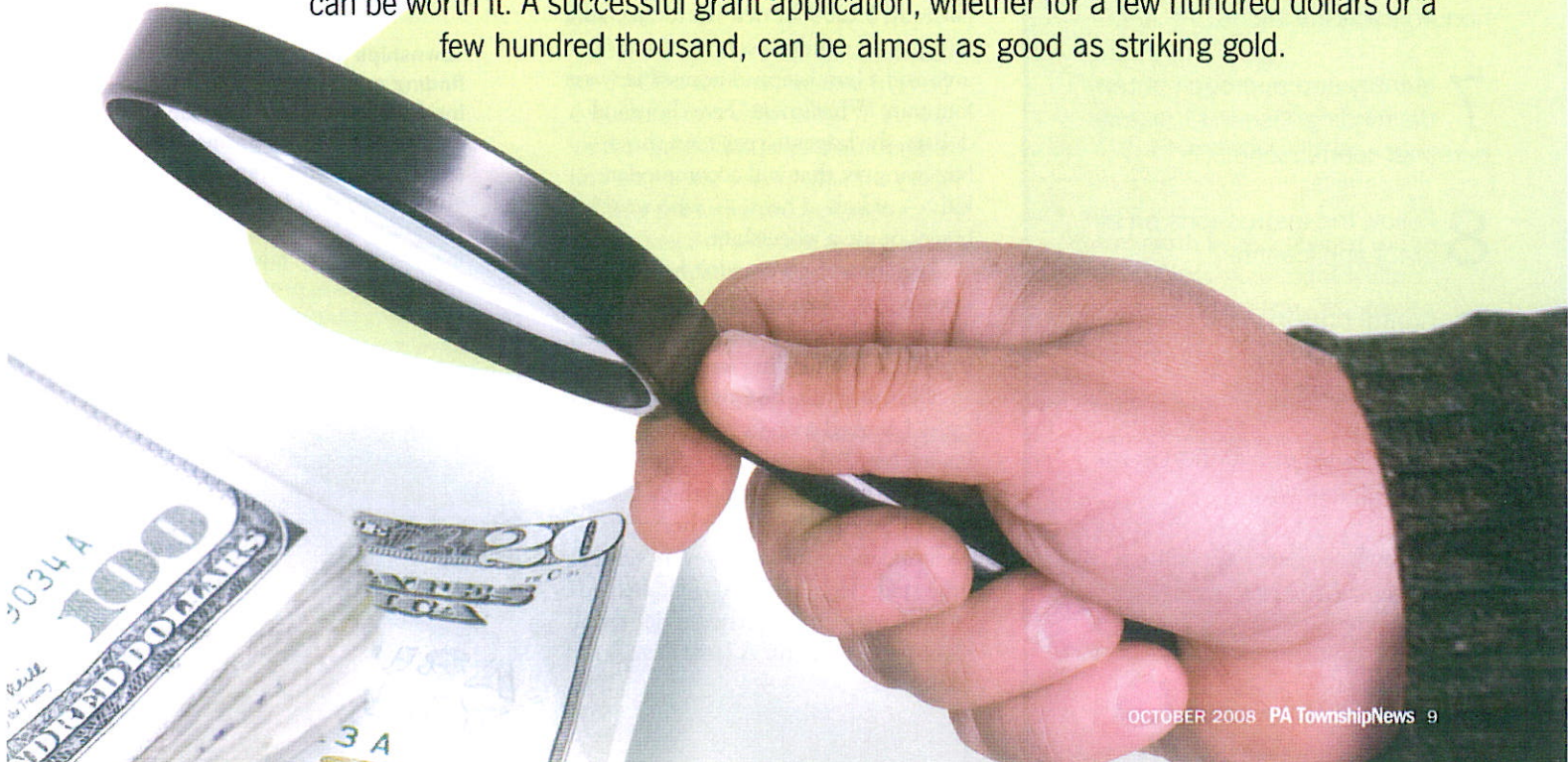


TRACKING DOWN Dollars

Great **GRANT HUNTERS** Offer Their Tips for **SUCCESS**

BY JENNIFER L. HAWBAKER / ASSISTANT EDITOR

TIMES ARE TOUGH, AND TOWNSHIPS ARE LOOKING FOR EVERY available dollar to help meet their residents' wants and needs. Grant funding is a good option, but tracking down those dollars requires planning, persistence, and a lot of patience. The payoff, however, can be worth it. A successful grant application, whether for a few hundred dollars or a few hundred thousand, can be almost as good as striking gold.



