Guide to Soliciting Funds From Foundations

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INTRODUCTION

Our Experience

As a grants development and training firm founded in 1985, Research Associates has worked with nearly 20,000 individuals on how to write, find, evaluate, and administer grants. We have also written hundreds of grants with an overall success rate of 90 percent, obtaining over $250 million in funding for our clients. Not only have we learned a great deal of information about grants development from both clients and students, we have also identified many successful styles and approaches to win foundation and corporate grants.

During the past 20 years, we have developed and refined a unique method of winning foundation and corporate grants. This process has earned us a high success rate while saving time and reducing frustration. We know what it is like to be a full-time Grant Writer or fundraiser faced with requests from program staff for additional funds. We also know what it is like to have a full-time job with the responsibility of grant writing during "free" time. Either way, we all need a process that wins us foundation and corporate grants in the least amount of time. This success is what our Foundation Grants Process Model brings.

The Research Associates Foundation Grants Process Model

If you ask people to list the basic steps in securing foundation grants, most will say that you find the grant opportunity, read the guidelines, and develop a proposal based on foundation requirements. These steps are important, but our experience has been that following this path is probably the most time-consuming and frustrating.

We are asking you to step out of your box and consider reordering your foundation grants development process. The basic premise is that if you do preparatory work before finding funding opportunities and approaching foundations, you will be ahead of the game and increase your chances for success. As foundation opportunities come your way, our model will allow you to respond quickly to these prospects with ease and a first-class proposal.

The steps of the **Research Associates Foundation Grants Process Model**, presented in this book, are summarized below.

1. Learn how foundations work.

The first step to winning foundation and corporate grants is to understand what foundations are and how they work. This saves time by helping you target the foundations most likely to fund your program. In Chapter 1 we describe types of foundations, review the scope of foundation giving, and reveal how foundation representatives think—including what irritates them! We will introduce our **Study of Foundation and Corporate Funders**, which surveyed foundations on topics from how they make funding decisions to what advice they offer grant seekers.

2. Prepare for grant success.

Before your organization can approach foundations and submit applications, you must be able to explain precisely why you need funding. In Chapter 2 we discuss how to get organized for grant success—*before* you have found funding opportunities or developed a proposal. We cover organizing a grant team, assessing organizational and community needs, determining priorities, managing information, gathering required grant documentation, and developing a volunteer foundation advisory committee.

3. Develop the foundation proposal.

We believe it is important to develop what we call a "core," or basic, proposal *before* finding grant opportunities and approaching foundations. Chapter 3 provides strategies for developing a foundation proposal designed to win funding, including five essential messages the proposal must convey about your organization. We also review the common components of typical foundation grant applications: organization information, need statement, project design, management plan or timeline, sustainability, evaluation plan, budget, and abstract/executive summary.

4. Find foundation grant opportunities.

After a core proposal is developed, it is time to locate and identify foundation and corporate grant opportunities. Chapter 4 presents the tools you need to find these opportunities, including our **Foundation and Corporation Match Checklist**. We give you a strategic process to create a list of potential funders so you have the best foundation matches—the ones most likely to fund your program. We show you what to look for, ways to discover opportunities and use resources, and how to make the best matches.

5. Approach the foundation.

Relationships are important. Submitting a grant proposal is a much larger process than the writing of a proposal. In Chapter 5 we present strategies for approaching foundations and making a favorable impression. We discuss approach etiquette, contact do's and don'ts, how to tailor your proposal to a targeted foundation, and the submission process and all its components.

6. Follow through.

Submitting a proposal is not the end of the process. Chapter 6 discusses the importance of internal and external communications, responding to foundation requests, how the foundation makes a decision, and what to do whether your proposal is denied or funded.

The Research Associates Foundation Grants Process Model is a roadmap for success that works! Our model provides a solid beginning for winning foundation and corporate grants. For Grant Writers who want to achieve more, Research Associates offers a three-day Certified Grant Specialist Seminar. To learn more about this workshop and others, visit our website at **www.grantexperts.com**.

About the Authors

Mike DuBose, MSW, founder and president of Research Associates, has developed more than 130 large grant proposals and more than 500 small proposals totaling over $200 million and with an overall success rate of 90 percent. Mike has also served as a grants administrator for more than 100 grant programs.

