

# Composing Creative Collaborations throughout the Libraries



An interview with  
**Bess de Farber**  
FORMER GRANTS MANAGER

**Laurie N. Taylor**

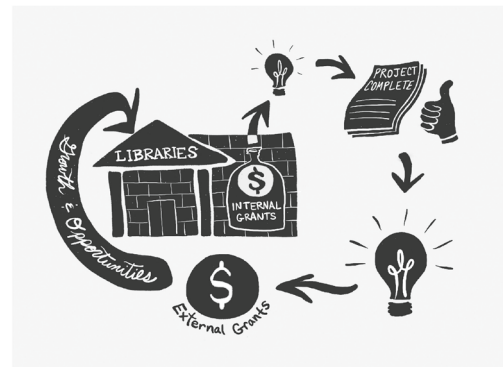
SENIOR DIRECTOR FOR LIBRARY TECHNOLOGY & DIGITAL STRATEGIES

**Bess de Farber**

## Intro

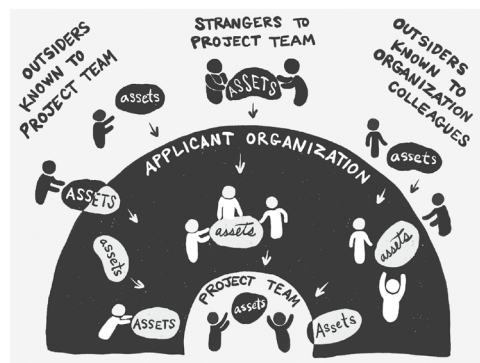
**B**ess de Farber was the Grants Manager for the Libraries. Bess de Farber has had four careers: as a musician, and arts and culture administrator; as a program officer managing grant awards for Arts & Cultural, Social Services, and Human and Race Relations Programs; as a consultant for nonprofit organizations seeking grant funding; and as an academic research development professional at the University of Arizona and the University of Florida. She has provided grantseeking instruction and collaboration workshops to thousands of library staff, nonprofit and academic professionals, artists, and university students in the past 32 years, and has led efforts to secure millions in grant funding for nonprofits and academic libraries. Bess is the author of two books on grantseeking, *Collaborative Grant-Seeking: a Practical Guide for Librarians*, and *Creating Fundable Grant Proposals: Profiles of Innovative Partnerships*, and coauthor of a third, *Collaborating with Strangers: Facilitating Workshops in Libraries, Classes, and Nonprofits*. She holds a Bachelor of Music from the University of Southern California, and a Master of Nonprofit Management from Florida Atlantic University.

In this interview, we hear from Bess as she shares stories of grants management at UF, collaboration creation, and her books.



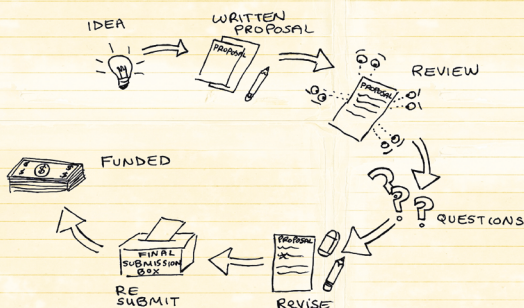
## What is a unique part of your job at UF?

Co-creating proposals with personnel in the Libraries—often from the first conversation about the idea to the determination of the feasibility of a proposal concept, and ultimately to submission of fundable proposals—can be a stressful yet consistently creative undertaking. Using a collaborative approach within the Libraries and external partners, and the insistence of sound and reasonable budget requests, we are able to add significant assets that turn ideas for projects into competitive proposals.



