

THE TRANSFORMATIVE GRANT GUIDE: LEADING INNOVATION IN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

by

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## ABSTRACT

This product dissertation draws on the literature and the author’s professional journey from knowing little-to-nothing about grants to helping secure \$10 million in grant awards advancing the strategic objectives of his home institution in central Illinois. To develop the Transformative Grant Guide, the author drew on research into why students chose and persisted at a higher education institution, how community college leaders can build diverse coalitions to drive innovation, how they can meet stakeholder needs, and how they can achieve the institution’s strategic objectives, as well as his professional experience facilitating grant proposals and managing major grant awards. The Guide outlines the Five Cs of the Transformative Grant Cycle (TGC)—Conceive, Connect, Create, Comply, and Continue—and identifies the critical components of each item that must be addressed in order to harness the opportunity presented by grants. Successful implementation of the TGC creates stakeholder coalitions invested in and committed to achieving shared outcomes (e.g., strong grant proposals, successful projects, distributed effort, and leveraged resources). The Guide identifies concerns and red flags related to each subcomponent of the Five Cs that proposals and project teams must overcome in order to secure funding and position for successful implementation.

The Guide outlines how to get from “no” on each subcomponent to a “yes,” where the potential concern is overcome, and the institution and project are in a strong position to receive funding and achieve results. The Guide utilizes a transformative leadership theoretical

framework to assist community college leaders and grant teams in the development of institutionally significant grant project proposals that are well positioned to be awarded funding and be successfully implemented. The Guide is a big-picture strategy, not a technical manual. The Guide is designed to help community college leaders advance innovation, promote institutional responsiveness to stakeholder needs, and achieve the strategic objectives of the institution.

**KEY WORDS:** Innovation, Transformative Leadership, Grants, Institutional Advancement

## DEDICATION

To my little robins and the love of my life.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

The Transformative Grant Guide (TGG) is a big-picture strategy designed to help community college leaders advance innovation and institutional responsiveness to stakeholder needs and achieve the strategic objectives of the institution. The Guide outlines the Five Cs of the Transformative Grant Cycle (TGC)—Conceive, Connect, Create, Comply, and Continue—through which community college leaders can harness the opportunity presented by grants to achieve the strategic objectives of the institution through the development of stakeholder coalitions invested in and committed to achieving shared outcomes. The Guide utilizes a transformative leadership theoretical framework to assist community college leaders and grant teams in the development of institutionally significant grant project proposals that are well positioned to secure funding awards and achieve desired outcomes.

### **ACHIEVING INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES THROUGH GRANT PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT AND PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION**

Grant awards offer an opportunity for the institution to secure external resources to achieve strategic priorities—identified in the institutional mission, vision, values; strategic objectives; and master planning documents—through engagement with internal and external stakeholders. The process of applying for a grant is a clarifying opportunity for the organization and its stakeholders to validate the logic model, test their commitment and resolve, and move

forward or determine there is more work to be done before the timing is right. The worst outcome is not for an organization to pursue but not receive a grant; it is much worse to receive a grant that the organization is not able to execute. Failing to achieve the outcomes of awarded grants undermines trust in the institution and compromises its ability to secure future awards. Future grant applications will ask for the results of previously awarded grants. Failure to meet outcomes of past awards undermines reviewer confidence in the organization's ability to implement future awards. Unsuccessful projects additionally diverted time, energy, and resources that could have been better invested in advancing the institutional mission.

Community colleges can use the strategic pursuit of state, federal, and private grants to lead organizational change and adaptation, ensuring the continued relevancy and alignment of the institution and its ability to meet the ever-changing needs of students, communities, and industry partners (Brumbach, 2005). Brumbach (2005) stated:

There are many benefits for community colleges that become involved in managing workforce development grants and contracts. First, these programs allow colleges to tap local, state, and federal government resources to provide training programs for new hires and incumbent workers. These funds support economic development, assist in employer retention and relocation, and help raise the quality of life in a college's service area. Government grants and contracts can also yield additional funding for other programs and college needs, because they often result in an increased number of students eligible for Pell grants, donations for scholarships, gifts of equipment, and an increased willingness among business leaders to serve on college advisory committees. These grants can also help initiate new programs, draw new students and their families to the college, and reap goodwill and approval for the college among local taxpayers. (pp. 51-52)

Additionally, the process of pursuing grants holds enormous opportunity to position for change, build needed coalitions, implement proven strategies, and achieve desired outcomes (Herbkersman & Hibbert-Jones, 2002, 2003a, 2003b). The grant development process equips the community college with the vision, plan, and resources to secure project implementation,

advance the institutional mission, and align to meet stakeholder needs (Herbkersman & Hibbert-Jones, 2002, 2003a, 2003b). Successfully funded and implemented projects deliver a return on investment that includes “increased enrollment, additional resources for training and student needs, and an enhanced role in the community” (Brumbach, 2005, p. 58).

Pursuing grant award funding is an effective avenue to implement ambitious projects that achieve the strategic objectives of the institution, because funding solicitations provide the necessary conditions to bring coalitions together to achieve change: defined parameters, a fixed timeline, superordinate goals, and accountability for achieving desired outcomes. The Guide is an exploration of the work needed to help the institution evolve in tandem with the changing demands of its stakeholders. It seeks to provide an understanding of the real work involved in moving the institution forward, building diverse coalitions committed to achieving desired outcomes with or without funding. It also seeks to provide an understanding of the threshold grant proposals need to satisfy in order to earn positive funding recommendations. The product is a look at the real purpose and work of the institution embodied by its strategic objectives. At its heart, the Transformative Grant Guide is not really about grant awards per se; it is about equipping community college leaders for the overarching work of leading innovation and responsiveness in the community college hand-in-hand with and for stakeholders.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: LEADING STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT WITH TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP**

It is the responsibility of community college leaders to build internal and external coalitions committed to organizational change and the achievement of strategic objectives. Beginning with Burns (1978), leadership theory in higher education was generally thought to

exist in one of two forms—transactional or transformational—with practitioners embodying one style or the other. Over time, it became clear that effective leaders consistently interweave the two approaches based on context throughout their leadership tenures to draw on the strengths and minimize the weaknesses of a singular approach (Bass, 1985; Birnbaum, 1992; Clark, 1992). Bornstein (2003) termed this approach to leadership *transformative leadership* to describe the reality of how successful college leaders combine both approaches to leverage the authority of their office, collaborate with diverse stakeholders, and build wide financial and moral support for change. Transformative leadership allows practitioners to demonstrate the qualities of successful leadership appropriate to the context, audience, and circumstance through the deployment of the transactional skills necessary to lead the strategic planning aspects of the organization, including quality management, finance, personnel, and logistical concerns, as well as through the transformational skills needed to lead the strategic-thinking aspects, including visioning and managing complex organizational change (Beinecke, 2009). Transformative leadership enables the leader to select or blend behaviors and strategies to respond effectively to any number of complex and challenging situations. Specifically, transformative leadership enables leaders to demonstrate the ability to communicate vision, passion, and determination, and the ability to build trust and relationships (Bolman & Deal, 2013; Bornstein, 2003). It develops the relationships through the everyday to build toward accomplishing the extraordinary.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Community college funding models differ from state to state with revenues derived from varying mixes of local property taxes, annual state legislative appropriations, student



tuition, and philanthropic sources (Mullin et al., 2015). Public financial support for community colleges has decreased as a share of revenue while tuition has increased, a trend that grew following the Great Recession (Mullin et al., 2015). To form a bulwark against financial instability, community colleges are now working to build sizable endowments in support of general operations and new initiatives (Wenrich & Reid, 2003).

Contemporary declines in student enrollment and annual state appropriations have forced community colleges, like other higher education institutions, to adopt proactive strategies to compete with one another for market share, secure and retain students, and diversify funding streams (Milliron et al., 2003). The community college's ability to survive rests on its continuing ability to meet the underlying real stakeholder needs and provide a sustainable competitive advantage or compelling reason stakeholders prefer it to competitors (Doyle, 1990; Levitt, 1960). Ensuring continual institutional alignment with stakeholder needs requires new initiatives and institutional change, which, in turn, often requires resources to provide incentives for employees to accept new roles, institute new training, and establish new systems and processes (Bornstein, 2003). Securing new resources to lead change is often a preferable option for institutional leaders to the politically fraught alternative of reallocating existing resources through the reduction or elimination of current programs (Bornstein, 2003). Although grant development may form a significant part of the institution's approach to solve the need for additional revenue streams to fund innovation, successfully pursuing and securing grant awards is no easy task, much less those grant awards that will help advance and achieve the strategic objectives of the institution. Brumbach (2005) warned, "Managing grants and contracts requires considerable resources and staff time. Therefore, colleges need to carefully

consider what will be required in planning the incorporation of grants and contracts into the mix of institutional fiscal support.” Therefore, the Transformative Grant Guide was developed to illuminate the conditions needed to lead grant development efforts to maximize engagement of internal and external stakeholders for the purpose of advancing the institution and its ability to align with and meet stakeholder needs.

### **WHY A TRANSFORMATIVE GRANT GUIDE?**

Community colleges exist to serve the academic, economic, and quality-of-life dimensions of the communities they serve. The better the community college can evolve to meet the diverse and changing needs of community stakeholders, the better the community college is advancing the mission and realizing the vision for the community it serves. The Transformative Grant Guide contained in this dissertation is designed to inform the work of leading adaptation, responsiveness, and innovation in the community college. The Guide provides one approach for community college leaders to lead change, adaptation, and innovation by serving as a convener bringing diverse perspectives together to identify, commit to, and achieve shared goals with leveraged resources and effort.

The purpose of the Transformative Grant Guide (TGG) is to assist community college leaders and grant teams in advancing the community college institutional mission by achieving institutional strategic objectives that will ensure institutional alignment and meet internal and external stakeholder needs. The Guide outlines the Transformative Grant Cycle (TGC), composed of five stages—the Five Cs: Conceive, Connect, Create, Comply, and Continue—through which leaders and grant teams may engage internal and external stakeholders to develop institutionally significant grant project proposals that are well-positioned to be

awarded funding and successfully implemented. In the absence of funding awards, the TGC positions projects with alternate avenues to implementation because of the powerful momentum and internal and external stakeholder investment generated through the project proposal development process. The theoretical framework of the Guide is based on transformative leadership theory and harnesses the process of developing grant project proposals as the vehicle for leading innovation to ensure institutional responsiveness to ever-evolving stakeholder needs, advancing the community college mission, and achieving shared strategic objectives.

The Transformative Grant Guide is a big-picture strategy, not a technical manual. The Guide seeks to help community college leaders use transformative leadership in the context of engaging stakeholders in the development of grant project proposals through five stages of the Transformative Grant Cycle, producing stakeholder investment, identification of leveraged resources, and shared effort. Through the five-step Transformative Grant Cycle, institutional leaders gain the insight to engage internal and external stakeholders, build relationships with funding organizations, and oversee the translation of strategic objectives into achieved outcomes through ambitious grant-funded projects.

## **GOALS OF THE TRANSFORMATIVE GRANT GUIDE**

The research questions that guided the research and development of the Transformative Grant Guide are:

1. How should institutions select grant project proposals that will achieve the institution's strategic objectives aligned to those of funding organizations?

2. How can institutions build internal and external stakeholder support to position projects for future success in order to secure a funding award and identify alternate avenues for project implementation in the absence of a funding award?
3. What elements compose strong grant proposals?
4. What elements ensure the successful implementation of funded projects?
5. How can institutions use the design and execution of strategic projects to position the institution for future projects and funding opportunities?

## **FOUNDATION OF THE TRANSFORMATIVE GRANT GUIDE**

The author drew on a review of the literature and experience as a community college scholar-practitioner leading innovation in the community college through the pursuit of funding solicitations. The TGG was informed by research and the author's own professional journey from knowing little-to-nothing about grants to helping secure \$10 million in two years, thereby advancing the strategic objectives of his home institution. By understanding the Five Cs of the Transformative Grant Cycle, community college leaders and grant proposal development teams harness the opportunity presented by grants to achieve the strategic objectives of the institution through creating stakeholder coalitions invested in and committed to achieving shared outcomes. The Guide is applicable to all community colleges and community college leaders in the state of Illinois as well as nationally.

## **USING THE GUIDE**

Community colleges exist to serve the academic, economic, and quality-of-life dimensions of the communities they serve. The better the community college can evolve to meet the diverse and changing needs of community stakeholders, the better the community college is advancing the mission and realizing the vision for the community it serves. The

Transformative Grant Guide was designed to inform the work of leading adaptation, responsiveness, and innovation in the community college. The Guide provides one approach for community college leaders to lead change, adaptation, and innovation by serving as a convener bringing diverse perspectives together to identify, commit to, and achieve shared goals with leveraged resources and effort.

## **AUDIENCE**

The Guide is not a basic introduction to or overview of the components of grant proposals or project management. Instead, the Guide is designed to help community college leaders ensure they are taking the right approach to leading internal and external stakeholder engagement to achieve the institution's strategic objectives. The Guide is designed for community college leaders across the Illinois Community College System and across the nation to lead innovation in their institutions through internal and external stakeholder engagement to secure external resources, advance the strategic objectives of their institutions, and meet community and stakeholder needs. Some community colleges have special project or grant offices, which are responsible for understanding and leading much of the work contained in the TGG. In such cases, the grant office staff will engage internal and external stakeholder to understand their needs and preferred approaches and will do much of the work behind the scenes to develop the competitive proposal and help manage a funded project. In such circumstances, faculty and staff members may not be required to develop a deep understanding of all of the factors affecting the development of a competitive proposal. In such institutions, the TGG may be most helpful for members of senior institutional leadership who want to be involved and help guide the pursuit of external funding opportunities to maximize

achievement of strategic objectives and benefit the institution and its stakeholders. Not understanding the factors at play and the potential contained in funding opportunities could possibly cede opportunities for institutional advancement to chance or secure longer, more challenging paths to their achievement.

Many community colleges do not have established grant writing, grant management, or special project offices and dedicated personnel. Often responsibilities for developing grant proposals and managing grant awards are distributed among staff across the institution. In such cases, the TGG can help develop a common philosophy and approach to determining how to select, pursue, and manage grant-funding opportunities and manage grant awards. The Guide will help those with a basic working knowledge and some experience developing grant proposals and managing grant-funded projects to expand their abilities to develop the strongest proposal with the highest levels of internal and external investment in and commitment to achieving the desired outcomes. The Guide explicitly frames what funding solicitations seek and do not seek to do, the elements of a competitive proposal, and how to engage others inside and out of the institution to build support for change.

## **DEFINITION OF TERMS**

Key terms used in this dissertation are defined as follows:

- *Transactional leadership* – the “exchange of valued things, economic or political or psychological, between leaders and followers without a call to a greater purpose” (Burns, 1978).
- *Transformational leadership* – “the engagement of people in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality” (Burns, 1978).

- *Transformative Grant Cycle* – a series of five successive phases (the Five Cs of grant development)—Conceive, Connect, Create, Comply, and Continue—through which leaders can engage internal and external stakeholders to leverage resources and effort to achieve institutional strategic objectives aligned to real stakeholder needs.
- *Transformative leadership* – the contextually appropriate display of the continuum of characteristics and behaviors from transactional to transformational that develops trust, builds relationships, communicates need, creates vision, inspires action, and heightens outcomes to the benefit of stakeholders, leaders, and the larger community (Bornstein, 2003; Nicholson, 2007).

## **CONCLUSION**

In the past, when enrollment in higher education was high and funding was plentiful, higher education institutions (HEIs) did not have to worry about differentiating themselves. There were enough students and funding to go around. Over the past 20 years, enrollment and public funding have declined, forcing community colleges to compete to attract students, secure funding, and develop coalitions of stakeholders to advance the mission of higher education. The fortunes of community colleges now rise and fall on their ability to satisfy the changing needs and aspirations of their diverse constituencies—students, communities, and industry alike.

