

## **‘Without money, there’s no mission’: Fundraising advice for nonprofits**

Nonprofit organizations rely on funding to execute their mission, but steady funding is not always easy to come by. So, what can leaders of nonprofits do to attract attention — and resources — from foundations and corporations with money to give?

Many funders want to understand an organization’s impact — and quantifying and conveying that impact can take many forms, says [Velma Monteiro-Tribble](#), former director of grants and programs for the Florida Blue Foundation.

“People think that there is money lying around; money is tighter today,” she said. “And people are looking at those that really can tell the story... Quantifying, to me, doesn't mean that it's always in data and statistics. It's also through storytelling. And I think that organizations, nonprofits especially, should be in the business of doing that today.”

This week on the Health Disparities podcast, hosts Rev. Willis Steele and Dr. Erick Santos join Monteiro-Tribble and [Al Reid](#), the former VP of corporate development with Abbott Laboratories. Together, they delve into valuable insights and strategies for attracting funders during challenging times.

*The transcript from today’s episode has been lightly edited for clarity.*

Monteiro-Tribble: People think that there is money laying around; money is tighter today. And people are looking at those that really can tell the story. We should be about publishing what we're finding. And we know that we're doing the work. But we're really not quantifying the work. And quantifying to me doesn't mean that it's always in data and statistics, but it's also through storytelling. And I think that organizations, nonprofits especially, should be in the business of doing that today.

Rev. Willis Steele: You're listening to the Health Disparities podcast -- a program of Movement is Life, being recorded live and in person at Movement is Life's annual health equity summit. Our theme this year is: Bridging the health equity gap in vulnerable communities. And as always, we're convening with a wonderful community of participants, workshop leaders, and speakers. I'm Reverend Willis Steele, a representative for the Conference of National Black Churches, and Director of Patient Advocacy for Worldwide Hematology at Bristol Myers Squibb.

Dr. Erick Santos: And I'm Dr. Erick Santos. I'm an orthopedic surgeon that practices down in the Rio Grande Valley in Texas. And also these days, I'm a physician engineer consultant for a company called Biodynamic Research Corporation. And I also serve on the board of the American Association of Latino Orthopedic Surgeons as their secretary. We're very excited to be moderating a workshop titled, "Movement is Life Shark Tank: Teaching people how to fish for funds using the right bait." And we have a terrific group of people who are sharing their insights in the workshop. And without money, there's no mission. And part of our workshop is to try to teach people how to get that money from foundations and people who are going to give us the

funds to do good works. And so I'm going to invite our guests to introduce themselves, starting with Al Reed.

Al Reid: I'm Al Reed, former VP of Corporate Development with Abbott Labs, and currently I am the CEO and founder of Calypso Investment Partners.

Velma Monteiro-Tribble: Hello, my name is Velma Monteiro-Tribble, and I'm the former executive director of grants and programs for the Florida Blue Foundation, and currently chairing the A.L. Lewis Black opportunity and Impact Fund.

Steele: Welcome all. So for this discussion, I have some questions, I'd like to go around the table and ask you to share your thoughts. So let's start with each of you telling us just an overview of how your organization gives or how you've worked in the giving space in the past.

Monteiro-Tribble: The Florida Blue foundation gives around focus areas, and they are equity, mental well being and food security. We don't accept unsolicited grants or proposals. They have opening and closing dates. And that's the major focus for the foundation.

Steele: So Al Reid, you have had a long history of mentoring young leaders, self included over the many years both in the space of pharma, biotech, and outside. So tell us how your giving happens now with Calypso Funds and other work that you do.

Reid: Yes, well, Calypso is a three-year-old organization, which focus is trying to bring forth new and innovative healthcare technologies. We primarily fund things that we believe will represent or address some of the unmet medical needs that exist, whether the device is nutrition based or diagnostic tools. We look at up-and-coming incubation operations as a means of sourcing a lot of our activities, primarily at the university level where we've discovered there is a wealth of great ideas that just need a little nurturing. So we were really excited about the work we're doing primarily in the area of addressing some of the existing health disparities that exist in some of the most vulnerable communities.