Having trained over 20,000 individuals in both graduate courses and grant writing seminars, Mike is consistently rated "outstanding" by participants in his various grants development workshops. Mike serves as a field instructor for the University of South Carolina, College of Social Work, and his employment history includes positions with seven state agencies in South Carolina, grants administrator for two South Carolina governors, and executive director of the private nonprofit South Carolina Home Health Association.

Julie Neeley, MSW, MPA, is a senior Grant Writer for Research Associates. As a member of the grants development team, she develops and writes federal, state, and foundation grant proposals. She has also served as the Director of Success By 6 of York County, South Carolina, and Director of Foundation Relations for the United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta. Since 2000, she has secured over $28 million in federal, state, foundation, and corporate grants with a 90 percent success rate. Julie enjoys volunteering and serves as a board member for Arthritis Services.

CHAPTER 1 ➤ HOW FOUNDATIONS WORK

In working with private nonprofits, school districts, and government agencies to secure grants, the grants development staff at Research Associates have found that many people have a limited understanding of the foundation world. They know foundations give away money but do not understand why they fail to secure funding from foundation and corporate sources.

A proposal is only one step in the process of winning a grant from these organizations. First, you must understand how foundations work. Taking time to learn what foundations are and how they operate will save time and help you identify foundations most likely to fund your program. Ultimately, you will significantly improve your ability to win grants (McIlnay, 1998).[1]

Foundation: a Definition

They want to give away money?

Foundations are endowed with private funds but created to provide a public function.[2] One definition comes from the Foundation Center (2004):[3]

> **Foundation:** An entity that is established as a nonprofit corporation or a charitable trust, with a principal purpose of making grants to unrelated organizations or institutions or to individuals for scientific, educational, cultural, or other charitable purposes.

Yes, foundations and corporations give away money. Flourishing entrepreneurs often use foundations to shelter some of their wealth from taxes (Orosz, 2000). The United States Tax Code distinguishes between private foundations and public charities. Public charities are designated under section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code. They must show that at least one-third of their income comes from public sources in any given four-year period. Gifts to charities are tax deductible.

Private charitable foundations are also classified as nonprofit 501(c)3 organizations by the Internal Revenue Code, but they fall under section 509(a). This means they do not have to prove one-third of their income comes from public sources. They do, however, have to meet certain requirements.

- **Payout requirement.** Foundations have a "bottom line," but it is inverted (Orosz, 2000).[4] They must make sure they spend or give away a certain percentage of their money to avoid penalties. Foundations must give at least five percent of their investment assets annually in grants. This means if a foundation's assets for one year total $5 million, it would have to give out a minimum of $250,000 in grants.

- **Excise tax.** Foundations are also required to pay an annual two-percent excise tax on investment assets. This tax is counted as credit towards the five-percent payout requirement. Thus, the distribution in grants is further reduced, and that $5 million foundation is not required to give very much money away.

- **Form 990-PF.** Each year foundations must file a form, Return of Private Foundation (990-PF), with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). This form provides information such as the foundation's investment income, assets, grants distributed, and board members. We will talk more about this form in Chapter 4.

- **Annual public notice.** Foundations are also required to make their 990-PF returns accessible for public inspection. Many do this using newspaper advertisements that include the name of the foundation manager, address, office telephone number, and where the 990-PF return is available for inspection. Be aware that this type of notice is not easy to find.

Types of Foundations
Differences make a difference.

All foundations are not the same. Understanding some of the differences will save you time and effort when deciding which foundations to target. Just because an organization has the word *foundation* in its name, does not mean you can apply for a grant. Let's consider some of the different types of foundations as defined by the Foundation Center (2004)[5] and the Council on Foundations (2004). These include independent foundations, corporate foundations and giving programs, family foundations, operating foundations, public foundations, and community foundations.[6]

Independent Foundations

Independent foundations are the most common type of private foundation. Grants are awarded from gifts of an individual, family, or charitable endowment. Since independent foundations have their funds from endowments, generally their focus is on grantmaking rather than raising funds or seeking public support. Most independent foundations have a specific focus such as arts or youth, as specified by the original benefactor.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, with an estimated $8 billion in assets, is an example of a large independent foundation. Robert Wood Johnson transformed the small family firm of Johnson & Johnson into the world's largest corporate provider of health and medical care products. Today this foundation focuses on improving health and healthcare for Americans.

Corporate Foundations and Giving Programs

Unlike independent foundations, assets of private corporate foundations come from a company rather than an individual benefactor or family. Although corporate foundations are linked to their parent companies, they are classified as separate legal entities, subject to the same IRS codes mentioned above. Most corporate foundations also have grantmaking focus areas, but their interests tend to concentrate on benefiting employees and gaining positive exposure for the company.