It is the work of community college leaders to understand the need for their institutions to meet the ever-evolving demand of stakeholders and to learn and deploy the effective leadership approach to build the coalitions and strategy to deliver institutional alignment. Transformative leadership—the contextually appropriate use of characteristics and behaviors along the continuum from transactional to transformational to establish relationships, develop trust, recognize opportunities, and secure action—provides the most practical and effective leadership theory to guide and ground institutional responsiveness efforts. Transformative leadership enables community college leaders to enjoy the benefits while minimizing the faults

of a purely transactional or transformational approach. Transformative leadership is the prime theoretical framework to apply to the grant development process to lead innovation in the community college, secure organizational change, and ensure continual alignment to stakeholder demand.

The dissertation is organized in five chapters. Chapter One provides an overview of the context, problem, theoretical framework, purpose, and significance. Chapter Two provides a review of the literature related to the need for institutions to ensure alignment with stakeholder needs; an overview of the factors that constitute alignment with students in selecting and remaining at a higher education institution; an overview of transactional, transformational, and transformative leadership theory; and the application of transformative leadership to build coalitions of stakeholders willing to leverage resources and shared effort for change resulting in the achievement of strategic objectives and institutional alignment to stakeholder demand. Chapter Three describes the approach and rationale for the organization, layout, and design principles the author used to develop the Transformative Grant Guide and identifies the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of the Guide. Chapter Four presents the Transformative Grant Guide in its entirety. Chapter Five provides an additional discussion of the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of the Guide, conclusions, and recommendations for future research.



## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### **INTRODUCTION**

The following selected review of the literature details the factors relevant to utilizing a transformative leadership approach in leading the grant development process to advance and achieve institutional strategic objectives. The review begins with an overview of the need for institutions to align to stakeholder needs and demand, followed by an understanding of what prospective students look for in selecting a higher education institution (HEI), what factors students value in determining to remain at an institution, and how institutional leaders can use transformative leadership and the grant development process to achieve the institutional strategic objectives, thereby aligning the institution to meet stakeholder needs.

### **MAINTAINING INSTITUTIONAL ALIGNMENT**

Research on the importance of organization alignment with stakeholder need and demand has a long history. Early research from Levitt (1960) stressed that the organizations are in the business of satisfying the deepest needs of the customer, not producing products or providing services. Levitt stressed that organizations must continue to evolve to meet the ever-changing real needs of the customer. Levitt cautioned institutions too often define their mission too narrowly, thereby ensuring an eventual obsolescence. Doyle's research in 1990 identified four dimensions—quality, service, innovation, and differentiation—through which

organizations can provide a unique reason for customers to prefer their organization, products, or services to alternatives. Doyle found superior quality to be the strongest driver of customer satisfaction, with superior service being the quality most difficult for competitors to replicate.

## **ATTRACTING AND RETAINING STUDENTS**

Strategic planning in the community college is an undertaking in understanding the institution's ability to meet the needs of its stakeholders—which primary is meeting the needs of prospective and current students. In recent years, many researchers have examined the factors paramount to prospective and current students in selecting and deciding to remain at a higher education institution. Goldgehn (2004) and Moogan (2011) suggested that HEIs reach out early, ideally prior to high school, to form real relationships with potential students in order to have a significant impact on their perceptions of the institution. Goldgehn and Moore advised institutions to be real, raw, and relevant and to form relationships with potential students, ensuring that the institution sets expectations that will be met with the experience delivered. Goldgehn and Moore emphasized that prospective students trust those that are willing to be honest about their shortcomings over those that create a too-perfect image.

Moogan (2011), Pampaloni (2010), and Trullas et al. (2018) researched the factors that prospective students included when selecting an institution and found an institution's programs of study, campus location, cost, and visit to be of primary importance. Pampaloni and Trullas et al. found sense of belonging—often experienced during the campus visit—and perceptions of organizational support to be important factors. Research has also stressed that sincerity and credibility are two important elements in attracting prospective students.

Bennett and Ali-Choudhury (2009), Moogan (2011), and Trullas et al. (2018) found perspective students to value the institution's brand reputation, while Sung and Yang (2008) found that students value how others perceive the university four times more than they value their own perceptions. Elliott and Healy (2001) identified academic advising and safety and security, and both Elliott and Healy and Bennett and Ali-Choudhury found prospective students value the instructional environment. Bennett and Ali-Choudhury and Trullas et al. found student perception of future employability, also termed their career prospects upon graduation, to be a significant factor in their selection of an institution.

Elliott and Healy (2001) and Trullas et al. (2018) identified a number of common factors that attracted prospective students and produced satisfied current students, including student perceptions of belonging and support, institutional pride, perceptions of future employability, and instructional effectiveness. Elliott and Healy, however, noted a contrast between the emphases placed on key factors by prospective students versus those that are most responsible for producing satisfied current students. Finally, Watkins and Gonzenbach (2013), Rauschnabel et al. (2016), Rutter et al. (2017), and Trullas et al. researched the importance of institutional reputation and brand elements to impact student perceptions, including sense of institutional pride, love toward the institution, and inclination to promote the institution through word of mouth.

## **TRANSACTIONAL AND TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP**

Burns (1978) distinguished leadership from the exercise of power and articulated two major theories of leadership—transactional leadership and transforming leadership. Burns posited the exercise of power considers only the goals of those wielding the power and does

not consider the needs or desires of those being affected. Leadership, by contrast, is a more limited, positive, and mutual interaction between leaders and willing (to varying degrees) followers. Burns suggested transactional leadership was the more common, pragmatic variety of leadership that allowed leaders and followers to realize everyday goals. Transforming leadership, by contrast, was depicted in grand terms as the joining of leaders and followers to accomplish great feats beyond the latter's original intention or conception. Burns claimed transactional leadership was the currency of incremental change, whereas transforming leadership catalyzed great change. An individual's leadership behavior was expected to be consistent across time, circumstances, and institutions and identifiable as either distinctly transactional or distinctly transformational (Burns, 1978).

Bass (1985) proposed the term *transformational leadership* to replace what Burns (1978) termed *transforming leadership* and it has become the accepted term. Bass did not implicitly accept the notion that leaders were either transactional or transformational, noting that leadership could be a response to given circumstances. A leader might be apt to adopt a transactional style at one institution early in their career due to the particulars of that place and time and later employ transformational leadership at another institution. Bass additionally argued transformational leadership held more potential for great change compared to transactional leadership.

Birnbaum (1988) pushed back on the often-implied inferiority of transactional leadership, arguing that the day-to-day actions and decisions of skilled administrators are invaluable and underappreciated in serving and advancing institutional performance. Though short of positing a new leadership theory, Birnbaum (1992) later rejected the false choice

between the two leadership theories, asserting that good leaders synthesize both approaches to leadership.

Researchers began examining the contextual nature of leadership and attempted to identify which circumstances were conducive to transactional leadership versus transformative leadership. Clark (1992) contended that transactional leadership was desirable for established, successful institutions in order to preserve and strengthen, rather than jeopardize their performance. New institutions, institutions in crisis, and institutions in need of great change present an opening for new approaches and bold action that would be unwelcome in successful, established institutions (Clark, 1992). Since past leadership and institutional practice is either nonexistent or insufficient in this context to lead the institution forward, internal and external constituencies lend greater support for new and unconventional approaches (Clark, 1992). Fisher (1994) unequivocally contended that major change could be led only by transformational leaders. Fisher saw transactional presidencies as no more than collegial managers incapable of leading major institutional change.

### **TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP IN BUILDING STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIPS**

Bornstein (2003) proposed the concept of transformative leadership—the adoption of attitudes and behaviors along the continuum from transactional leadership to transformational leadership—to describe the reality of how successful college presidents combine both approaches to leverage the authority of their office, collaborate with diverse stakeholders, and build wide financial and moral support for change. Bornstein found transformative leadership avoids the false choice between transactional and transformative approaches to leadership by recognizing the wide range of options available to leaders. Bornstein acknowledged leaders feel

pressure to embrace the grandeur of transformational leadership while underappreciating the importance of transactional leadership. Transformative leadership addresses this dilemma by enabling leaders to avoid both the stereotypes and pitfalls associated with a single approach (Bornstein, 2003). Many great leaders are hesitant to embrace the transactional label for fear it implies weakness, incrementalism, and lack of vision, while institutions with strong cultures of collaboration may be hesitant to embrace the transformational label for fear of alienating stakeholder groups (Bornstein, 2003).

Nicholson (2007) analyzed the behaviors of four highly successful fundraising presidents and found their transformative leadership approach to be key to their successful leadership and fundraising efforts. Such behaviors included building rapport, trust, and confidence with partners through a series of transactional interactions, while eventually drawing on transformational behaviors and characteristics to create new, heightened opportunities for giving and engagement to the mutual benefit of partners and the institution (Nicholson, 2007).

Good leaders demonstrate the ability to communicate vision, passion, and determination and the ability to build trust and relationships (Bolman & Deal, 2013; Bornstein, 2003). Beinecke (2009) argued that transactional skills are necessary to lead the strategic planning aspects of the organization, including quality management, finance, personnel, and logistical concerns, while transformational skills are needed for the strategic-thinking aspects, including visioning and managing complex organizational change. Shields (2010) assessed the degree to which transformative leadership translated from theory to practice in serving as a guide for educational leaders interested in leading both educational and social change. Shields advanced a conception of transformative leadership drawn from questions of social justice,

democracy, and opportunity, demanding the leader act boldly and courageously to advance equality. Nicolaidis and McCallum (2013) proposed transformative learning and adaptive leadership—a diffuse and nuanced system by which leaders may interpret their circumstances, structure decision-making processes, and implement responses—to address increasingly complex and ambiguous circumstances.

Van Oord (2013) called for a transformative leadership in educational institutions that embraces action research and knowledge creation in the decision-making process and articulates a five-step process for meaningfully involving all key constituencies. Van Oord noted that for institutional change to be realized, those that are responsible for implementing any given change must develop internal commitment to the change by participating in the decision-making process, understanding the rationale for the change, knowing who made the decision, and having the opportunity to develop ownership of the change.

### **TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP, GRANT DEVELOPMENT, AND INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES**

Bornstein (2003) suggested that transformative leadership is the most effective approach to build credibility and trust through a series of transactional interactions that create the opening and possibility to achieve previously unimaginable projects, initiatives, and achievements. Carlsen (2003), McGee (2003), and Bornstein (2003) shared how fundraising campaigns provide presidents a unique leadership opportunity to strengthen, reinvigorate, and advance their institutions. Carlsen illustrated how the transformative president is able to develop long-term opportunities from the everyday interactions by connecting the institutional mission to student needs and engaging supporters of the college in meaningful activities.

Milliron et al. (2003) suggested community colleges entered a distinct era at the turn of the millennium, where institutional advancement or the ability to develop relationships to support core institutional functions in light of declining state support is a primary objective and indicator of future institutional success. Research by Herbkersman and Hibbert-Jones (2002, 2003a, 2003b) identified how a highly successful grant development process—which includes organizational commitment, effective organizational structures, strong internal and external stakeholder project leadership and engagement, and top performing personnel—can be a major driver in achieving institutional strategic objectives, while also delivering a strong financial return on investment for the institution. Brumbach (2005) similarly identified the institutional benefits from an effective grant development operation, including increased enrollment, external funding streams, and a heightened institutional role in the community.

Weill (2009) noted the critical role of the college president in proactively engaging a college's host community in order to advance interests and build collaborations that mutually benefit the campus and surrounding civic, cultural, and economic vitality of the region. Weill stressed the importance and efficacy the role the president serves in developing institution-community relationships and the importance those relationships play in attracting and retaining new students, faculty, and staff.

## **CONCLUSION**

A review of selected literature illustrates the need for community colleges to ensure continual alignment to the real needs of internal and external stakeholders, including students, industry partners, and employees. Research has identified specific factors emphasized by prospective and current students that attracted them to the institution and led to a satisfying



experience. Producing satisfied students is the most effective manner to secure future enrollment and retention. Current and former community college leaders attest to the strength and effectiveness of employing transformative leadership in building internal and external stakeholder support for change. Finally, utilizing the grant development process is an effective avenue to achieve institutional strategic objectives and secure institutional alignment to stakeholder needs.

## CHAPTER THREE: CONCEPTUAL DESIGN OF THE TRANSFORMATIVE GRANT GUIDE

### INTRODUCTION

A community college leader is anyone and everyone involved and invested in advancing the mission and achieving the strategic objectives of the institution. A community college leader is an engaged student, an engaged community or industry stakeholder, a faculty member, a staff member, a member of administration. Leadership comes from every level and corner of the institution and the grant guide is for every such leader who seeks to understand the factors at play, align interests, leverage resources, and achieve results. This does not have to be a president, a vice president, member of cabinet, or any other executive leader.

Awareness of the release of a funding solicitation can originate anywhere from anyone, but wherever it originates, that person must follow institutional processes, align with institutional objectives, and get the necessary institutional approvals. The Transformative Grant Guide is here to illuminate the process.

The TGG provides the reader with the strategy, the awareness of the landmarks indicating one is on track, and the caution signs likely indicating conditions and support have not yet been met for a fundable and successful project. With this strategy and awareness, the community college leader can navigate the hidden and visible features of the innovation landscape and help lead others on the journey.

## **BACKGROUND**

The author's academic career began in instructional design and later transitioned to institutional communications advancing community college marketing and foundation efforts. A few years later, as part of graduate research and reading, the author's awareness of community college issues grew with expanded awareness of critical issues in the community college, including the factors impacting new student recruitment, persistence, and completion. Over the following years, when the author accepted a position advancing new program development, pathways, and work-based learning at a mid-sized community college in central Illinois, the author enjoyed the opportunity to pursue a number of grants that aligned with the mission, vision, and strategic goals of the institution. In this role, the author worked with diverse, committed internal and external stakeholders to perform multiple times what he would come to identify as the Transformative Grant Cycle. Along the way, the author was fortunate to receive the kind help and insight from more experienced grant practitioners, in addition to working with professional grant consultants. During a two-year period, the author helped secure \$10 million to implement four funded grant projects; for three of the four, he served in the additional roles of project management and compliance.

The Transformative Grant Guide is the culmination of the author's professional foray into the exciting world of grant proposal development and grant project management. He soon learned the TGC could be a potent avenue to build support for change and secure resources, authorization, and accountability to achieve the institution's strategic objectives. When community college leaders use transformative leadership to help bring together committed individuals and organizations to achieve shared desired outcomes, there is almost no limit to

what can be achieved in service of students, industry partners, and the community—from implementing more accessible and efficacious models of career technical education, to building new programs, to funding the construction of new facilities, to building regional infrastructure that underlies economic development and quality of life.

During a small respite between securing the last wave of grants and beginning the cycle anew for multiple additional opportunities in the tens of millions of dollars, the author compiled the research he had drawn on to successfully ground grant proposals in proven effective, replicable, and scalable strategies and reflected on the grant development process to identify the Five Cs of the Transformative Grant Cycle; he also authored the *Transformative Grant Guide—Leading Innovation in the Community College*. It is the author’s hope that by producing and sharing this guide, he can help community college leaders to pursue and secure billions of dollars in resources to achieve institutional strategic objectives, meet community needs, and advance the community college mission over the coming years and decades.