## Collaborative Grant-Seeking for Libraries: A Recipe for Success !

### Step 1. D.I.Y. Grantmaking Program



### Step 2. Search for Grant Opportunities

### Step 3. D.I.Y. Master Deadline Schedule

### Step 4. Send Funding Alert

### Step 5. D.I.Y. Workflows of Steps

### Step 6. Brainstorm !

### Step 7. Broadcast Grant Activities

Bess de Farber and Rebecca Jefferson  
George A. Smathers Libraries at the University of Florida

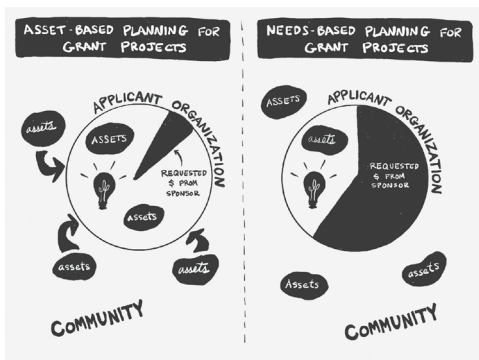
Get Handouts Here!



ufdc.ufl.edu/AA00039166/00001

## What things are you most proud of for your time at UF?

Since January 2020 (until December 31, 2021), our submitted proposed projects all received full funding awards or remain pending. This is an extraordinary achievement for any single organization and it occurred during a pandemic, in which I worked remotely and within a 32-hour work week. The dedication of employees combined with our collaborative culture of building competitive, fundable proposals during this time synchronized to create an historic feat within the Libraries grantseeking program. For specific projects, I'm proud of the Coral Way Elementary digital project that captures the memories and primary documents of the first public bilingual school in the country, in which I participated in the first year of the program (1963). Also seeing the number of proposals that supported the facilitation of CoLAB Workshops either as standalone workshops or as part of larger projects was very rewarding. And of course, being granted and participating in completing the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Challenge Grant award with Rebecca Jefferson to raise new endowment funds for future acquisition, digitization, and preservation of Jewish immigrant stories of Caribbean, Latin American, and Florida residents was truly a highlight. Especially gratifying was the accessioning of my families' papers into the Price Library of Judaica Collections as part of this project.





## We've seen how much you love bringing people together. How did you get started in partnerships?

As a program officer providing technical assistance and training to nonprofit organization applicants, and then stewarding the applications, review processes, and awards, I noticed many missed opportunities for leveraging organizations' assets and reducing duplication of effort. It was frustrating to read applications from nonprofits that didn't take advantage of existing knowledge, space, programs, expertise, and equipment. And then, in the early 1990s, I attended a book talk by one of the authors of *Building Communities from the Inside Out*, and discovered that my asset-based community development ideas matched with the project development methods described in this book. Through my company, ASK Associates, I began applying these asset-based appreciative inquiry methods while providing technical assistance to nonprofit organization staff and board members to transform their grant applications into fundable projects. In 2001, a group of philanthropic organizations approached me to design a workshop that would facilitate real-time collaboration development, not just a workshop for teaching theories and practices. This was just after 9/11; South Florida funders were struggling to meet the competitive needs of small and minority nonprofit organizations, especially. We tested the efficacy of the first CoLAB Workshop with 50 organization representatives over a two-day intensive timeframe. The overwhelmingly positive results from the workshop then inspired the trademark for the CoLAB Planning Series®. Since that time, over 3,500 participants have benefitted through conferences, in classes, and in libraries in Florida around the country.

### Composing A Heart for Clarinet, Stories ... and Life!

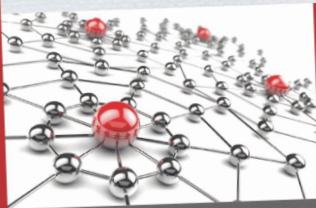
Bess de Farber, clarinetist-storyteller

November 19th, 7:30 p.m.  
Civic Media Center  
433 South Main Street, Gainesville

Book by Fisher, 1918, South Beach Post, Miami Beach, Florida. Photo by Joseph Fisher



### COLLABORATIVE GRANT-SEEKING



A Practical Guide for Librarians

BESS G. DE FARBER

PRACTICAL GUIDES FOR LIBRARIANS, NO. 24

### Collaborating with Strangers

Facilitating Workshops in Libraries, Classes, and Nonprofits



Bess G. de Farber, April Hines, and Barbara J. Hood

## At Coral Way Elementary First Bilingual School to Open

Coral Way Elementary School will become the county's — perhaps the nation's — first bilingual school this fall, with American and Cuban pupils attending classes taught in both English and Spanish.