The MetLife Foundation, with an estimated $143 million in assets, is an example of a large corporate foundation. The goals of this foundation, connected to the MetLife Insurance Corporation, are to strengthen communities, promote good health, and improve education.

Corporate giving programs are different from corporate foundations and are not classified as *foundations* by the IRS. Companies use these charitable programs to make gifts or in-kind contributions to nonprofits and grassroots organizations. Employees of the company may also contribute directly to the corporate giving program. Many large national corporations provide community support via both corporate foundations and corporate giving programs.

Family Foundations

Family foundations are considered a subset of private independent foundations. The major difference is that the benefactor or the benefactor's family is still actively involved in the foundation's policies and grants. Nearly 32,000 organizations are considered family foundations. Research trends show that larger family foundations are more likely to fund grants in education and health and direct a bigger portion of their funding for programs and capital support (Foundation Center, 2004).[7]

The Waitt Family Foundation, based in California and with estimated assets of $138 million, is an example of a private family foundation. Founder Ted Waitt, chairman of Gateway, provides leadership. Waitt's philanthropic interests, which include reducing violence in homes and communities as well as promoting positive social and economic changes, are channeled through the foundation.

Operating Foundations

Similar to private independent foundations, operating foundations possess assets that generally come from an individual benefactor or small group of donors; they do not raise funds publicly. And although they have *foundation* in their names, these organizations rarely make grants to outside organizations. Most operating foundations run their own charitable programs instead of making grants. If grants are made, they are usually tied to the programs they operate. These foundations, however, still fall under the same IRS requirements as other private foundations.

The Charles F. Kettering Foundation, which is supported by a $265 million endowment, is an example of an operating foundation. Its goal is to seek "ways to make fundamental changes in how democratic politics are practiced." While the foundation does not make grants, it will participate in joint ventures with organizations of similar interests.

Public Foundations

Categorized as public charities by the IRS, public foundations have assets that generally come from contributions by corporations, individuals, government, and private foundations. There are two primary differences between a public foundation and a nonprofit organization: (1) a public foundation concentrates more on making grants than on providing direct charitable services, and (2) it also provides grants focused on a specific area of interest such as AIDS or the arts.

The Arthritis Foundation, Breast Cancer Research Foundation, and the World Wildlife Fund are examples of public foundations. As their names signify, these foundations support specific causes or programs and may have pre-selected the organizations they will fund.

Community Foundations

Although the IRS usually classifies community foundations as public charities, they are sometimes categorized as private foundations. Assets generally come from many individual donors and are placed in an endowment. The money or interest earned on the endowment is used to award grants. Community foundation grants typically focus on a wide range of public needs in a specific geographic area. Donor-advised individual funds are also characteristic of community foundations.

The Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta, with an estimated $271 million in assets, is an example of this type of organization. Focusing on 22 counties in the Atlanta metropolitan area, the foundation makes grants to meet needs in the following areas: arts and culture, civic affairs, education, health, religion, social services, and community development.

As you can see, there are a variety of types of foundations. Since most nonprofits seek funds from private independent and corporate foundations, we will focus on these types.

Financial Scope of Foundation Giving

They give away how much?

More than 65,000 foundations make grants in the United States. In 2003, foundations gave nearly $30 billion in grants. This represents nearly a three percent decrease in giving from the previous year. Here are some additional facts based on research from the Foundation Center (2004).[8] **Note:** Some data may appear to be outdated, but most available statistics concerning foundation giving are usually two to three years behind. They do suggest patterns, however.

- Decreases in giving can be attributed to a 10 percent loss in foundation assets between 2000 and 2002, continuation of the stock market slump into early 2003, and the finishing of the 2002 extraordinary giving in response to the 9/11 attacks. We will talk about economic influences on giving later in this chapter.

- Independent foundations gave nearly $23 billion in 2003, down almost $758 million from 2002.

- Corporate foundations gave over $3 billion in 2003, down over $68 million from 2002.

- Foundations in only five states are responsible for nearly half of 2002 giving: Pennsylvania, Washington, New Jersey, California, and New York.

- The South demonstrated the quickest growth rate and largest increase in the number of foundations, and the Midwest had the biggest decline in assets in 2002.

- Mississippi led all other states in the foundation-giving growth rate between 2001 and 2002, followed by Arkansas and Arizona. This is good news since Mississippi is one of our poorest states! New York ranked top in overall giving.

