

AFP Ethics Case
March 12, 2009

Building a Better Community, Inc. is a two year old 501© (3) organization located in Claunch, NM. In 2006 the corporation received a renewable two year grant as seed money. The grant covered all the expenses of BBC.

Recently BBC was notified that the grantor would be unable to renew the grant due to an unexpected decrease in the value of its investments. In response to this news, BBC hired you as its first Director of Development.

Shortly after you were hired, BBC's Executive Director came to you with an idea she said was a guaranteed dynamite plan: Jane, an accomplished grant writer who got results and was a friend of BBC, was willing to contact several grantors on behalf of the agency, and then write the follow-up grant requests. The exciting news, the ED said, was that Jane didn't want to be paid for her work, but just wanted 1% of any grants awarded (total compensation not to exceed \$500) simply to reimburse her for expenses.

The ED explained to you that BBC was in a disastrous cash crunch and would go under if they couldn't raise more money without any upfront costs. The ED then made a telling comment: "Let's be clear about what's at stake here – the continuation of BBC and its good work in the community, not to mention the jobs of 5 people, 4 with families (you're one of those 4 with a family to support).

The ED presented this proposal to the Board, which whole-heartedly supported the idea and congratulated the ED for her creativeness.

The ED then entered into an agreement with Jane and requested that you be the lead person on the project for BBC. You told the ED you were very uncomfortable about the assignment, that you thought it violated the profession's code of ethics, and you wanted it to be given to someone else in the organization. The ED's response was that you were the Development Director and the only one in the organization who had the skill and knowledge to make it happen. The ED also implied that she would have to get another Development Director if you couldn't get the job done.

You have asked a group of your colleagues to help you think through the situation. Maybe what's most important is, as the ED says, organizational and personal survival. Yet there is definitely the conflict with the AFP code of ethics. On the other hand, if Jane is so successful, why shouldn't BBC accept her generous offer?

What do you decide, and why?