The Transformative Grant Guide is grounded in transformative leadership theory, which, drawing from the literature and professional experience, the author believes to be critical to successful execution of the Transformative Grant Cycle. Transformative leadership is the combination of the attitudes and behaviors of transactional leadership as well as transformational leadership. It begins with the understanding and assumption that both individuals and organizations have to develop relationships and rapport in order to develop the trust and partnerships that are needed to accomplish the previously impossible. Transformative leadership allows practitioners to demonstrate the qualities of successful leadership appropriate to the context, audience, and circumstance through the deployment of the

transactional skills necessary to lead the strategic planning aspects of the organization, including quality management, finance, personnel, and logistical concerns, and through the transformational skills needed to lead the strategic-thinking aspects, including visioning and managing complex organizational change (Beinecke, 2009). The combination of both leadership approaches complements, builds on, and enhances each approach (Beinecke, 2009; Bornstein, 2003). A purely transactional leader might accomplish an initial goal but fail to develop relationships or envision future opportunities for greater collaboration. Conversely, a purely transformational president leader may be inclined to ask for support before fully developing a relationship with potential donors, which could possibly undermine both short- and long-term opportunities to secure collaboration and support.

## **GOALS OF THE TRANSFORMATIVE GRANT GUIDE**

The Transformative Grant Guide (TGG) seeks to illuminate the process of pursuing the development of grant project proposals through a transformative leadership approach. The Guide seeks to provide a practical framework and strategic manual for community college leaders to use a transformative leadership approach to engage stakeholders through five stages of the Transformative Grant Cycle: Conceive, Connect, Create, Comply, and Continue. The deployment of transformative leadership utilizes the process of developing grant project proposals and implementing funded projects as a vehicle for leading innovation to ensure institutional responsiveness to ever-evolving stakeholder needs, advancing the community college mission, and achieving strategic objectives. The goal of the TGC is to position the institution to be able to achieve its strategic objectives through securing grant funding or

through the identification of alternate means through mobilizing coalitions of internal and external stakeholders, leveraging resources, and maximizing shared effort.

The research questions that guide the research and development of the Transformative Grant Guide are:

1. How should institutions select grant project proposals that will achieve the institution's strategic objectives aligned to those of funding organizations?
2. How can institutions build internal and external stakeholder support to position projects for future success in order to secure a funding award and identify alternate avenues for project implementation in the absence of a funding award?
3. What elements compose strong grant proposals?
4. What elements ensure the successful implementation of funded projects?
5. How can institutions use the design and execution of strategic projects to position the institution for future projects and funding opportunities?

#### **PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING THE GUIDE**

In developing the TGG and the Five Cs approach, the author began by compiling the relevant literature on (a) the reasons students select and remain at a specific higher education institution (HEI), (b) the steps for building a successful HEI experience and brand, and (c) the role of transformative leadership in the context of stakeholder engagement to achieve shared strategic objectives. The author also reflected on his experience working with internal and external stakeholders in his professional role and documented the common steps involved in developing grant project proposals, from initial conception, through stakeholder engagement, application, award, and implementation, and then thinking forward to future cycles.

The author synthesized and distilled the overarching phases of the transformative grant development process to the following five steps or Five Cs of the Transformative Grant Cycle:

Conceive, Connect, Create, Comply, and Continue. To help a team apply this process effectively, the Guide includes a grant self-assessment tool, useful to evaluate the strength, readiness, and likelihood of the team's success in funding any grant proposal. The team should use this tool to reflect on each consideration under each of the Five Cs and mark whether the specific consideration is satisfied.

Following this assessment tool and process, the Guide outlines each element, walking the team through the components of a grant proposal that the funding reviewers want and need to see to be convinced of the strength and positioning of the proposal. Meeting these expectations will help the community college leader and grant development team to get that item from a "No" to a "Yes." The strongest grant proposals would expect to have every element a solid "Yes" prior to submission, though, in practice, teams and institutions might consider their proposal well positioned with any number of elements still at "No." Getting every element to "Yes" may not be possible, but regardless, it may still be in the institution's and stakeholder's interest to submit. Although outside of the scope of the Transformative Grant Guide, leaders may want to reference a standardized proposal development review process and the Go/No-Go framework in determining whether to pursue and/or submit for any given grant (Sinclair Community College, 2018a, 2018b).

When the Guide was between 70% and 90% complete, the author shared it with two retired individuals who had extensive professional experience leading grant offices at community colleges in the Midwestern United States and with one individual who had extensive grant-writing and management experience in the community college and private consulting experience, as well as service as a state and federal grant reviewer. Each individual

reviewed the draft stage of the TGG and provided feedback to the author based on their professional knowledge and philosophy. As a result of the provided feedback, the author included many additional critical elements, salient points, and tweaked tone. Following three rounds of revisions, the author provided the Guide to the members of the dissertation committee comprised of current and former community college presidents and vice presidents. The author incorporated their feedback, engaged the services of a professional editor, and finalized the content of the TGG.

## **CONCEPTUAL DESIGN OF THE GUIDE**

The conceptual design of the Guide presents a grant self-assessment that walks a community college leader or grants development team through the Five Cs of the Transformative Grant Cycle: Conceive, Connect, Create, Comply, and Continue. Together the Five Cs guide the journey from concept, to execution, to continuation, as follows:

1. *Conceive* – The first step in the grant guide is identifying and aligning target organizational goals, objectives, and outcomes with target goals, objectives, and outcomes of any given grant opportunity and identifying the proven models to adopt or scale to achieve the desired results.
2. *Connect* – The second step in the grant guide is identifying the individuals and organizations that are engaged, invested, and working or willing to work to achieve the same target outcomes sought by the applicant organization and the grant-funding organization.
3. *Create* – The third step in the grant guide is carrying out the work of crafting the proposal in a way that will communicate the problem, the need, the proven rationale behind the chosen approach, the necessary resources, including identification of key personnel, timeline, scope of work, baseline data, project deliverables, and outcomes.
4. *Comply* – The fourth step in the grant guide is implementing the work plan, expending the funds, and achieving the target milestones, outcomes, and deliverables on the timeline identified in the grant agreement.



5. *Continue* – The fifth and last step in the grant guide is starting to draw on the data and outcomes of the grant to identify the next steps to advance the work at hand through the next iteration of the cycle.

The Five Cs of leading innovation through grant development follow the 80/20 rule.

Driving innovation comes down to the ability to identify a compelling need, create coalitions willing to address the need using demonstrated effective strategies, pooling resources to achieve the target outcomes, doing the work, and collecting the evidence demonstrating project effectiveness. Eighty percent of the content that comprises the grant guide covers the first three steps of building a coalition and crafting the project proposal. Twenty percent of the content of the guide falls into the final two steps of project implementation and continuation. Over the scope of an awarded project, however, the proportions are reversed; most of the actual time and energy will go into the final two steps. The real work and time are in faithfully executing the project and achieving the deliverables.

## **DELIMITATIONS OF THE GUIDE**

The contents of the Guide include a grant self-assessment tool for community college leaders and grant teams to use funding solicitations as an opportunity to engage internal and external stakeholders to pursue desired shared outcomes through the development of strong grant proposals. The Guide will aid the leader and team in evaluating the strength, readiness, and likelihood of funding for any given grant proposal and the grant development process as a whole to build overarching support for achievement of the strategic objectives of the institution.

## **ASSUMPTIONS BEHIND THE GUIDE**

Community colleges exist to serve the academic, economic, and quality-of-life dimensions of the communities they serve. The better the community college can evolve to meet the diverse and changing needs of community stakeholders, the better the community college is advancing the mission and realizing the vision for the community it serves. Because grants provide an opening for the conditions needed to bring coalitions together and achieve change—defined parameters, a fixed timeline, superordinate goals, and accountability for achieving desired outcomes, they are a potent avenue to secure innovation and institutional responsiveness to stakeholder needs.

The Guide assumes community college leaders can gain insight into the complex and variable work of leading adaptation, responsiveness, and innovation in the community college through the understanding and application of a framework and standardized processes to guide the convening of coalitions in order to achieve strategic objectives through shared work and leveraged resources. Working across institutional divisions and across organizations to address complex and persistent issues is no easy task, but it is one that can be assisted with an accurate understanding of the scope of the work, major steps involved, needed thresholds of support, and an appropriate leadership paradigm. The Guide is designed to help community college leaders and grant proposal development teams lead the convening diverse coalitions to coordinate collective efforts and leverage resources to identify and achieve common, desired outcomes through the development of transformative grant project proposals. Through the Transformative Grant Cycle, teams build the internal and external investment to implement transformative projects and achieve strategic objectives, ideally through the securing of funding

awards, but also in the absence of such awards, through alternate pathways. Securing funding awards may accelerate the ability of institutions and partner organizations to begin and finish implementing the project.

## **LIMITATIONS OF THE GUIDE**

Much of the research is from a relatively limited number and diversity of sources, as well as the author's relatively limited professional experience. Additional sources may supplement the understanding conveyed in the Guide. The sources used to articulate transactional, transformation, and transformative leadership theories are drawn from North American contexts and institutions and may reflect a predominantly White, middle- and upper-middle-class socioeconomic perspective, which limits the generalizability of the recommendations and understanding proposed in the Guide. Additionally, the research on transformative leadership in fundraising was drawn from studies and testimonials considering successful fundraising presidents as defined and identified by the researchers. The diversity of presidents considered is limited and may not be reflective of a greater diversity of presidents' experiences. Community college leaders in other positions may or may not agree with the recommendations and perspectives of current and former community college presidents referenced in the literature review.

## **GUIDE STRUCTURE**

The Guide is subdivided into the following elements:

1. An overview of the Five Cs of the Transformative Grant Cycle—Conceive, Connect, Create, Comply, and Continue.

2. A grant self-assessment tool for community college leaders and grant teams to use to evaluate the strength, readiness, and likelihood of funding for any given grant proposal completed or in the process of development.
3. Detailed descriptions of the subcomponents of each of the Five Cs, including a description of potential dangers or concerns and the criteria that would have to be met to overcome the potential concern. Meeting these criteria on the grant project self-assessment is considered a “Yes.” A “Yes” is what the grant proposal reviewers need to see on each item to be convinced of the strength and likely future success of the project, or what grant officers expect to see in the successful implementation of an awarded project.
4. Detailed guidance of what it would take for a community college leader or grant team to get each subcomponent that is a “No” to a “Yes” prior to submitting a grant proposal, or to a “Yes” in successfully executing a funded project.
5. A case study that walks the reader through how to use the Transformative Grant Cycle to pursue and secure a \$7.5 million funding solicitation for a facilities construction or renovation project to develop a cutting-edge manufacturing training academy in central Illinois.
6. A conclusion, afterword, and references.

## **CONCLUSION**

The author drew on research into the reasons students chose a higher education institution and persisted at an institution, and how community college leaders can build diverse coalitions to advance strategic institutional goals. The author also used his professional experience in facilitating grant proposals and managing major grant awards to develop the Transformative Grant Guide. The Guide outlines the Five Cs of the Transformative Grant Cycle—Conceive, Connect, Create, Comply, and Continue—and identifies the critical components of each item transformative leaders and grant teams must consider and successfully address in order to develop strong grant proposals. The Guide identifies the hidden fear or concern funders have related to each item that the proposal must address or assuage to their satisfaction in order to receive serious funding consideration. The Guide directs leaders and the

team through the steps needed to move from a “No” on each item to a “Yes,” where the fear has been eased and the institution and project are in a strong position to receive a funding award.

## CHAPTER FOUR: *THE TRANSFORMATIVE GRANT GUIDE—LEADING INNOVATION IN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE*

### **AUTHOR MESSAGE**

Community colleges exist to serve their communities by offering academic opportunities, fueling economic growth through education, and enhancing quality of life. The better the community college can evolve to meet the diverse and evolving needs of community stakeholders, the better the community college is advancing its mission and realizing the vision for the communities it serves. The Transformative Grant Guide is designed to inform the work of leading adaptation, responsiveness, and innovation in the community college. The Guide provides one approach for community college leaders to lead change, adaptation, and innovation by serving as a convener bringing diverse perspectives together around the identification and commitment to achievement of shared goals with leveraged resources and effort. The explicit purpose of the Guide is to help community college leaders build and mobilize coalitions of internal and external stakeholders committed to seizing the opportunity presented by grant-funding solicitations to realize the shared strategic objectives of the institution, partner, and funding organizations.

In developing the Transformative Grant Guide (TGG) and the Transformative Grant Cycle (TGC), the author drew on a review of the literature and his professional experience as a community college scholar-practitioner leading innovation in the community college through

the pursuit of funding solicitations and management of awarded projects. The TGG grew out of the author's professional journey from knowing little-to-nothing about grants, to helping secure \$10 million in two years to advance the strategic objectives of his home institution. By understanding the Five Cs of the Transformative Grant Cycle, the TGG will help community college leaders and grant proposal development teams harness the opportunity presented by grants to achieve the strategic objectives of the institution, project partner organizations, and funding organizations through the creation of stakeholder coalitions invested in and committed to achieving shared outcomes. By coming together, the institution, partner organizations, and funding organizations realize transformative change that would otherwise have been unachievable. The Guide is applicable to community college leaders at any institution size, location, and focus.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of the Transformative Grant Guide is to assist community college leaders and grant teams in advancing the community college institutional mission through the achievement of institutional strategic objectives designed to ensure institutional alignment to meeting internal and external stakeholder needs. The Guide outlines the Transformative Grant Cycle, composed of five stages—Conceive, Connect, Create, Comply, and Continue (the Five Cs)—through which leaders and grant teams may engage internal and external stakeholders in order to develop institutionally significant grant project proposals that are well-positioned to be awarded funding and be successfully implemented. In the absence of funding awards, the TGC positions projects with alternate avenues to implementation because of the powerful momentum and internal and external stakeholder investment generated through the project

proposal development process. The theoretical framework of the Guide is based on transformative leadership theory and harnesses the process of developing grant project proposals as the vehicle for leading innovation to ensure institutional responsiveness to ever-evolving stakeholder needs, advancing the community college mission, and achieving shared strategic objectives.

The Transformative Grant Guide is a big-picture strategy, not a technical manual. It aims to help institutional leaders (1) gain a deeper understanding of what grant funders are looking for in deciding to provide funding, (2) gain insight into when grants are or are not a good fit, and (3) understand how to get the right pieces into place in order to secure funding. Even if you do not get the first grant you seek for your project, the Guide will equip you with the understanding, mindset, big picture, and leadership approach to go about advancing the mission-critical work of the institution, which will inevitably align with amazing future grant opportunities.

The main point is that securing the grant is not the primary point or the goal. The organization's stakeholders, mission, and strategic objectives are the point and the goal. The organization has to know what needs it meets, what demand it fulfills, and how it can form partnerships for mutual advancement. This is the core critical work of the institution and the organization's leaders and what is needed to prepare for the seeking of grant funds. Community college leaders and grant proposal development teams should proceed through the TGC with the purpose of achieving strategic objectives, not necessarily securing grant awards at all costs. Though the Guide outlines how to get to "Yes" for each of the subcomponents of the Five Cs of the TGC, it may not necessarily be in the interest of the institution and partner



organization to always get to “Yes” and submit the grant proposal. If there is a question as to whether to move forward in developing and/or submitting a proposal, consider consulting the Proposal Development Review Process and “Go/No-Go” frameworks (Sinclair Community College, 2018a, 2018b). The TGG encourages community college leaders to use the strategic objectives, mission, vision, and values of the organization and internal and external stakeholder needs as the guiding and driving force in pursuing grant funding. If the timing is not right for any given opportunity, you should continue the work and more and better funding opportunities may arise, or you may find alternate avenues to accomplishing the objectives without securing grant funding. As you lead the organization to meet stakeholder needs, you will secure gains and will be able to use those gains to respond to future grant solicitations with the proof of the effectiveness of your approach and the promise of replicating and scaling your results.