Now let's consider the sources for foundation giving and how the economy is likely to influence giving.

Foundation Piece of the Pie

It is important to remember that foundations are only *one* of many funding sources. You may be surprised to learn that foundation funding is only a small piece of the giving pie when you look at all potential funding sources. In 2003, Americans gave approximately $240 billion to charity representing nearly three percent growth from the previous year (Giving USA Foundation, 2004).[9] Table 1 highlights how this giving breaks down by source.

Table 1. Total Contributions to Charity, 2003		
Source	**Giving in Billions**	**% of Total**
Individuals	$179	75
Foundations	$26	11
Bequests	$22	9
Corporations	$13	6

Source: Giving USA Foundation: AAFRC Trust for Philanthropy, Giving USA (2004)[10]

As you can see, foundation giving represents only 11 percent of total giving. So while foundation funding can be a valuable source of support for your organization's programs, you do not want to bank solely on foundation funding; there are other sources out there.

Beneficiaries of Foundation Support

What types of organizations get the most foundation money? In 2002, educational institutions, particularly colleges and universities, got the most money. Educational institutions received over 37 percent of the highest dollar value grants (Foundation Center, 2004).[11] Human service agencies follow at nearly 11 percent of the overall dollar value of grants. These agencies are also awarded the highest number of grants.

Other recipient organizations include community improvement organizations, environmental agencies, hospitals, museums, and public health organizations. Some of the top recipient organizations receiving the most money in grants include the Foundation for the National Institutes of Health, Washington Education Foundation, Harvard University, Duke University, and Columbia University.

Types of Support

The largest number of grants in 2002—representing 41 percent of total foundation giving—went to program support areas (Foundation Center, 2004).[12] Program support includes areas such as project development, seed money, curriculum development, online services, staff development, and seminars.

General support (operating expenses, annual campaigns) and capital support (capital campaigns, building, equipment) were the next largest recipients followed by research and student aid. The largest number of grants in 2002 benefited children and youth, followed by economically disadvantaged persons and racial or ethnic minorities.

Economic Influences on Giving

A variety of influences can impact foundation giving, including stock market activity and inflation. This is because a major portion of foundation assets is in stocks and other investments.

Loss in foundation assets based on stock portfolio performance is one recent influence on giving. In 2002, nearly 30 of the largest 50 foundations were faced with double-digit losses in assets. Some organizations such as the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation lost at least $1 billion (Foundation Center, 2004).[13] Asset losses among the larger foundations can potentially be attributed to their concentration in equities markets whose values fell in 2002.

What do foundations do in economic downturns? Research Associates has learned if you are approaching a foundation for the first time in an economic downturn, your chances may not be good as a new grantee. To preserve support for purposes vital to their missions, foundations engage in the following grantmaking strategies: reducing the number and size of grants, decreasing the number of new grantees and multiyear grants, and focusing on operating support instead of capital projects (Foundation Center, 2004).[14]

When economic conditions impact a foundation, the next year's giving in terms of the number and size of grants awarded may change. Make sure you are aware of the economic climate and its effects when considering potential donors.

Study of Foundation and Corporate Funders

We went straight to the source.

In 2005, Research Associates completed a research project and produced our **Study of Foundation and Corporate Funders**. We asked a variety of foundations for their perspectives on issues in the grantmaking world from how they make a funding decision to what advice they offer grant seekers. Sixty-one foundations responded to our 13-question survey, providing insight into the foundation world. Table 2 presents some demographics of the foundations that responded. Appendix A contains complete demographics.

Table 2. Study of Foundation and Corporate Funders

Demographic	**Response**
Total Assets	62% have assets above $50 million.
Grant Size	41% award grants between $10,000 and $49,000.
Geographic Area	28% fund grants nationwide.
Full-time Staff	38% have 1 to 5 full-time staff members.
Part-time Staff	44% have 1 to 5 part-time staff members.

Throughout this book, we will tell you what we learned from our study. While the advice and strategies provided by the foundations cannot be applied to all foundations, it still helps to have a sense of what a foundation may be thinking, how it may make funding decisions, and how it may view your proposal.

Foundation Perspectives

What are they thinking?

Imagine that you are a foundation staff member or trustee. What are the issues you face? What concerns you and your organization?