Top Tips for Getting Grants

- 1 Start with a plan. All projects should stem from or support the township's comprehensive plan.
- 2 Have general information, such as population, growth, and budget, updated and on hand at all times to facilitate grant writing.
- 3 Create a one-paragraph description of your township — the setting, the residents, business and industry, etc. — to introduce your community to funding organizations.
- 4 Define your project. State why the project is necessary, how it will meet a need, the work it will involve, and what it will cost. Summarize this information on a single page to share with potential partners.
- 5 Stay the course. Don't change project parameters along the way.
- 6 Identify project partners, including the state and other local governments, businesses, and nonprofit organizations.
- 7 Identify and approach potential funding resources. Make personal connections.
- 8 Follow the instructions on all grant applications.
- 9 Contact the grant source if you have questions about completing the application.
- 10 If the grant application is rejected, ask why.
- 11 Learn from every application, successful or not, and try, try again!

GRANT FUNDING

If there's a dollar of grant money floating around Ridgway Township in Elk County, you can bet that assistant secretary Jan Kemmer will find it. State agencies, legislators, the county, foundations, local businesses — all, she knows, are potential funding sources that can help the township help its residents.

The local park, with a popularity that extends beyond the township's borders, is just one example of how this community has used grant money to take a place from satisfactory to extra-special.

Several years ago, Kemmer says, one of the supervisors was working near the park — home to a beaver pond, a fishing stream, and the local baseball team — when he noticed a group arrive with some disabled members. "He saw what a hard time they had getting into the park," Kemmer says, "so the township applied to the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources for a grant to put in a paved pathway. They also put in an observation and fishing dock that's wheelchair accessible."

But that was just the beginning. When Kemmer started work for the township, she applied to a local foundation and received \$14,000 to extend the pathway, \$9,000 for new restrooms, and, to top it off, funds for a new concession area and a handicapped-accessible water fountain. What's next? Five thousand dollars, she hopes, to pay for a three-bay swing set that will accommodate kids — or kids at heart — who wear leg braces or use a wheelchair.

The supervisors couldn't have known that when they hired Kemmer, they were also tapping into a surprisingly lucrative funding stream.

"I knew about the foundation because I worked with its programs before I came here," she says. "Nobody in the township had ever applied there before."

Kemmer doesn't just set her sights on foundation grants, however. Money from state Sen. Joseph Scarnati helped procure water and electric service for all three park pavilions. A local factory do-

nated \$5,000 for fence repairs. County money helped purchase historical signs. And the list goes on.

How has this township of less than 3,000 become so gifted in the art of grant writing — and grant getting?

Kemmer began by attending a few workshops that offered tips on where to find funds and how to write a successful grant application. She pairs that knowledge with her own strengths — "I'm a stickler for English, and I enjoy writing," she says — and gets extra points for persistence.

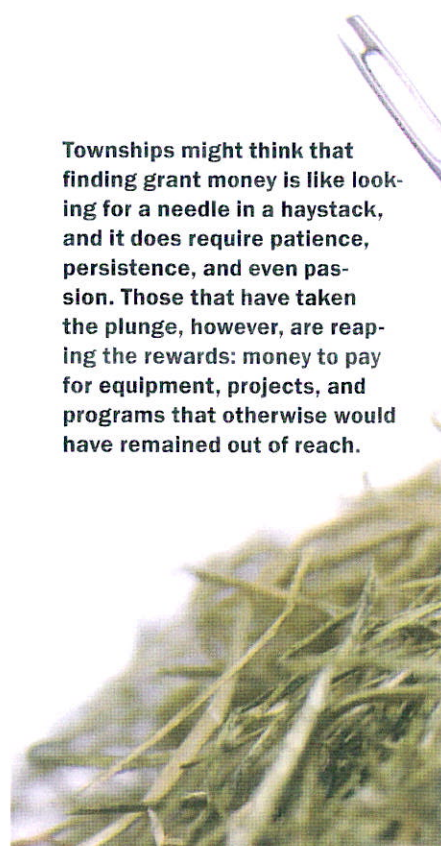
"I figure the worst anyone can say is no," Kemmer says. "If they did, I'd ask them why the application was not approved and if there is something I could do to improve my request."

