



# Cracking the Code to Fundraising

**Riva Richmond**

Director of Content & Development  
MicroSociety Inc.

---

**July 11, 2022**

11:25 a.m.-12:05 p.m.

# Agenda

An intro to pursuing grants  
so you can work with us or  
raise money from foundations  
on your own

Putting our mission and needs at the center

Prioritizing partnering and planning

10 key planning steps

Finding funders with matching goals

Applying!

# About the Speaker

## I'm Riva Richmond from MicroSociety Inc.

I serve as MSI's in-house writer and editor and lead our effort to raise funds from foundations. (I'm also George Richmond's daughter!)

---

**We aim to work with MicroSociety schools on innovative projects that advance our collective mission.**

In 2021 and 2022, we raised over \$300,000 to pilot and develop MicroSociety 2.0, an approach to taking MicroSociety online that's designed to prepare MicroSociety students everywhere for the future world and workplace.



# A Mission-Centered Strategy

Clarity about our mission, vision and values are critical to grants success.

- **Vision:** The big external outcome you want to create – “One day, the world will look like this because of our work.”
- **Mission:** What you intend to do. Your role in making this change.
- **Values:** Your core principles and ethics.



## Example: MicroSociety Inc.

**Vision:** One day, every child will be motivated to learn, inspired to achieve, and prepared to create a brighter, more inclusive future for themselves, their families and their communities.

**Mission:** MSI engages children in compelling, standards-aligned real-life learning through the creation and operation of miniature societies. For a period a day, students run governments and businesses, choose jobs, earn and invest school currency, settle disputes, and innovate solutions to authentic challenges. We use these activities to fire up motivation; level the playing field; leverage student interests and abilities; build self-worth, confidence and grit; incentivize academic performance; and graduate powerful thinkers primed to succeed and ready to lead.

### Values:

Learning that has relevance and purpose  
Adults sharing power with kids  
Teachers as experts  
Children as producers, contributors and partners  
Family and community members as educators  
Seeing setbacks as opportunities  
Continuous innovation and improvement  
Serving our school communities

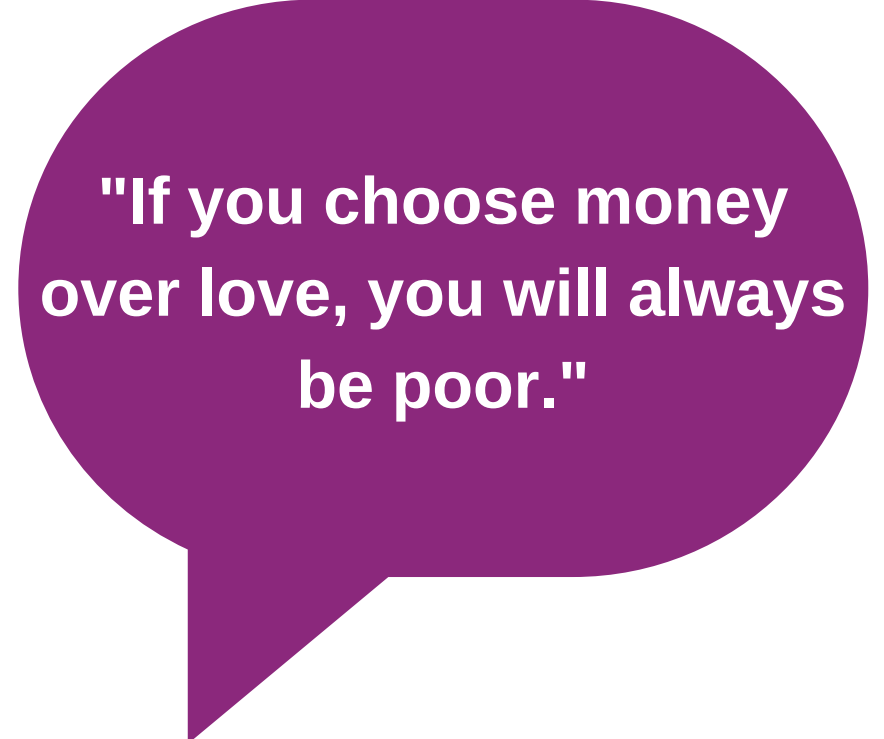


# Key term: "Alignment"

**Identify your needs first.** Then find funders with matching interests.

**Partner up.** Collaborating with aligned organizations benefits your students, school, and community. It also amplifies and accelerates grant success.

What other schools, nonprofits, community groups you can team up with?



"If you choose money over love, you will always be poor."



"Teamwork makes the dream work!"

# Plan. It saves time.



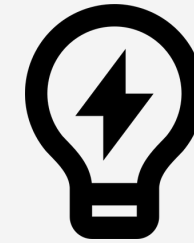
Develop problem/need statement

---



Develop outcomes and evaluation plan

---



Develop program strategies and methods

---



Create proposal plan and budget

---



Research funders, select best bets

---

# 10 Steps

to creating a proposal plan

---

# Project idea

Challenge yourself to write one clear sentence that answers the below questions. (Be sure to use action verbs and hard numbers.)

What will you do?

When?

With whom?

Where?

Why? In order to what?

## Example:

Over the next two years, MicroSociety Inc. will develop a digital-first “MicroSociety 2.0” model that delivers high-quality, engaging online learning, working with five MicroSociety pilot schools across the U.S., to prepare diverse students for future success in the high-tech world and workplace.



# You

Who are you as an organization and what are you all about? What is your **mission** and **vision**?

