

## Seek and ye may fund:

### Meeting provides grantwriting tips

By *Natasha Thomsen, nmtbomsen@aol.com*



*Susan Shiroma at EFA presentation.*

*Photo by Natasha Thomsen.*

in her presentation on “Grant Writing Basics for Freelancers” at the EFA’s October 28 General Meeting in New York City.

“I’m not a writer,” she declared, and yet she took the audience through a high-speed presentation morphing two workshops—“Grantseeking Basics” and “Proposal Writing Basics”—into one. Through useful tips, specific resources and practical handouts, Shiroma highlighted the kinds of writing and editing muscles that make a powerful proposal.

Shiroma has been with the center, where she is currently a trainer and manager in the Nonprofit Services Working Group, since 1995. She also works directly with nonprofits to help them find funding. Her goal: “to assist you with our numerous resources and encourage you to expand your freelance writing practices to nonprofit organizations.”

**W**ho knew? Proposal writing can make money, if you steel yourself with the right stuff, according to Susan Shiroma, senior librarian at the Foundation Center,

*The annual EFA Holiday Party will be held on Monday, January 12, 2009, at the EFA office. Watch the EFA website and lists for further details.*

## Back to basics

A grantwriting consultant not only writes about programs that need funding, but also finds the audience for those proposals. In the philanthropic world, this means identifying grant-makers as prospects.

Enter the Foundation Center, with its multi-tiered database, “Foundation Directory Online” (<http://www.fconline.foundationcenter.org>), which offers Internet-based access, as well as various levels of subscription-based services. The database indexes 92,000 funding sources, including the 72,000 nonprofit 990 Private Foundation (PF) tax forms filed with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) that provide

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## Marketing made easier

By *Ruth E. Thaler-Carter, EFA Newsletter Editor, [www.writerruth.com](http://www.writerruth.com)*

**O**ne of the most challenging aspects of being an editorial freelancer is marketing to find new clients. When you’re immersed in a project and focused on meeting a deadline, it can be easy to forget to look for a new one to do when that one is finished. Setting time aside for marketing takes a conscious effort, and not all of us have the discipline or interest to do so, but marketing is essential to a successful, profitable business.

With the new year fast approaching, now is a great time to assess your

marketing efforts and identify ways to make them better.

The EFA has one easy way to help: being listed in the organization’s member directory. Many members have said they get a lot, if not most, of their clients through their directory listings. Others report getting just one or two high-paying and ongoing gigs. Directory listings work because many clients would rather look for freelancers with certain qualifications than wade through a stack of résumés and cover letters in response to a job listing.

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## Grantwriting, continued

detailed information about the “who, what, where and when” of grants awarded, from both the giver’s and seeker’s perspectives. Shiroma underscored the importance of doing one’s homework to cultivate a funder, even if you’re only the proposal writer.

Using the database, a writer can identify prospects by funder fields of interest, types of support offered, geographic focus and several additional search fields. Searching the 990-PFs is legally taking advantage of what the IRS has been digitizing since 1997. Narrowing searches to local geographic areas by zipcode means you’ll know which neighbors’ doors to knock on.

## Drafting the proposal

In addition to identifying potential funding sources, a writer needs to start collecting information to draft a 10- to 12-page proposal. “Seventy percent of what goes into writing a proposal is

not so much grant writing, but filling out forms,” said Shiroma.

To substantiate a “statement of need”—that identifies a program’s address to a specific problem, issue or community—the writer will need to harness the proposal with statistics.

“One major complaint from nonprofits is they wished writers would spend more time with them, to better understand what they are writing about, rather than staying in a vacuum with the executive director,” said Shiroma. One vehicle for productive meetings between the writer and program staff is the center’s “Wisdom Exchange Project Outline.” Together, they can agree on how to identify the need, project description, goals, etc. (including sources for future support), and a simple budget breakdown.

What funders perceive about an organization will come, in part, from a proposal. The qualities they are seeking? A high-quality program that meets

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## Marketing, continued

However, not enough EFA members are taking advantage of this resource—we’ve all seen the reminders to update member profiles and résumés for the directory, but not even half of the membership has done so to date. If you have not yet updated your EFA Member Directory listing, do so *today!* It does not take long, and the payoff should be substantial. Not only will you do yourself a favor, but the more detailed, fleshed-out profiles prospective clients can see, the stronger and more professional the EFA looks to those clients, and the more likely they are to use the directory and recommend it to their colleagues as a source of freelance talent.