What it comes down to, the experts say, is that when going after grants, this township is doing just about everything right.

It pays to plan

For starters, townships should send at least one employee to a grant-writing workshop. They're offered through the Pennsylvania Local Government Training Partnership, some counties and state agencies, and even private foundations.

And any supervisor who doubts the



Townships might think that finding grant money is like looking for a needle in a haystack, and it does require patience, persistence, and even passion. Those that have taken the plunge, however, are reaping the rewards: money to pay for equipment, projects, and programs that otherwise would have remained out of reach.

wisdom of such an investment need only look to Sandy Wright, secretary for Greene Township in Beaver County, for confirmation. She made grant training — along with proper office space — a condition of accepting her job there.

As it turns out, the township won big with that deal. Wright has been able to secure grants that equal everything she's earned from the township over the last 18 years, plus another \$150,000. Not bad for a day or so away from the office.

One of the messages these classes get across is that grant writing involves a lot more than tracking down dollars and completing applications. Planning is a crucial component, and that may come as a surprise to townships that are new to the process or haven't had much luck with it.

"All communities need to have a very good plan that they're following, a comprehensive plan from which their projects should be coming," says Rebecca Denlinger, funding coordinator for the Lancaster-based engineering and consulting firm RETTEW. "Then, when they want to move forward with a project, they must define that project up front and know what it is they want to accomplish."

In other words, no one is going to

hand out a grant to fund what amounts to a grand idea. Wright, who now teaches grant-writing classes for PSATS and the Pennsylvania Local Government Training Partnership, has her own analogy.

"Think about building a house," Wright says. "You wouldn't go to the bank and ask for a loan without at least starting to design your house, knowing what features you want, and having a budget. Likewise, you can't ask for a grant without knowing exactly what the funding is for."

It may be tempting to tailor a project to the grants that are out there, she adds, but that's a backward approach that isn't likely to meet with success. "You must have a 'needs list,'" Wright says. "Prioritize your needs and then look for the money to start those projects."

Surveying residents — often a part of the comprehensive planning process — is a good way to start. This way, Wright says, the township is addressing what the residents need and not just what the elected officials want. And she makes sure that when Greene Township goes after grant money, the potential funders know it's for the citizens, not the township.

"The road department doesn't need a new truck," Wright explains, "but the residents do so they can drive on safe roads. The secretary doesn't need a new copier, but the residents do so they can benefit from the work that it's being used for."

Lori Thompson, a project manager for CMX, a national engineering and consulting firm with offices in Pennsylvania, agrees. She helps municipalities find grants and knows what the people holding the wallet are looking for. "My biggest piece of advice is to look at a project from outside the box, to view it the way an agency would and not in terms of your own needs and wants," she says.

A comprehensive plan, which delineates a community's long-term goals,

can help a township do that and more. For instance, it helps a municipality align its decision making with surrounding communities, and these days, that regional approach is just what funders are looking for.

"The state is very interested in pooling funds into areas and understanding how a project can have a significant impact," Denlinger says. "Planning as a region has never been more important in securing funding, and we're going to see this trend continue."


She points out that in 2005, 10 state agencies agreed to uphold the "Keystone Principles for Growth, Investment, and Resource Conservation." The 10 principles were developed by the Interagency Land Use Team, a working group of Gov. Ed Rendell's Economic Development Cabinet, which is co-chaired by state Department of Community and Economic Development Deputy Secretary Kenneth Klothen and Joanne Denworth of the Governor's Office of Policy.

The principles encourage economic development while conserving the state's natural resources and guide the agencies in their support of various projects. One principle, "plan regionally, implement locally," sums up the state's focus on multimunicipal partnerships. (See the list of these principles on Page 19.)

When looking for state grants, Denlinger says, "Townships should be asking, 'Are we making sure the project we've defined hits on at least a few of those principles?'"

That's why experts recommend that townships participate in their regional council of governments or at least partner with some neighboring municipalities on projects.

"You're much better off when you apply for funds with many municipalities, especially if you're really small," grant-writing consultant Michael Sand says. "Join up with these other townships, and then you won't be small anymore. The chance of funding goes way up



**"You'll get as much out of it
as you put into it. You can't leave
any stone unturned."**

GRANT FUNDING

because the funding sources are fully aware that their dollars are better spent by giving them to several municipalities instead of one.”