Challenge yourself to write one clear sentence that establishes your credibility. Include your name, location, history, credentials, values, along with your mission and vision.

## Example:

MicroSociety Inc. (MSI) is a 31-year-old 501(c)3 nonprofit organization based in Philadelphia whose mission is to engage children in standards-aligned real-life learning through the creation and operation of miniature societies that motivate children to learn, inspire them to achieve, and prepare them to create a brighter, more inclusive future for themselves, their families and their communities.

# Problem/need statement

Describe the specific need or issue in your community that your proposed project will address? **What problem are you trying to solve?** What motivates you to act? Why does it matter? **Cite supporting research/data.** Pull heartstrings.

(Don't offer your solutions yet!)

## Example:

The Covid-19 crisis worsened the economic plight of low-income families and the obstacles to success for its children. According to a 2020 McKinsey study, learning losses were especially acute in schools that primarily serve students of color, where scores were 59% of the historical average in math and 77% in reading. These losses will impose long-term earnings and health consequences, McKinsey says.

# Goals

What specific changes do you intend to achieve in your community as a direct result of your work? What will success look like?

**Outputs** are direct results of project activities.

**Outcomes** are the changes in attitudes, behaviors, knowledge, skills, or status expected to result from project activities.

## Example:

### Outputs:

- updated Micro 2.0 website
- prototype of online financial system software
- 28 teachers trained
- 104 students experienced "tech jobs"
- 3 new guidebooks developed
- 8-10 new community partners mentored students online

### Outcomes:

- strong student online engagement
- increased student knowledge of careers
- increased entrepreneurial thinking
- increased readiness for economic mobility

# Action Plan

What are the major steps you will need to take to make these changes happen?

How will you get from where you are to where you want to be?

## Your steps might include:

- **Staff up** - new hires, contractors
- **Handle logistics** - get equipment, training materials, physical space
- **Do marketing/outreach** - recruit community partners, gain family buy-in
- **Implement** - roll out to students
- **Follow-on tasks** - track results, gather feedback, troubleshoot
- **Evaluate** - 3rd party evaluation of success



# Partners

Who has a vested interest in working with you as a partner to tackle this problem or opportunity?

## Example:

- **MicroSociety school** - Penn Hills Charter School of Entrepreneurship
- **Technology company** - AG Strategic Design
- **University partner** - Duquesne University Palumbo-Donahue School of Business
- **Community partner platform** - Nepris
- **Evaluators** - Dr. Roy Wade of CHOP, Dr. Steven Kramer of 21PSTEM

# Success measures

What information, tools, data, etc. will you use to decide how well you met your success goals?

## Example:

### Short-term (1 year): **measurable**

- 100% of students will meet Pennsylvania career readiness standards
- 104 students will experience "tech jobs"

### Long-term (5-10 years): **not measurable during the grant period**

- More students take STEM-related career paths (and gain economic mobility)

# Resources Needed

To prepare to create your budget, list all the resources you will need to do your work. (Think: skills, labor, equipment, training, supplies, services, etc.)

Consider using mind mapping to come up with all concrete resources you will need to complete the tasks you identified in step #5.

## Example:

- **Staffing** - project coordinator, community partnerships director, videographer, technology firm
- **Logistics** - AV equipment, training materials
- **Marketing/outreach** - materials for families, partners (consent forms, newsletters, social media posts)
- **Implementation** - program support, tech support
- **Follow-on** - tracking/feedback/improvement system
- **Evaluation** - 3rd party evaluators, final report

# Price tag

What's your estimated *total cost*, if you had to pay for everything?

Your number should include the value of partners' donated products and services. Funders like to see the value of what others are contributing, monetary or not.

Can you break your total number down by a unit that's meaningful (such as per student)?

## Relatedly...

What's your sustainability plan? How will your project be funded when the grant period is over?

- state or local funding
- community support
- foundation support



# Keywords

What broad categories of need or opportunity does your project address?

List keywords you can use to search online for funders with similar interests and goals.

## **Issue area: Education**

- K-12 education
- Education innovation

## **Nature of location:**

- Urban
- Rural

## **“Downstream” impact:**

- Technology skills
- Career readiness
- Entrepreneurship

## **Target population:**

- Children and youth
- Minorities
- Disadvantaged youth

## **Types of support needed:**

- General operations
- Project
- Equipment
- Technology

# Do your research

Using your keywords, search online for funders whose giving priorities match your mission and needs.

Online resources include:

- GrantStation (subscription)
- Inside Philanthropy's GrantFinder, K-12 guide (subscription)
- Funder websites
- Google

Reach out to any contacts you may have. Seek an introductory meeting with the appropriate program officer.

## Read funder websites carefully:

- Is your organization/project aligned with the funder's strategy?
- What sum should you ask for?
- Do they accept letters of interest (LOIs)?
  - Your steps 1-9 of your plan make a solid LOI and basis for a full proposal.
- Do they take unsolicited inquiries/proposals?
  - If not, look elsewhere, unless you or a partner know someone and can connect.
- How do you apply?
  - Increasingly, applications are online.
- What's the deadline?
  - Don't be late!

# Select best bets and apply!

---

Narrow down the funder possibilities to those that are best aligned with your project and needs.

Follow application instructions carefully. Read application questions carefully.

Write responses in a document for later cutting and pasting (and your records). Tell a story. Don't be boring. Make them *want* to fund you.

Submit by the deadline!



## Thank you!

---

Riva Richmond  
rrichmond@microsociety.org

---

July 11, 2022