HENRY FORD HEALTH SYSTEM:
ADMINISTRATION, GLOBALIZATION, AND MULTICULTURALISM
DIMENSIONS OF PREPARING GRANT WRITERS TO INCREASE EFFECTIVENESS

MSA 698 Directed Administrative Portfolio

Paper #3 MSA 604 Administration, Globalization, & Multiculturalism

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Section 1: Administration, Globalization, & Multiculturalism Aspects of the MSA 698 Issue

This paper is a continuation of a series of studies examining the need for Henry Ford Health System (HFHS) to adequately prepare grant writers to write competitive grant proposals. Specific administration, globalization, and multiculturalism aspects of this major challenge are examined in this paper.

External funding from federal agencies and private foundations is crucial to sustain the health system’s research enterprise. As funding for research studies becomes more limited and competition for this funding increases, the need to provide adequate preparation resources to grant writers becomes an increasingly critical, system-wide issue. HFHS must ensure that grant writers have the training and other resources necessary to develop successful grant proposals.

Several administration, globalization, and multiculturalism topics relate to preparing effective grant writers, including generational and cultural differences; stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination; gender issues; and the organizational culture. The subsequent sections of this paper present a brief review of the related literature involving these topics, relevant HFHS information, an analysis that examines these issues in more detail, and answers to the following research questions related to these topics and the major issue of study:

1. How do generational and cultural differences impact the method of training that is most effective and preferred?

2. What effect might stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination have on the grant peer review process?
3. Do gender issues affect the grant writing process and the resources needed to ensure that grant writers are prepared to write highly ranked grants?

4. Does the organizational culture at HFHS support a cohesive and culturally acceptable strategy to prepare grant writers to write successful grants?

5. What actions can HFHS take to address the effect of these factors on preparing grant writers to write successful grant proposals?

**Section 2: Brief Review of the Literature**

Administrative and multicultural factors have been widely studied and their effects on employee training and peer reviews have produced an abundance of literature. This section reviews literature concerning generational and cultural differences related to training; the effect of stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination on peer reviews; the impact of gender on training and peer view outcomes; and organizational culture’s role in supporting training and innovation.

Generational and cultural differences may affect which employees are interested in receiving training. Warr and Birdi (1998) found that older employees are less likely to participate in voluntary development activities than younger employees; however, once older employees participated in one activity, they were equally as likely as younger employees to further participate. Diverse national cultures play a role in the importance placed on organizational training, with some cultures strongly valuing and encouraging training and development, while others consider it unnecessary and a waste of resources (Hassi & Storti, 2011).

The type of training that is most effective and desired can vary widely between employees and is affected to an extent by their generation and culture. Urick (2017) found that younger generations are more likely to be comfortable with training that uses technology than older generations. Additionally, older generations are less likely than younger generations to
want formal, instructor-led training, preferring on-the-job training and mentorship instead. According to Thornhill (1993), employees from cultures with strong uncertainty avoidance are likely to be comfortable in structured learning situations, while participants from weak uncertainty avoidance cultures will prefer open-ended environments that promote discussion. Differing power distance scores can also affect the role trainees expect the trainer to take in leading the training session and their expected level of expertise.

Racial or cultural differences can also result in prejudice and discrimination that affect grant peer review outcomes. Shavers et al. (2005) identified a number of factors that impede racial/ethnic minority investigators from applying and successfully competing for NIH research funding. Some commonly reported barriers include: grants proposing minority-focused research are stigmatized and devalued; “inadequate representation of racial/ethnic minorities on grants review and other NIH committees” (p. 1068), which results in the “absence of truly peer review process” (p. 1068); and “the belief among grant reviewers that minority researchers' training is substandard or that minority researchers cannot produce quality research results” (p. 1068).

While generational and cultural differences may affect training and peer review evaluations, gender plays a surprisingly small role. Marsh, Jayasinghe, and Bond (2011) found that the gender of a grant proposal applicant does not have an effect on peer review outcomes. Similarly, there are no gender differences “in the probability of receiving training, in participation in multiple training events, or in hours of training received” (Veum, 1996, p. 43). Research regarding gender differences in learning styles is inconsistent, as some studies suggest contradicting results of differing learning style preferences, while others report no differences between genders. McCabe (2014) suggests that this inconsistency stems from viewing gender dichotomously (i.e. male/female), which does not affect preferred learning styles; however, when
gender is treated as a multifactorial construct, the impact of psychological gender identity traits (i.e. instrumental/expressive) on the learning style preferred by men and women does differ.