Even two townships can work together to reap the benefits of partnership. Just ask East Providence and Monroe Townships in Bedford County. With less than 3,200 residents between them, the townships’ budgets stretch only so far — and certainly not far enough to foot the bill for a piece of equipment costing almost \$68,000.

Together, however, they applied for and received a \$25,000 Shared Municipal Services Grant from the Governor’s Center for Local Government Services. Each township kicked in another \$21,475, and they are now the proud co-owners of an asphalt recycling machine.

“They swear it’s the greatest thing since sliced bread,” says Harry Krot, a policy manager for the Governor’s Center. “The main thing is, it’s helped them reduce their costs.”

What sounds like a simple transaction still required a bit of back and forth for Julia Hillenbrand, the East Providence Township secretary-treasurer who filed the paperwork for the grant.

“We had to do a contract letter of intent,” she says, “and had to get a letter from our legislator, Rep. Dick Hess, in support of the purchase.”

The boards of supervisors also had to supply financial information to the state and adopt resolutions to enter into the purchase agreement. All the work, Hillenbrand says, was worth it.

“If either one of the townships had to do this on our own, it would have taken a big chunk out of our budget,” she says.

As townships know all too well, money does *not* grow on trees. Grant funding, however, is available from places many have never considered, including private foundations and local and national businesses. Partnering with local nonprofit groups can also provide access to grants for joint ventures.

Put it in writing

Whether a township is looking for grants from a state agency or elsewhere, it can prepare for the often long and complex process by putting some details down on paper right from the start.

“All year long, townships should be developing the kind of background information they’re going to need for any grants they write,” consultant Michael Sand says. “They should have information, for instance, on population growth and employment conditions so if they’re writing an economic development grant, they have the details they need to support that application.”

It’s much better to get that preliminary work out of the way now, he says, rather than waiting until the grant deadline to scrounge up facts and figures. “More often than not,” Sand says, “the request for proposal doesn’t give you much time to respond, and you’re so busy that you can’t work on it 24/7 between now and the time that it’s due.”

Along with the fact sheet that Sand suggests, Greene Township’s Sandy Wright advises communities to also develop a sales pitch.

“Create a descriptive narrative of your township, just one paragraph,” she says. “If I’m reviewing your grant application, it should give me a picture of where you’re located and the type of community you are, so right off the bat, I can picture myself being there and know what you’re all about.”



When that’s complete, there’s still more writing to be done. At this stage of the game, it’s time to start defining the project that requires funding.

That’s a critical step for RETTEW’s Rebecca Denlinger, a former assistant borough manager who now helps municipalities find grants and other funding to support their projects.

She goes through a step-by-step “strategic implementation plan” to help clients identify projects and define exactly what they want to accomplish. That’s a key to success whether a township is working with a consultant or on its own.

When funders look at a grant application, they want specifics: Why is a project necessary, how will it meet a need, and what will it involve? Defining the project will help answer these questions up front and save a lot of stress as the grant deadline draws near.

“We identify resources and partners that clients might want to bring to the table and then come up with a one-page communication piece about the project,” Denlinger says. “As they’re having meetings and talking to people in the community or going to their legislators, having that one-page leave-behind could make the difference between the legislator remembering the project or not.”

This project summary, she adds, contains the information a legislator will need before providing the township with a letter of support — a requirement for many grant applications.

Of course, when it comes to communication, a township doesn’t have to settle for a piece of paper. The supervisors and recreation board members in Carroll Township, Perry County, are so determined to see their ambitious park project through to the end that they’re making their sales pitch with the help of technology.

“We put together a compact disc showing what we’ve done in the past with grants to demonstrate that we can use that money to complete a project,” supervisor Dan Kirk says. “We talk about why we’re building a new park, we show the different phases, and that leads to why we’re asking for money.”

The township secured two \$125,000 grants from the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

Where to go for grants

STATE AGENCIES CAN BE a lucrative source of grant money for everything from road equipment to salt sheds to records storage, but they're just the beginning. Following is contact information for several state agencies, plus some ideas for townships to look even deeper for funding both within and beyond their borders.

