

# Alabama Community Leadership Network (ACLN)

## Bringing 2018 To A Close

### *Greetings from the Alabama Community Leadership Network.*

We are pleased to announce that Dr. Arturo Menefee has joined the staff of The University of Alabama Center for Economic Development as Director of Leadership Development. Please make sure that you have his current contact information:

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***BE ON THE LOOKOUT....for a new ACLN website during the first quarter of 2019.***

As you continue to build your leadership programs, we hope that you will find this newsletter helpful. Please continue to update us on your community leadership events/projects. Feel free to send photos and a brief description of your leadership events that you would like us to highlight in our quarterly newsletters. Please submit this information via e-mail to: <mailto:Martha.Whitson@ua.edu>

## Communication is Essential



One of the major barriers to leadership development is the lack of effective communication. Therefore, good **communication skills are essential**. Verbal and non-verbal language is an art of communicating exactly what one wants to convey to others. Effective communication determines how well individuals are understood and how well we understand others. The basic elements

of the communication process include the following:

1. **Sender** (Encode) – The sender begins with an idea (image) of the thing that he/she wants to communicate.
2. **Message** (Verbal and Non-verbal) – Words and actions are constructed together to create a message.

3. **Receiver** (Decode) – The message is sent to a receiver that decodes the message, going through his/her selection and sorting process.
4. **Feedback** (Receiver's Understanding) – The receiver provides feedback to the sender, indicating how he/she interpreted the message.

### **Oral Presentations**

To combat stage fright, take deep slow breaths and relax. Speak loudly and clearly, keep eye contact, and remember to communicate one's personality and friendliness. Presenters should focus on three to five main points, so that one does not lose the attention of the audience. Be sure to Keep it SIMPLE!

### **Keep it SIMPLE!**

#### **S**senses &

#### **I**magery

Appeal to the audience on more than one level: intellectually (facts and figures), visually (PowerPoint, handouts, giveaways), audibly (sound), and emotionally (music, pictures, stories).

#### **M**inimum

#### **P**oints

Decide on three to five major points that relate to each other.

#### **L**aughter

**&**

#### **E**xercises

Make it funny, laughter is good for the soul.

Include the audience with a song, game, or engage in discussion.

Keep in mind that non-verbal communication methods are extremely important because they are cues that convey a message to the audience during an oral presentation. Non-verbal communication includes facial expression, posture (standing and sitting), gestures, voice, and visual aids.

### **Listening**

Listening is used more than any other communication skill, but most have never had training in developing listening techniques. While most people talk around 150 words a minute, listeners hear in the thousands of words per minute. Listeners tend to evaluate and judge the speaker and his/her ideas instead of what the speaker said. The basic listening skills are the following:

- Listen actively (attentive).
- Remain objective (open-minded).
- Avoid evaluating.
- Listen for what is NOT said.
- Listen for consensus.
- Be a complete listener.

### **Written Communication**

Effective written communication takes time and skill since such a small portion of our communication is contained in the words themselves. Leaders and managers must deliver their messages clearly, succinctly and effectively to be successful. Remember that once something is in written form, it cannot be taken back. Poorly written messages create confusion or fail to achieve their intended purpose. Effective written communication tips:

- State goals clearly.
- Explain what the person receiving the messages needs to do.
- Explain the benefits for responding as requested.
- Establish credibility and show respect for the reader.
- Choose an appropriate communication method.

Communication is a skill that is worth developing. Like other skills, you must

practice and continue to work on improving your communication ability. Don't take for granted that you are a great communicator or that you are comfortable with your current communication skills. We can all improve, so let's begin today!

### References:

- Community Leadership Program (Fanning Leadership Center)
- How to Conduct Productive meetings (Toastmasters)
- Simple & Effective Presentations (DML Training & Consulting)
- Spotlight on Effective Communication (National Association of Parliamentarians)

## Resources and Capacity Building

### Effective Grant Writing Tips: Part II

#### Writing Your Proposal

After you have contacted potential grant-making agencies, discussed your project idea with a program officer and obtained the necessary request for proposals (RFP) instructions for the grant, you are ready to begin writing your proposal.



There should be one person designated as the primary author/editor of the grant. It is certainly possible (and perhaps desirable in some cases) to have multiple contributors to the grant writing effort. If there are several contributors to the writing effort, there needs to be an overall editor to ensure that all contributions mesh and that there is no abrupt change in voice or approach for the project narrative.

The single most important point to remember throughout the writing process is to follow the grant guidelines and instructions as closely as possible. This may seem to be an obvious point that would not require clarification, but in fact, many grant proposals fail because the applicant did not follow the basic requirements outlined in the program guidelines. Be sure to adhere to all requirements identified in the RFP. This is a competition. Deviation from the RFP guidelines may place your proposal at a competitive disadvantage.