*One caveat:* Be sure to preview your profile and résumé materials *before* approving them for the website. If you

see strange code or symbols, review the instructions within the Member Profile form and the Member Profile FAQ (which you can see in the left navigation menu when you’re at your profile). If you still have no luck, contact **Glenn Court**, the EFA webmaster.

## EFA needs your marketing tips

There is marketing yourself, and there is marketing your professional organization. The EFA would like members’ suggestions for ways to promote the association and make it more visible to prospective clients. If you have ideas about ways or places to publicize and promote the EFA that could enhance its members’ visibility with prospective clients, let us know! Send your tips, insights and appropriate contacts to:

[info@the-efa.org](mailto:info@the-efa.org) ■

## Grantwriting, continued

the needs of a community, is delivered and tracked efficiently, and is operated by capable leadership, within a strong organizational and financial infrastructure.

Shiroma wove in useful advice that would make a typical proposal—with an executive summary, narrative, budget, appendices and supporting

materials—a winning one. “Remember to say ‘thank you’ in the cover letter. They don’t say it enough in this country,” she said, referring to organizations that have been awarded grants.

“Keep the language clear and simple. Show it to a sixth-grader.” That means using action words, avoiding jargon and acronyms, and editing, she said.

The grant writer is responsible for

numbers as well as words. “It’s very important to make sure the numbers add up,” said Shiroma.

Other useful tips from Shiroma:

- Writers are considered artists, and can receive funding if they associate themselves with a fiscal sponsor (an organization that has 501(c)3 nonprofit status).
- Break in by volunteering to write proposals and develop a track record; otherwise, charge for your time. (It’s unethical to be paid out of a grant’s budget.)
- Do not rant and rave if your proposal is rejected. “Funders talk among each other, and will discuss your character and personality,” Shiroma noted.

## Grantwriting resources

- “Ask us,” an online librarian, found in the upper right-hand corner of the Foundation Center’s website at [www.foundationcenter.org](http://www.foundationcenter.org). Staffers are on call to answer queries (including weekends).
- Guidestar.org, to find out the status of a 501(c)3 charity organization.
- Google “sample proposals,” for examples of nonprofit proposals.
- The Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP), for networking, ethics and standard policies regarding nonprofits and acceptable practices for working with them.
- The Association of Professional Researchers for Advancement (APRA), for information on fundraising research.
- Sample price list of what one proposal writer charges (<http://www.non-profitgrantwriters.com/page7.html>).
- *The Grantseeker’s Guide to Winning Proposals* (June 2008)—examples of funded proposals to serve as models.
- *The Foundation Center’s Guide to Winning Proposals, Volume I and II* (2003).
- *How to Become a Grant Writing Consultant: A Start-up Resource Guide for Your Home-Based Business*. Beverly A. Browning (2001 and 2005). A practical approach to defining and developing expertise in the grantwriting business.
- *The Foundation Center’s Guide to Proposal Writing* (2007).

## Next steps

Shiroma emphasized the benefits of visiting the Foundation Center’s national headquarters to mine resources that include full access to a multi-tiered database, reference books, training webinars and videos, and workshops, many of which are free.

EFA members can read successful proposals in Foundation Center publications or look at work by Beverly A. Browning, Ph.D., on how to become a grantwriting consultant. You may bring a flash drive to plug into the workstations and save PDF files from database searches.

EFA members based outside New York City can take advantage of the Foundation Center’s regional sites in Atlanta, Cleveland, San Francisco, and Washington, DC, along with its online training and cooperating collections ([foundationcenter.org/collections/](http://foundationcenter.org/collections/)). Many of Shiroma’s handouts will be at these centers.

For further information, contact Susan Shiroma, 212-807-2454, [sgs@foundationcenter.org](mailto:sgs@foundationcenter.org); the Foundation Center, 79 Fifth Avenue, 2nd Floor, New York, NY 10003; 212-620-4230; <http://www.foundationcenter.org>. ■

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