State agencies

To learn about state-government grants, contact the individual departments for the name and phone number of your regional representative or log onto the department's Web site. Contact information for several state agencies follows:

- **Governor's Center for Local Government Services and Pa. Department of Community and Economic Development**
Web site: www.newpa.com/programfinder.aspx
Phone: Toll-free (888) 223-6837
- **Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources**
Web site: www.dcnr.state.pa.us/brc/grants
Phone: (717) 783-2658
- **Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection**
Web site: www.dep.state.pa.us/grantscenter
Phone: (717) 705-5400
- **PennDOT Bureau of Municipal Services**
Web site: www.dot.state.pa.us (Click "Search," type "Grants and Funding," and click on the first link.)
Phone: (717) 787-0800
- **Pennsylvania Historic and Museum Commission**
Web site: www.phmc.state.pa.us (Click "Preservation Programs," "Grants and Funding," and then "Grants.")
Phone: (717) 787-3362

Additional funding and information sources

- Local businesses
- Local nonprofit groups
- County commissioners
- State and federal legislators
- Federal grants:
 - **www.grants.gov** or call toll-free (800) 518-4726
 - U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development – Log onto **www.rurdev.usda.gov/pa** or call (717) 237-2299 to locate your regional representative
- Foundations:
 - Log onto the Center for Rural Pennsylvania's Web site at **www.ruralpa.org** and click "Rural Access Guide" to view this listing of state, federal, and nonprofit/foundation grants, loans, and technical assistance resources, or call the center at (717) 787-9555.
 - Log onto the Pennsylvania Recreation and Parks Society Web site at **www.prps.org/grants.htm** for a list of grant resources by region or call (814) 234-4272. The grants cover such areas as family, youth, conservation and ecology, camps and sports, and economic development.
 - Log onto **www.foundationcenter.org** to search for foundations that may offer funding for your project. Many libraries also have the *Foundation Yearbook*, which includes foundation resources by geographic location and organization type.
 - Log onto **www.pafoundations.net** to view information on Pennsylvania foundations or check your local library for the *Directory of Pennsylvania Foundations*. (Note: This Web site is still under construction.)
- The Internet: The Web can lead townships to a wealth of resources. Try searching phrases that tie into the theme of your project and include the word "grant."

"Once you know about the **little pots of money** here and there, they can **really start to add up.**"

GRANT FUNDING

to purchase an 80-acre farm. On it, the board members envision trails, sports fields, pavilions, an amphitheater, and — eventually — the township building and maintenance facilities. The municipality had to put up matching funds for the initial purchase, and now it's on the lookout for ways to fund subsequent phases of the project — hence the CD, which the township will share with local banks, nonprofit organizations, and any other potential funders.

"If we didn't get grant money, we wouldn't even be thinking about this project," Kirk says. "We haven't raised taxes, and we've just been trying to work with what we have."

Denlinger helped Carroll Township

track down this money and says it is an excellent example of a community pooling funds from different resources to get a job done.

"They immediately understood that they needed to layer funding and needed many different sources to come to the table for this project," Denlinger says, "and they started with themselves."

That's right. Grant funding starts at home, and that's another piece of information to include on a project summary sheet.

"After we've defined the project and how much it will cost, we ask what you, the township, are going to bring to the table," Denlinger says. "If the answer is nothing, you're really not setting yourself up for success. You may be bringing cash, you may be bringing in-kind resources, but you've got to bring something to the table."

"It's our job to put the best foot for-

ward with that match and show a real local commitment to a project," she adds.

Getting the grants

With a well-defined project ready and waiting, it's time for the hard part: getting the grants that will give it life. Where's a township to start?

Well, the hunt can be hard work, too, and it helps to have the time and energy to focus on that alone — but how many townships have a dedicated grant writer? That's why some turn to their township engineer for assistance.

"There's a lot of detailed research that goes into finding grants, and municipalities are constrained with time," CMX's Lori Thompson says. "They need to consider their internal budget, the expertise they have, and the contacts they have with various agencies."

For West Earl Township in Lancaster County, which recently applied for a hefty federal reimbursement grant through the Safe Routes to School program, a quick look at the math shows just how valuable outside help can be.

"Usually, I'm the person responsible for writing the grants," manager Patrick Barrett says. "This one was pretty involved, so we had our engineer help us out."

