



Ask SCORE for Business Advice

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Where are the Grants? by Tina Dettman-Bielefeldt

On the SCORE website, one of the articles discusses grants. “Let’s get the bad news out of the way first,” the article says. “There is no such thing as free money from the federal government to start or expand your small business.”

It is a message that’s often repeated to SCORE clients who schedule a meeting in hopes of getting a check. Therefore, it was interesting to see that Rep. Steve Kagen will be hosting “Grants Resource Fair 2010” on April 8 at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay. The fair is free, and will provide information on the different types of grants available.

Amanda Dietrich, a constituent aide for Kagen, explained that the groups that benefit most are local units of government, school districts, non-profits, emergency responders, and small business owners.

“Small business owners?” I asked. “What funds are available for them?”

Dietrich said that the Small Business Administration will be a presenter, and because the SBA is responsible for helping small businesses, business owners benefit by learning how things work. “They can come and learn about the process, about the loan programs and resources available for people starting small businesses and how grants work,” she explained.

In saying this, she was quick to note that her SBA contact in Milwaukee has never seen a start-up receive grant money. Not in 20 years of working with the SBA. Yet, even if grants aren’t available for this group, the resource fair will have information for those that might benefit.

Karen Smits, a successful grant writer for NWTC, will teach “Grant Writing 101” for those not yet schooled in the process. Presenters from FEMA, HUD, the U.S. Department of Education, Focus on Energy, and others will have information on available grants. There will be breakout sessions on rural development, education, energy, public lands, and other topics.

While businesses might not find seed money, they might find money for things like energy upgrades, employee training, and security programs.

Dietrich said there are still grants available under the Recovery Act, and that fair participants will have details on the groups they fund. She noted that this is the third year for the event. About 100 people are expected.

If you can't make it, Dietrich recommends visiting www.grants.gov or Rep. Kagen's website, www.kagen.house.gov, where there is also information on the event.

The SCORE article says that entrepreneurs should research grants, but be prepared to look for other funds. The SBA actually presents a good option for businesses. "Though free government money may be a myth, the next best thing, a business loan with a favorable interest rate, is very real and very available to new and established small businesses," the article notes. "The SBA's guaranteed loan program, for example, has helped millions of small businesses get off the ground, expand and acquire new facilities and equipment."

If you'd like to learn more, contact the Green Bay Chapter of SCORE. Visit www.greenbayscore.org or call Cindy Gokey at 920-496-8930 for information.

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