Organizational culture plays a key role in preparing grant writers to be successful. Sanz-Valle, Naranjo-Valencia, Jiménez-Jiménez, and Perez-Caballero (2011) found that the type of organizational culture directly impacts organizational learning. Additionally, organizational learning has a significant effect on innovation. An organizational culture that is externally oriented and values flexibility and change was found to be most supportive of organizational learning and would foster the development of new and innovative training and preparation resources, as well as novel research ideas and processes, which are essential to securing funding.

Literature suggests that generational and cultural differences can affect which employees are most likely to participate in training programs, as well as what method of training is likely to be preferred. Furthermore, racial/ethnic discrimination can affect grant peer review outcomes. Gender, however, does not significantly impact training usage, preference, or peer review outcomes. Importantly, the type of organizational culture plays a strong role in supporting a cohesive strategy to encourage learning and innovation. This information highlights the need for organizations to consider multicultural and administrative issues in developing resources to prepare grant writers to be successful.

Section 3: Brief Description of MSA 604 Organizational Data Collection Efforts

HFHS organizational information was collected for this report from a number of internal and external sources. Informal interviews with current grant writers and other research staff, as well as personal observations based on over six years of working in research at HFHS, provided substantial information on each of the topics discussed in this paper. The system’s 2011 Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award Application provided data on the diversity of the workforce.
The external HFHS website provided information on Employee Resource Groups and their efforts to decrease discrimination and stereotyping and the Innovation Institute’s role in supporting an organizational culture that fosters innovation.

Section 4: Effect of Generational and Cultural Differences on Grant Writer Training

There are a number of administrative, globalization, and multicultural aspects of the challenge to develop and utilize resources to prepare grant writers to be successful in the competitive research funding environment. Some of these aspects that may have the greatest impact are examined in this paper. This section discusses the effect of generational and cultural differences on grant writers’ training needs and preferences.

The workforce of HFHS is very diverse. In 2011, women made up 78% of the workforce and men made up 22%. Sixty-eight percent of employees were Caucasian, 22% were African American, 8% were Asian/Pacific Islander, 2% were Hispanic, and 1% were classified as Other. Ages were also widely ranging, with 4% of the workforce under 25 years old, 22% aged 25-34, 25% aged 35-44, 28% aged 45-54, 19% aged 55-64, and 3% over 65 years old (HFHS, 2011). This diversity provides a wealth of different knowledge and experience that employees can share with each other for development purposes, but it also creates challenges for implementing educational and training courses.

HFHS currently provides educational and training resources to its employees through its internal University website. From this website, employees can sign up for development courses that are available in a variety of formats, including web-based interactive courses, online videos, and in-person classes. Employees are able to choose the method of training that is most effective for them based on their differing preferences and skills. This platform provides a ready opportunity to provide training to grant writers through a variety of methods.
In addition to training related to the writing of grants, some grant writers at HFHS have identified a need for training in the use of the online submission mechanisms utilized by many funding sources. This training may be critical for employees who are less accustomed to working with computers, as grants are often required to be submitted through online programs and a lack of experience with these programs may prevent the submission of an otherwise fundable grant.

The cultural and generational diversity of HFHS requires that differing preferences for technology use, formality, and level of participation in training courses be considered in the development of training courses. Additionally, content needs may differ based on grant writers’ varying skills and experience. It is essential that HFHS provides training that meets the needs of all employees in a way that is appropriate for diverse cultures and generations.

**Section 5: Impact of Stereotypes, Prejudice, and Discrimination**

This section examines the topic of stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination and their possible impact on the grant review process. Cultural differences and steps to reduce discrimination at HFHS are discussed.

The previous section showed that the HFHS workforce is very diverse. In the research sector, there is a level of cultural separation between different divisions, as many researchers and staff in a given division are from the same country or region. Some grant writers interviewed stated that they feel excluded if they are part of a minority culture within a division. Others reported perceptions of discrimination based on the country in which they received their medical and research training which could negatively impact grant review outcomes.

HFHS has taken many steps toward becoming an inclusive organization that tries to prevent discrimination and dispel stereotypes. An example of one such step is the creation of Employee Resource Groups, which represent different cultures, generations, genders, and sexual
orientations and “provide professional and personal growth opportunities for all employees [and] provide education and awareness for participants and other employees around various dimensions of diversity” (HFHS, 2017). These groups work to engage all members of the workforce to overcome discrimination and prejudice.

Discrimination and prejudice are challenges faced by some grant writers that could affect the grant review process. HFHS has taken, and continues to take, steps to reduce the prevalence of these issues. Overall, there is significant cooperation and collaboration among researchers at HFHS, indicating that cultural differences and discrimination do not play a strong role in preventing collective participation in the grant writing and review process.

