant is taking a leap of faith—faith in yourself, in your program, in your staff. It's a major investment of time, energy, and resources, and that's often hard to come by. And because writing a government proposal sometimes feels like writing a graduate thesis, I often feel the need for a bit of pomp and circumstance when I complete one. So, before that hefty application package goes out the door, everyone in the building is required to lay hands on it and give it their good wishes and blessings,

calling upon providence, karma, mother nature, and gods from every faith to give it the final push to success! It's been working for us in El Paso so far ….

When Beth is not hiking or hanging out with her kids and mentee, she is the CEO of Big Brothers Big Sisters of El Paso. She has written the state and federal grants that provide over 90 percent of the funding for her agency since 2000. Beth has a master's degree in social work and has been a professional writer and trainer for 20 years.

Senger, B. (2008). Government Funding Sources. In M. Garringer (Ed.), *Sustainability planning and resource development for youth mentoring programs* (pp. 50–64). Washington, DC: Hamilton Fish Institute on School and Community Violence, and Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, National Mentoring Center.

Steps To Getting Started

Open a dialogue with key members of your organization about exploring government funding.

Offer to help search for appropriate opportunities among local, state, and federal agencies that might support your organization's cause.

Examine opportunities with your eyes wide open. By all means, look the gift horse in the mouth if the reins are too tight.

Have a good idea of how far a budget can stretch.

Invest the time it takes to produce a quality proposal the program can find success with.