Foundation Roles

Most foundations see their role as providing support for programs and organizations helping to make society better. However, your definition of *better* may differ from a foundation's. Your idea (e.g., to rid your community of ants to ensure children are safe from ant bites) may not fit with the foundation's mission to ensure children live in safe environments. Let's examine how most foundations in the United States view their roles as grant makers (Orosz, 2000):[15]

- **Not as sole funders for a program.** Foundations typically do not want to be the only funder for a program. They want potential grantees to consider other sources of income, partnerships, and in-kind donations. When foundation reviewers examine your budget, one of the first things they will probably do is compare the requested contribution to the total program budget; then they will want to know who is now contributing—or may contribute—to program funding. In particular, foundations like to see their gift help you leverage other funds. In our foundation study, several foundations stated that one main reason they decline to fund a project is that there is no evidence of start-up funding from other sources.[16]

- **Emphasis on solutions.** Foundations usually direct their philanthropy to addressing the root causes of community problems rather than funding palliative (or band-aid) efforts that meet immediate needs. Thus, few foundation missions seek to provide food, shelter, and clothing. This approach is based on the idea that prevention is the key to problem solution rather than simply treating symptoms. If a foundation focused primarily on helping meet basic needs, it would likely not have enough money to support fundamental change.

- **Interest in innovation.** Foundations typically prefer to fund new, innovative programs instead of providing ongoing support. This issue is often difficult for nonprofits that need support for ongoing programs. Recall, however, that foundations represent only 11 percent of total giving. To have impact, foundations look for new ideas.

- **Start-up funding.** How long should a foundation fund a program or organization? Some foundations apply the principle of discontinuity (McIlnay, 1998).[17] Under this principle, the role of the foundation is to grant start-up funds and then dissolve its support to pursue new opportunities and discourage dependency. This approach may result in either one-year or multiyear grants. The point here is that foundations probably do not want to fund indefinitely.

Note: We have found one technique to get around this principle of supplying start-up funding if you have received a grant from a foundation and want to apply again. Apply to the foundation with a different, new, innovative program that requires start-up funding. Or take a look at an existing program. Was everything implemented as planned? In most cases the answer to this is negative; adjustments were made, and components were added or deleted. You now can call this existing program a *pilot* program and seek funding again. In this way you can continue to approach the foundation with which you have a relationship and the foundation can fulfill its role to find and fund new opportunities.

Objectivity

Most foundations endeavor to engage in purposeful, rather than arbitrary, funding decisions (McIlnay, 1998).[18] While the diversity among trustees is improving at some foundations, many share a common economic, ethnic, and educational background. While these individuals may strive to achieve objectivity, their perceptions are affected by their experiences. The biases and values of foundation staff, trustees, and donors will always impact grant decisions. In our foundation study, 62 percent of board members made funding decisions.[19] Your program may not be set up as a for-profit business, but you should consider how a business person will view your strategies.

Grantmaking Styles

Foundations actually have different styles in the way they make grants. Understanding a foundation's style will help determine (1) if you are a good match with the foundation, and (2) your approach. There are essentially four grantmaking styles (Orosz, 2000).[20]

1. **Passive.** These foundations usually do not publish an annual report or listing of guidelines, and you may have to search to find and learn about them. Interestingly, however, these foundations may offer the best chance of receiving funds for an unsolicited proposal. Further, these foundations typically limit sharing lessons with others based on what was learned from their funded programs.

2. **Proactive.** These foundations are more active in making their goals and priorities known. They use several methods to spread the word including media, websites, annual reports, and written guidelines. You will find proactive foundations are also open to unsolicited proposals, and program officers are actively looking for good programs. Sharing lessons learned is also important. Nearly 80 percent of foundations in our study stated they accepted unsolicited proposals.[21]

3. **Prescriptive.** These foundations make sure their interests are clearly defined. Grantmaking is strategic and usually achieved using an initiative-based method. Although the foundation may respond to a few unsolicited proposals, nonprofits typically submit applications in response to formal request for proposals (RFP).

4. **Peremptory.** Rarely accepting unsolicited proposals, these foundations are focused on an agenda. They may use an RFP to select grantees, but they may also choose organizations to receive funding without public notice or competition. Many peremptory foundations actually administer their own programs.

Program Officer

Except for extremely large foundations, most foundations have limited staff and often rely on the service of their trustees. In a research study of over 20,000 foundations with assets of at least $1 million, only one in six foundations had staff (Foundation Center, 2003).[22] Over three-fifths of foundations had two or fewer employees.

