



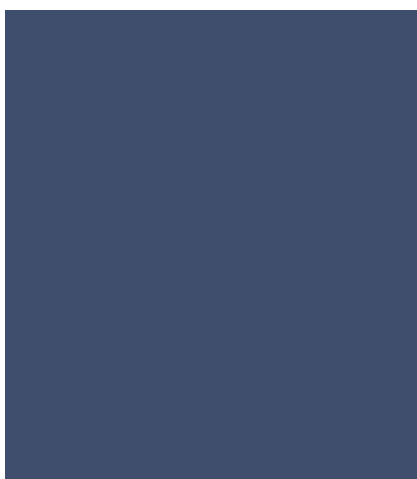
Avoiding the Downward Grant Spiral, Increasing Grant Revenue

*Three Mega Trends Affecting Grant Funding and What
Organizations Can Do Now to Succeed*

A whitepaper prepared by

In4Grants™

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The Downward Grant Spiral

How can institutions that rely on grant funding compete in this tepid economy, and beyond?

As endowments and other revenue sources shrink, universities and nonprofits are seeing more relevance in grant money. At the same time, headcount at these organizations have been frozen or cut, workloads have increased, and expenditures are under a microscope. Plus, the process of winning a grant is becoming progressively competitive. Now, grant notifications often require skill combinations that one researcher—or even a small team in one department—couldn't possibly have.

As a result, three mega trends have not only emerged but will likely be with us for good. These trends include:

1. The grants process is becoming more strategic.
2. It's requiring smarter collaboration.
3. It's demanding quicker adoption of modern technologies.

Organizations that ignore these trends often find themselves in a downward grant spiral. This spiral starts with a stalled grants process, which leads to even more diminishing returns:

- Missed funding opportunities.
- Less new research.
- Fewer endowments.
- More management scrutiny on expenses.
- Disengaged researchers who've lost confidence.
- Increased brain drain from researchers who've left.
- Looming job cuts.

What's a *mega trend*?

- >> It's not just a market condition or new methodology.
- >> It has far-reaching implications everywhere.
- >> It leaves a wake in its path anytime it hits.



The good news is, advances in online search, social media and browser-based software have paved the way for organizations to avoid the downward spiral and more effectively manage the grants process. This whitepaper explains these advances, explores the mega trends, and recommends appropriate steps organizations can take to succeed. All poll data is based on a February 2011 interactive webinar between 130 representatives of grant-seeking organizations and software company InfoReady Corp.

First, the mega trends:

The Grants Process is Becoming More Strategic

In the webinar poll, **95 percent** of respondents said they were attempting to make the grants function more strategic to their institutions. Due to grants' ability to improve organizational visibility, and their increasing importance in this economy, fund seekers have seen the need to make grant management less of an administrative-led endeavor and more of a top-level strategic function.

The first step to reach this goal is to develop a strategy with quantifiable metrics for grant revenue and win rates. Those that have started this process have discovered the following benefits:

- Stronger collaboration inside and out.
- Better research.
- More grant and endowment income.
- Increased enrollments.
- A competitive edge.
- Fully-engaged researchers.
- Improved career stability for grants administrators.

Info4Grants webinar poll, February 2011



Despite these benefits, only **51 percent** of respondents said they actually had a strategic grants plan in place. After all, a shift in strategy requires a major shift in thinking, which may be tougher for smaller organizations that may not have previously relied on grant funding. It may also be tougher for organizations that don't have modern tools to properly identify, share and manage grant opportunities.

Here are three tips to make this shift possible:

1. **Create a culture of accountability.** Accountable institutions involve researchers in the grant-selection process. In an accountable culture, there are properly-disciplined people working on the grants that impact their careers. When this happens, they not only feel ownership, they're held responsible for results.
2. **Create a culture of collaboration.** When grant participators receive too much irrelevant information, and find the process cumbersome, they tune out. Organizations should adopt methods that facilitate more precise grant information being distributed to the players involved.
3. **Create a culture of efficiency.** Every hour spent on administration is one hour lost for research. Organizations should find creative ways to cut administration time.

The grants process should not be just a paperwork and number-crunching exercise. When it's a high-level strategic process, accountability, collaboration, efficiency—and ultimately grant funding—will improve.

The Grants Process is Requiring Smarter Collaboration

Effective grants management is an exercise in smart communications. If grant opportunities, documents and feedback are readily available, collaboration becomes easier. When collaboration is easier, the entire grants process is better.

In the webinar poll, **89 percent** of respondents said they were seeing the need for increased collaboration in order to win grants. As more grants are requiring mixed skill sets, the paradigm of having a few people involved in the grant-writing process is quickly fading.

Regardless of the desire to increase collaboration, only **9 percent** of poll respondents said they used a single collaboration system within their organizations. That means the remaining **91 percent** are using different communications systems for each department—potentially different systems within one!