The township applied for an \$847,000 grant. Subtract a reasonable consulting fee, and Barrett still sees that as a very nice return on its investment. He expects to learn this month whether the funding will come through.

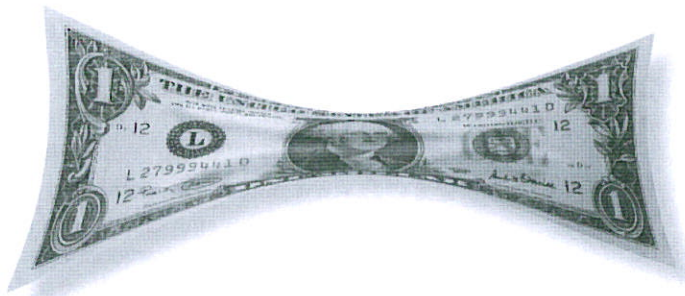
That chunk of change would help the township install new sidewalks, replace damaged ones, install school crossing lights, and complete storm-water management and paving work, among other things. It's an ambitious project, and Barrett plans to tap every grant program he can find to help pay for it.

He learned about the Safe Routes to School funding through e-mail — first from a tip on PSATS' e-mail discussion group and then from the township engineer.

That's proof that townships can find funds from a variety of sources. State agencies are a great place to start, of course, but grant hunters should keep one thing in mind: No matter what the

Watch for information on grant workshops to be held through the Pa. Local Government Training Partnership in 2009. Log onto www.palocalgovtraining.org to view all upcoming courses.

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resource, you need to make personal connections, not just submit applications.

"I think one mistake municipalities make early in the game is getting very concerned about particular programs when what they should be doing is making connections with the agencies themselves," RETTEW's Rebecca Denlinger says. "You could spend a lot of time trying to understand all the programs — or you could connect with a regional adviser or program manager who can help you."

CMX's Lori Thompson agrees, saying that relationships offer an advantage in the competitive world of grants. "Over the years, I've worked with several different agencies," she says, "and they keep me in mind as I keep them in mind. They let me know the moment a pilot program is coming out so I can prepare."

That's what happened with the Local Government Greenhouse Gas Pilot Grants Program, offered through the state Department of Environmental Protection. Thompson worked with eight Bucks County municipalities to submit a joint application for funding to study their greenhouse gas emissions and come up with a reduction plan. The pilot grant program will distribute \$300,000 among 15 municipalities, and many townships may not have known about it without a special heads-up from their department contacts — or their consultant.

Professional grant writers don't simply rely on state funding, though, and townships shouldn't either. "I look everywhere and anywhere for funding," Thompson says. "I see everybody as a possible foundation."

That route has certainly worked for Ridgway Township in Elk County, where the Stackpole-Hall Foundation, which supports organizations committed to social welfare in the county, has awarded it numerous grants.

Businesses, both local and national,

are another source of grants. And while the funding outlook might be better at the local level, it doesn't hurt to search on the national front, too.

Lowe's, for example, has a charitable and educational foundation that supports community improvement projects. So does Wal-Mart, and even the General Mills Hamburger Helper brand, which offers the "My Hometown Helper" grant. Townships can find these and other resources by searching the Internet and talking to store managers and business owners in their community.

"Typically, every business, every organization has some kind of funding available," Thompson says. "If you haven't found it, you haven't looked hard enough or haven't talked to the right people there."

Many foundations will only donate to a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt nonprofit organization, but townships can easily partner with local nonprofits to accomplish the community's goals. After all, as long as the residents get what they need, it doesn't matter whose name is on the check. ▶

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GRANT FUNDING

Counties may be able to lend a hand as well, either by offering training classes in grant writing or helping townships find funding — especially through Community Development Block Grants. In fact, the federal government released more than \$45 million in CDBG funds to the commonwealth this year.

State and federal legislators offer another source of municipal funding for a wide range of projects. Herrick Township in Bradford County spent only \$2,000 to build a cinder shed, thanks to a \$30,000 grant awarded through its state legislators. South Park Township in Allegheny County was able to upgrade its financial system software with the help of a grant through the office of Rep. David Levdansky, and the township is also working with U.S. Congressman Tim Murphy to find funds to revitalize

buildings along a main thoroughfare.