## **AUDIENCE**

The Guide is not a basic introduction to or overview of the components of grant proposals or project management. Instead, the Guide is designed to help community college leaders ensure they are taking the right approach to leading internal and external stakeholder engagement to achieve the institution’s strategic objectives. The Guide is designed for community college leaders—across the Illinois Community College System and nationally—to lead innovation in their institutions through internal and external stakeholder engagement to secure external resources, advance the strategic objectives of their institutions, and meet community and stakeholder needs. Some community colleges have special project or grant offices, which are responsible for understanding and leading much of the work contained in the TGG. In such cases, the grant office staff will engage internal and external stakeholder to

understand their needs and preferred approaches and will do much of the work behind the scenes to develop the competitive proposal and help manage a funded project. In this situation, faculty and staff members may not be required to develop a deep understanding of all of the factors affecting the development of a competitive proposal. The TGG would still be helpful, however, for members of senior institutional leadership who want to be involved and help guide the pursuit of external funding opportunities to the maximum achievement of strategic objectives and benefit to the institution and its stakeholders. Not understanding the factors at play and the potential contained in funding opportunities could possibly cede opportunities for institutional advancement to chance or secure longer, more challenging paths to their achievement.

Many community colleges do not have established grant writing, grant management, or special project offices and dedicated personnel. Often responsibilities for developing grant proposals and managing grant awards are distributed among staff across the institution. In such cases, the TGG can help develop a common philosophy and approach to determining how to select, pursue, and manage grant-funding opportunities and manage grant awards. The Guide will help those with a basic working knowledge and some experience developing grant proposals and managing grant-funded projects to up their game to develop the strongest proposal with the highest levels of internal and external investment in and commitment to achieving the desired outcomes. The Guide explicitly frames what funding solicitations seek and do not seek to do, the elements of a competitive proposal, and how to engage others inside and out of the institution to build support for change.

Regardless of whether the institution has a special projects office or utilizes ad-hoc teams to review funding solicitations, develop proposals, and manage awards, senior institutional leadership must be aware of the strategic priorities of the institution, communicate their support for the institution to achieve the strategic priorities, and engage at the outset and at an appropriate interval through the Transformative Grant Cycle. Ideally, there are strong relationships among institutional leaders, faculty members, and project staff with common understanding of the institutional strategic priorities and mutual sense of who needs to be engaged at the varying levels of detail and minutia. Over time, senior leadership will be able to engage at the outset of the proposal development process to confirm strategic alignment and institutional commitment, as needed to secure stakeholder support and final confirmation prior to submission. Senior leadership faces many demands on their time and it often would not be a prudent use of their time to be engaged in working out the minutia, detail, and logistics that go into developing the project application. Leaders will want to develop strong working relationships and entrust much of the proposal logistics and detail to project staff, while being available to engage at critical junctures to ensure the development of the strongest proposal possible.

Depending on the nature of a funding opportunity and other internal commitments, institutions experienced in pursuing grant funding as well as those new to the pursuit of grant funding may want to consider securing the aid of consulting firms in proposal writing, project management, and/or evaluation services. Certainly, in situations where institutions do not have a grants office, it may be wise to contract with outside assistance. The Transformative Grant Guide will help leaders to successfully lead stakeholders through the Transformative Grant

Cycle without the assistance of outside support and expertise. Oftentimes, however, there is so much work and energy that goes into the process that outside assistance is warranted and needed and will demonstrate a compelling return on investment.

An additional outside resource is worth mentioning in building capacity and efficacy in pursuing grant funding. Many community colleges and nonprofit organizations have found Compression Planning® training from the McNellis Compression Planning Institute to be a particularly effective method of engaging stakeholders, helping leaders make good decisions quickly, and identifying actionable, assignable next steps and communication plans (McNellis, 2013). Any individual or institution serious about building grant-development capacity may want to invest in Compression Planning® training.

The Transformative Grant Guide uses the pronoun “you” to describe the steps needed to accomplish the work at hand. You may refer to any entity that makes sense in the specific situation, whether you as an individual community college leader committed to advancing the institution, the grant team, or the work of the institution as a whole.

## **GOALS OF THE TRANSFORMATIVE GRANT GUIDE**

The questions that guide the Transformative Grant Guide are:

1. How should institutions select grant project proposals that will achieve the institution’s strategic objectives aligned to those of funding organizations?
2. How can institutions build internal and external stakeholder support to position projects for future success in order to secure a funding award and identify alternate avenues for project implementation in the absence of a funding award?
3. What elements compose strong grant proposals?
4. What elements ensure the successful implementation of funded projects?

5. How can institutions use the design and execution of strategic projects to position the institution for future projects and funding opportunities?

## **TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP**

Transformative leadership allows practitioners to demonstrate the qualities of successful leadership appropriate to the context, audience, and circumstance through the deployment of the transactional skills necessary to lead the strategic-planning aspects of the organization, including quality management, finance, personnel, and logistical concerns, as well as through the transformational skills needed to lead the strategic-thinking aspects, including visioning and managing complex organizational change (Beinecke, 2009). The combination of both leadership approaches complements, builds on, and enhances each approach (Beinecke, 2009; Bornstein, 2003). A purely transactional leader might accomplish an initial goal but fail to develop relationships or envision future opportunities for greater collaboration. Conversely, a purely transformational president leader may be inclined to ask for support before fully developing a relationship with potential donors, which will potentially undermine both short- and long-term opportunities to secure collaboration and support. This takes us to the terrain of the mission-critical work of the institution and the area ripe to advance through grant-funding opportunities. This is the high-effort, high-impact area of the effort-and-impact matrix (Freeman, 2021). These are the major initiatives and projects that will move the needle on outcomes; these are the areas where change does not just happen. If it did, the work would already be done. This is the area that takes vision, strategy, coalition building, shared effort, and shared resources.

The Transformative Grant Guide is grounded in transformative leadership theory. Transformative leadership is the combination of the attitudes and behaviors of transactional

leadership as well as transformational leadership. It begins with the understanding and assumption that both individuals and organizations have to develop relationships and rapport in order to develop the trust and partnerships that are needed to accomplish the previously impossible. It believes you have to start somewhere, and that somewhere is often small—likely terrain of small, hard tasks that take a long time and will seemingly have negligible payoff. In the effort-impact matrix in Figure 1, this is labeled the terrain of high effort and low impact thankless tasks. These are the kind of tasks that few want to take on because they underutilize their skills, are disproportionately challenging and time-consuming, and lack glory. I would suggest, however, the competition here is minimal and there is no more fertile ground on which to build credibility, rapport, and good will. By investing the time and energy to get the job done right without much of a payoff in sight, you signal that if you are willing to do the little things right, the stakeholder partner can likely expect you to similarly invest magnitudes more to do the big things right.

**Figure 1. Effort-Impact Matrix**



*(Adapted from Freeman, 2021)*

## USE OF TERMS

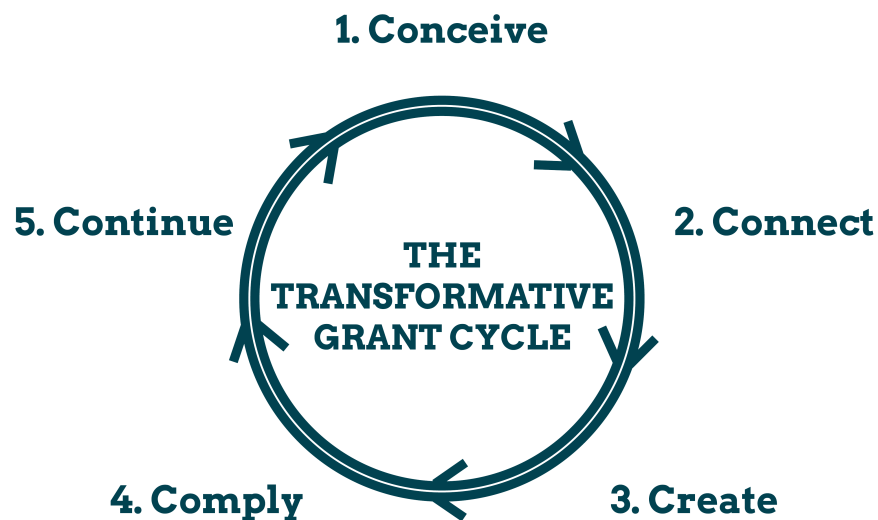
The Guide uses the following terms interchangeably:

- Grant solicitation; funding opportunity; solicitation (similar synonymous terms not used here include Funding Opportunity Announcement [FOA]; Notice of Funding Opportunity [NOFO]; Request for Proposal [RFP])
- Application; funding application; grant application; grant proposal; project application; project proposal; proposal
- Funding award; grant award
- Grant manager; project manager
- Grant officer; program officer

## GETTING TO YES – THE FIVE CS OF THE TRANSFORMATIVE GRANT CYCLE

The Transformative Grant Cycle, comprised of the five stages—Conceive, Connect, Create, Comply, and Continue—is depicted in Figure 2. The five stages are collectively referred to as the Five Cs. The first three stages typically occur prior to and during the development of a project proposal. The grant team, however, will want to think through steps 4 and 5 in developing the project application prior to submission so that, if awarded, the project can be fully implemented while positioning the institution for future funding awards.

**Figure 2. The Transformative Grant Cycle and the Five Cs of Transformative Development**



**Conceive** – The first step in the Transformative Grant Cycle is identifying and aligning the institution’s strategic priorities, objectives, and outcomes with the goals, objectives, and outcomes identified in the grant solicitation and then identifying proven models to adopt or scale to achieve the mutually desired results of the institution and funding organization. At the outset of considering pursuing a grant, it is helpful to share the work. No one individual needs to undertake this work alone. The work of implementing the grant will be easier if more



individuals are involved and invested in developing the proposal from the beginning. If your institution has a formalized process for pursuing grants, someone who manages that process will form a grant application working group to consider a grant solicitation and develop the proposal. That individual will lead the working group or designate someone to lead the group. If the college does not have a formal process, the transformative leader or someone they designate may form and lead the working group. At a minimum, it might contain representatives from stakeholder groups served by the project, those responsible for executing the project, and someone able to coordinate the proposal with other efforts across campus. A strong proposal process needs an inclusive and representative team to build investment in the project and ultimately work to its realization. The grant team will want to check in with faculty, institutional research, the business office, marketing, facilities, information technology, other relevant departments, and key members of college leadership to ensure the project is supported by these key areas and is integrated into any necessary processes.

**Connect** – The second step in the grant guide is identifying the individuals and organizations that are engaged, invested, and working or willing to work to achieve shared objectives among the community college, partner organization, and funding organization. The institution needs to build on the work of existing coalitions or form new coalitions able to carry out the proposed activities to effect the desired change. By the time the organization submits the grant proposal, everyone's role in and contributions to the future project should be defined and outlined in signed letters of commitment or a memorandum of understanding, which, if allowed, should be included in the submitted application packet. Ideally, the clear roles and

shared commitment will leave little doubt in the funding reviewers' minds that a coalition is mobilized to achieve the target outcomes—even perhaps in the absence of a funding award.

**Create** – The third step in the grant guide is carrying out the work of crafting the proposal in a way that will communicate the problem, the need, the proven rationale behind the chosen approach, the necessary resources including identification of key personnel, the timeline, the scope of work, baseline data, project deliverables, and outcomes. The proposed outcomes and deliverables should position the institution with the data needed to prove the efficacy and impact of the model and should prepare the institution to write not only this proposal but the next project proposal. This step may include the inclusion of a logic model, which is basically a chart that shows how the resources, personnel, activities, and resources will lead to the desired outcomes and deliverables in the desired timeframe. The project summary should communicate a compelling case for support that includes the future significance and impact the project will have at the conclusion of the performance period, once it is proven model-worthy of scaling and replication.

**Comply** – The fourth step in the grant guide is implementing the work plan, expending the funds, and achieving the target milestones, outcomes, and deliverables on the timeline identified in the grant agreement. During this step, compliance includes the sponsor's grant implementation rules, regulations, and guidelines, as well as all applicable federal, state, and institutional rules, regulations, policies, and guidelines. Additionally, this step consists of collecting data needed for reporting, timely submission of project and financial progress reports, and participation in performance monitoring. Should conditions change in the execution of the grant that force a modification in implementation of the grant in either the

scope of work or expenditure of funds, the project manager should communicate with the granting institution grant officer to request and secure approvals to changes in scope of work and budget modifications.

**Continue** – The fifth and last step in the grant guide is to start drawing on the data and outcomes of the grant to identify the next steps to advance the work at hand through the subsequent iteration of the cycle.

## **TRANSFORMATIVE GRANT PROJECT PROPOSAL SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL**

Y N

### **1. Conceive**

- 1.1 Do the grant activities and desired outcomes directly align to the strategic objectives of the institution?
- 1.2 Are aligned institutional priorities identified in updated master planning documents of the college project partners (e.g., Strategic Plans; Facilities Master Plans; Information Technology Master Plans; Human Resource; Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Plans; etc.)?
- 1.3 Is the project impactful (locally, regionally, nationally, globally) and can project impact be demonstrated?
- 1.4 Is the institution resolved to move in this direction whether or not the grant is funded?

### **2. Connect**

- 2.1 Will the proposed project meet and be responsive to student and community stakeholder needs (preferably with stakeholder investment and leadership)?
- 2.2 Is the proposed project built on proven effective strategies?
- 2.3 Does the proposed project build on existing institutional and stakeholder expertise and efforts?
- 2.4 Is there sufficient stakeholder support to realize the project activities and outcomes, whether or not the grant is funded?

\_\_ \_\_ 2.5 Are stakeholders specifically identified, involved, and committed through attached resumes, CVs, signed memorandums of understanding, letters of commitment, etc.?

### **3. Create**

\_\_ \_\_ 3.1 Does the institution have the personnel (or is committed to hiring the needed personnel) and financial resources to carry out the project successfully beyond what the grant will fund, in terms of both matching funds, if required, and other costs that are not paid for by the grant?

\_\_ \_\_ 3.2 Are project activities aligned to and capable of delivering project outcomes? (Do you have evidence that the project activities will do what you say they're going to do? Attach logic model, as applicable.)

3.3 Do you have defined and reasonable yet ambitious:

\_\_ \_\_ Purpose, goals, and outcomes

\_\_ \_\_ Project activities

\_\_ \_\_ Project leaders

\_\_ \_\_ Timelines

\_\_ \_\_ Logic model

\_\_ \_\_ Budget

\_\_ \_\_ Sustainability plan (Will project partners have the capacity to sustain the program after the grant-funding period?)

\_\_ \_\_ Evaluation plan

\_\_ \_\_ 3.4 Are there other viable avenues to make it happen should the proposal not be funded?

\_\_ \_\_ 3.5 Are you prepared to meet all solicitation stipulations?

#### 4. Comply

4.1 Are you implementing the plan; achieving the outcomes; collecting the data with regard to project activities, timelines, goals, and outcomes; and disseminating the outcomes?

\_\_ \_\_ Project leaders

\_\_ \_\_ Project activities

\_\_ \_\_ Goals

\_\_ \_\_ Outcomes

\_\_ \_\_ Logic model

\_\_ \_\_ Budget

\_\_ \_\_ Timelines

\_\_ \_\_ Evaluation plan

\_\_ \_\_ 4.2 Are you meeting all grant award stipulations as well as maintaining compliance with all sponsor, federal, state, and institutional requirements?

\_\_ \_\_ 4.3 Do you carry out continuous improvement and mitigation strategies as indicated?

#### 5. Continue

\_\_ \_\_ 5.1 Do you have institutional commitment and resources to sustain the project activities following the performance period? (Saying that you will seek additional grant funding is not enough.)

\_\_ \_\_ 5.2 Is this a pivotal stepping stone that, if successful, will allow the institution to grow and expand in previously unreachable directions? (Consider how the project outcomes may provide the evidence and rationale for a future project building on this one.)

### STEP 1: CONCEIVE – ASSESSING AND BUILDING READINESS

**1.1 Do the grant activities and desired outcomes directly align to the college’s mission and institutional priorities?**

**Potential Red Flags:** You are chasing dollars rather than being guided by the work that is core to the institution and stakeholders. If you are chasing dollars, there is a much higher risk your organization will not have the capacity and commitment to faithfully execute the project and an equally great risk the organization will not sustain the project following the end of grant funding. There are few disappointments bigger than for the funding organization to have made a difference in the short term, only to have all of those gains wiped away at the end of the grant—leaving them and the community benefiting from the grant with no long-term impact.

