THE GROW PROJECT: "SHOW ME THE MONEY!"

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Abstract –
Identifying funding to initiate a clever new outreach program is not extremely difficult. There are many foundations and government sources that are willing to fund new programs. These same sources often want to know about your plans for "sustainability." Yet there is no Foundation for Sustaining Successful Outreach Programs! Good programs are often rewarded in the same way that bad programs are punished: non-renewal of funding. Girls Researching Our World (GROW), a National Science Foundation (NSF)-funded project at Kansas State University (K-State), provides outreach to middle-school girls and middle- and high-school teachers and counselors. The project leaders have devised an organized development plan, in conjunction with the K-State Foundation, to sustain this successful project. Development plans call for endowment of the project coordinator's position, the summer workshop, and other activities.

Index Terms — development, middle school, network

INTRODUCTION

Faculty members and administrators at Kansas State University (K-State) created Girls Researching Our World (GROW) with funding from the National Science Foundation in 1999 [1]. This outreach project for middle-school girls and for middle- and high-school teachers and counselors seeks to build a network of universities, schools, government agencies, non-profit organizations, and corporate entities who share an interest in supporting the interest of middle-school girls in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) disciplines.

Now in its fourth year, the project offers a summer workshop, industry tours, a graduate course in gender-equitable teaching methods, an interactive website (www.ksu.edu/grow), and opportunities for teachers to partner with K-State faculty in developing hands-on activities for the summer workshop and for use in grade 6-12 classrooms. The network has more than tripled in size since the initiation of this project, and has involved over 250 girls and 100 teachers and counselors. Table I lists current network members.

The GROW Project is directed by a four-member steering committee of women administrators and faculty at K-State (authors 2-5 of this paper). A project coordinator (author 1 of this paper) manages day-to-day details and is responsible, in conjunction with steering committee members, for implementing project initiatives.

TABLE I
GROW PROJECT NETWORK CURRENT MEMBERS

MEMBERS	CONTRIBUTIONS
Universities/Research Organizations	
Kansas State University – Main Campus	Planning, personnel & facilities
Kansas State University - Salina	Personnel & facilities
Konza Prairie Biological Station	Personnel & facilities
Haskell Indian Nations University	Personnel
Grambling University	Personnel
Xavier University	Personnel
Corporations/Commercial Organizations	
Cydex	Financial support
Boeing Company	Financial support, personnel
Kansas City Power & Light	Financial support
HNTB Corporation	Financial support, tours
GARMIN International, Inc.	Financial support, tours
Hallmark	Tours
Procter & Gamble	Financial support, tours
Consolidated Container Corp.	Tours
Midwest Ear Institute	Tours
Bayer Coleman	Tours
Raytheon	Tours
Philips Lighting Company	Tours
Phillips/Chevron Chemical Co. LP	Financial support
Schools	
3 Unified School Districts in NE KS	Recruiting, evaluation data
Non-Profit Organizations	
Girl Scouts of Kaw Valley Council	Recruiting, personnel, planning
Girls Engaged in Math & Science	Recruiting
Teen Women in Science & Technology	Recruiting
Government	
Environmental Protection Agency	Tours
Dept. of Labor: Region VII Women's Bureau	Financial support
City of Manhattan Water Facilities	Workshop tours

The enthusiastic response from the girls and from partners in our expanding network reinforces our desire to continue this program on a permanent basis. We have begun to make plans to sustain these activities beyond the end of the current NSF funding by seeking support outside the university from corporate sources and other donors. To this

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end, we worked with the K-State Foundation to design an organized development plan. This plan includes endowment of the project coordinator's position, the summer workshop, and other activities. In this paper, we will describe the efforts undertaken to design the development plan, the informational materials created for potential donors, and a timetable for implementation.