Section 6: Gender Issues in the Grant Writing Process

The effect of gender issues on the grant writing process are discussed in this section. The availability of successful female role models and genuine acceptance by male colleagues decreases the concern at HFHS about harmful effects of gender issues, however, there are some gender issues present.

There are a number of women at HFHS, including the Vice President of Research and many of the department chairs and division heads, who have overcome the gender-based barriers that are often found in scientific fields and are largely successful at writing effective grants and securing substantial external research funding. They often serve as mentors and role models for new grant writers, both female and male. This mentorship was noted by many of the female grant writers interviewed to be an important resource for guidance in preparing research grants.

Additionally, most male grant writers at HFHS are fully supportive of and happy to collaborate with their female colleagues. Male and female grant writers typically have fruitful
interactions that lead to quality grant proposals. Indeed, many of the grants awarded to HFHS are collaborations between researchers of both genders.

There are, however, some departments that are predominately male, with little or no female researchers or staff. In these departments, some female grant writers reported that they feel that their contributions are undervalued by their male supervisors and that their suggestions are often dismissed.

Although some gender-based issues do exist, these issues do not appear to be a significant factor in the grant writing process at HFHS. The availability of female mentors and a cooperative atmosphere to work with grant writers of both genders provides a supportive environment for effective participation in training and peer review for all grant writers.

**Section 7: Role of Organizational Culture in Preparing Effective Grant Writers**

The final administration, globalization, and multiculturalism topic analyzed is organizational culture. The culture of HFHS can have a great impact on the development and effectiveness of resources to prepare grant writers to be successful through its level of support for learning and innovation.

HFHS’s culture supports the preparation of grant writers to write successful grants by encouraging individual and organizational learning and collaboration to develop novel research ideas. The system provides a number of opportunities throughout the year for individual and shared learning, including educational courses on the internal University website, funding for attendance at national conferences, a monthly seminar series to learn about recent findings in medical research from both internal and external researchers, and an annual research symposium for internal researchers to present findings. The previously mentioned steps that HFHS has taken to create an inclusive culture help to foster collaboration and innovation between researchers in
different fields and from different cultures. In 2012, HFHS opened its Innovation Institute to provide staff with the resources and environment necessary to develop new ideas. The Institute was designed to operate flexibly and respond to changing needs and healthcare advances (Henry Ford Medical Group, 2014). This provides a stimulating environment for grant writers to come together, share new knowledge, and develop novel grant ideas.

Section 8: Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

The preceding sections analyzed four major administration, globalization, and multiculturalism topics related to HFHS grant writer preparation resources. Generational and cultural differences; stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination; gender issues; and organizational culture have varying effects on grant writers’ use of training and peer review resources.

Literature suggests that generational and cultural differences can impact which employees are likely to want to receive training, as well as the method of training that may be most effective and preferred. Interviews with HFHS grant writers supported the impact of these differences and also identified that the training content needed may also vary due to differing skills that are somewhat dependent upon generational and cultural characteristics.

The grant peer review process is vulnerable to adverse effects from stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination. Some cultural minority grant writers at HFHS have expressed occurrences of discrimination and stereotyping that could lead to negative outcomes of grant reviews if conducted by prejudiced peers. The literature review discussed that such outcomes are perceived during NIH grant reviews, reinforcing that this could happen during HFHS reviews.

Gender issues, however, do not significantly affect the grant writing process or the resources needed to effectively prepare grant writers at HFHS to be successful. Both female and
male grant writers have access to mentors of both genders to provide guidance in grant writing and peer review of new grants. Some female grant writers feel undervalued by their male colleagues during the grant writing process, but most male and female grant writers are able to successfully work together.

An organizational culture that supports a cohesive and culturally acceptable strategy to prepare grant writers is critical to the effective implementation of preparation resources. Relevant literature suggests that an externally oriented culture that values flexibility and change is most supportive of organizational learning, which positively impacts innovation, both of which are key to preparing grant writers to develop novel research ideas and write successful grants. The culture at HFHS strongly encourages employee learning and the sharing of knowledge and HFHS provides resources and a supportive environment to stimulate innovation within the staff.

**Recommendations**

The first recommendation for HFHS to address the effect of administration, globalization, and multiculturalism factors on preparing grant writers to write successful grant proposals is to provide a range of training methods for differing preferences. A variety of online, in-person, one-on-one, and group sessions can provide all employees with a training opportunity that will be most effective for each individual. Training developers should work with grant writers to identify common preferences and content requirements.

The second recommendation is to ensure that the organizational culture suitably supports learning and innovation. HFHS should provide training, peer review, and collaboration resources that are appropriate for employees of all cultures, generations, and genders and are consistent across every department. Employees should be made to feel comfortable working together and expressing their needs and concerns about issues that could hinder the grant writing process.
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