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Finding funding for community

When it comes to community culture, volunteers are most often the number one resource supporting local events, artistic endeavours and non-profit group activities.

Funding is generally a close second to an individual or group's ability to pull off an event or build something needed in the community.

In Grey Highlands many people give tirelessly of their time and effort to ensure our myriad of cultural activities, events and facilities offer a little something for most everyone. Through fundraising, local individuals and businesses also often reach into their own pockets to support these endeavours. The municipality may support activities through the in-kind support of staff or provision of facilities.

When this just isn't enough to bring a program or project to fruition, then artists, organizations and even municipal facilities turn to another source – grants.

Over two dozen people attending a recent Grey Highlands Cultural Roundtable at the Kinplex in Flesherton got a glimpse into the world of funding sources courtesy of cultural consultant Anne Frost, who provided a beginners overview of the world of grant crafting.

"If you see your own project reflected in the guidelines of a grant, there's a better chance of getting the funding," she offered, suggesting people may want to volunteer on grant review teams to get an idea of how proposals are judged. "Talk to the grantor, they are there to help you."

In a quick run through sources of money and the various parts of proposals, Frost said most funders will require a clear narrative of the project and a budget outlining a variety of sources. Community support, volunteer commitment and measurable outcomes are important as well.

"It really is a commitment to a partnership with the funder," she said, emphasizing there are always expected results for projects to be reported back to the granting agency. "It's really a proposal pitch, not just a hand out for money."

Frost, who lived and worked in Grey County for years in arts and culture funding, was a long-time mentor of the second speaker, Aly Boltman, Executive Director of the Community Foundation of Grey Bruce (CFGB).

"We want to help with new projects, programs and ideas," said Boltman, who outlined the foundation's available grants. "We want to provide seed money to help charitable organizations get some wind under their sails."

A Grey Highlands Cultural Development Fund Collaborative Project Initiative

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Boltman has a lot of experience in arts and culture and spent many years on the other side of the table writing grants. Calling herself “super empathetic,” she used to run the Roxy Theatre in Owen Sound, where one capital project fell short due to an unsuccessful grant application.

“Don’t get too hopeful and put all your eggs in one basket,” she warned, noting a variety of funding sources from donations, fundraising and in-kind support should be part of any project’s revenue mix. “Sometimes you can learn more from your failures than your successes. It really can deflate enthusiasm if you miss a grant, so be sure to have a plan B.”

Roundtable attendees were urged to talk to any funder they think may be able to help. Boltman is often consulted with community ideas for projects and is sometimes able to help people toward the proper funder, or assist groups in working together toward common goals.

She provided a list of available funders for those in attendance and quickly reviewed the CFGB’s many grant options. The foundation only grants funds to charities, but may provide funding through charitable groups to non-profits through a sponsorship arrangement with a charitable organization. This works as long as there is a clear relationship between the two groups.

A further workshop for those seeking details will be held by the CFGB and the Ontario Trillium Foundation in their annual Not-for-Profit Sector Spring Workshop in Chesley on March 25th. For more information contact cfgreybruce@brucetelecom.com or call 519-371.7203.

Resources provided at the session are available through the Grey Highlands Public Library online at greyhighlandspubliclibrary.com or by emailing contact@greyhighlandspubliclibrary.com.