ORGANIZING A PLAN

Because the GROW Project is an initiative that involves personnel from multiple departments and administrative units, plans to sustain the program on a permanent basis require efforts on a university-wide scale. On our campus, each college has its own Foundation development officers who are responsible for fund-raising activities on behalf of that college. Thus, it was not obvious who should be responsible for working with us on a development plan.

In November 2002, Suzanne Franks, Ruth Dyer, and Susan Arnold met with Mitzi Richards, Director of Development for the College of Engineering, to discuss the future development of the GROW project at Kansas State University. Richards shared a draft development plan with the group and offered suggestions about how the project coordinator and the GROW committee could carry it through on a timeline of 12 months. Table II outlines this plan.

The GROW Project began with the goal of building a network of supporters for middle-school girls; the development plan would continue to build that network. Fund-raising up to this point had concentrated on efforts to provide scholarships for individual girls attending the summer workshop and other outreach events. Richards challenged the GROW team to develop a big-picture plan, one with more of a long-range focus. The goal of the draft plan is to raise $150,000 in the next three years. Planned giving (donations made on an agreed-upon schedule) from current and potential network partners would allow us to achieve this goal, and continue the project after NSF funding ended.

BEGINNING THE PLAN

During the first few months of the plan, solicitation materials were developed specifically for the GROW project. These included a newsletter, a "door knocker" (a short summary of the project to be provided to potential donors) and a general program proposal. The Foundation provided examples of materials successfully used with various other projects.

The first effort was to develop the newsletter. Copies were sent to all network members including the middle-school girls who participated in GROW Project activities. The newsletter was posted on the GROW website and an

TABLE II

GROW Project 12 Month Development Plan
Month 1
☐ Meet with Foundation staff to create development plan
Month 2
☐ Begin work on solicitation materials
Month 3
☐ Continue work on solicitation materials
☐ Distribute newsletter to current partners, participants, and potential supporters
Month 4
☐ Send draft of solicitation materials to Foundation
☐ Identify prospective donors to receive letters and visits
Month 5
☐ Complete editing of solicitation materials
☐ Plan donor visits
Month 6
☐ Print solicitation materials
☐ Distribute newsletter to current partners, participants, and potential supporters
☐ Begin donor visits
Month 7
☐ Provide copies of solicitation materials to Foundation
☐ Meet with Foundation staff for advice and coordination to identify major prospect to endow workshop and project coordinator's position
☐ Complete donor visits
Month 8
☐ Follow up with corporate letters and visits – thank you letters
☐ Follow through with steps from Foundation meeting regarding endowment
☐ Follow up with donor visits– thank you letters
Month 9
☐ Identify new corporate and individual partners
Month 10
Distribute newsletter to current partners, participants, and potential partners
Develop personal solicitation letters
Month 11
☐ Send personal solicitation letters to GROW participants and others identified
Month 12
☐ Distribute newsletter to current partners, participants, and potential supporters
☐ Follow up with individual donors – thank you letters

email containing a link to the website was sent to university faculty members and staff, as well as to teachers at the local middle schools. The feedback we received from the individuals who read the newsletter was very positive:
current industry partners were able to use extra copies in the office to tell more people about the project; teachers were able to use the information to share success stories with principals; and parents loved seeing the "big picture" of the GROW Project and the involvement of their daughters in the activities.

Some newsletter articles also were used as content for the "door knocker". This will be given to potential new network partners as well as our current partners to introduce them to our new development plan. The creation of this piece was a true collaborative effort between the GROW Project and the K-State Foundation. The Foundation personnel provided expertise in selecting information that would attract potential donors and agreed to format and print the "door knocker" free of charge.

The last item created was a general program proposal that would be used to explain in detail the goals of the GROW Project. It also makes clear our need for planned giving from network partners. This explanatory piece was modeled on an example provided by the Foundation staff, who also edited it.

Once the materials are ready for distribution, we will send them to all of our current GROW partners and meet with some to discuss the planned giving program in more detail. The receipt of these materials soon after the newsletter will reinforce the visibility of the GROW Project. Individuals who are interested in seeing copies of these materials after the conference should contact Susan Arnold (see contact information in footnote on the first page of this paper.)

