

SWAN - Funding Friday - 6.26.26

Learning Never Stops, and Neither Should You

On Wednesday, I launched a new series called [What to Do \(or What Not to Do\) Wednesday](#) by sharing a reality that anyone involved in fundraising will eventually face. One of the grant applications I helped prepare for a nonprofit organization had been declined.

There isn't much value in dwelling on a rejection. What matters is what happens next.

So instead of focusing on the "no," I immediately turned my attention to the next opportunity. Within hours, I submitted two additional grant applications for the same nonprofit.

Then, this morning, I learned that another grant application I had helped prepare for one of the nonprofit organizations where I volunteer had been funded.

The timing could not have been better. It served as a reminder that successful fundraising isn't measured by whether every proposal is funded. It's measured by persistence, preparation, and the willingness to keep moving forward.

Grant seeking is often described as a numbers game, but I think it's more accurate to say it's a discipline. Every opportunity deserves careful research. Every application should be tailored to the funder's priorities. Not every grant is the right fit, and that's okay. The goal isn't to apply for everything. The goal is to apply strategically.

One thing I've learned is that some of the most important efforts take place long before an application is ever submitted.

That's why I make it a priority to participate in webinars, attend information sessions, subscribe to grant newsletters, and stay connected to the nonprofit and philanthropic communities. Every event expands my understanding of what's available, introduces me to new ideas and new connections, and occasionally reveals an opportunity that may be an excellent fit for one of the organizations where I volunteer.

Over the past few weeks, I've participated in several outstanding learning opportunities.

I attended a webinar for a funding opportunity that provided valuable insight into eligibility requirements, funding priorities, and how reviewers evaluate applications. Even when a session doesn't immediately lead to a grant submission, it strengthens the way I evaluate opportunities and make recommendations.

I also participated in the webinar introducing the new [Pennsylvania Cultural Exchange \(PaX\) Fellowship](#), an exciting statewide leadership initiative that brings together artists, educators, historians, nonprofit leaders, and cultural practitioners to strengthen communities through the humanities.

Another excellent session was hosted by Pennsylvania Creative Industries, the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission, and the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, highlighting grants, technical assistance, and resources available to creative organizations, entrepreneurs, and small businesses. The workshop featured practical case studies demonstrating how organizations are leveraging available resources to strengthen both their programs and their communities.

Looking ahead, I'm planning to participate in another educational session focused on improvements to the federal grants process and new collaboration tools available through Grants.gov. Opportunities like these don't simply teach us about a single grant. They help us become better grant seekers overall.

The nonprofit sector changes constantly. New funding opportunities emerge. Priorities evolve. Technology advances. The organizations that are best positioned for long-term success are often those whose volunteers, board members, and staff are committed to continuous learning.

Every webinar attended, every newsletter read, every new relationship formed, and every proposal submitted is an investment in becoming a better advocate for the organizations and communities we care about. None of these efforts exists in isolation. Together, they build the knowledge, skills, and connections that strengthen our ability to identify opportunities, secure resources, and help nonprofit organizations advance their missions.

If you volunteer with a nonprofit, serve on a board, or simply care about helping an organization fulfill its mission, don't underestimate the value of investing in your own learning. The knowledge you gain today may become the opportunity that helps change an organization's future tomorrow.

And every now and then, after a difficult Wednesday, that commitment to learning and persistence leads to a very satisfying Friday.



Upcoming Virtual Learning & Networking Opportunities

♦ **Simpler Grants.gov Demonstration**

June 30, 2026 | 11:00 a.m. ET

Hosted by the Council on Federal Financial Assistance (COFFA), the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the Simpler Grants.gov team.

Learn about the next generation of Grants.gov, including improved application tools, collaboration features, budget form prototypes, and updates based on user feedback from across the grants community.

Register: <https://www.grants.gov>

♦ **Pennsylvania Cultural Exchange (PaX) Fellowship**

Application Deadline: July 8, 2026

The PaX Fellowship brings together humanities, arts, and cultural practitioners from across Pennsylvania for professional development, collaboration, and community-building. The information session recording and application materials are now available.

Learn More: <https://www.paculture.org/programs/pax>

♦ **The Compounding Impact of Federal and State Policy and Funding Shifts on Basic Needs, Essential Services, and the Nonprofit Sector**

July 10, 2026 | 11:00 a.m.

Presented by the Pittsburgh Foundation and the Community Foundation of Westmoreland County.

This timely session will examine the potential impacts of H.R. 1, changes in federal funding, and state budget decisions on healthcare, nutrition programs, affordable housing, and nonprofit organizations throughout the region. Particularly relevant for nonprofit leaders engaged in strategic planning and advocacy.

Register: <https://pittsburghfoundation.org>

♦ **Nonprofit Masterclass Learning Webinar - Monthly Series**

A free hands-on training series for nonprofit professionals featuring practical tools, templates, and strategies that can be implemented immediately. The June session focuses on navigating funding shifts, workforce challenges, and organizational change management with presenter Charonda L. Hill, MSOL.

Register: <https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/f2R-Zlv5SZiz3tTNyiE6JA>

♦ **Disability Protections in Pennsylvania**

July 15, 2026 | 12:00 p.m.

Presented by the PEAL Center and the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission.

This training explores disability rights, legal protections, and advocacy resources available to Pennsylvanians. Valuable for nonprofit leaders, educators, employers, board members, and community advocates interested in accessibility and inclusion.

Join: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88092834773>

As I mentioned above, none of these programs require airfare, hotel reservations, conference registrations costing hundreds of dollars, or days away from work. They simply require a willingness to learn, connect with others, and invest a little time in their own professional growth.

The nonprofit sector changes rapidly. The people and organizations that continue learning are often the ones best positioned to adapt, collaborate, and thrive. If you're looking to expand your network, strengthen your organization, or simply learn something new, I encourage you to consider attending one or more of these programs.

Disclaimer

Funding Friday is provided by [SWAN](#) as a public service informational resource intended to help connect nonprofit leaders, volunteers, educators, artists, and community organizations with opportunities, training, grants, events, and professional development resources throughout Southwestern Pennsylvania.

The information and individuals, groups, and organizations featured do not constitute an endorsement by SWAN of any organization, program, event, funding opportunity, service, or third-party content. While we make every effort to share reputable, relevant information, organizations and individuals are encouraged to independently research and evaluate all opportunities before participating.

As always, if something sounds too good to be true, it usually is.

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