Santos: Do you have any concrete examples of how these, I guess, nascent companies or ideas are contributing to fighting the battle against health inequities?

Reid: Yeah, well, a couple of things where things that are like diagnostic based. Obviously, you know, there's a lot of prevalence of disease and issues within some of the most vulnerable communities. And our focus is to, you know, identify opportunities, perhaps that would make it easier for persons to be able to determine a maintenance, diabetes, for instance, or vascular disease, or some of the other abnormalities that people in these communities experience. And so, you know, many of those things that we've looked at, and I'll give you an example one is that through University of West Virginia, they have something, a company where that opportunity basically, is to help people that have, you know, GI gastro issues. And so look for that to be hitting the mark here really soon. But we're very excited about the promise that it holds for assisting people that have a variety of GI issues.

Steele: Let us turn to Velma Monteiro-Tribble. Tell us, if you will, what are some key features that you can share of successful grant applications?

Monteiro-Tribble: I don't think I would call them key features. But I look for those applications, some of them might be a little disjointed when they come in, because some people can afford grant writers. So I know those that can afford grant writers. But I also have to look at the elements that people are trying to tell us when they're speaking from the heart about things that they know are a need in communities. And I, for me, if you can state the need, if you start with the need, and you can do an incredible job with that, because that, to me says that you really know your environment, you know the community, and you can speak to it. But I also look at, the second part is, what metrics you're going to use to evaluate it to make a difference? Because I think we are about, today, looking at how can you make a difference in something that's already there? So I think those are the key parts that I look for. And if I can find that, then we can move on.

Santos: So let me make this straight. So if you're an organization that's looking to be funded by a foundation, you really have to show your impact with real numbers.

Monteiro-Tribble: Yes. You're absolutely right today, as people think that there is money laying around; money is tighter today. And people are looking at those that really can tell the story. We should be about publishing what we're finding. And we know that we know we're doing the work. But we're really not quantifying the work. And quantifying to me doesn't mean that it's always in data and statistics, but it's also through storytelling. And I think that organizations, nonprofits, especially should be in the business of doing that today.

Steele: So let me turn to both of you and ask what are some key, and you said something very important, it's key elements to the request. And I would argue that's probably true, whether it's looking for seed funding or a grant application. I'm going to ask them, what are some of the mistakes you see, from both of you, whether it's a funding request or pitching an idea to Calypso or to the Foundation.

Reid: Well, I think one of the most common one is not well thought out proposals. I think, you know, point which was recently made about understanding the need. But those needs should also be supported by some data and analytics, right, around market research. Why is there a great desire? And I think that from a healthcare perspective, the most important thing is, if you're in that space, it's got to be four things that you focus on, one of which is access, how is it going to promote greater access? What is the quality of care that you're talking about delivering? Third, is it innovative? And then the fourth piece is around: Is it going to improve outcomes. And so I think, at the end of the day, if you can demonstrate those things, the likelihood of success, as part of your pitch, is much greater than if you don't. And then I think, I'm an energy and effort guy. I just I love for prospectives to come to me, and you can see the enthusiasm that comes out of this idea, or any idea for that matter. And I think we just have to make certain that they are excited about it, because if they're excited about it, their brilliance

and the courage will be conveyed across the other partners that are in the room. And certainly the outcome for funding is far greater.

Monteiro-Tribble: One key mistake is they come to you unprepared, and I think you said that. And they'll ask you, what do you think they should apply for, not here are the things that we know that we need. And they sometimes will also send you in proposals that they've sent to 50 different funders, and they forget to take the names out and the other organizations they have sent it to. And they forget that we as funders, we talk to each other. And we know the kinds of things that are going on. So those are two things that I see a lot of that I wanted to add.

Steele: Do those mistakes go right in the garbage?

Monteiro-Tribble: They go to file 13. Because I always say if you don't take the time to know who you come in to meet with in the organization, you're not serious. And so file 13, that's where it goes.

Reid: But I think, even taken off of that, too, is just understand what types of things historically have they funded, or interested in funding that are kind of core and unique to them, to the organization whether it's a foundation or big corporation. I think she's absolutely right, it's a very common mistake, not knowing your audience and being prepared to speak to specifically the types of things that they're interested in.