**Checking Yes:** Grant reviewers and funding organizations want to know that the project is core to the applicant organizational mission and that the organization and organizational leaders have the capacity and are determined to devote the necessary energy and resources to implementing the project and securing the target outcomes. If the organization’s mission and strategic objectives are publicized and well known, check them for fit against the grant. Share the grant solicitation with a few trusted internal stakeholders who are familiar with the work the grant award would seek to advance and see if there is consensus on alignment.

**Getting to Yes:** It is difficult to get to “yes” within an open grant application period. As a general rule, either there is an alignment between the grant opportunity and the organizational mission or there isn’t. The flexibility you do have on this element is considering alternative projects that would still fit the grant solicitation. Sometimes there may be multiple active grant solicitations you could pursue. If one avenue or project is not a strong fit, consider other possibilities. If you and the grant team cannot come up with a mission-advancing project aligned to the grant opportunity, this might be an early indication it isn’t a good fit and the institution should pass.

An exception to pursuing development of an application despite poor mission-opportunity alignment would be to engage internal and external stakeholders in a practice exercise of getting a grant-level detail proposal together. In this case, the institution can position itself to be ready for future opportunities or to potentially move forward with the project once readiness is achieved without a grant award.

Sometimes there is alignment between the grant and where the institution wants to go, but the area is so new there is not yet enough evidence to demonstrate the alignment. In this situation, you use what evidence you have and hope for the best, recognizing in all likelihood you will be building alignment for future application cycles. Getting documentation of alignment in place takes time, and, in this case, the organization should begin planning and committing resources to be in a better position next time. This situation is explored in further detail in the next element. In federal funding, many grant solicitations with a specific outcome reoccur on a regular cycle, for example, every year or every other year. If you are not quite ready this year, then you can keep working on the proposal to make it stronger for next year. In this situation, the institution can often make significant gains toward project implementation without grant funding, thereby setting the groundwork for a very competitive application in the subsequent solicitation cycle.

Sometimes there is general alignment, but the timing or specifics might be off enough to where the institution still cannot commit for any number of reasons, including staff capacity, availability of matching funds, etc. Getting to “yes” with these elements will also be further explored in later elements of the Guide. If you cannot get to “yes,” consult “Go/No Go” frameworks to identify when to stop the process for a particular grant solicitation, although the

institution will likely not stop the work of achieving strategic objectives unless or until they no longer reflect the needs and priorities of the stakeholders and communities the institution serves (Sinclair Community College, 2018b).

**1.2 Are aligned institutional priorities identified in updated master planning documents (e.g., Strategic Plans; Facilities Master Plans; Information Technology Master Plans; Human Resource; Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Plans; etc.)?**

**Potential Red Flags:** You do not have the institutional support from key leaders and decision makers to follow through in delivering project outcomes and to sustain and continue the work the project advanced following the end of the performance period.

**Checking Yes:** Check “yes” if you can pull excerpts and paraphrase from your institution’s current guiding and planning documents to demonstrate a direct alignment between the activities and outcomes sought in the notice of funding description and the future direction and priorities of your institution.

**Getting to Yes:** If the grant either does not align with the articulated mission and strategic direction of your institution, or it does but the planning documents are out of date or do not capture the alignment, your project will be at a significant disadvantage in convincing the reviewers your organization would be a worthy recipient. If there is not a strong alignment, the grant is a bad fit from the outset. If there is alignment, but no official evidence of this approved by college leadership and the board, the college must first update these important documents and plans. Otherwise, the institution signals it does not have its house in order and is not ready to receive funds and move forward on projects. If some of the planning updates are in process, pull from progress reports, meeting minutes, and draft guides to show the work is being carried out and the alignment is there. Sometimes letters of commitment or



memorandums of understanding can help to bolster this weakness, especially as it relates to community partners.

### **1.3 Is the project impactful (locally, regionally, nationally, globally) and can project impact be demonstrated?**

**Potential Red Flags:** The problem the project seeks to address and the goals the project seeks to achieve do not really matter compared to the magnitude of impact other projects might realize with similar resources. Solicitations sometimes refer to this specific element as broader impact. The funding organization wants to use its resources to leverage resources that make a big difference. They do not want to solve one problem in one place in time. They want to tout your project and its results to show what a difference you and they made, especially in terms of the project's potential to provide compelling evidence further and which can be replicated to other contexts and scaled to create wider benefit.

**Checking Yes:** If your project was fully implemented and achieved all of its goals, how big of a difference will it make in the trajectory of your organization, community, and the lives of the project participants? Check "yes" if it has the potential to make a lasting, highly significant, or life-changing positive impact. It is a good sign if you cannot imagine a future where your project was not implemented because of the loss it would be to the organization and target population.

**Getting to Yes:** Evaluate the data and engage the organization's stakeholders to identify problems or shortcomings of great importance, where the institution and/or society can and should be doing better to meet the needs of stakeholders. In the community college world, critical areas for increasing impact include supporting access, persistence, completion, career advancement, diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging.

Various data streams can be helpful in identifying areas where the organization is not meeting the needs and expectations of students. Comparing the institution's performance to that of top peer institutions might also illuminate opportunities for improvement. Possible data sources to consider include Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE), Higher Education Insight Survey (HEIS), Community Perception Surveys, NGBS (Needs, Goals, Barriers, Solutions), and/or SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats). The institution or grant team might consider engaging a subset of relevant stakeholders—potentially including current or prospective students, former students, alumni, faculty, staff, industry partners, and/or community members—to help identify the most pressing needs and potential avenues to meet the needs. Although making a strong case for the local and regional needs is most important, you may be able to separate your project proposal from the rest of the pack by showing broader impact or the potential for your project to replicate or scale to help address a statewide or national concern.

#### **1.4 Is the institution resolved to move in this direction whether or not the grant is funded?**

***Potential Red Flags:*** If the institution and stakeholders are not resolved to implement the project without the grant resources, the project likely lacks the level of stakeholder investment to implement the project with the grant resources. Likely, the project is not core enough to the needs and next steps of the stakeholders. There may be a lack of consensus and internal division on the path ahead, increasing the likelihood the project would not be enthusiastically pursued and achieved should it be awarded.

**Checking Yes:** The institution and its leadership are committed and determined to implement the project and achieve the results one way or another.

**Getting to Yes:** The easiest way to get to “yes” is in choosing the project theme and scope. Choose a project that is core to the institutional mission and is already identified in the organization’s strategic objectives. In the community college world, this may often center on advancing access; persistence; completion; diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging; and industry alignment. Projects that are peripheral to the organization are a poor fit for grants, often consume more time and resources from the organization than benefits they return, and should be avoided. Finally, pursuing grants is a lot of work both for the organization and for stakeholders. You will get a lot further if you can tell everyone from the beginning: We are doing this project one way or another regardless of whether or not we get the grant. In this case, everyone is relieved from the outset that their work is not for naught. This fact often supercharges creativity and commitment. Individuals and outside partners may commit more to the project in order to help secure the leveraged funds that will come from the grant. Everyone begins to see how much more helpful having the grant will be than trying to accomplish the same results without the added infusion of the grant resources. As the project proposal comes together, momentum, investment, and commitment build, so that no one can imagine abandoning the effort should a grant award not materialize. In any case, everyone is on the lookout for alternate ways to achieve the project aims—grant or no grant.

## **STEP 2: CONNECT – BUILDING STAKEHOLDER SUPPORT AND LEVERAGING RESOURCES**

### **2.1 Will the proposed project meet and be responsive to student and community stakeholder needs (preferably with stakeholder investment and leadership)?**

**Potential Red Flags:** The project is conceived by outsiders and will be imposed upon the target population. Awarding agencies are also wary of proposals removed from the diversity of stakeholders needed to enact the proposal. It is a red flag if all of the stakeholders that would have to come together to enact the proposal were not involved in the design of the proposal. Grant reviewers want to be confident that the path forward has been identified through an inclusive process, is agreed upon, and there is broad investment in carrying out the project. If this threshold has not been met, there is the potential that the work of enacting the project will fall on too small a group of individuals to successfully carry it out, or that the stakeholders involved may chafe at the project and work against its success. A lack of involvement and leadership from the groups carrying out the project and who stand to benefit from the project signals insufficient stakeholder involvement or potential stakeholder hostility to the project.

**Checking Yes:** Check “yes” if these stakeholder groups have been consulted in the development of the project and there is consensus on the path forward. In the community college world, current and potential students are frequently the target population. Often the goal is increasing enrollment, supporting retention and persistence, increasing certificate or degree completion, facilitating student transfer to a four-year institution or employment, etc. Potential stakeholders include student groups, community organizations, K-12 partner institutions, industry partners, government agencies, economic development organizations, and the college president.

**Getting to Yes:** The strongest, most compelling grant proposals seek to address stakeholder needs in partnership with the stakeholder groups themselves. Map out all of the stakeholders who will be called on to implement the project and all of the stakeholders that will

be impacted by the implementation of the project. Engage stakeholders in identifying the problems to be addressed, strategies to be employed, resources required, and goals and timeframes needed. If key groups are absent from the planning and implementation, circle back and reach out to include them. Avoid solving a problem removed from those who are tasked with carrying out the project and those who will be “served” by the project. This process of engagement ensures stakeholders are invested in the project and are committed to achieving the desired outcomes. You can be sure you are successful in this regard when everyone else is excited about the project and advocating for its implementation.

## **2.2 Is the proposed project built on proven effective strategies?**

***Potential Red Flags:*** The proposed project budget and activities will not produce the desired goals of the grant. Many grantors want results, and although willing to assume some risk, they want to ensure there is a strong likelihood a funded project will result in the desired outcomes. Rather than awarding funds in the hopes of finding something that will work, grantors will want to see you convey beyond a reasonable doubt that you can secure the desired outcome, in the desired timeframe, using the proposed strategies, at the proposed cost—not significantly more, not significantly less. In order to demonstrate likely success, you will want to show how elements of your proposal have been previously successful in similar circumstances. Generally, you will reference earlier projects at your institution that have been successful, or you may want to connect with other colleges that have developed best practices and resources relevant to your project (e.g., the National Science Foundation Advanced Technological Education Centers). Even solicitations funding innovation will want to see how

your project is advancing proven effective approaches and avoiding mistakes and lessons learned from previously funded work.

**Checking Yes:** The surest way to convince the reviewers of your ability to deliver everything as you outline is to show them how some component of the project has proven to be effective at your institution or elsewhere. Grant reviewers have an obligation to award funds to proposals that are most likely to demonstrate a strong return on investment. It is a misperception that grant funds are allocated to test effectiveness. To the contrary, grant reviewers want strong evidence that the strategies employed through the grant activities are likely to lead to the desired outcomes of the grant solicitation. In order to build this high degree of confidence in the grant reviewer, projects can employ one of two core strategies: replicate or scale.

A project that is based on the strategy of replication takes a program that has proved effective in one context and seeks to deploy the same strategy and approach in another context. The proposal will detail how and why the program worked in the original context and will outline the rationale and evidence as to how and why one could reasonably believe the same approach could be successfully duplicated and adapted to another context.

A proposal based on the strategy of scaling provides evidence that a project has proved effective in a specific context at a given scope and provides evidence as to how and why the same project could be effective with additional resources and activities to serve a larger population. Again, even in innovative proposals, check “yes” if you identify known, effective strategies and show how the project builds on, adapts, improves, or grows the strategy to arrive at the innovation.

**Getting to Yes:** Find proven effective strategies that can plausibly be replicated or scaled at your institution. Identifying the proven effective strategy is the bread and butter of the Connect step. Perhaps the right proven strategy is already in place at your institution in another division or department or used for another purpose. Reach out and ask around. The great thing about identifying a proven effective strategy at your institution is that grant reviewers can view it as quite plausible that something effective at one part of the institution could be replicated or scaled to another part of the institution. You will be able to design your project to take into account the lessons learned and insight gained from colleagues already leading similar work. Furthermore, your project will have foreseen and avoided the majority of probable challenges and will be able to draw on resident expertise to confront and overcome unexpected challenges. If you are not able to identify the right model or proven effective strategy internally, reach out to others leading this work nationally or internationally, or review the literature. By networking with others already leading this or similar work, you will learn what to do and what not to do and find yourself in a much better position for having reached out. Save yourself a lot of trouble by learning now if your approach is not the best way forward. Instead, adopt strategies that have proven effective and identify how you plausibly believe you can replicate them effectively to your institution.

**2.3 Does the proposed project build on existing institutional capacity and stakeholder expertise? (Attach resumes/CVs of lead staff)**

**Potential Red Flags:** The institution does not or will not have the institutional capacity to carry out the project. It may lack the necessary staff with the right skills and expertise to be able to gain and sustain momentum to execute the project and secure the project outcomes by the end of the grant period. Reviewers may question proposals in which the institution will

need to hire new staff or consultants in order to carry out the project, because the entire success of the whole grant award could hinge on whether or not the institution was able to fill the positions. What happens if the institution cannot fill the position(s)? The grant award is unsuccessful, the project cannot proceed, the goals will not be met, and the funds will get returned!!! Reviewers will not accept such a risk if there are any viable alternative projects from which to choose. A lack of relevant staff could potentially raise a red flag that the institution is not already invested in and advancing the work of the grant, is chasing funds, or is ill-prepared to accomplish the desired outcomes. In order to avoid raising this concern, take care to justify the need to hire new personnel to launch and carry out new programs, both in the project and budget narratives. Show relevant relationships to other institutional efforts and personnel and show the project as the next step forward. If there are no such institutional efforts and results to cite, the reviewers will ask why not, and they may again be skeptical that you are now able to suddenly accomplish work that heretofore you have not completed.

**Checking Yes:** Identify you have the right staff with the right capacity to devote to the project or have good job descriptions for new hires. Collect resumes and CVs that show the required and desired backgrounds, knowledge, and skills to advance the work of the project. Write up similar work the team has led and the results they've achieved, and describe how they are the right team to achieve the results of this project.

**Getting to Yes:** Most grants are for a specific period of time, ranging from months to a handful of years. Grant reviewers want to be sure the project deliverables and outcomes will be achieved by the end of the performance period of the grant. If the institution does not already have the necessary personnel and expertise on staff to convincingly signal the institution will



implement the project and secure the outcomes, consider additional options to increase capacity with the use of the awarded grant funding—through the hiring of new staff, use of consultants, or making subawards so that other entities can carry out portions of the program. A good plan is convincing. Reviewers understand that new programs require additional capacity. When the path forward requires hiring new personnel, provide as much evidence as possible to show the institution is prepared to advertise and secure the new hire in a rapid and timely fashion. Attach position descriptions and include a clear and specific description of the necessary steps to advertise, vet, hire, and train the new position. Include the date key staff will be trained and ready to begin as fully productive members on the project. You may also want to identify the industry networks you will use to advertise and secure individuals with the desired background and experience.

**2.4 Is there sufficient stakeholder support to realize the project activities and outcomes, whether or not the grant is funded?**

***Potential Red Flags:*** The institution and project stakeholders are only marginally committed to realizing the project and achieving the target outcomes.

***Checking Yes:*** Similar to 3.4, identify alternative pathways to project implementation, perhaps with greater resources allocated by the institution, project stakeholders, or private fundraising efforts, should the grant not be awarded.

***Getting to Yes:*** Work with stakeholders to identify how to move to begin implementation of the project without the grant and be well-positioned in future applications to show institutional alignment and capacity. Work to identify a strong enough path forward where the project could conceivably be implemented one way or another absent a grant award—albeit perhaps at a smaller scale or over a longer timeframe than if awarded funding.

