



PROBLEM-SOLVING JUSTICE

# FINDING RESOURCES TO HELP YOUR PROGRAM THRIVE

*“When you’re first starting your program, you need to be one part practitioner, one part marketer, and one part fundraiser. And be creative. You can shape your problem-solving strategy in so many ways to fit funders’ goals while still meeting your programmatic needs.”*

— Roxann Pais, Dallas Community Court

This fact sheet is one in a series to support the development of problem-solving justice initiatives. For other documents in the series, please visit [courtinnovation.org](http://courtinnovation.org).

A successful search for funds is supported by three things:

- solid research of potential funding sources;
- a compelling project; and
- networking.

Planners should look beyond the traditional sources of criminal justice funding. Is there a local elected official with discretionary funding who might be enticed to support community service projects? Is there a hospital that might fund drug abuse prevention efforts? Is there a foundation that might be interested in neighborhood beautification? Networking is also key because cultivating relationships with funders—as opposed to simply responding to requests for proposals—helps you stay abreast of new funding opportunities and keep your project in the spotlight.

## SIX STRATEGIES TO SUSTAIN PROBLEM-SOLVING CRIMINAL JUSTICE PROJECTS

### 1 Seek funding from state and local governments and private foundations

Take a close look at any institution—banks, businesses, government agencies, foundations—that has a stake in the success of your neighborhood or your project. It is usually easier to make a pitch to someone with a vested interest. The most important thing is to find someone to take that initial leap to invest in your ideas. Talk to local legislators, city council members, and others. Try state administering agencies that serve as a conduit for federal funding. Another great resource is the Foundation Center, which offers information about grantmakers and publishes a free newsletter announcing available grants (<http://foundationcenter.org/newsletters/>). Once you get the ball rolling, other funding is sure to follow. For example, a grant from a community foundation can fund a planner who can then seek additional support for the project. Local funding, even if modest, demonstrates that



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## BUFFALO (N.Y.) CITY COURT'S INNOVATIVE STAFFING

When beginning its C.O.U.R.T.S. (Court Outreach Unit: Referral and Treatment Services) program, which seeks to link offenders to services, the Buffalo City Court convened a meeting with over 60 area providers, explaining the concept and making the case that if providers would locate staff members in space provided by the court, defendants would have easier access to treatment. Seeing the benefits, 22 agencies now have staff—social workers and case managers—who work in the courthouse, performing assessments and coordinating service delivery at no additional cost to the court.

there is local commitment to the project—a feature many national funders value. In one innovative example, a nonprofit 501(c)(3) corporation was created in Atlanta to help raise funds for the Atlanta Community Court from individuals, private foundations, and faith groups—both through contributions and fundraising events, such as golf tournaments. The 501(c)(3) can accept donations that help court participants, like computers for a GED program or mass transit tokens for juvenile court participants.

### 2 Seek out federal funding sources

Visit <http://www.grants.gov>, an online gateway to more than \$400 billion in federal grants and the single access point for over 1,000 grant programs. The site allows you to register for email alerts of new grant postings. Also, the Department of Justice provides funding to community justice initiatives through the Office of Justice Programs, including the Bureau of Justice Assistance and the Community Capacity Development Office. On a regular basis, review their websites, program plans, and press releases. You should also consider setting aside five minutes each day to review The Federal Register, which provides a daily compilation of federal documents. This is a great starting point both to review federal agencies' grant opportunities and to learn more about agencies' policies, procedures, and future directions.

### 3 Develop partnerships

Use the power of the justice system to bring other players to the table as collaborators. Explore filing joint funding applications with other programs or agencies. There's often strength in numbers. In Orange County, California, judicial leaders are bringing together all their problem-solving courts—including on-site services—under one roof. The “one-stop shop” format will give participants convenient access to more key social services while giving service providers access to more clients. This provides not only an incentive for service providers to come on board (and commit staff to the project) but also helps attract funding; various agencies are beginning to file joint applications for grants to provide additional services.

### 4 Use existing resources in innovative ways

Many funders look for an initiative's ability to leverage resources to get the biggest bang for the buck. Often “in-kind” contributions can be just as valuable as cash. In Clackamas County, Oregon, court planners convinced the county to donate a room for the community court near the neighborhood it was going to serve, along with a portable judge's bench and some recording equipment. When a representative from probation coordinated community service and the state welfare department contributed a social worker, planners were able to open the community court without any initial grants. In another example, Dallas's community court opened in a neighborhood community center that was already host to 25 agencies.

### 5 Use volunteers

Volunteers are another potentially cost-effective way to boost problem-solving criminal justice initiatives. Volunteers can help criminal justice practitioners pursue their goals in a number of concrete ways: by freeing up project staff to focus on pressing duties (answering phones, preparing reports, etc.), by participating in neighborhood clean-ups or patrolling local parks and housing developments, and by providing manpower for new initiatives. The Sault Tribe of Chippewa Indians Tribal Court has trained com-

## PUTTING TOGETHER A COMPELLING FUNDING PROPOSAL

- Link your project with specific issues that have urgency in your community.
- Clearly demonstrate how your project is consistent with the priorities of potential funders.
- Make a case for your project on more than criminal justice terms—show how it supports economic development, public health, etc.
- Communicate to funders how their funds will leverage other resources for the project.
- On applications, make sure to follow all directions precisely and to answer every question asked.
- Outline your answers in advance and make sure they speak directly to the question you’re answering.
- Use clear and concise language throughout—remembering that most of the time, less is more.

munity volunteers to participate in “peacemaking,” the traditional Native American practice in which designated “peacemakers” mediate disputes.

### 6 Get noticed

At the end of the day, the most successful fundraising strategy is to run a high-quality program. Funders, whether they’re local, state, or national, respond to results. Unfortunately, a successful program doesn’t always speak for itself. Often it is necessary to aggressively get the word out. The best advice here is not to be shy. Make every possible effort to communicate with the public. Distribute newsletters and press clips to foundations and elected officials. Launch your own website. Send out photos and press releases to local media, and invite journalists to events. Put the name of your project on the back of vests participants wear when performing community service. The community outreach coordinator for South Carolina’s 4th Circuit’s Operation Community Justice project is in regular contact with journalists and writes a weekly column herself—talking about the project’s achievements and problem solving in general. You never know when a letter, press release, or newspaper column will catch a funder’s attention.

## FURTHER READING

### *How Do We Pay for That? Sustaining Community Prosecution on a Tight Budget*

<http://www.courtinnovation.org/research/how-do-we-pay-sustaining-community-prosecution-tight-budget>



## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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