Non-Profit Grant Writing: Supporting a Local Breed Specific Dog Rescue

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Abstract

For this action project, I chose to pursue a project that would help support the needs, specifically medical, of a local non-profit, no kill dog rescue called Boise Bully Breed Rescue (BBBR). I chose this rescue because it is breed specific and because it is bully specific, this rescue must work a little harder to acquire sources of funding to aid them. After receiving guidance from the rescue’s founder, I decided that the most optimal way to help this rescue was through finding and applying for grants that could offer funding to support their growing medical costs. Funding through grants could allow this rescue to continue taking in dogs, especially those with extensive medical needs due to abuse and neglect and help them find their forever homes. This project was near and dear to me because I am an animal lover, I believe deeply in adopting over shopping, and most importantly, I have rescue bullies of my own that enhance my life every day.

Keywords: non-profit, grant writing, bully breeds
Introduction

Over 6 million animals enter shelters each year and over a million of those animals are euthanized. One of the biggest ways we will see improvement in this area is by working close to home with local animal rescues, especially those that are specifically no-kill. I chose to pursue an action project that will help support the medical needs of a local non-profit, no kill dog rescue called Boise Bully Breed Rescue and it has been an amazing experience from start to finish. Personally, I have always placed a lot of importance on rescuing animals and all my dogs have been rescued. Further, in my adult life, I have always had rescue bullies and they have been such an amazing addition to my family. Bully breeds are often misunderstood and many of them suffer from the stigma that has been created around them so I hope that this project will also help bring awareness to this often-overlooked breed.

Coming into this project I had hoped to do a fundraiser to raise money for the many needs a non-profit rescue has to fill but after a very enlightening conversation with the founder of BBBR, Cathleen Catti, I gained a new perspective around how I could really help. Cathleen shared with me that they had experienced the most benefit and highest intake of funds from grants, and that fundraisers could often be unpredictable and not offer the financial support they so desperately needed. Unfortunately, because this rescue operates primarily with the help of volunteers, they had been unable to acquire and keep a designated person to continually apply for grants. I took this information and decided to pivot with my project and try my hand at some grant writing instead. I had little experience with grant writing coming into this, but I was excited to learn what I could so I could pursue larger amounts of funding for the growing medical needs
of this rescue. Cathleen gave me directions to look for grants that the rescue might be eligible for and offered some very helpful leads that led me to three very hopeful grant opportunities for this rescue. The first grant I submitted was called Subaru Loves Pets and this grant originated from a combined effort between Subaru and the ASPCA (The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) to celebrate Subaru Loves Pets Month in October. This opportunity was by invitation only and funds will be awarded by the end of September. The second grant I applied for was through the Friends of San Francisco Animal Care and Control. This grant was also by invitation only and was offered to rescues that are current SFACC adoption partners, which BBBR is. Finally, I submitted an emergency medical grant through Petfinder Foundation. This grant required specific information about a singular dog in need of emergency medical attention, which BBBR had plenty of. With the help of Cathleen, I chose a dog the rescue had taken in named Lilliput that needed extensive medical care after experiencing severe neglect. Unlike the other two grants, this grant is awarded monthly and although I was unable to receive results from any of the grants I applied for before my project was due, I am extremely hopeful.

Elements Coming Together

One of the biggest issues that this rescue faces circles around the breed that it supports, and this can make funding difficult for them. My hope with this project, aside from gaining funding through grants, is to also bring together varying perspectives through a common goal of helping a local nonprofit. I think that one of the ways I am accomplishing this is by offering education and awareness around a breed specific rescue. Just by applying for these grants, I am bringing this breed into people’s awareness, and this new awareness might even be able to
influence some negative perspectives. Bully breeds tend to already have a place in most people's opinions, and they are generally negative. Being able to offer education and even some positive perspective might just allow a small shift in how this breed is perceived which could ultimately lead to more overall support for this rescue.

I started my search for information by visiting the websites of the ASPCA, The Idaho Humane Society and Best Friends Society. I was able to find a lot of statistics and information on both the ASPCA website as well as IHS, but it was the work of the Best Friends Society and their long-term commitment to create and promote no kill shelters that led me to my final idea and that was where I found Boise Bully Breed Rescue. I was lucky enough to connect with the founder of BBBR, Cathleen Catti, who has been a huge support and a wealth of knowledge within this area. The conversations I have had with Cathleen have been what helped me identify the best way to help this rescue, which is through grant writing that will support the growing medical needs of this rescue.

