

Judy Lonza - Grants and Submissions Co-ordinator at Frankston Special Development School

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TENDER BRIDGE CASE OF SUCCESS: CASE 7

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Frankston Special Developmental School provides a specialised and challenging curriculum in a supportive environment for students with moderate to severe intellectual disabilities whose ages range from five to eighteen years. Individual education programs are delivered by trained special education staff, including a speech therapist, an occupational therapist and a physiotherapist. Students also have access to extra-curricular programs. The 120 students who attend live within a 20-kilometre radius of the school.

The School has been a subscriber of Tender Bridge since 2010, but did not really make use of the subscription in the first year. But that all changed when as a school they got serious and decided to allocate specific resources to attract resources. When Leanne contacted the new principal in late 2011 about re-subscribing, she was told that the school was about to employ someone a day each week specifically to seek funding for the school. And so Judy Lonza began in her role as Grants and Submissions Co-ordinator in early 2012.

Michelle Anderson and Leanne Eames paid Judy a visit at the school to find out more about what Judy does, and how she does it.



Senior school students at Frankston Special Development School with new bikes and vests (RACV Foundation) and helmets (Karingal East Bowling Club).

What is your connection with the school?

I was principal at the school for six years before retiring in October 2011, and now work one day a week on submission writing. This came about because I understand the school and the students. I have an intimate understanding of what's needed by the school. I also have a passion for the school, school education and the needs of the students, and the teachers just don't have time to explore possible school-community relationships, and so the principal felt it more cost effective to employ me."

What does a Grants and Submissions Coordinator do?

"I ask what the needs of the school are, and the staff provide a list. I look on the Tender Bridge website, and sometimes I hear about funding through another school by word of mouth. I match my searching to the needs or wants of staff for students. We decided on 'Grants and Submissions Co-ordinator' as the title of the role because there is a lot of coordinating to do. I need to coordinate the reports from, for example, the speech coordinator.

"Then I do some research – I find out the names of some of philanthropic funds and trusts from the Tender Bridge website database, and then I go to their respective websites. I read a bit more, find out about their guidelines, and I look at their lists of who and what they've funded. If appropriate, I ring them to talk directly with them about the project idea we have – does it fit with their guidelines? Is what we are seeking of interest to them? It comes down to matching our needs with the needs of the prospective funder."

While Judy responds to lists provided by staff, these need to align with the school's overall key priorities. Judy works through school's list of key priorities, seeing if there are any funds that match with these key priorities.

How did other staff learn about your role?

"Scott (the current principal) told staff about my position at a staff meeting. I regularly mingle with them at morning tea and they often ask me, 'What are you seeking funding for now?' and they will ask me about ideas they have for possible funding."

What are the attributes of a successful grant-seeker?

Judy believes that someone in her role needs to have an understanding of the school, and of the children in the school, as well as a good working relationship with the school leadership team. "And of course I've done the professional development with Tender Bridge supported by the school, which give me a 'yes, I can do this' approach. Writing the submissions became not so daunting, and it's something that you can still bring your passion to.

The school also needs to be flexible about the time the person works, to fit in with the professional development days. Judy also stresses that "A grants and submissions co-ordinator could be a parent; as long as it's someone who can share the vision of the school with the leadership team. You need to bring a school agenda to your coordination. And you need to ring people, to talk to people.

"The new principal recognised that I understood the school and what the school requires. I had an innate understanding of the school, staff and needs of the children. I have a passion for the school, and for special education. The principal thought that would come through in any submissions. They don't have time to do that, so they thought it would be more cost effective for me to do it".

What have been your funding successes to date?

Judy's first success was a chaplaincy program, a federal government initiative. Then came the soundfield, which was through the Victorian Department and Early Childhood Development. (Note: a soundfield is essentially 'surround sound' for teachers and pupils, shown to result in better student comprehension, better test results and fewer behavioural problems.) She also secured a grant from Newsboys Foundation¹ to purchase tents and sleeping mats to practise for the Duke of Edinburgh award. More recently, she succeeded in securing RACV Foundation funding for bikes and vests for an extensive bike education program. "Bike-riding is an important life skill and form of transport for our students. Karingal East Bowling Club funded the helmets. I got this tip from the funder feedback from Tender Bridge's 'Grant Seeking for Success' program. I wondered whether what I had written was too simple. But keeping it simple helped them to understand what I was asking for."

The school also has a kindergarten project, and is establishing an integrated early education program with East Karingal Kindergarten. "This one has been a long time coming, and the tipping point was them recognising that they have kids in their kinder who can benefit from the expertise of our staff, so there's a two-way benefit. We are providing a staff member here who has special education and early childhood qualifications."

Judy is also currently working on establishing a relationship with a local service club, where some members are the grandparents of the school's students. "It's about relationships." She has also met with a philanthropic foundation to discuss funding for a sensory garden.

There is a lot of diversity in your grant applications. How do you keep a track of where you are at?

"I have a folder with a list of things I'd like to apply for funding for, and I write deadlines against the need. I put the priorities down, and then I have a personal list at the bottom."

1 Newsboys Foundation was featured in the June 2012 (No. 5) issue of the Tender Bridge Quarterly.

What is the hardest thing?

"Knowing when to stop! Because I get on a roll, and more ideas pop into my head. I keep adding things to my list, and other things into my personal list. It's really exciting work, and it's good fun, but where do you stop?!?! One day a week isn't enough!"

Judy's key lessons/top grant writing/seeking tips

- *Write it, leave it, go back to it.*
- *Get another staff member to read it.*
- *Make sure you make contact with the funder, to have a discussion to see if your project is likely to be accepted.*
- *Use Tender Bridge and the LLEAP Guide and Cases companion document.*
- *Be prepared that you are not going to be successful all the time. Look at what you did and what you might do differently next time.*

How have Tender Bridge and the LLEAP project helped?

"Feedback from Tender Bridge's 'Grant-Seeking for Success' program helped and gave me confidence, and I've used the section on what makes for a good proposal from the LLEAP Guide as a bit of a template for subsequent applications.²

"A lot of it has been about giving me confidence. Understanding the processes, and learning that I need to keep the language simple, removing the education speak so that people outside of the department know what you're talking about. Sharing others' stories and experiences has been helpful tool. The LLEAP Guide and Case Studies are fantastic. The case studies have given me ideas for more big picture things. Reading these gave me the confidence to be able to say, 'I can do that'."



Judy Lonza, Grants and Submissions Co-ordinator, Frankston Special Development School.

² As part of the Tender Bridge 'Grant-Seeking for Success' program, participants were encouraged to submit a 'sample' or 'practice' application, which was then passed along to a funder for their anonymous feedback.