Santos: I want you to kind of guide us into what actions applicants take that really put them to the top of the heap. Let's say, okay, you guys are the cream of the crop, you really want to fund you? And what actions are they taking that they're different from, from everybody else?

Monteiro-Tribble: Let me tell you some things that I think, and I don't know how my counterparts think about this. But I, it's very interesting to me when organizations take a minute to not come in asking for money, but throughout the year, they might send you e-newsletters. They might invite you to events, and you might not go but at least they thought enough. When they write something they always send it in for you to read to see what they're doing, how engaged they are in the community. To me, they are, in a sense, they are priming me. But at the same time, I'm learning more and more about them. So when they submit a proposal to me, here's the key, they have an up because they have talked, I've seen their work, I've seen what they've done. And it resonates to me if I get 500 applications and I'm certainly going to look very closely at theirs because I have a sense of who they are.

Santos: So the more exposure they bring to you ...

Monteiro-Tribble: The more you know about them, the more you see their work. It's just human nature.

Santos: Like, that personal relationship with them.

Steele: Do you agree, Al?

Reid: Yeah, I think is so critical -- relationships is key across all things that we do. But touching on another point that was mentioned is that the importance of really clearly understanding what it is that you're pitching, right? You have to be concise about what it is that you're doing, what you hope to solve, what capabilities are required in order to make it happen. And then, do you have the team? Do you have a track record? And you know, and I know for a first timer, that's all kind of difficult, it's the chicken and the egg, right? You know, what I think you have to really make certain that you have a well thought out idea, you know, from soup to nuts, and expect people to punch a few holes in it, right? And that's okay. Because again, I think that just kind of helps develop a more perfect pitch, a product, at the end of the day.

Santos: I've seen that in academia and research. You can't get a grant proposal funded unless you've already done some of the research, so...

Monteiro-Tribble: But I've taken chances, I've taken a few chances. Because, you know, and Al is so right about that. But I always feel that, what if the little guy never gets in, you know? Because they can't do all the bells and whistles. And sometimes there are some that come across my desk, I will say, I won't give them a tremendous amount of money, but I will give them some money. So I can test this and watch this and see how it works. So seed funding, right, I give them some seed money, maybe a little more than seed money.

But I don't just do that, I've asked them to partner with another organization to help them get stronger, so that they can at some point come in, and, and be that top guy, for example, they might not have the budget that you know, to be able to get the money that I give them that I could give them. Because if I gave them a grant of, let's say, \$200,000, and they have a budget of 15,000, I could put them out of business through IRS. But what I can do, I can find, you know, help them find an organization that can be a financial support, who has that capability to be their financial supporter and mentor to help them through because I think it's sometime it's important that we look at that to ensure that we are not leaving the small organizations, grassroots organizations behind.

Steele: I like that you say grassroots, the smaller groups often have as much if not more impact.

Monteiro-Tribble: But I mean, I'm, I'm talking about grassroots organizations.

Steele: I mean that, the grassroots organization can be impactful because they're in the community, day to day. Let us in with one last query. And that is, you said earlier, Miss Velma, that the environment has shifted, people think there's lots of money just laying around. So for the organization, that doesn't apply, because they think they're not going to get it. And Al, I'll ask you the same thing, for someone who wouldn't come to Calypso because they think they're not going to get it. Does that end up leaving money on the table in 2023-24, because people don't come to you?

Reid: I think there's a lot of, in VC community, is a term, there's a lot of dry powder that's left, right? Where things that aren't being applied to innovative, new ideas. And I think you're right. But I think people should continuously try to pitch things. Pitch, pitch, pitch, pitch, because you never know, that idea, something Velma said, it might resonate with someone based off of their individual experiences or what have you. And I think the best pitches that I've seen are the ones that have been told no, numerous times, right. You know, I think about, you know, Magic Johnson and some of his companies, right? He was continuously told no, no, no, no for funding and then all of a sudden, you know, someone said, this is the person that we're going to invest in and it became something big. And I think we see that happen in terms of medical technologies all the time, because it's about the partner. They're partnering with the right organization that can help you cultivate, collaborate with you in a way to bring forth other partners or ideas that can make your concept or idea very possible and productive, I should say.

