



### 1. Build your coalition.

- ◆ **Assemble potential stakeholders** in your community to discuss what local issues you are trying to address by implementing CIT, and gather local data about the problems associated with the criminalization of people with mental illness.
- ◆ **Determine what sources might fund your coalition.** A community coalition around CIT is in a unique position because it includes both non-profit groups and local government entities. Non-profit organizations are eligible for foundation grants, and local governments (including law enforcement agencies) are eligible often eligible for state funding. If you have buy-in, your coalition can apply for money from a variety of sources. In fact, most grant makers today are looking for projects that include a strong collaborative effort.
- ◆ **Gather information.** Your coalition partners may know of funds that are available to them; for example, law enforcement agencies may have funds available for training. Find out whether any members of the partnership have connections with any community, foundation or government funding sources. Find out whether anyone has grant writing experience.

### 2. Search for grants.

- ◆ **Use your connections in the community.** Find out whether community service groups like the Rotary Club or Kiwanis Club offer small grants. While they probably will not be able to fund your entire project, you may be able to get multiple small grants. And, funding from a local organization makes your project more legitimate in the eyes of larger funders.
- ◆ **To find foundation grants,** search these two websites: the Foundation Center (<http://foundationcenter.org/>) and Guidestar (<http://www.guidestar.org/>). Both have fees, but one grant will easily pay off the cost of the subscription.
- ◆ **To find federal government grants** search [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov).
- ◆ **To find state and local grant makers,** you can contact your local community foundation – most major cities have one – or a local university non-profit leadership center (locate them here: <http://www.naccouncil.org/members.asp>). Also consider contacting your state department of mental health or the department that conducts law enforcement training. Finally, ask at your public library for a foundations directory. Be sure to verify information in printed guides before applying for any grants; it may be out of date.
- ◆ **Carefully examine the criteria for funding** when reviewing grant opportunities; only consider applying if you meet the criteria. Look at the list of projects the grant maker has funded in the past: this will help you gauge whether your project is in their area of interest. You should also look at the amounts that they have granted; if your request is significantly larger,

consider applying for only a portion of your budget. If your request is significantly smaller, consider another grant maker.

- ◆ **It is unlikely that you will find grants specifically for CIT**, so look for other categories where your project may fit, including: community policing, violence prevention/reduction, improved community relations, and jail diversion.

### 3. Make a call.

- ◆ **Build a relationship.** The relationship you build before you submit your application will vastly improve your chances of receiving funding. If you or someone in your coalition has a connection to a grant maker, have that person make an initial call. Research the grant maker's board of directors to find out whether any member of your coalition has a connection with one of them. If you don't know someone who knows someone, you still need to make the call.
- ◆ **Choose your representative carefully.** Find a person who is both articulate and enthusiastic about the program to make this initial call.
- ◆ **Be prepared.** The caller should prepare by reading through the grant maker's guidelines, and having an overview of the proposal on hand, along with local data about the problem that CIT addresses. In this initial conversation, the details of the project may be less important than how the overall goals match the funder's priorities. Find out what their expectations are, and appeal to them.
- ◆ **Introduce yourself to the program officer.** If you are calling cold, call the number listed on the grant solicitation, and say that you are interested in applying for funding. Ask to speak with the person who handles your category of grant proposals, usually referred to as the program officer. Tell him or her about your project, demonstrating that you've read the criteria for funding. Ask whether this is something the organization might be interested in funding. If the program officer says "no", thank him or her and cross them off your list. Do not push, because you may want to apply for money from them in the future. If they say "yes", continue the conversation. If you have a positive conversation, this person may be someone you can call on later for guidance on the grant writing process.
- ◆ **Tip: Some large foundations will not talk to an organization that hasn't submitted a letter of inquiry.** Check the proposal guidelines carefully; if necessary, submit the letter of inquiry first, and follow up with the phone call. A letter of inquiry is a short overview of your organization and your proposed project. If you receive no response to your letter of inquiry, and aren't able to reach the program officer on the phone, assume that you should look for other sources of funding.
- ◆ **Tip: After an open question period, government grants may be closed to questions.** Rather than a personal response, your question will be answered on a public website. You should still make a call to introduce yourself to the program offi-

cer, but be sure to do it before the open question period ends.

- ◆ **Tip: Take advantage of any opportunities to build relationships before you go seeking money.** Some foundations and government agencies are willing to meet with you to have a general discussion about what they are interested in and to learn about what you do or may plan to do in the future.