Many other townships have similar stories, and Sandy Wright has a reminder for them all: Don't forget to say "thank you."

"You need to let your legislators know that you support them," she says. "If you do get grant money through your legislators, acknowledge them publicly. We put posters up saying 'thank you' in a community tent at our local fair."

She encourages township supervisors to get to know their legislators on a first-name basis, discuss the residents' needs, and offer the township's support whenever possible.

"You can't expect to ignore your brother-in-law and then go ask to borrow 50 bucks from him," Wright says. "It's the same thing with your legislators."

While lawmakers can be a big help in procuring grants, township supervisors and staff should not overlook other valuable resources. Peers in other townships can be a wealth of knowledge, and the Internet may return some surprising leads. And last but not least, they

should always keep their eyes and ears open for valuable tips. (See the sidebar on Page 13 for more information on grant resources.)

Persistence, patience, and passion

Now, after the township has compiled its project information and identified possible funding sources, comes the next big step: writing the grant.

And this is where the simplest advice may be the most important: "Follow the instructions," Ridgway Township's Jan Kemmer says. "If you don't, you can't expect to be chosen. There's a reason they ask for the information in the format they do."

And if you have questions along the way, pick up the phone and call the number provided. This is when it really helps to have an established relationship with someone at the agency or organization offering the grant. Trying to second-guess the instructions could take the township out of the running.

"We recommend that prior to submitting an application with the Gov-

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APPLYING FOR STATE GRANTS?

Know the Keystone Principles for Growth

Applications for state agency grants could stand a better chance of success if they address one or more of Pennsylvania's "Keystone Principles for Growth, Investment, and Resource Conservation."

The 10 principles, developed in 2005, are meant to encourage economic development in rural, suburban, and urban areas while conserving the state's natural resources.

They were crafted by the Inter-agency Land Use Team, a working group of Gov. Ed Rendell's Economic Development Cabinet, which is co-chaired by state Department of Community and Economic Development Deputy Secretary Kenneth Klothen and Joanne Denworth of the Governor's Office of Policy.

State agencies consider these principles when reviewing funding requests, says Rebecca Denlinger, funding coordinator for RETTEW, a Lancaster-based engineering and consulting firm, and projects tend to rise to the top of the pile if their impact goes beyond community borders.

The Keystone Principles are:

- **Redevelop first** — Support revitalization by giving funding preference to the reuse and redevelopment of brownfields and previously developed sites.
- **Provide efficient infrastructure** — Use and improve existing infrastructure. Require private and public expansions of service to be consistent with approved comprehensive plans and ordinances.
- **Concentrate development**

— Support infill and greenfield development that is compact, conserves land, and is integrated with existing or planned transportation, water and sewer services, and schools. Foster creation of well-designed developments and neighborhoods that offer healthy lifestyle opportunities for residents.

- **Increase job opportunities**

— Retain and attract a diverse, educated workforce through economic opportunities and quality of life. Invest in businesses that offer well-paying, high-quality jobs near existing or planned water and sewer infrastructure, housing, a ready workforce, and transportation.

- **Foster sustainable businesses** — Strengthen natural resource-based businesses that employ sustainable practices in energy production and use, agriculture, forestry, fisheries, recreation, and tourism. Increase the state's supply of renewable energy. Reduce consumption of water, energy, and materials to lessen foreign energy dependence and address climate change.

- **Restore and enhance the environment** — Maintain and expand land, air, and water protection and conservation programs. Conserve and restore environmentally sensitive lands and natural areas for ecological health, biodiversity, and wildlife habitat.

- **Enhance recreational and heritage resources** — Maintain and improve recreational and heritage assets and infrastructure, including parks and forests, greenways and trails, heritage parks,

historic sites and resources, fishing and boating areas, and game lands offering recreational and cultural opportunities to residents and visitors.

- **Expand housing opportunities** — Support the construction and rehabilitation of all housing types to meet the needs of people of all incomes and abilities. Support local projects that are based on a comprehensive vision or plan, have significant potential impact (e.g., *increased tax base, private investment*), and demonstrate local capacity, technical ability, and leadership to implement the project.

- **Plan regionally, implement locally** — Support multimunicipal planning and implementation that has broad public input and support and is consistent with the Keystone Principles. Provide education, training, technical assistance, and funding for such planning and for transportation, infrastructure, economic development, housing, mixed use, and conservation projects that implement such plans.