Having multiple paths forward for the institution and its stakeholders imbues a confidence and security the grant reviewers will sense through the content and tone of the funding application and letters of commitment. The reviewers will be more likely to provide a positive funding recommendation due to the strength of your proposal and confidence in your ability to move in the needed directions to successfully achieve your project outcomes.

Work with college leaders and stakeholders from the beginning of the project—with the understanding that the institution is committed to the project regardless of the funding outcome—to identify various avenues to project implementation should grant funding not be secured. Perhaps the avenue forward outside of the grant may be slightly smaller in scope, but it should still achieve key outcomes. Those outcomes could later be used as a proof of concept and evidence of institutional and stakeholder commitment to replicate or scale the approach and secure future grant or private funding.

**2.5 Are stakeholders specifically identified, involved, and committed through attached resumes, CVs, signed memorandums of understanding, letters of commitment, etc.?**

***Potential Red Flags:*** The project will not ultimately have the right project partners to implement the project and achieve the desired outcomes.

***Checking Yes:*** The strongest, most compelling grant proposals seek to address stakeholder needs in partnership with the stakeholder groups themselves. Map out all of the stakeholders who will be called on to implement the project and all of the stakeholders that will be impacted by its implementation. Check “yes” if stakeholder groups have been meaningfully engaged in the development of the project and have reached consensus on the path forward. Students, faculty, staff, administration, student groups, community organizations, K-12 partner institutions, industry partners, government agencies, economic development organizations,

and the college president could all be relevant stakeholders for any given project. Through discussions with project partners, you may find it makes sense for them to also be project implementers through MOU (memorandums of understanding) agreements or subawards. For example, wraparound services can be provided by social service agencies. In such instances, partners will not only contribute to the project, but also may directly benefit from the grant award by being able to hire staff for the project period, increase their organizational impact, gain recognition, etc.

**Getting to Yes:** Engage internal and external stakeholders to identify common goals and potential collaborations. Capture partnerships and enumerate partner contributions to the project in letters of commitment and memorandums of understanding. Prioritize this element early in the proposal development timeline in order to allow enough time (weeks, if not months) for letters of commitment to receive multiple levels of approval—potentially including legal counsel and governing boards, and to be signed and returned by partner organizations.

### **STEP 3: CREATE – CRAFTING THE PROPOSAL**

**3.1 Does the institution have the personnel (or is committed to hiring the needed personnel) and financial resources to carry out the project successfully beyond what the grant will fund, in terms of both matching funds, if required, and other costs that are not paid for by the grant?**

**Potential Red Flags:** Many grant awards will not pay the entirety of costs associated with the overall scope of the project and activities needed to achieve the level of outcomes the funding agencies desire in order for them to make a grant award. Funding agencies are often expecting applicants to commit leveraged personnel and resources to a project. The applicant must communicate the organization is willing and able to devote the necessary personnel (if

existing) or secure the needed personnel (if not currently on staff), along with the needed financial resources to successfully carry out the project. The reviewers will be cautious if it appears the institution does not have sufficient personnel and other financial resources to successfully implement the project and achieve the proposed outcomes.

**Checking Yes:** After checking with internal stakeholders from institutional research, the business office, and impacted departments, there is general consensus that departments and key individuals have capacity to take on the project. Personnel cannot have their time on grants exceed 100%. Ensure that the project can be taken on without personnel time exceeding 100% among all grants. Work closely with top leadership, including the college president and CFO, to ensure there is complete support for the project and that the necessary resources from the institution will be available to make certain the institution complies with any and all requirements to achieve the grant outcomes.

**Getting to Yes:** Getting to “yes” on this element may be possible or it might not be. Sometimes capacity is at its limit and opportunities have to be passed by to follow through on existing commitments. Potential avenues to get to “yes” include internal collaboration to identify how more can be taken on with existing resources, or how additional capacity can be built. Sometimes the grant itself is the avenue to build additional capacity through temporary grant-funded positions. Conversations with college leadership and external stakeholders can identify institutional resources that can be committed to the project. If the grant solicitation does not allow for a large enough percentage of the budget to be used for the personnel costs required and the college does not have adequate personnel available to carry out the grant,

you need to identify sources of leveraged funds from local economic development organizations, community organizations, or employers, or pass on the opportunity altogether.

**3.2 Are project activities aligned to and capable of delivering project outcomes? (Do you have evidence that the project activities will do what you say they're going to do? Attach logic model).**

**Potential Red Flags:** The activities and resources you outlined in the project will not actually produce the results you claim they will produce.

**Checking Yes:** Your project is based on high-impact practices identified in the research, or as outcomes from previously funded and completed grant awards. There is a logical and reasonable relationship among the personnel, activities, resources, goals, and outcomes identified in the project.

**Getting to Yes:** Draw on the high-impact practices you identified during the Connect phase—from effective existing efforts on campus, the literature, or publicly available grant outcomes from other institutions—to inform your logic model. Seek feedback from stakeholders as well as experts in the field. Draft your logic model early so you have time seek feedback and make adjustments.

**3.3 Do you have defined and reasonable yet ambitious:**

**Purpose, Goals, and Outcomes**

**Potential Red Flags:** The proposed project is not coherent and cohesive. It will not meet the desired objectives of the funding organization.

**Checking Yes:** The project communicates a clear, compelling, and memorable purpose to address an institutional or stakeholder need. The proposed solution or approach is based on

a strong rationale supported by evidence. Goals and outcomes are identified and aligned with those of the funding solicitation.

**Getting to Yes:** Revisit steps 1.3 and 2.2 to engage internal and external stakeholders in developing and revising the purpose, goals, and outcomes until they meet the above criteria.

### **Project Activities**

See item 3.2.

### **Project Leaders**

**Potential Red Flags:** You do not have individuals with the relevant knowledge, skills, and experience assigned to the project, you do not have sufficient personnel assigned to the project to implement the scope of work, or you will not be able to secure the needed personnel to successfully implement the project.

**Checking Yes:** You have the right people assigned to the project, if at all possible, no key roles are TBD, and if resumes/CVs are allowed, you have updated versions to attach to the grant application.

**Getting to Yes:** Work internally to identify the individuals with the relevant knowledge, skills, and experience. Secure key personnel for innovative areas with institutional funds ahead of seeking grant funding. Pursue public-private partnerships with industry partners to leverage industry expertise on grant applications to show the institution has access to the needed technical expertise to pull off cutting-edge projects.

## Timelines

**Potential Red Flags:** The timeline set forth in the project work plan is either too conservative, leaving the proposal wanting of ambition, or unrealistic, causing the reviewers to question whether the project could possibly be executed as outlined.

**Checking Yes:** Consult with internal and external stakeholders as well as contractors to develop accurate timeframes to implement the major project elements. You must strike the balance of an ambitious yet realistic and achievable work plan. Note of caution: One element to be aware of is that many grant solicitations state the performance period of the grant, but this period may exist more on paper and in reporting than in the reality of implementing the project. The performance period is the timeframe in which the costs incurred by the organization implementing the grant can be charged to the grant and will be reimbursed by the granting entity. Many times you may find that the awarding agency takes longer than stated in the solicitation to review applications, request supplemental information, and negotiate the award terms. In practice, once you receive the official grant award, you may be weeks or months into the performance period. Oftentimes if you expend funds ahead of receiving the grant award, you risk having those costs not reimbursed by the grant. If you do not begin project implementation in accordance with your project timeline, you may be officially starting your grant weeks or months behind schedule. This is just a word of caution; there is nothing you can do to change this reality.

**Getting to Yes:** In order to ensure your project can start on time and proceed in accordance with the timeline, while understanding that grant awards take time and often come after the official start of the performance period, it is advantageous to develop projects that

the institution is committed to advancing, with or without the grant. With institutional commitment, you do not lose the momentum from project development to project implementation. You can keep your coalition together and motivated. You may also want to frontload leveraged funds from the institution or project partners to cover early critical expenses in the project. This will enable the project to begin on time and proceed on schedule in instances when official grant awards either do not materialize or arrive well into the performance period.

### **Logic Model**

See item 3.2.

### **Budget**

***Potential Red Flags:*** The budget does not align with the scope of work, is not sufficiently detailed, or is not allocable, allowable, and/or a prudent use of resources.

***Checking Yes:*** Your budget is clear, specific, allocable, allowable, and a prudent use of resources to advance the project outcomes. Ideally, the project will seek to achieve results that are proportional or outsized in comparison to those expected, based on the amount of resources sought. Most grants do not allow the grant award to supplant or replace funding of an existing program already in place. Supplanting is a prohibited use of federal grant funds and should be avoided. Check the funding solicitation for required matching or leveraged funds along with the allowability of cash or in-kind matches. Identify matching and leveraged funds in the project narrative and budget.

***Getting to Yes:*** Ensure proposed budgeting is allocable, allowable, and prudent. It must directly support the project scope of work and be sufficiently detailed.



## **Sustainability Plan**

**Potential Red Flags:** The reviewers need to be convinced there is a plan to solidify the gains made under the grant, institutionalize the processes, and continue to secure the outcomes of the grant. If it appears to reviewers that there is not a sustainability plan that will prevent the gains achieved through the grant award from being lost at the end of the performance period, the reviewers will wonder why the project is worthy of being funded. The reviewers want to see that the gains achieved through the project will endure far beyond the performance period. Demonstrating sustainability can be done through letters of commitment, which can expand the commitment beyond the grant period. It is better yet, however, to identify ways in which the commitment will be operationalized into department roles and budget or become a part of an ongoing program. This is often easiest for projects that establish a new program or develop new curriculum. Throughout the project, communicate that you will ensure continued engagement with stakeholders and program participants to support sustainability.

**Checking Yes:** You have the institutional commitment and resources to sustain and build on the project activities following the performance period. Check “yes” if you have a clear, defined, and reasonable sustainability plan that maximizes increases to future revenue streams as a result of a successful project. Perhaps the project increases revenue through improving new student recruitment or student persistence, thereby offsetting future costs to sustain the project activities. Saying that you will pursue additional funding opportunities is not a sufficient sustainability plan.

**Getting to Yes:** Early conversations with college leadership, those directly involved in the project implementation, and external stakeholders must include plans for sustaining the project following the conclusion of the performance period. Generally, institutions use the performance period to plan for integration of project costs into the institution's operational budget. Show that you are using the funds from the grant to change existing systems and build new systems that will produce new, desired results. Institutions cannot commit to sustaining an indefinite number of new programs and positions, so you must show how the gains from the grant project are central to the success of the organization and how the organization will be able to extend the gains achieved through the grant.

#### **Evaluation Plan**

**Potential Red Flags:** You won't have the evidence to know whether or not the project is successful and to prove that the project met its intended outcomes.

**Checking Yes:** You have baseline data on key performance indicators and have a plan and ability to collect data throughout the duration of the performance period to show progress and achievement of target outcomes. You can demonstrate a continuous improvement process that includes mitigation strategies and capacity to adapt, refine, or replace approaches that are not effective.

**Getting to Yes:** Work with grant team staff, other departments, and/or external consultants to identify key performance indicators and mechanisms to collect the data. Set a regular interval to review and act on the data. Plan to report progress in quarterly financial and performance reports.

#### **3.4 Are there other viable avenues to make it happen should the proposal not be funded?**

**Potential Red Flags:** The institution and project stakeholders are only marginally committed to realizing the project and achieving the target outcomes.

**Checking Yes:** Identify alternative pathways to project implementation, perhaps with greater resources allocated by the institution, project stakeholders, or private fundraising efforts, should the grant not be awarded.

**Getting to Yes:** Work with college leaders and stakeholders from the beginning of the project with the understanding that the institution is committed to the project regardless of the funding outcome. Together, identify various avenues to project implementation should grant funding not be secured. Perhaps the avenue forward outside of the grant could be slightly smaller in scope, but it should still achieve key outcomes. Those outcomes could later be used as a proof of concept and evidence of institutional and stakeholder commitment to replicate or scale the approach and secure future grant or private funding. Sometimes funders may ask if the organization could implement some aspects or activities of the project with reduced grant funding. In these cases, you will want to show you have cohesive subcomponents of your project that could still be implemented and impactful if full funding is not awarded.

### **3.5 Are you prepared to meet all solicitation stipulations?**

**Potential Red Flags:** Different granting agencies may have different review, awarding, and compliance requirements. It is important to know what is required to be awarded funds and to maintain compliance through the lifecycle of your grant award. In order for your institution to receive certain grant awards, the institution must have required policies and procedures adopted. Work closely with your grant office and bring in experienced consultants as needed. With certain federal awards, if your organization is a new awardee, the institution

may be subject to a financial review and/or cost analyst review that it must pass prior to being approved to receive an award. Oftentimes potential new awardees do not have the breadth of policies and procedures in place to pass this review and are therefore deemed ineligible to receive an award. For example, the financial review required by the National Science Foundation (NSF) outlined in the Prospective New Awardee Guide ensures a potential awardee has the administrative and financial capabilities to manage a federal award. The NSF requires the potential awardee to submit certain forms and documentation in order for the NSF to review the proposal's budget and the organization's financial operations to ensure the organization has the policies and procedures in place to meet the requirements of the NSF Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide (PAPPG), Research Terms and Conditions, and the federal requirements contained in 2 CFR 200 - Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirement for Federal Awards (Uniform Guidance). The NSF will not process awards to institutions that lack required institutional policies and procedures. Additionally, written policies and procedures provide defense in an audit and signal the organization is making a good faith effort to comply with the requirements of an award.

**Checking Yes:** Work closely with program staff, the business office, and colleagues from other organizations who have managed similar grant awards in the past to understand and identify whether your organization is compliant with the requirements of the grant solicitation. If you have received similar awards in the past, you may seek feedback from your grant officer and use the results of performance monitoring visits and audits as evidence of compliance.

**Getting to Yes:** Organizations new to pursuing and managing grant awards may initially need to connect with individuals from other institutions that have previously managed such

awards in order to guide the new institution through the process. This area may present information that is challenging to understand, as the requirements and implications of the guidance are not always clear from a direct reading of the materials. Organizations new to managing federal awards may find it beneficial to hire an experienced consulting firm to review their administrative and financial capabilities, make recommendations based on findings, and perhaps even provide the awardee financial management services. Carefully review and understand the parameters set forth in the solicitation. Some grants will pay capital expenses and equipment; others will not. Some will pay personnel; others will not. A proposal that violates the conditions in the solicitation risks a low score and could be passed over for funding. If the proposal does not follow the conditions of the funding solicitation, the funding agency will have little confidence you can adequately manage an award. If you lack the expertise to understand the various considerations presented in the solicitation, consider contracting with a consulting firm to guide the development of the proposal and perhaps assist in project implementation, evaluation, and reporting.

### **Tips and Tricks**

When crafting your proposal, develop an elevator pitch for your proposal that succinctly captures the purpose, rationale, and outcomes. Develop a one-page project summary before you reach out to partners and stakeholders. The one-page summary is also helpful to include when requesting letters of commitment and for familiarizing the project team with uniform talking points when speaking to project partners and funding organizations. Ensure the project summary is clear, compelling, and memorable from the start. You want the partners, reviewers, and everyone else to be convinced there is a problem to be solved, excited you are on the case,

and eager to learn more and to help. Most of all, you do not want confusion or skepticism about whether you have the right approach or are the right institution for the job. Workshop your proposal and solicit feedback from a variety of stakeholders until your proposal meets the following:

*Clear purpose* – The project solves a problem and addresses a need.

*Memorable* – The reviewer can easily tell someone else about your project.

*Rationale* – Your proposed approach is proven, and you are well positioned to carry it out.

*Logical design* – Activities and resources will logically lead to desired results.

*Case for support* – Reviewers want to be a part of the project and share credit for results.

*Impact* – The project will make a significant difference in the target population/community and has potential to be scaled or replicated.

*Timely and relevant* – Addresses contemporary and important issues and challenges.

*Resources* – The project will achieve appropriate results using institutional and leveraged resources.

