Charity fundraising outlook improves, conference told

FRANCES WILLICK
The Windsor Star

Community organizations struggling to make ends meet during dark economic times may see brighter days ahead, says the executive director of the WindsorEssex Community Foundation.

Glenn Stresman said when stock markets collapsed in late 2008 and 2009, foundations and corporations put a clamp on their coffers, limiting the flow of cash to charities and non-profit organizations. But he expects donations to rebound this year. "I think we've maybe gone through the worst of it," he said.

The foundation, which granted $125,000 to community groups from mid-2008 to mid-2009, hopes to double that amount in 2010, Stresman said.

And charities are ready to reach out for some of those dollars.

About 140 representatives from local non-profits attended seminars Tuesday to get tips on writing grant applications. Stresman said he was flooded with calls from organizations eager to learn how to snag some cash from foundations, corporations and government funders.

He was expecting about 35 people per session, but instead had 70 attendees at each seminar, with another 60 on the waiting list. Stresman said those numbers indicate community groups have been struggling to bolster their budgets during tough economic times.

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Glenn Stresman, executive director of the WindsorEssex Community Foundation, leads a workshop on writing grant proposals.

HOW TO APPLY

Tips for successful grant applications:

1. Research the funding body and how it fits with your organization.
2. Give yourself enough time to complete the application.
3. Focus on the benefits the project will have on the community.
4. Ask someone to review the application before you submit it.
5. Don't use acronyms or jargon.

had to get creative to weather the storm that hit the global economy in late 2008 and 2009.

"We've definitely had a lot of roadblocks in the last year," said Julia Curtis.

The orchestra has traditionally relied on grants and private sponsorships to stay afloat, but also attended the workshop. She said when larger private sponsorships dried up, the group asked its membership to solicit donations from family, friends and co-workers.

But Leona MacIntyre, who runs a consultancy business for non-profits, said relying too heavily on volunteers could lead to burnout. "Volunteers are like gold to a small association," she said. "You have to really look after them and treat them well."

MacIntyre said teaming up with other complementary charities can help grant applicants score points with funders. "Everyone is looking more favourably on grant applicants who are partnering with other associations so that the money goes farther," she said.

While donations from corporations and foundations could bounce back this year, Stresman said government sponsor-

tough economic times.

"It's a cruel imbalance that during the time you need more, you have to do with less," he said.

The funding developer for the Windsor Symphony Orchestra said her organization sponsorships to stay afloat, but when the economy took a nosedive, the group had to seek support by expanding its donor base and planning more events.

Kamla Rampersad of the Trinidad and Tobago Multicultural Association of Windsor said government sponsorship may be slower to rebound. "If you read what the provincial and federal treasurers are saying, the deficits at those levels are going to make it more difficult for organizations to access grants" he said.