One of the top complaints of grants administrators is the lack of participation by researchers. Why is engagement so low?

1. **Collaboration with old methods is cumbersome.** After a grant is identified, which itself is an inefficient process with old methods, the opportunity is often sent to multiple colleagues via email. Some colleagues respond, some don't. Even more grant-related data is sent after that. In this "serial" communications process, some data is inevitably lost. Meanwhile, the information pertaining to a grant is stored in separate spreadsheets, viewable by only the creator unless he or she sends the file via email. Talk about cumbersome.
2. **Collaboration changes are met with resistance.** Just because the current communications process is cumbersome doesn't mean change is easy.

Low adoption, high frustration

- >> 42 percent of poll takers have collaboration systems that aren't being used by all grant participants.
- >> There's just too many disparate systems.

It's clear organizations need easier-to-use and more centralized collaboration systems. In addition, these systems should encourage collaboration inside and outside of departments to ensure multiple skill sets are involved, especially since these types of grants are usually bigger.

When these changes happen, participants will feel a sense of ownership, become more engaged, and be less inclined to resist.

The Grants Process is Demanding Quicker Adoption of Modern Technologies

In the webinar poll, **65 percent** of respondents said they personally use sites such as **Facebook**. Increasingly, researchers are adept in modern technologies such as social media and “cloud” application services. However, institutions often rely solely on previous-generation tools such as manual searches, emails and enterprise software.

Even though most people involved in the grants process know how easier it is to communicate via social media, they still rely too much on email. In addition, despite using cloud application services such as photo-sharing sites, which are hosted remotely instead of being downloaded, grant seekers are still too often relying on old-fashioned enterprise software solutions such as **Excel** or **SharePoint** to manage the grants process.

Social media is mainstream

According to a 2010 Pew Research poll, 47 percent of 50-to-64-year-olds use Facebook.

An enterprise-level shift is needed akin to the personal shift that’s already occurred. In the late 80s, enterprises made the switch from typewriters to computers. In the mid 90s, it was the telephone and fax to Internet and email. Now, the same kind of shift is happening with social media and cloud computing, but many enterprises aren’t taking advantage of it.

These advances are applicable to the pre-award process. For grants administrators, the speed of online search, familiarity of social media and power of enterprise software can be offered in one browser-based application to manage the *entire* pre-award process. Now, grants administrators can:

- Incorporate online search technology to discover only the most relevant grant opportunities from multiple databases. With advanced filtration, users can not only find the right grants but the needle in the haystack.
- Use social-media tools to collaborate with peers in a central environment. When everyone involved with a grant is communicating in one project-based location, nothing is lost and no one is overwhelmed with disconnected emails.
- Enjoy the benefits of a hosted service to track all pre-award progress automatically. Why build databases to manage grant activity when your browser can do it for you?

The next generation of technologies is here. These technologies will improve accountability, collaboration and efficiency. Adopting new technologies will also free up more time to craft winning grant proposals.

Nine Tips for Grants Success

Avoiding the downward grant spiral takes knowledge of major trends facing the industry. It also takes a stated strategy to adapt. When the grants function is visible throughout your entire organization, you'll see stronger collaboration, better research, more revenue, increased enrollments, a competitive edge, more engaged researchers and improved career stability.

In review, here are nine steps you can take right now to improve grant win rates:

- 1. Create a culture of accountability by implementing a researcher-based selection process.
 - 2. Create a culture of collaboration by making it easy for participants to communicate and making sure only pertinent grant information is sent.
 - 3. Create a culture of efficiency by finding creative ways to cut administrative time.
- strategy
-
- 4. Reduce serial communications, or the process of storing and sending one bit of data or feedback at a time.
 - 5. Increase centralized communications, or the process of storing and sending data and feedback in one project-based location.
 - 6. Encourage cross-disciplined and cross-departmental communications to win bigger grants.
- collaboration
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- 7. Incorporate advanced search techniques that more quickly discover relevant and hidden grant opportunities.
 - 8. Use social-media tools that facilitate more efficient peer collaboration.
 - 9. Let browser-based software automatically track pre-award workflow.
- technology

When participant accountability, smart collaboration and administrative efficiency are built into a grants process that has stated goals, organizations will see results. They'll also have the ability to better compete in any economy—tepid or hot.

Luckily, technologies exist that can make this process easier. In 2011, there's **no** reason to rely on old, cumbersome solutions to solve modern pre-award challenges.

About InfoReady

InfoReady Corp. is developing fresh alternatives to enterprise information-management software. Behind our innovation is a relentless drive to deliver valuable business outcomes faster by improving knowledge-worker productivity with information discovery and collaboration products that don't require user manuals or IT support.

Our flagship product, In4Grants, helps grant-seeking organizations better manage the complex pre-award process. Learn more or schedule a demo at www.in4grants.com.