*Innovative* – The project results are cutting-edge and lead a trend for others to follow.

#### **STEP 4: COMPLY – Implement the Plan, Achieve the Outcomes, and Collect the Data**

##### **4.1 Are you implementing the plan, achieving the outcomes, and collecting the data with regard to project activities, timelines, goals, and disseminating the outcomes?**

***Potential Red Flags:*** If you don't make progress, achieve key milestones, or implement the work plan, the project will fall behind and may not catch up by the end of the performance period.

**Checking Yes:** Regularly review the project work plan to stay on track in performing the activities, expending the funds, collecting data to verify progress, and demonstrating achievement of outcomes. Check “yes” as long as everything is on track.

**Getting to Yes:** Hold a weekly or biweekly meeting with key project staff to coordinate on project implementation. Facilitate swift action if circumstances change and the project is not able to proceed as planned. Communicate regularly with your assigned program officer at your funding organization. You will want this relationship to be a good one! Reach out to this contact with any questions to receive needed clarity, sooner than later. This individual will receive and approve your quarterly or annual progress reports and is invested in seeing your project succeed. Regular contact with the program officer allows them to be aware of your implementation progress, to connect you with press and media opportunities related to your project, and to review and approve modification requests to the project budget or scope of work. Engage institutional leadership or project partners if assistance is needed to overcome key obstacles to implementing project activities and securing project outcomes.

### **Project Leaders**

**Potential Red Flags:** If you do not secure or are not able to replace key personnel that you have lost, the whole project and its outcomes may not be achieved.

**Checking Yes:** Check “yes” as long as key personnel are assigned to and working on the project; demonstrate the college can fill open positions in a timely matter.

**Getting to Yes:** If positions do not fill as expected, consider alternate personnel that can be assigned to the project to implement key activities while positions are being filled. Do not allow the project to stagnate.

## Logic Model

**Potential Red Flags:** The activities and resources are not producing the desired outcomes.

**Checking Yes:** You are continuously collecting and reviewing data to show progress toward the desired outcomes and are engaging in continuous improvement to implement appropriate changes in strategy to keep the project on track and achieve the target outcomes.

**Getting to Yes:** Depending on circumstances within or beyond your control, you may need to request modifications to the budget or scope of work to achieve target outcomes. Identify clear and compelling rationales for the requested changes.

## Budget

**Potential Red Flags:** You will spend funds in a manner that is not compliant with the stipulations of the grant solicitation, end the performance period with significant amounts of unspent funds, or expend all funds before the objectives of the proposal have been achieved. Budget expenditures should be allocable, allowable, and prudent. Many granting agencies expend funds on strict budget cycles and cannot easily accept returned unused funds and may not have an ability to re-award unused funds. Either you were awarded funds you did not really need, or you are not following through on your implementation plan for whatever reason—within or beyond your control—justified or not. Regardless, it will seem, the funds could and should have gone elsewhere to impact outcomes. Not spending the funds impacts the granting agency's performance outcomes and will count against your future ability to secure grant funding with this organization and others. After all, the greatest indicator of future performance is past performance.



**Checking Yes:** You can continue to check “yes” if your budget is being drawn down consistent with grant-to-date expected expenditures in line with grant outcomes.

**Getting to Yes:** Ensure there is clear leadership and responsibility for grant implementation and leadership support for achieving the grant outcomes. Keep a calendar or chart of key activities, expenditures, and milestones. Seek timely support to overcome obstacles hindering implementation of key activities. Ensure expenditures are allowable under the terms of the grant award, appropriate documentation of expenditures is kept, and accounting is accurate. If funds will not be utilized as budgeted, identify alternatives for how the funds could be used to advance the project and work with your program officer on any budget or scope-of-work modifications to stay on track in using the awarded funds.

### **Evaluation Plan**

**Potential Red Flags:** You don’t have the evidence to know whether or not the project is successful and to prove the project met its intended outcomes.

**Checking Yes:** You have baseline data on key performance indicators and have data through the duration of the performance period to show progress and achievement of target outcomes.

**Getting to Yes:** Work with grant team staff, other departments, and/or external consultants to identify key performance indicators and mechanisms to collect the data. Set a regular interval to review and act on the data. Report progress in quarterly financial and performance reports.

#### **4.2 Are you meeting all grant award stipulations as well as maintaining compliance with all sponsor, federal, state, and institutional requirements?**

**Potential Red Flags:** You do not adhere to the conditions of the grant award, jeopardizing whether the grant will reimburse expenses or find the organization in noncompliance and halt the award.

**Checking Yes:** Work closely with program staff and the finance office to comply with the terms of the grant award, in addition to all federal, state, and institutional requirements. All federal and state pass-through grants using federal funding must comply with 2 CFR 200 - Uniform Guidance for Federal Awards. Institutions must demonstrate they have adequate internal controls in place in order to receive and comply with federal rules. These internal controls are often termed UG policies. Check “yes” if you have the appropriate policies and are in compliance with the policies. Many grant awards are subject to performance monitoring where the granting agency will audit the programmatic and financial elements of your grant. The monitoring visit will end with a compliance report and any findings or recommendations. Monitoring visits are an opportunity to get official feedback on whether you are in compliance with the terms of your award.

**Getting to Yes:** Carefully review and understand the terms and expectations of the grant award, especially with regard to allowable expenditures. Some grants will pay capital expenses and equipment; others will not. Some will pay personnel; others will not. Unallowable expenses will not be reimbursed by the grant and will have to be absorbed by the institution. Work with your finance office and any needed external consultants to ensure the institution understands the terms of an award and stays in compliance.

The grant award will detail progress and final reporting requirements. Reporting is a critical dimension of maintaining compliance with your grant award. Keep track of due dates for periodic performance and financial reports. Ensure timely submission of all reporting documents. If you or the institution does not have internal expertise or capacity to ensure compliance with the grant award, consider contracting with a consulting firm to perform grant management and/or reporting.

### **Tips and Tricks**

Despite the best planning, preparation, and stakeholder engagement, sooner or later grant implementation will not proceed exactly as planned. Internal and external conditions will change. Personnel may come and go, and decisions outside of your control may impact the project. The good news is that both the agency and the project managers want your project to be a success by spending the allocated funds and delivering the target outcomes. Keep in touch with the grant officer at the awarding agency regarding the progress in project implementation or the lack thereof. This is a relationship you want to nurture. It is much better to be upfront about challenges and setbacks than to pretend everything is on track when it is not. Be honest and detailed on periodic performance reports and ask for help if you need it. Get help from the appropriate internal institutional leadership, your grant manager at the awarding agency, or external consultants. Fortunately, you can usually adapt your approach to respond to unforeseen circumstances within your existing budget and scope of work, or, if needed, seek approval for budget and scope-of-work modifications. In fact, many funders welcome modifications as long as you have a clear rationale for the change. Adapting your approach shows that you are paying attention to what is really needed to secure project success. Program

officers can use your learning experience to help inform them in evaluating other proposals they review and projects they oversee in the future.

#### **4.3 Do you carry out continuous improvement and mitigation strategies as indicated?**

**Potential Red Flags:** The original project application likely identified continuous improvement strategies to be practiced throughout the performance period. If the project staff are not practicing the identified strategies, the project is not being carried out as described and is failing to perform the promised scope of work. Additionally, this may impact the project's ability to achieve its outcomes and will undermine the ability of the project to achieve the maximum impact possible.

**Checking Yes:** Project staff are regularly implementing continuous improvement and mitigation strategies to ensure the project is maximally effective. Staff are engaging in plan, do, check, and adjust cycles on a regular basis, and staff are following the data and leading the project through an evolution to achieve the outcomes. There is two-way communication informing the implementation of the project from lessons learned across the institution that are of benefit to the project, and, in turn, project staff are sharing lessons from the project to benefit the institution and stakeholders as a whole.

**Getting to Yes:** The project staff must do what they say they are going to do, including practicing continuous improvement. Even when project activities are implemented as described, there is room for increasing efficacy and efficiency. Identify a regular basis to evaluate project activities, data, and outcomes, whether it be weekly, monthly, quarterly, etc. Detail successes, challenges, lessons learned, and adjustments going forward. Bring in outside expertise as needed to get the project on track or to help make it all that it can be.

## STEP 5: CONTINUE – TEEING UP THE NEXT ITERATION

### 5.1 Do you have the institutional commitment and resources to sustain the project activities following the performance period? (Saying that you will seek additional grant funding is not enough.)

**Potential Red Flags:** As discussed in the last item of 3.3, the grant officer will want to see progress toward implementation and achievement of the sustainability plan.

**Checking Yes:** Throughout the performance period of the grant award, you want to make progress toward sustainability. You may use quarterly performance reports, annual reports, and closeout reports to identify how the institution is operationalizing the project personnel and activities in order to show how the gains achieved through the grant will be sustained at the end of the performance period.

**Getting to Yes:** If challenges arise that impede or prevent implementation of the proposed sustainability plan, work closely with the grant officer, institutional leadership, or project partners, and potentially reach out to additional key invested parties in order to develop a new avenue to sustain the project. Most importantly, keep a pulse on this item and work proactively throughout the performance period to successfully deliver on this element. See the last item in 3.3 for additional considerations.

### 5.2 Is this a pivotal stepping stone that, if successful, will allow the institution to grow and expand in previously unreachable directions? (Consider how the project outcomes may provide the evidence and rationale for a future project building on this one.)

**Potential Red Flags:** This is not a major concern from the perspective of the funder. It is a strategic opportunity to use one funded project to secure internal and partner support to grow the college in new directions that would have otherwise remained out of reach.

**Checking Yes:** Making the most of this element is one of the biggest opportunities for your project to stand out from the rest. The majority of applications will most likely resemble one another in most aspects and will probably play it safe to a large degree. Mobilizing the institutional and stakeholder interests to achieve an ambitious project is one of the best ways for your project to be rated highly by reviewers. This is not a mandatory element, but it has the potential to set a proposal apart from the rest. It also allows the institution to develop long-term visions for growth, of which this project is but one step.

**Getting to Yes:** Begin with the end in mind. Facilitate rich and robust big-picture conversations that set aside concerns of funding, limitations, institutional history, and personnel in order to give innovation the space to occur. When you speak with leaders from partner organizations, seek to understand their needs, hopes, and dreams. By identifying mutually beneficial goals, you begin to develop ever deeper and more integrated partnerships to advance the shared work.

#### **SPOTLIGHT IN ACTION CASE STUDY—ILLINOIS MANUFACTURING TRAINING ACADEMY FUNDING SOLICITATION**

**Purpose:** Fund the construction of two manufacturing training academies to provide a regional approach to cutting-edge training not typically available at community colleges in downstate Illinois communities. Constructing these manufacturing training academies will lead to high-wage, in-demand employment and will support the retention, expansion, and recruitment of advanced manufacturing employers in Illinois through the development of a highly trained workforce.

**Funding Agency:** Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity

**Funding Source:** Rebuild Illinois Capital Plan

**Eligible Applicants:** Downstate Illinois Community Colleges (defined as those outside of the Chicago metropolitan region)

**Total Funding:** \$15M

**Number of Awards:** 2

**Award Range:** Not defined.

**Allowable Expenses:** Capital expenses including construction, renovation, and equipment expenses.

**Match:** No match required.

**Application Period:** 90 days

**Application Narrative Page Limit:** No limit.

**Performance Period:** Individually negotiated with grant awardees.

### **Case Study: Step 1—Conceive**

In 2019, the author's home institution began investigating the creation of an Electric Vehicle Training and Certificate program in order to (1) offer high-tech, high-wage stackable career pathways for students, (2) meet projected industry demand for employees trained in electric vehicle and energy storage technology (the district had a local employer committed to adding thousands of electric vehicle and energy storage manufacturing jobs in the coming 5 years), and (3) solidify the college's reputation as a national leader in cutting-edge applied training programs. Although the institution did not have a traditional automotive program or existing facility space that could be converted into an electric vehicle training program, the

college hoped to create a three-course series specific to electric vehicles to provide upskill automotive technicians traditionally trained in internal combustion engines vehicles.

Additionally, Governor Pritzker outlined the state's clean energy priorities and Rebuild Illinois Capital Plan to invest in the state's infrastructure and workforce in a manner that would establish Illinois as a global leader in the equitable clean energy transition.

### **Case Study: Step 2—Connect**

The application reflects the culmination of more than a year's worth of work building professional relationships in the Electric Vehicle and Energy Storage Systems training space with employers inside the college's district as well as faculty and program directors nationally. After connecting with a number of industry partners, program directors, and faculty, we learned the college would assume nearly all of the cost in equipment and facility whether we created a three-course certificate or an entire Associate's of Applied Science degree in EV Technology. Furthermore, we learned industry needed a pipeline of technicians to replace the looming retirements of many long-time workers, which would not be solved with the sole creation of an upskill certificate.

Based on the projected costs shared from other institutions and our own research, we estimated we would need to secure or commit somewhere between \$1.4M and \$6M to start an Electric Vehicle program, depending on whether we leased off-campus industrial space or constructed new facilities on campus. The college identified scaling Career Technical Education and industry responsiveness as key strategic priorities of the college. We had high levels of support from the college president and the Board of Trustees. Fortunately, the college was just embarking on a facilities master planning process and was able to incorporate the need for



facility space to support an Electric Vehicle program, in addition to many other new and cutting-edge programs. In less than 10 months, the Board of Trustees voted to adopt an updated facilities master plan calling for an addition and renovation of a 20,000-square-foot Career Technical Education facility in the short term and a 30,000–50,000-square-foot CTE facility at a future point in the coming 20 years.

### **Case Study: Step 3—Create**

Funds from the manufacturing training academy solicitation could cover construction and renovation costs, but no other costs. The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity was the lead organization on the grant, but the review and award process was an interagency collaboration with the Illinois Community College Board. In developing a competitive proposal, the state agencies suggested the most competitive proposals would begin as soon as possible and be fully implemented in a compact period of time. They also encouraged applicants to identify leveraged institutional and private funds to maximize the impact of the project and cover non-capital, unallowable expenses.

With an updated facilities master plan in hand, we had the documentation we needed in both the college's strategic plan and facilities master plan to show the college was committed to growing CTE, had done its homework in terms of knowing what would be required to carry out the vision, and was willing to commit resources to move in that direction ahead and independent of any grant opportunities. When the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity released the manufacturing training academy grant solicitation, we knew we were well positioned on steps 1–5 of the Transformative Grant Cycle. For Step 1, we could show this was our work, prove it with planning documents, and demonstrate the project

would be impactful locally as well as advance industry and State of Illinois priorities.

Additionally, we had the support of the Board of Trustees and college leadership to show we were committed to making it a reality in one manner or another, regardless of a grant award. Absent an award, the project would likely have depended on additional private support, had a longer timeframe to implementation, or been smaller in scope. Through securing leveraged resources of industry partners, we demonstrated we met the needed threshold of Step 2 and had access to the needed industry knowledge, talent, and resources to carry out the project. For Step 3, we demonstrated we had identified the right strategy, timelines, budget, goals, and evaluation plan to ensure a successful project. We assuaged the potential red flags of Step 4 by showing we had institutional capacity to create the program, manage the funds, and develop the facility. Finally, for Step 5, we showed how this project would position the institution and the state to replicate and scale the program. Fortunately, due to the work that had been invested for the years prior to the release of the funding solicitation, the college was in a strong position to check “yes” for all or nearly all items in Steps 1–5 of the Transformational Grant Cycle. The institution was thereby able to avert raising any of the following potential red flags relating to Steps 1–5 that would preclude receiving a funding award:

*Conceive*

- 1.1 The institution is pursuing priorities core to its mission rather than chasing funding.
- 1.2 The institution and industry partners have organizational priorities aligned to the funding solicitation documented in updated planning documents.
- 1.3 The project is locally, regionally, and nationally impactful.
- 1.4 The institution is committed to seeing the project through in one manner or another regardless of grant funding.