The program is one of two pioneer projects in the teaching of second languages now getting under way in Dade's public school system.

The other is taking place at Lindsey Hopkins Education Center, where a professional staff is working under a \$275,000, three-year Ford Foundation grant to develop materials and techniques for teaching English as a second language.

Obviously related, the two projects nevertheless have distinctly different goals.

Aim of the Ford project is to improve the education of Spanish-speaking children who have come to the U.S. to live — whether they are Cubans in Miami, Mexicans in Los Angeles or Puerto Ricans in New York.

But the bilingual school is designed to make both native and foreign-born students more or less equally adept in two languages and at ease in two cultures.

Not all the pupils at Coral Way will participate in the program. There will be two classes of English-speaking students and two of Spanish-speaking students in each of



A Refugee Practices English  
... two languages—a meeting ground

projects. Otherwise, the only connection will be that materials developed under the Ford project will be put to the test in the bilingual school.

They probably will be tested in other Dade schools, too, Robinett said.

Dr. Rojas, who is directing the Ford project, doesn't know exactly how far her team will get in the actual development of materials.

"It's a question of starting from scratch," she said, noting that the materials now available are totally inadequate for teaching foreign-born pupils to speak, read, write and really understand English.

Often, she said, such

youngsters learn to read English with deceptive ease and develop their understanding with great difficulty because their textbooks are soaked with American culture, which is enigma to them.

Miami Herald article on the first bilingual school in the US.




The Coral Way Bilingual Program | Maria Coady, Author & UF Librarians Talk, February 19, 2020.

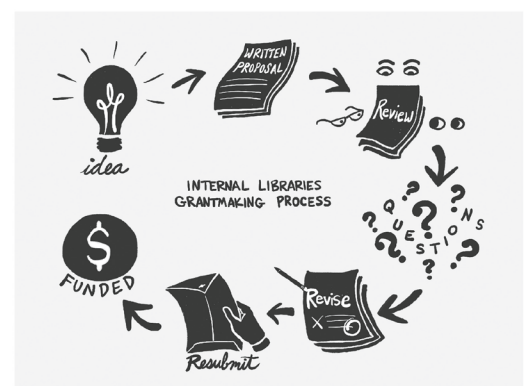
## Please tell us (about your books and) how you got started in writing books?

My original goal was to write a book about the Collaborating with Strangers Workshops at UF, and was unable to secure a publisher. In response to my original book proposal, I was offered a contract to write about grantseeking, a topic which at the time I considered too expansive to tackle. But, the first book, *Collaborative Grantseeking*, allowed me to experiment with a format for this how-to book which I then employed in subsequent books. Writing how-to books is a specific genre which requires deep consideration of how readers will engage with the content successfully. My last book was the most enjoyable to write: *Creating Fundable Grant Proposals—Profiles in Innovative Partnerships*. After interviewing colleagues in the Libraries about how their ideas for grant projects materialized, and what happened during the project activities after funding was received, I was able to combine my own contributions to those projects along with grantseeking insights to create stories about 60 grant-funded projects at all levels of funding from an insider’s perspective. Links to all of the full proposals and project images offer readers the complete experience of seeing these case studies come to life. I don’t believe there is another book that achieves this level of transparency in sharing the stories of how actual grantseeking activities actually unfold.

After completing the first book, a proposal to the American Library Association Editions made possible the publishing of the *Collaborating with Strangers* book.

## What would you say are your best assets?

As the daughter of immigrants, I’m always interested in finding new assets to appreciate and combine in new ways. It’s a constant learning process—always on the look out to learn from others about their knowledge and experiences—these become mental files of possibilities for strengthening future projects as they come across my desk. 



See more from this interview in the online supplement:

<https://librarypress.domains.uflib.ufl.edu/source-spring-2022-supplement>