- **Be fair** — Support equitable sharing of the benefits and burdens of development. Provide technical and strategic support for inclusive community planning to ensure social, economic, and environmental goals are met. (*This principle seeks to recognize that rural, suburban, and urban areas have different characteristics and needs. What works in a rural community, for instance, might not work in an urban one and vice versa.*)

GRANT FUNDING

ernor's Center, a municipality call the toll-free number," policy manager Harry Krot says. "They will be directed to the local government policy specialist assigned to their region to talk about the project and see if any adjustments need to be made."

Krot also asks townships to be reasonable in their funding requests. "Ask only for what you need," he says. "When it comes time to make the awards, we're going to take a close look at budgets. Also, once we commit those funds to you, then they're not available for somebody else."

Not every grant application will receive a stamp of approval, but a "no" doesn't mean the township should throw in the towel. Every experience, successful or not, can offer a lesson for the next time around.

"If we don't receive an award in the first round of a grant, we find out why and reapply the next time it comes up,"

Carroll Township's Dan Kirk says.

The township's persistence has paid off over the years, and Kirk knows why. "You'll get as much out of it as you put into it," he says. "You can't leave any stone unturned."

Kirk has also learned the value of patience. Each grant requires follow-up administration, he says, and sometimes, the promised funds don't arrive as expected. "Even though your grant has been approved," Kirk says, "the money doesn't always get released when you think it will. You need to be patient and keep after it."

And because townships are up against some stiff competition — namely, each other — they need to be passionate about going after grants, just like RETTEW's Rebecca Denlinger. "I want to win," she says. "I want to get every dollar I possibly can for these projects."

Just the beginning

Denlinger doesn't stop at grants, though. While they can give a significant boost to township budgets, grants should be just one slice of the much

larger funding pie. "A lot of municipalities are only interested in grants," Denlinger says. "They need to open themselves up to all of the funding possibilities out there."

That includes public-private partnerships, tax incentive programs, and loans through public agencies such as PENNVEST, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the state Department of Community and Economic Development, she says. And don't forget the local banks.

"In some cases," Denlinger says, "we're seeing that conventional financing can get close to and may be even better than public financing because there may not be as many criteria to meet or as much paperwork to complete."

Michael Sand agrees that townships have a lot of financing options, but says they can't wait for the money to find them.

"Yes, it's hard times, and no, there's not a lot of new money out there," he says, "but don't give up. Once you know about the little pots of money here and there, they can really start to add up." ♦

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We are committed to enhancing the quality of your children's lives through play. Our extensive experience in the recreation industry assists us in designing, manufacturing and building premier playgrounds, skate parks and much more.

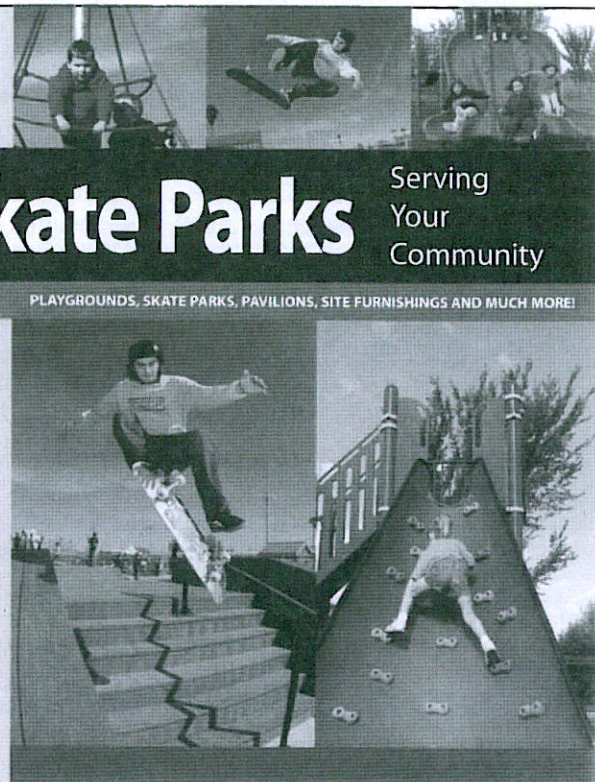
In everything we do, quality and safety are never negotiable.



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