### *Connect*

- 2.1 The project is driven by and intended to meet student and industry partner needs.
- 2.2 The project employs proven effective strategies to achieve desired outcomes.
- 2.3 The institution has access to critical personnel to carry out the project, which is demonstrated through an industry partner agreement to provide a full-time trained, certified electric vehicle instructional consultant, which the college otherwise may have been unable to demonstrate it could secure.
- 2.4 The project has access to sufficient institutional and industry support to achieve the identified project outcomes—albeit perhaps at a smaller scale or over a longer timeframe—independent of a grant award.
- 2.5 Key institutional and partner personnel are identified in attached resumes and CVs, and critical institution-partner collaborations are documented in signed letters of commitment and memorandums of understanding.

### *Create*

- 3.1 If the grant is awarded, the institution commits the personnel and financial resources to execute the project.
- 3.2 The identified scope of work is aligned to and capable of delivering the deliverables identified in the funding solicitation.
- 3.3 The proposal outlines defined and ambitious—yet reasonable—project components.
- 3.4 The college is prepared to draw on institutional resources and engage partners to move forward with the project in some fashion absent an award, though it may take a much longer timeframe.
- 3.5 The institution has the personnel and infrastructure to meet all solicitation stipulations.

### *Comply*

- 4.1 The institution is implementing the plan, achieving the outcomes, and collecting the data with regard to project activities, timelines, goals, and outcomes.

- 4.2 The institution is meeting all grant award stipulations as well as maintaining compliance with all sponsor, federal, state, and institutional requirements.
- 4.3 The grant manager and project personnel engage in continuous improvement efforts, identify mitigation strategies to overcome obstacles to implementation, and secure budget and scope-of-work modifications to ensure outcomes are achieved.

*Continue*

- 5.1 The institution is adhering to step 3.1.
- 5.2 The project would position the institution and the state as a leader in a cutting-edge training program necessary to support local industry workforce needs and drive the clean energy transition. Additionally, if awarded, the college will use the state funding as matching funds to pursue additional federal funding for a larger capital project. The college will also pursue additional funding avenues to cover programmatic and operational costs not covered by the original solicitation.

By taking into account the state and industry priorities behind the funding solicitation (providing cutting-edge training not otherwise available in downstate communities, supporting the manufacturing sector of the Illinois economy, and establishing the state as a national leader in the clean energy transition), the community college developed an ambitious, competitive proposal to develop stackable industry-aligned certificates leading to a first-of-its-kind Associate of Applied Science degree in Electric Vehicle Technology and certificates in Energy Storage. The programs would be developed over a matter of months and offered initially at a to-be-determined off-campus site for the first two years, while the on-campus facility was designed and constructed. The institution soon learned DCEO awarded the college \$7.5 million to fund the construction and remodel of facilities for the first of its kind Electric Vehicle-Energy Storage Manufacturing Training Academy on the college campus in central Illinois.

### **Case Study: Step 4—Comply**

The college did not wait to learn whether its proposal would be funded to move forward in developing the program curriculum. Because the entire application was built around a project the college had already been working on for two years and was committed to implementing regardless of grant funding, the institution continued to meet with industry partners, began developing the curriculum, and engaged its facilities team in identifying and preparing to outfit a leased off-campus interim EV training facility. By the time the college learned its project was selected for funding, the institution was poised to submit the AAS program for approval by its Curriculum and Academic Standards Committee, Board of Trustees, followed by the Illinois Community College Board, Illinois Board of Higher Education, and the Higher Learning Commission. Following the Notice of Award, the Board of Trustees approved an architectural contract for architectural and engineering services and bidding documents for the addition and renovation, and a team from program development, enrollment and student services, facilities, and the business office began meeting on project implementation.

As mentioned on item 4.2, it is important to carefully follow funding solicitation stipulations in implementing the grant award. According to the grant solicitation, the purchase of automobiles was not an allowable expense because they are rolling stock and not a bondable capital expense. At the same time, the grant agreement allowed for the purchase of “laboratory equipment” under “other construction expenses” of the approved budget. Given the absolute centrality of having electric vehicles in order to operate an electric vehicle training program, the college sought guidance from the grant officer as to whether grant funds could be used to purchase electric vehicles, for non-transportation and training-only purposes, thus falling under

“laboratory equipment” instead of automobiles in this situation. The grant officer confirmed that even for training purposes the funds could not be used to purchase automobiles without requesting and receiving a specific exemption. With this confirmation, the college complied with the grant award and used leveraged funds from the institution to purchase the electric vehicles for the program. The college also reached out to other employer partners to request donations of new, used, or totaled electric vehicles and received a donated totaled vehicle within months.

### **Case Study: Step 5—Continue**

Following the award of the Electric Vehicle-Energy Storage Manufacturing Training Academy grant to the institution, the college joined a National Science Foundation Advanced Technological Education consortia application led by Indian River State College and joined by nine other entities to advise on career technical education at the intersection of electric vehicles; energy storage; high-voltage charging; smart grids; and safety, emergency preparedness, and emergency response. Additionally, the college submitted a \$8.4M project requesting 50 percent federal funding under American Rescue Plan Act Economic Adjustment Assistance program through the Economic Development Administration to scale the EVES Manufacturing Training Academy to include synergistic programs in Renewable Energy, HVACR, Robotics, Electronics, and Digital Media. Sometimes a strong, timely, forward-thinking proposal will not only help advance the institution and its partners and stakeholders through the current funding opportunity, but also will position the college to advance a series of aligned opportunities for potential future funding. The Transformative Grant Cycle is designed to help

you think big-picture and long-term to position the institution to achieve ambitious—previously out of reach—results.

## **CONCLUSION**

Grant awards offer an opportunity for the institution to secure internal and external resources to achieve strategic goals—identified in the institutional mission, vision, and values and master planning documents—through engagement with internal and external stakeholders. The process of applying for a grant is a clarifying opportunity for the organization and its stakeholders to validate the logic model, test their commitment and resolve, and move forward or determine if there is more work to be done before the timing is right. The worst outcome is receiving an award that the organization is unable to execute. Pursuing a funding award will be a growth and learning experience whether or not the institution receives a grant award. The experience will clarify needs, goals, barriers, strategies, resources, partnerships, and solutions. Failing to achieve the outcomes of awarded grants, however, undermines an institution's future ability to secure future grant awards. Future grant applications will ask for the results of previously awarded grants. Previous underperformance or outright failure to meet the outcomes of past grants is a red flag for reviewers. Funding agencies will award applicants who have proven effective at executing past grant awards but will avoid entrusting funds to organizations that have proven unable to spend previously awarded funds and secure past project deliverables.

Community colleges can use the strategic pursuit of state, federal, and private grants to lead organizational change and adaptation, ensuring the continued relevancy and alignment of the institution and its ability to meet the ever-changing needs of students, communities, and

industry partners (Brumbach, 2005). The process of pursuing grants holds enormous opportunity to position for change, build needed coalitions, implement proven strategies, and achieve desired outcomes (Herbkersman & Hibbert-Jones, 2002, 2003a, 2003b). The grant development process equips the community college with the vision, plan, and resources to secure project implementation, advance the institutional mission, and align to meet stakeholder needs (Herbkersman & Hibbert-Jones, 2002, 2003a, 2003b). Successfully funded and implemented projects deliver a return on investment that includes “increased enrollment, additional resources for training and student needs, and an enhanced role in the community” (Brumbach, 2005, p. 58).

Pursuing grant award funding is an effective avenue to implement ambitious projects that achieve the strategic objectives of the institution, because funding solicitations provide the necessary conditions to bring coalitions together to achieve change: defined parameters, a fixed timeline, superordinate goals, and accountability for achieving desired outcomes. The Transformative Grant Guide is an exploration of the work needed to help the institution evolve in tandem with the changing demands of its stakeholders. It seeks to provide an understanding of the real work involved in moving the institution forward, building diverse coalitions committed to achieving desired outcomes with or without funding. It also seeks to provide an understanding of the threshold that grant proposals need to satisfy in order to earn positive funding recommendations. The product is a look at the real purpose and work of the institution embodied by its strategic objectives. At its heart, the Transformative Grant Guide is not really about grant awards per se; it is about equipping community college leaders for the overarching



work of leading innovation and responsiveness in the community college hand-in-hand with  
and for stakeholders.

## CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

### INTRODUCTION

The Transformative Grant Guide was developed in an attempt to guide the work of leading innovation in the community college to ensure continual alignment between the organization and stakeholder needs. The Guide was informed by a review of the literature and the author's professional experience helping to facilitate the development of competitive grant proposals. The Guide utilized a theoretical framework of transformative leadership as most appropriate and effective in facilitating internal and external stakeholder engagement in developing proposals that would be awarded funding, and in securing the needed levels of stakeholder commitment and leveraged resources to successfully implement the projects and achieve the desired outcomes. The Transformative Grant Guide identifies the Five Cs of the Transformative Grant Cycle, a process that can be used by community college leaders to lead innovation in the community college while achieving the strategic goals of the organization. This final chapter discusses the research questions that guided the development of the Guide; the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of the Guide; and recommendations for future research.

## DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

The research questions and conclusions that guided the research and development of the Transformative Grant Guide are the following:

1. How should institutions select grant project proposals that will achieve the institution's strategic objectives aligned to those of funding organizations?

Community college leaders must rely on the strategic objectives of the institution identified through a deep understanding of the change that would be required for the institution to fully meet stakeholder needs. By engaging internal and external stakeholders, community college leaders can activate natural constituencies committed to achieving desired outcomes, innovation, and change to the mutual benefit of the institution, its stakeholders, and project partners.

2. How can institutions build internal and external stakeholder support to position projects for future success in order to secure a funding award and identify alternate avenues for project implementation in the absence of a funding award?

Transformative leadership enables community college leaders to bring with transactional interactions to build credibility, trust, and rapport with internal and external stakeholders needed to activate shared imagination, commitment, effort, and resources to achieve otherwise impossible transformational outcomes.

3. What elements compose strong grant proposals?

The elements that constitute a strong grant proposal include the project leaders, partners, activities, logic model, timelines, goals, outcomes, budget, evaluation plan, and plan for disseminating the outcomes.

4. What elements ensure the successful implementation of funded projects?

Similar to the elements that compose a strong grant proposal, the elements that ensure successful implementation of funded projects are determined in large part during the Conceive, Connect, and Create stages of the project development. Ultimately, the institution, team, and partner's execution of the project proposal determines the achievement of the desired outcomes and deliverables. Successful implementation again depends on the project leaders, partners, activities, logic model, timelines, goals, outcomes, budget, evaluation plan, and plan for disseminating the outcomes.

5. How can institutions use the design and execution of strategic projects to position the institution for future projects and funding opportunities?

Institutions can begin with the end in mind. The current project may not get the institution all the way to achieving its strategic objective, mission, or vision, but by identifying the desired ultimate state, community college leaders and members of the grant team can identify a series of projects that, when combined, will realize the achievement of the strategic objective or the satiation of stakeholder needs. The institution can build support and implement the first project and then use the outcomes to secure support for each successive project until the whole is achieved.

## **ASSUMPTIONS**

The contents of the Guide include a grant self-assessment tool for community college leaders and grant teams to use funding solicitations as an opportunity to engage internal and external stakeholders to build internal and external support for achieving strategic objectives through the shared effort and leveraged resources. The Guide is designed for community college leaders who have some familiarity and experience with grant development. If the Guide

were intended for individuals with little to no experience or familiarity with grant development, then it would need to provide a greater overview of the definitions and basic components of grant development and grant management operations. The Guide uses transformative leadership as the guiding theoretical framework for development and execution of the Five Cs of the Transformative Grant Cycle. Alternative leadership frameworks could result in distinct and perhaps contrary recommendations in leading grant development efforts, stakeholder engagement, and efforts to achieve institutional strategic objectives.

## **DELIMITATIONS**

It is possible that community college leaders who do not successfully engage internal and external stakeholders to build commitment to achieve shared strategic objectives also deploy a transformative leadership approach. In such cases, transformative leadership would not be a distinguishing characteristic between effective and ineffective grant development efforts. Additional research is needed to determine if transformative leadership indeed separates successful grant development leadership from less effective approaches.

## **LIMITATIONS**

A greater diversity of community college leader backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives, as well as a greater epistemological diversity, would provide a larger understanding of the generalizability, desirability, and effectiveness of transformative leadership in leading internal and external stakeholder engagement across institutions, partners, cultures, and locations.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

Community college leaders report feeling underprepared in areas critical for successful fundraising leadership, including “developing and communicating a vision,” “understanding of interpersonal communication,” and “effective listening and feedback skills” (Brown et al., 2002, pp. 59 & 61). Additional research should be conducted into how presidential preparation programs could best prepare future institutional leaders to lead institutional advancement and fundraising, especially at the community college level. Higher education leaders must be prepared to navigate “private and philanthropic fundraising, partnerships with businesses, and development of college foundations” (Wenrich & Reid, 2003, p. 28). Katsinas (2003, as cited in Wenrich & Reid, 2003, p. 28) noted higher education leadership programs typically do not explicitly teach fundraising leadership, and current and retired presidents reported entering their role feeling underprepared to lead fundraising. Echoing the recommendation of Katsinas (2003, as cited in Wenrich & Reid, 2003, p. 28), additional research should be conducted on best practice in fundraising leadership, and explicit training on fundraising leadership should be built into talent development and leadership preparation programs.

A limited amount of research has focused on institutional brand with regard to the retention of current students. Future research should expand on the findings of Trullas et al. (2018) in recognizing the potential for institutional branding and communications to influence current student perceptions of quality, organizational support, and future employability, and their corresponding effect on retention. This research could be particularly salient in the community college context, where many students may perceive a stigma of low quality, lower levels of organizational support, or increased anxieties regarding future employability, which

may have a compounding effect against student persistence and may exacerbate equity gaps. The potential for institutions to help influence student perceptions to build sense of belonging, institutional support, instructional effectiveness, and sense of future employability must be pursued with utmost urgency, as its potential to impact student recruitment and persistence is highly suggested by the research.

Recent scholarship suggests a fourth technological revolution is underway with the development of artificial intelligence, and machine learning has the potential to bring far greater change economically, socially, and politically than the change that occurred during any of three previous revolutions (Evans, 2017; Peters, 2017; King et al., 2017; Lehman, 2015; Schmidt, 2017). Combined with changes to the future of work wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic, the fourth technological revolution has the potential to replace many high-skilled workers in fields such as finance, law, accounting, and medicine with a financial impact in the hundreds of billions of dollars in lost salaries and wages in the coming decade (King et al., 2017, pp. 59-60). While Evans (2017) and Schmidt (2017) predicted entire industries would disappear as others emerge, many organizations are completely unaware and unprepared for the coming change. Craig (2018) cautioned that organizations must begin planning how they will adapt to the fourth technological revolution to position themselves to meet the changing needs and expectations of stakeholders. Future research is warranted focused on change to the future of work and the consequent implications for the community college in preparing individuals for the workforce.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Transformative Grant Guide was designed to support the community college leader in engaging internal and external stakeholders to achieve institutional strategic objectives, thereby ensuring the institution evolves to meet underlying stakeholder needs. The Transformative Grant Guide identifies the five memorable steps—the Five Cs of grant development—of Conceive, Connect, Create, Comply, and Continue to lead successive, successful cycles of building strong project proposals honed to achieve shared results. The Guide contains a grant self-assessment tool that outlines the components of each step of the cycle, identifying potential warning signs, criteria to determine if the component is adequately addressed, and guidance on how to get from an inadequate state to an effective state. Through adoption of the Transformative Grant Guide approach to engaging internal and external stakeholders, the hope is that institutional leaders may find a ready appetite to lend shared effort and resources to achieve change that may start small but ultimately changes everything.



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