

Education Grants

Alert

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Schools may soon benefit from new grants database

A Web site that is soon to get off the ground could be the beginnings of a large-scale database with information beneficial to school districts around the country.

Common Grant Application, a project of **Oceanpeak Inc.**, is expected to be available to users later this year and could one day be a central location for grantseekers of all kinds to search foundation information and available opportunities for funding. While the name is similar, CGA isn't to be confused with the "common grant application" that grantmakers refer to as a standard format for submitting proposals.

At its highest hope, this CGA will allow school districts and other grantseekers to not only research funders, but also store their schools' standard application content (such as background statements, mission statements and budgets), manage multiple applications, and participate in social networking. Ultimately, the site could save your busy school district or grants development team time and money and plug your organization into a wider range of foundations.

The idea was the brain-child of technology entrepreneur **Jeff Lawrence**, co-founder of a software company that was acquired by **Intel**. **Lawrence** later became a trustee of the **Lawrence Foundation**, and his experiences as a grantmaker led him to find a way to use technology to make the grants process easier on both the applicant and grantor side.

Using paper-based applications proved too time-consuming for Lawrence, the foundation's executive director **Lori Mitchell**, and the applicants.

Implementing an online application process at the foundation led to the idea to create a national database of grantseekers and grantmakers and their funding needs and information.

The benefits to grantseekers are plentiful.

Unlike Web sites that currently provide applicants with foundation information, this site will allow them to set up accounts and

manage their profiles; and to choose how much information they wish to make public. Once the site is completely rolled out, schools should be able to search for funders by topic area.

Your school district may choose to publicize its grant award history for grantmakers, who will also be able to register and search the Web site for organizations worthy of donations.

Services such as browsing funders' background information will be free. But users could pay from \$20 to \$100 a month to receive more detailed information about foundations; tailor and save different application profiles to send to different funders; and even apply for grants through the site.

Lawrence said grantseekers will pay a few dollars to submit their applications and he expects the notion may not sit well with users at first.

But he insists they will ultimately save money by not having to mail application packages or letters of intent.

Also, the process could save time, as applicants could apply in a few minutes if they already have their information registered and stored on the site—versus spending hours to put individual application packages together.

The site has benefits for grantmakers, too. Aside from being able to browse organizations' background and past awards information, it will provide a manageable system for them to collect and process applications.

While it's just getting off the ground, Lawrence hopes CGA encourages "collaboration, the sharing of information and social networking."

"Hopefully," he said, "it can help make [the grantseeking/grantmaking process] more transparent."

For more information about Common Grant Application or to contact Jeff Lawrence or Lori Mitchell, go to <http://www.commongrantapplication.com>.

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