Although proposal formats differ among sponsors/agencies, all proposals tend to call for the same information. Generally, the following components will be found in a grant proposal package:

- **Cover letter:** The cover letter should create a favorable first impression and fully address any information requested in the grant RFP, i.e. contact information, authorization to apply, etc.
- **Title page:** The title page should be well laid out and informative -- the project title should accurately describe the proposed project.
- **Abstract:** This item is typically written last and is often read first. The abstract should provide a concise (perhaps three or four paragraphs) summary of the entire project. The abstract is very important in creating a strong favorable first impression.
- **Introduction:** The project introduction should clearly establish who you are, your goals, your credibility and set the stage for your problem statement. It should emphasize the importance of conducting the project and set forth the major focus of the entire project. The introduction should also include a statement on the need for the project. After

reading the introduction the reviewer should feel you are a professional organization that is fully capable of carrying out a grant-supported project.

- **Problem or needs statement:** This section should describe the reason(s) behind your proposal -- the circumstances or conditions you plan to change and the problems you propose to address. This is the section in which you identify an important need or needs that a grant-making organization can understand and support. Use and cite accurate, recent and reliable data to document your description. Such sources can include recent census data, recent local or regional plans or surveys and current school system statistics. Your goal for this narrative is to make the problem real to the reader. Use observable characteristics that can be quantified whenever possible. Clearly describe what is wrong or needs correcting in an objective, quantifiable manner. It is very important that your grant proposal feature the most current and accurate demographic and economic data available. Use of old or unreliable data reflects poorly on your ability to prepare a quality grant proposal and will hurt your chances of being funded.
- **Objectives:** Project objectives are statements of what you intend to do to address or resolve the issues highlighted in your problem statement. Each objective should be tied to a specific problem or need identified in the problem statement. These objectives represent the outcomes or end results of your grant project -- the end products or changed conditions that will exist after the project has been completed. Objective statements describe what new conditions will be present as a result of a successful grant project. Objectives are not the process steps in reaching these end products.
- **Methods (Action Steps):** This section is where you describe the steps, methods or processes you will use to reach your project objectives. Typical items to cover in this section include who will do what, how long activities will take, and how progress will be measured (project milestones or process benchmarks). A good project milestone or process objective will have the same features as a good objective statement-- it will be observable, quantifiable, measurable and realistic.
- **Evaluation:** Project evaluation, in terms of process and outcomes, has become increasingly important to grant-making organizations. The applicant should be able to describe what evaluation strategies will be employed to determine if the project is achieving its goals as it progresses (process evaluation) and, after the project is concluded, if the project accomplished its overall objectives (outcome or impact evaluation). You should discuss whether you plan to utilize informal or formal evaluation techniques (or both) and how you will apply the various techniques.
- **Dissemination:** Grant-making organizations will want to know how you plan to tell others about your project activities and accomplishments. This section should describe in as much detail as possible the strategies you plan to use to inform other people and organizations about the progress and results (objective accomplishment) of your project. Dissemination strategies might include a project newsletter, regular news releases, conferences or workshop presentations, project web sites, special events, articles in professional journal, or other techniques.
- **Biographical sketch (resume):** A biographical sketch for all key project personnel is generally a requirement of most sponsoring organizations. Format and page limitations for this component are normally provided in the program guidelines or RFP.
- **Budget:** All proposals require a budget. Be sure to follow the instructions carefully and provide the level of required budget detail. A

budget narrative (if required) should provide detail concerning how cost estimates were calculated and an explanation as to why the cost is necessary for the completion of the project. Be realistic in preparing your budget -- frugal, but not cheap. An inflated budget will undermine your credibility with the sponsoring agency.

- **Attachments:** The RFP will define what attachments (if any) you can include in the application package. Typical attachments include funding agency-required certifications and assurances, resolutions from your board or governing body authorizing the application, letters of support from partner organizations, IRS letters concerning non-profit status, agency by-laws or incorporation documents, maps, drawings and brochures. Before including any attachments, be sure you are authorized to do so in the application guidelines.

### **Before Submitting Your Proposal**

Once you have completed a draft version of your proposal, ask two or three experienced colleagues or outside experts to critically review the draft. This is particularly important when multiple authors are involved. You are seeking a consistent style and voice for the entire proposal narrative, with no sense of changing authors.

Thoroughly edit the proposal narrative, seeking to eliminate all spelling and typographical errors. While electronic spelling and grammar checkers can catch a great majority of errors, it is advisable to have two or three readers you trust review the narrative to detect additional errors. Remember that what you say and how you say it are the primary ways grant reviewers judge your proposal.