LESSONS LEARNED

- **Develop a good relationship with the staff at your institution's foundation.** This means *all* of the staff. We found some of our best advocates were those who answer the phone. They took a personal interest in assisting us with finding the people who would be best suited to help us with our needs, whether it was editing a direct mail piece or helping us get our solicitation materials printed. Also, by identifying an advocate in a director's position, you can be sure that someone who makes decisions and who has important contacts is well informed about the goals of your program.

- **Sharing information is vital.** Make sure you share information with foundation personnel about the individuals you plan to contact and provide copies of all information that you send to potential donors. This ensures that you are not competing with another project for the same donors. It also provides you the opportunity to keep the foundation personnel apprised of your efforts and to seek their suggestions for future directions.

- **Think outside the box.** Other individuals or organizations may be able to help identify other funding sources for specific projects. For example, we sponsored a team of girls to participate in a toy design competition. The mother of one of the girls assisted in obtaining supplemental funding from her employer.

- **Find partners whose goals match those of your program.** It is easier to enlist the support of a partner when the goals of that organization match or overlap with those of your project. For example, the Girl Scouts also have outreach activities directed to middle-school girls and have provided invaluable assistance to our project in the form of personnel, recruitment, financial support, and an awareness of the issues involved in supervising and interacting with girls of this age group. Identification of appropriate partners takes time, research and personal contact.

It is critically important to explain to potential new partners how your program can help meet their goals and needs, rather than initiating contact with a request for their support to help meet your goals and needs.

- **Maintain contact with partners.** Through the use of such devices as a listserv for project partners and periodic newsletters, it is possible to provide partners with timely and regular information about project events. We also were advised by our Foundation personnel to make sure we had sufficient funding to support regular distribution of our newsletter, since regular, rather than erratic, communication with one's partners and stakeholders presents the best image of a program. After analysis of the time and financial costs associated with creation and distribution of a newsletter, we chose to publish our newsletter on a quarterly basis.

The listserve and newsletter provide our partners with tangible evidence of their involvement in community and non-profit educational activities and lets them directly see a return on their investment.

CONCLUSIONS

All effective programs eventually face the same challenge: sustainability. Sooner or later, grant support is no longer available and the beneficial activities and results from these grants come to an end, if other support is not identified. The GROW Project has already demonstrated its potential to provide valuable educational opportunities for young girls and teachers in the state of Kansas. The NSF grant support has enabled us to initiate and expand a network that includes both individuals and organizations across Kansas who care about gender equity in SME education. This network will just be reaching a peak level of operation at the time when grant support is scheduled to end.

Our project is now taking the next necessary steps to

insure that project activities will continue, and the network will remain active. The K-State Foundation has lent their experience and expertise to guide us in our efforts to identify donors who may be able to endow various aspects of our project.

During the eighteen months that remain of NSF support for our project, we will continue to work with the Foundation to implement the plan we have developed to sustain the GROW Project. We expect that a combination of funding from individual donors and corporate entities, plus user fees, such as summer workshop registration, will enable us to continue existing programs.

The most important lessons we have learned through our work with the Foundation on the GROW development plan are to think big and think long-term, and to use initial funding as leverage with potential supporters. For example, we have moved from thinking about scholarship support for individual summer workshop attendees to endowment of the entire program and the project coordinator's position. And we have used the fact that our project was considered worthy of funding by the NSF as leverage with potential donors, to help them see that they will be supporting a program that has already been reviewed and approved. Finally, we are asking partners to join a *network* and support the concept of a range of activities that promote gender equity, rather than contribute to a more narrowly defined goal such as summer workshop scholarships. Our goal is to endow the GROW Project in such a manner that it can continue the organic growth, change, and development that have been hallmarks of its success to date.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

REFERENCES

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