

Is There an Elephant in the Room?

by Diane McDonald

Whether you like it or not, sometimes the *unwritten* information about your organization plays a major role in the decision foundations make about your grant request. We live in small communities where everyone knows something about everyone else or every organization in town. Publicity, positive or negative, may influence those involved in making funding decisions (board members, distribution committees, executive directors).

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Let's face it; a funder's role is to protect their assets. They want to make sure they make the right investments – the ones that will have the greatest, positive impact on the community. Some foundations will do their own detective work before reaching a decision. They want to know who's been naughty and who's been nice! A funder has their own resources; they read the papers, listen to the news and have their own network of friends and trusted professionals whose opinions matter.

So, the next time you complete a grant application ask yourself;

- ***“Is there anything I need to address with the funder personally?”***
- ***“Has there been good press or negative perceptions a buzz in the community?”***

If you answered “yes” to either of these questions then take the time to educate the funder. If it doesn't fit in the application, it may be appropriate to offer an explanation in your cover letter or request a meeting. Funders appreciate that issues may arise. Offer to clean out the closet, be honest and open about what your organization is doing to correct any wrongs.

Listen to what the funder is telling you. Sometimes no matter how honest, open and persuasive you are, they simply may not be interested in funding your project. If that's the case, politely accept their decision and move on. Don't waste your time and theirs trying to make your organization or program into something it's not.