

Granting a School's Wish

A Service-Learning Experience



Proposal Project

Service-Learning

Service-learning is described as a learning method that combines classroom instruction with community service. Students can improve academically, while also personally. This was my experience during my service-learning project. With this project, I was able to enhance my level of civic responsibility, while also gaining valid professional experience. The project was to assist a local 501(c)(3) nonprofit with grant writing.

Spokane Guilds' School (Community Partner)

The Spokane Guilds' School & Neuromuscular Center (SGS) was founded in 1960. SGS is Eastern Washington's first neuromuscular center. The center provides a comprehensive care for children (birth-to-3 years of age) with developmental disabilities and delays. SGS provides children with specialized pediatric care and personalized treatment programs that include occupational, physical, speech therapies, and special education programs. SGS serves 234 children each term, and 18% of all graduates from SGS no longer require any further therapeutic. SGS is the only nonprofit school of its kind in the Spokane area. SGS was asking for a \$30,000 grant to fund an update to their file system. The upgrade would include technology updates for Electronic Medical Records (EMR). EMR would allow SGS to increase their overall efficiency.



\$30,000 EMR Grant

Preparation

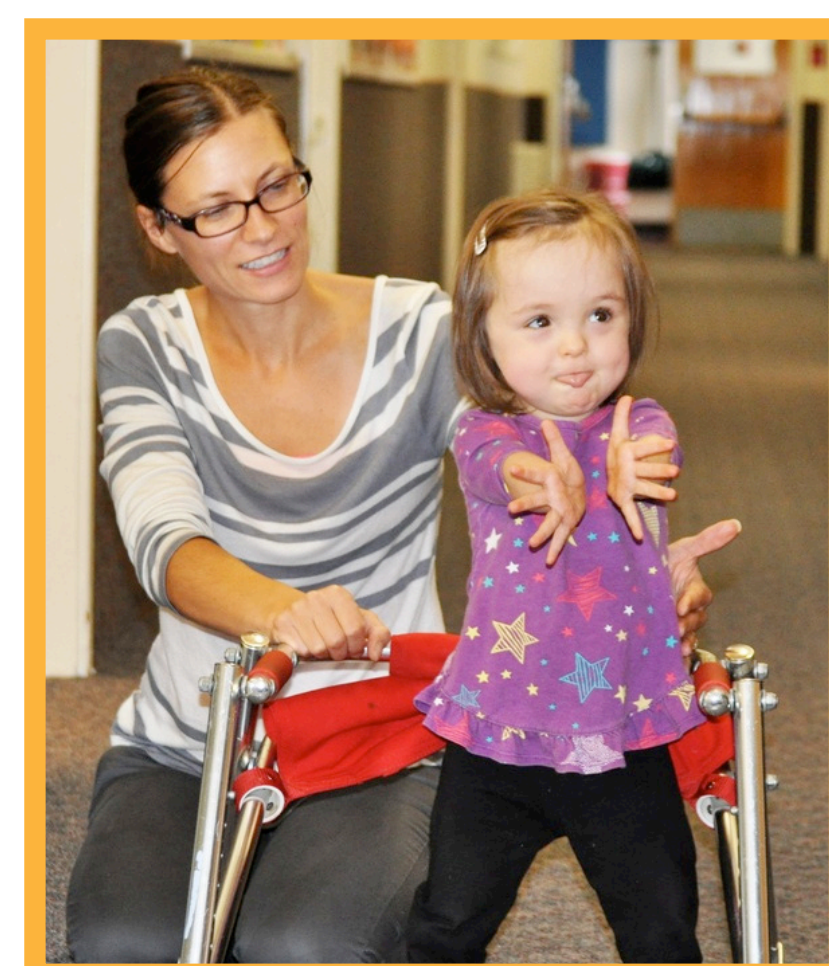
Before beginning the grant proposal, I met with the developmental office staff at the Spokane Guilds' School. We discussed various options for possible grants, but ultimately decided that their current largest need was for Electronic Medical Records (EMR). We also identified potential funders for the grant, who had previously made donations to SGS.