#### 4. Write your grant proposal.

- ◆ **Put together a work group and choose a coordinator.** Your work group should include a point person from each organization involved in the coalition. Establishing a work group helps solidify everyone's commitment to the project and prevent any misunderstandings regarding who will do what once you are funded. This group can also provide quick and easy access to information you may need for writing the proposal. It is important, however, to choose one person who will make sure that everyone stays on track and the proposal is completed on schedule.
- ◆ **Decide who will submit the application.** If only law enforcement agencies are eligible for funding under a particular grant, the application should go out under the police or sheriff department's name. The same applies if only non-profits are eligible. This does not mean that the organization that applies for the funding has to write the application or implement all aspects of the program. Your workgroup should continue to emphasize shared responsibility.
- ◆ **Use the resources available to you.** If you are applying for multiple grants, use NAMI's CIT Grant-Writing Templates or develop your own. Most grant applications ask similar questions, including: What is the need? How will you measure the effectiveness of your program? How is your program going to be structured? Develop standard language to respond to these questions. **Warning:** *you should always customize templates to your individual program, your local needs, and the requirements of the grant maker.*
- ◆ **Follow instructions to the letter.** If there are restrictions on font size, margins, length, etc, follow them. If a grant maker receives your application and sees that you did not follow the instructions, they may not even look at it. *Absolutely do not write more than the length limit.*
- ◆ **Know your limits.** Carefully gauge what your organization and your coalition have the capacity to do. If you do not complete your project, the grant maker can demand that you return the money.
- ◆ **Ask for what you need.** Calculate your budget carefully and ask for what you need, not less or more. Be sure to include *all* costs, direct and indirect. Many, but not all, funders expect there to be 10%-20% in indirect costs – expenses like rent, utilities, IT support, and bookkeeping. Often grant makers will tell you explicitly whether and how much they will fund indirect costs; if they don't cover indirect

costs, don't include them in your request. Be sure that the coalition can cover these costs if you receive the grant.

- ◆ **Avoid acronyms and jargon** without first explaining what you mean. For example, your first reference should be to "Crisis Intervention Teams (CIT)" and thereafter you can use "CIT." It is very easy to use shorthand without realizing that your readers may not understand you.
- ◆ **Review your application carefully.** Remember that the foundation's review committee may know little or nothing about mental illness or CIT. Ask a trusted outsider to read your proposal to make sure that your plan and goals are clear. He or she should identify any jargon or overly technical language. Finally, ask your reviewer to read your application as he or she would a résumé: for spelling, grammar, and adherence to the instructions.
- ◆ **Tip: Check your 501(c)3 status.** Some NAMI affiliates do not have their own non-profit status, but rather are umbrella groups of the state NAMI. If this is the case, you can't apply for grants without very careful cooperation with the state organization. You may want to consider applying for funding under the name of another partner in your coalition.

## 5. Follow Up.

- ◆ **If you receive funding: Congratulations!** There are still a few things you need to do.
- ◆ **Thank the grant maker.** You can't say thank you too many times! Write a private letter of thanks, and also consider a public thank you. Acknowledge the grant maker on any materials you print and at any public events that feature your CIT program.
- ◆ **Comply with any conditions of the grant,** including reporting on your progress and outcomes. Be sure also to respond in a timely fashion to any informal inquiries that you receive from the grant maker.
- ◆ **Involve the grant maker in your organization.** Invite the grant maker to any major public events that your organization holds, such as the NAMIWalk, a press conference or a fundraising gala. Maintaining an active relationship will increase your chances of receiving future funding. Since foundations talk to each other, your successful relationship with one will improve your reputation with other organizations.

## Resources

### **NAMI's CIT Advocacy Toolkit**

This toolkit includes the NAMI CIT Grant-Writing Templates. Available at [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org).

### **NAMI's Fundraising Toolkit**

Tentatively scheduled for release June 2008, at [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org).

### **The Foundation Center**

<http://foundationcenter.org/>

This website includes guides to grant-writing, as well as a directory for searching grants.

### **Guidestar**

<http://www.guidestar.org/>

Another excellent site for searching for grants.

### **Non-Profit Guides**

<http://www.npguides.org/>

Grant writing guides and information for non-profits.

### **Grants.gov**

[www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov)

Search and apply for all federal government grants

### **Non-profit Academic Centers Council**

<http://www.naccouncil.org/members.asp>

This website lists university centers for non-profit leadership around the country.