Steele: How about in the grant world?

Monteiro-Tribble: In the grant world, I think that so often in the foundation world, we've been sitting behind closed doors, and we don't expose ourselves to the communities. And I, you know, in every, you know, I was at Alcoa, Kellogg, did international grant making, and one of the things I always thought was, I've got to bring this to the community so people can understand it. And so I hold what I call clarification conference calls. And I send that out over to the world to say, join me so I can, we can talk about so that you can get a sense of what we're looking for, what we're all about. Because I want people to not feel afraid to be able to talk to people who are really making decisions about their lives and their organizations. And I think it's important that, no matter how busy you are, you have, as a funder and a foundation, you need to get from behind the closed doors and from behind the desk, and have forums. I do these once a year, I do forums around the state of Florida, so that people can get a real sense and talk to and and talk about ideas that they have. It's very tiring, but it's rewarding at the same time, because you see people that thought they never would have a chance now see that, hey, I might want to try this, you know. So I think it's important.

Steele: Thank you for that.

Santos: Kind of go into the sort of thing that we had talked about before, about the evaluation of the organizations and how they had to show you real results and metrics and all that. And so I wanted to know what's the best way for an organization to do that? I know in a lot of grassroots organizations, especially minority communities, there's a fear of being a guinea pig, of, in quotes of, you know, the whole shadow of Tuskegee, and other experimentation when you tell them, Okay, we want to do a research study, to obtain a consent to have you become a part of our evaluation, they immediately kind of go back and say, I don't want to be part of that. I just want to participate. How would you deal with something like that?

Monteiro-Tribble: Well, mine, you know, we're talking about and I think AI would agree that we're talking about evaluation of what they're proposing to us. And developing metrics around what they are proposing to us. And I don't think it's from us looking at individuals and communities

outside of what we see on the paper that they've sent to us. So I think that's the difference, I believe. And let me just add to that, that, because it's based on what they're proposing to us, one of the things that I have started helping people to do, when I was at the Kellogg Foundation, we created something called the real logic model. And anybody can go out online, and they can actually see that guide to the logic model. And as a result of that, based on the community that I'm in, I've taken that version, and I have revised that to make it easier for any lay person to be able to complete a logic model. Now the logic model to me, it is like similar to a Gantt chart. But to me, it's a way of being very concise about the metrics about the strategies about who's going to do what, how are you going to, what's your midterm evaluations of that? And what do you perceive as the outcome from it? In that way, I can sit there and I can visualize it, and I can see it. And it's teaching people to really write in that manner, especially nonprofits. And now it's becoming easier for people to do that, because it was so foreign to them in the past, but it's really not about talking about individuals in the communities because we don't collect names. We fund what you submit to us and you talk to us about the population that you're going to serve. So I don't know if I answered your question, but...

Santos: You did. We're having a debate on how to best do these evaluations, communicate that they're not really, you know, we're not experimenting on you, we're really looking at that program as a whole, and how it's going to benefit everybody.

Steele: And I think my former life at Abbott, there were a number of programs, systems set up, similar to what you just described. And I think, whether it's in subsaharan Africa, where we work with a variety of at-risk communities, I think about Rwanda, where we build clinics that would enable mothers to be able to, you know, deliver healthy babies and take care of them thereafter. But I think it was very matrix based. And so they understood exactly how we were evaluating them in terms of the care providers, the government and other things. And I think you have to be very explicit about what it is that you're hoping to get out of it. And then they were able to clearly demonstrate on a quarter by quarter basis, so that we were able to see how things were progressing in most cases was very favorable, because again, they bought into this is how we've been evaluated. This is the thing you're looking at, and they bought into the system.

Santos: I think those are all excellent insights. I really want to thank Velma and AI for being with us today. And that brings us to the end of another episode of Health Disparities podcast. I want to thank them for their time and their insights and to my co-host Willis for final remarks.

Steele: And thank you, Dr. Santos. And thanks to all of our listeners for joining us on America's leading health equity podcast. Until next time, be safe and be well.