



FIRST 5 LA GRANTEE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE INSTITUTE CUSTOMIZED CONSULTING 2009–2010

TAPROOT FOUNDATION: STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

Program Overview

Effective communication has become increasingly important in all aspects of life and is among the most under-resourced aspects of nonprofit organizational operations. From straightforward objectives such as newsletters and announcements to complex branding and positioning, nonprofit organizations often have difficulty prioritizing staff time and other organizational resources to address and accomplish marketing, communications, and public relations. With the rapid escalation of sophisticated communications strategies, the nonprofit sector has recognized an increasing need for greater visibility and more effective means to share its good work and positive impact with a wider audience.

The Taproot Foundation has developed a proven approach to integrate the strategic communications needs of the nonprofit sector with the tremendous talent and motivation of professionals from strategic communications and other fields through its service grants. By engaging teams of volunteer business professionals to work on strategic communications and other nonprofit management projects, the Taproot Foundation provides nonprofit organizations with tools and services to maximize the impact of their critical work. Each strategic communications project is executed by a team of five to six professionals who volunteer approximately 100 hours of time and expertise over a six-month project, working in close collaboration with the nonprofit organization. The Taproot Foundation model ensures high-quality services customized to meet the specific agreed-upon objectives of each project, which are refined during the first phase of the project.

Program Components

The Strategic Communications Program, one of First 5 LA's Customized Consulting opportunities, involves an introductory information session, a competitive selection process, and an orientation session prior to implementation of one of the following strategic communications project types:

- **Annual Report:** An effective annual report can be a powerful resource for engaging major donors, foundations, or strategic partners. For many nonprofits, a key challenge is to create a report each year that appropriately conveys its accomplishments and culture and is compelling, informative, inspiring, and economical.
- **Brochure:** A brochure can inspire donors, provide program information for a prospective client, or recruit a new volunteer. This project type is appropriate for

organizations with a solid marketing and fundraising strategy and a strong name and visual identity.

- **Website:** A professional-quality website can improve an organization's ability to reach a variety of audiences; invite them into a productive, ongoing relationship; and enable them to interact with the organization in ways that improve their experience in a cost-effective manner.
- **Naming & Visual Identity:** An organization's name and visual identity can support and enhance communications with key constituencies and the greater community.
- **Visual Identity & Brand Strategy:** This project type assists organizations in defining a distinctive brand message to constituents and creating a compelling visual identity (logo) that clearly communicates key aspects of the organization's mission and work.
- **Key Messages & Brand Strategy:** Brand strategy and key messages drive and unite all communications, leverage all marketing and fundraising efforts, and allow everyone involved with an organization to "speak with a singular voice."

Intended Audience

Participants for the Strategic Communications Program are selected through a competitive application process, based on level of readiness and ability to compose an appropriate team and demonstrate commitment of the time and resources required to successfully complete the customized strategic communications plan. The program is open to current or former First 5 LA grantees in good standing and requires a modest participation fee.

Program Leader

The **Taproot Foundation**, a national organization with offices in Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco, and Seattle, was started in 2001 by Aaron Hurst with the aim of strengthening nonprofits by engaging business professionals in service to the nonprofit sector. Service Grants are awarded to nonprofits in the areas of marketing, information technology, human resources, and other aspects of nonprofit management and leadership. Taproot serves organizations in the environment, health, social services, and education sectors, working in partnership with philanthropy to provide qualitative, high-impact pro bono professional services.

Information Session

November 2, 2009

2:00-4:00 PM

First 5 LA

750 North Alameda Street

Los Angeles, CA 90012

To register for the Information Session, please visit

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=tJDtdEDOssPRrec6wlbxkw_3d_3d

Applying

Applications must be completed online at www.taprootfoundation.org/npo and are due by December 1, 2009.