Research

A key aspect to grant writing is doing proper and thorough research. To start my research, I needed to describe the community need of special education, and how an upgrade of EMR for SGS would help meet this need. I then had to find a strong potential funder for the grant. I looked into local companies whose key community goals matched the mission statement of SGS. With this information, I narrowed it down to Itron. Itron focused on funding education, health, and children based projects in the community but also had a compelling passion for the advancement of technology. It was a strong match.

Writing

I had learned all proposal writing guidelines from class content. The other important step to writing was to follow all the specific grant submission guidelines and requirements laid out by Itron. A grant should always be tailored to the wants and needs of your funder and your community partner to ensure the best chance of your grant being accepted.



Special Education Need

Community Need

Spokane has always been a city with strong core values. Spokane is dedicated to always improving community health and education. Washington State has been a pioneer in bringing education and health care to all the communities in Washington. It is believed that every man, woman, and child should be given the opportunity to live a healthy and happy life.

In 2010, a report by the US Census Bureau stated that 19% (56.7 million people) of the population had a disability. Every year, over 1,000 children in the Spokane area will be born with a developmental delay. There has been a 3% increase in enrollment of special education programs in the local area. That's roughly 150 new families in need of special education services every month. These services are crucial for allowing children to meet their potential. With the assistance of the Spokane Guilds' School early-childhood, special education program these children will be able to reach their full potential. By implementing Electronic Medical Records, The Spokane Guilds' School can improve the effectiveness of their many programs offered to children and their families.

SGS Numbers

234 Students being served (8% increase).

118 Children a month received Speech Therapy.

115 Children served in their home environment due to being medically fragile or because of preference.

84 Children a month received Occupational Therapy.

81 Children a month received Cognitive Therapy.

19,045 Hours of therapy provided to children.

26 Percent of the children discharged from the program in 2015 reached age appropriate skills.

99 Children a month received Physical Therapy.

21,237 Miles traveled by therapists to serve children in their homes.



My Experience

Technical Communication

Course Outcomes:

- » Key features of the proposal genre and types of proposals
- » Identify funding sources
- » Use paper and online sources to research grant opportunities
- » Examine information provided by funding sources
- » Prepare a grant proposal package
- » Work in a team with a client (community partner)

English 507 (Proposal Writing) was one of my most rewarding technical communication classes. This was also my first project working with a real life client. I was able to meet all of the course outcomes and goals during the completion of my service-learning project. The class lectures, reading material, and most importantly the hands-on learning experience enabled me to gain the most from this course. In fact, now as I approach the completion of my technical communication major, I am very interested in being a grant-writer for a nonprofit for my future career.

Service-Learning Reflection

My experience with the Spokane Guilds' School resulted in an enhanced sense of civic engagement and continuing professional relationships with SGS staff. Gaining these connections is of the utmost importance for growing towards my professional career. This project was one of my most rewarding experiences at Eastern Washington University. I was able to apply classroom gained knowledge to real world situations:

- » Working with a real life client (community partner)
- » Collaborating with a team
- » Managing a long-term project
- » Collecting usable data and research
- » Writing successful proposals
- » Finding potential grant funders

My service-learning experience has allowed me to grow outside the academic setting and to help within the community. Getting to work with a nonprofit that is exceptionally beneficial to the community was incredibly rewarding. I intend to use my experiences with this project as I move forward into the workforce.



References:

- Unite for Children. "Children and Young People with Disabilities: Fact Sheet" May 2013.
- "The Importance of Early Intervention for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities and their Families". July 2011.
- Spokane Guilds' School & Neuromuscular Center. "2014-2015 Annual Report". 2015.

Timeline

- Week 1** » Research potential local nonprofits in Spokane/Cheney area
- Week 2**
- Week 3** » Official Meeting with SGS
- Week 4**
- Week 5** » Research on community need
» Compile data for proposal
- Week 6** » Outline Goals and Objectives
» Draft Proposal
- Week 7** » Letter of Inquiry to Itron
- Week 8** » Develop Detailed Budget
- Week 9** » Final Proposal Revisions
» Submit for Grade
» Submit to SGS
- Week 10**