This project has helped me gain a deeper awareness of self and others through learning more about a specific challenge that is presenting itself within a realm that means a lot to me. I have also gained awareness of the passion that drives efforts to meet these challenges and make improvements which has been nothing short of inspiring. Although this challenge I chose to address involves animals, and more particularly breed specific dogs, I was also fortunate enough to see many amazing humans that were invested in this cause, and they are making a huge difference. Working with animals / that come from severe abuse and neglect can be difficult and heart wrenching at times. As I moved through the layers of this project and spent time learning about this rescue, I gained an extraordinary amount of appreciation, compassion, and empathy
for those that have been in the trenches fighting this fight. It isn’t easy to hear and see some of
the things that happen in the world of animal shelters, and I have gained a newfound respect and
admiration for the people that are invested in it every day because they care so much about the
cause.

Like previously mentioned, I had initially decided on a fundraiser but, after having a
discussion with the rescues founder, and listening to some of the things she had to navigate in her
position over the years, I was able to tap in empathetically to what her needs were for the rescue
she so dearly loved. By actively listening and being receptive to her feedback, I was able to gain
a deeper understanding around how I could make the biggest difference for this rescue, which
was through writing and applying for grants. If I had not been utilizing the various practices of
emotional intelligence as I navigated my communication with the founder, I would not have been
able to see this better option. In addition, this journey has allowed me to contribute something
very valuable to others by offering encouragement as well as a simple blueprint for how others
could step into grant writing for nonprofits. This project and my research around it will hopefully
allow others to gain awareness of the multitude of grants that are out there to support various
non-profits like this dog rescue. In addition, I hope that this project allows individuals to gain an
understanding that if there is an area they are passionate about helping within the non-profit
realm, grant writing could be a great option for them too, no matter their experience level.

The path to my project began with creative thinking and simply allowing myself to get
lost in my creative ideas without judgment. By creatively brainstorming around some of the
things I was passionate about, I was quickly able to settle on what I wanted to do. From there, as
I moved towards my idea of helping a local animal rescue, I not only had to continue to make
room for daydreaming about this idea, but I also needed to make room to think outside of the box to find some creative ways to execute this idea. Part of thinking outside the box involved reaching out to the founder of this rescue for her feedback which proved to be very useful and resulted in an optimal way to help this rescue through grant writing. My approach to this project was unique because it was not only a completely new experience, but I had to change direction with my project after coming across some new information and I pivoted from fundraising to grant writing. Although I have volunteered with animals in the past, I have never worked with a rescue in this capacity before, nor do I have much experience with grant writing for non-profits, so it has been a very informative, eye opening and empowering experience.

As this project began to form and I became aware of what this rescue represented, my desire to help support them grew. I began to understand just how critical constant funding through various sources, like grants, was for this rescue to continue taking in dogs, no matter the condition they were in. Specifically, I wanted to help this rescue gain funding to support the growing medical needs they are experiencing as they take on more dogs that have run out of time in shelters. Having the ability to address the various medical needs of these dogs upon intake not only gives these dogs a better quality of life, but it also increases their chances of getting adopted and finding their forever home. Being able to address the medical needs of these dogs in a prompt and efficient manner also allows for the space to continue taking on dogs that need help.

Results

My action project involved writing and applying for three grants, all of which will not be awarded until after this project is due. Fortunately, I have received a lot of positive feedback throughout this process from the founder of BBBR, Cathleen Catti. Cathleen has relayed how
pleased she was with how I wrote and completed each grant, and she has expressed her gratitude multiple times. I am also happy to report that my help on this has been so well received by the rescue that they made me their official volunteer grant writer and even put me on their website which feels like a pretty big honor. I feel like I have really made a difference here and I look forward to volunteering and helping this rescue in the future!

**Conclusion**

I have learned a lot while working on this project and am grateful for getting to help such an amazing rescue in the process. Stepping into this project, I had little knowledge around grants or what went into writing them, so I have a new appreciation for what that process entails. More importantly, I was fortunate to get an in-depth look at the layers of a non-profit dog rescue and all the different moving pieces that must work together to keep them functioning. One of the biggest and most gratifying moments has been to see how my work on this project has benefited the stakeholders, which in this case was the founder of the rescue, Cathleen Catti. I enjoyed working closely with Cathleen not only learning about the history of the rescue and how it operated day to day, but also as I learned more about grant writing. I didn’t expect to pivot from fundraising to grant writing, which was an area I knew little about, but gaining a new skill all while helping such a worthy cause has been incredibly rewarding. I think that if there was one thing I might do differently, it would be to pivot sooner. I initially thought a fundraiser would offer the best benefit, but I did begin to question myself around this early on and wish I would have pivoted to grant writing a little sooner, or maybe I could have worked something out where I could have intertwined the two and utilized the benefit of both.
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