After the application has been written, double-check the RFP guidelines before submitting. Most state and federal agencies provide a detailed application package checklist for their grant programs. Use this checklist to ensure you have included everything in your submission package. For organizations that don't provide a checklist, prepare a simple list for yourself and use it.

### **Follow-Up**

If you are successful in your application effort, follow-up will consist of the following:

- Negotiating a grant agreement or contract between your organization and the funding agency.
- Implementing your project.
- Preparing and submitting all required progress reports (typically quarterly or semi-annually) to the funding organization.
- Expending grant funds in accordance with your grant agreement.
- Closing out your project when it's completed (i.e., preparing a project final report).

If you are not successful, your follow-up actions are also very important and may set the stage for funding success in the next grant cycle. You should contact the grant-making agency as soon as you learn of the funding decision. Request a copy of the reviewer's comments and, if possible, discuss your application with the agency program officer to identify areas that need improvement. Try to obtain specific comments about what needs to be addressed or corrected. Request a copy of successful grant proposals. Use the comments and successful proposals to revise your proposal prior to the next submission cycle.

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***"Excellence is to do a common thing in an uncommon way." - - Booker T. Washington***

Over the holiday weekend, while eating more than I needed and watching football all day, I also recalled reading a story about a doctor in Illinois.

Dr. Russell Dohner provided medical care to a small community in Illinois for more than 58 years. After serving in WWII, Russell went on to college and later graduated from medical school. He initially wanted to be a cardiologist, but then decided to become a family physician. The people of this community loved Dr. Russell and truly valued his service. So far, this sounds like a common story, one that you have heard or read about plenty of times. But here is the uncommon aspect of this story.

Dr. Russell was known as the \$5 doctor. In 2012, he only charged his patients \$5 per office visit, up from the \$2 that he charged in 1955. And he doesn't take medical insurance. In an era where the cost of healthcare has skyrocketed, many people who can't afford healthcare will simply forgo seeing a doctor. But not Dr. Russell's patients. People would line up outside his office every day. He didn't make enough to be profitable as a business but was able to maintain his practice through income generated from a farm his family owns. Dr. Russell Dohner passed away in 2015 at the age of 90, but he leaves behind a legacy of excellence. To do a common thing (provide medical care) in an uncommon way (\$5 fee) - - that's excellence. He was driven by his heart and compassion for people, not the market.

What common thing can you do in an uncommon way? What drives you? Maybe you can mentor a young person, start a foundation or serve the elderly. Or maybe you can provide fresh vegetables and fruits to the residents of your community. Because you know what they say...an apple a day, keeps the doctor away! **BE UNCOMMON.**

Arturo S. Menefee, Ph.D.

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## Community Spotlight

**Callie N. Nelson**  
**Interim Director, Leadership Selma-Dallas County**  
**County Extension Coordinator**

**Building a Bridge for the Future** is the tag line for Leadership Selma-Dallas County, a community leadership program that began 24 years ago to help develop leaders and promote community development in Selma, Alabama and Dallas County. Callie Nelson currently serves as the interim director for one of the Black Belt's oldest Leadership programs, a role she has held for the past five years in addition to her full-time position as County Extension Coordinator for the Dallas



County office of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System.

As the interim director, she is passionate about the mission of the program which is dedicated to furthering the development of leaders for their community. This is achieved by building a diverse group of informed community leaders who create and collaborate to impact community needs.

Under Callie's leadership, the 10-month long program has revamped the curriculum and added core competency seminars such as conflict resolution training, building collaboration, and facilitator training. This year participants are completing an online Leadership Development Course as part of the program and will also participate in a deliberative dialogue on Racism in a Diverse Nation.

*"Helping to develop leaders for our community is very important and I don't necessarily mean those in elected positions; for a community to be successful there must be leaders at all levels, ages, genders, nationality, etc. Therefore, I strive to engage people of all backgrounds who care about their community, so Selma and Dallas County can flourish and truly be the "Queen City" of the Black Belt and Alabama."*

Callie is a graduate of Alabama A&M University and The University of Montevallo. She has been married to Michael Nelson for the past 34 years and is a step-mother to Cameron; Grandma Callie to Camdon and Camble; and Auntie Coco to her nieces, nephews and now to her great-nieces and nephews.

## ASK ACLN



If you have a question regarding an article in this newsletter, or any strategies/resources/ideas pertaining to your local leadership program, please submit your question to us and we will present our response in the next quarterly newsletter. Please submit any questions to: Martha Whitson at [martha.whitson@ua.edu](mailto:martha.whitson@ua.edu).

**Thank you for helping the ACLN chart our way to building sustainable leadership programs.**

***Warm Wishes for a Profitable 2019!***

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**Alabama Community Leadership Network (ACLN)**  
**On behalf of The University of Alabama Center for Economic Development**