A program officer is typically a salaried employee of a foundation who helps make grant decisions and develops relationships with potential grantees. Among the program officer's extensive list of tasks is answering telephone inquiries, reading grant proposals, deciding which proposals to forward to trustees, summarizing proposals for trustees, sending out rejection letters, visiting potential and existing grantee sites, understanding and explaining the foundation's mission, reviewing grantee progress reports, meeting with potential and existing grantees, and attending numerous nonprofit events.

Why are we providing you with this list? *We want you to put yourself in the program officer's shoes.* When you make that first phone call to the foundation or your proposal arrives on the program officer's desk, you want to make the best impression possible. For example, imagine if the program officer just read 15 long "the world is going to end" proposals. And when your proposal comes up, it does not meet format requirements or the type font is too small. How would the program officer feel about your proposal? It may describe a very solid program, but you have made it a difficult start and reduced your chances of funding.

Never underestimate the influence of the program officer—or any other foundation staff member for that matter. Our foundation study revealed that over 52 percent of foundation staff review proposals and make funding recommendations.[23] While foundation trustees are most likely the final decision-makers, your grant proposal must first make it past the program officer.

Common Frustrations

Although it would seem easy to give away money, foundations still face many difficulties in this process. Consider some of the following frustrations based on our experience and research by McIlnay (1998):[24]

- **Program effectiveness.** Some foundations fund hundreds of programs each year. Although they may require detailed progress and evaluation reports, they often have no method to evaluate the effectiveness of programs or to determine the accuracy of grantee reports. It would be very difficult for foundation staff to visit every funded program regularly. Grantees are fearful of reporting failure because they worry about losing funding. They also do not want to jeopardize their chances with other potential funders.

- **Lack of honest relationships.** Grant seekers are careful not to say anything that will hurt their chances of getting a grant. On the other hand, foundation staff has to be careful about giving too much encouragement (to avoid giving the impression a grant will be given).

- **Superficial involvement.** When a grant is funded, the foundation representative is involved only superficially since this individual does not directly implement or manage the funded program. Nonetheless, foundation representatives are treated as the most important people on earth! Everyone wants something from them. If you are at a gathering of nonprofit organizations and a foundation representative walks in, just watch how the crowd will maneuver for strategic position. Wouldn't that grant maker be your new best friend, too?

- **Rejection of proposals.** It has been estimated that only *five percent* of applications are funded (McIlnay, 1998)![25] Foundation officers spend a lot of time talking with potential grantees, asking questions, and reading proposals. Some excellent relationships are developed, and high-quality projects are presented. Foundations are always faced with rejecting proposals, however, even for superior programs. Many of the foundations in our foundation study said that one of the primary reasons they decline to fund a project is because there are not enough resources to fund all programs.[26] They simply cannot fund everything that comes their way, which can be frustrating.

Think of foundations as potential partners (Geever, 2004).[27] As a nonprofit, your organization has the strategies and the capabilities to help meet societal needs but often lack funding to do the work. Foundations, on the other hand, have the financial resources but may not have the necessary wherewithal to implement programs. In the next chapter, we will discuss how you can make sure your organization is prepared to enter into a successful partnership.

Tips for Success

- Foundations are NOT required to respond to your phone call, read your proposal, send you a letter of decline, provide a written annual report, or publish written guidelines.
- Always understand the type of foundation to which you are applying. It may save you from submitting a "dead on arrival" application.
- Just because an organization has *foundation* in its name, does not mean you can apply for a grant.
- Never put all your funding eggs in one basket. Foundations are only *one* of many funding sources, representing only 11 percent of total giving to charity.
- Do not discount the impact of economic influences on foundation giving.
- Throughout your approach process, imagine yourself as the funder.
- Demonstrate partnerships and other funders for your program.
- Propose new, innovative programs.
- Do not become dependent on foundations for funding. View foundation grants as one-time support for a particular program. If you do receive funding for another year or so, great!
- Recognize who is most likely making the final decision about your proposal. Will it hit home with a banker, lawyer, or business person?
- Put yourself in the program officer's shoes. Will your approach make a good impression on this person?
- Be honest. The foundation will respect you.

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CHAPTER 2 ➤ PREPARING FOR GRANT SUCCESS

Before your organization can approach foundations and submit applications, it is critical to know exactly why you need funding. Some preparatory work in the beginning will save you heartache later when you are swamped with the last-minute details of submitting a proposal to a foundation. In this chapter we will help you organize for grant success.

Step 1. Establish a Grant Team

Seek support.

Grant writing often occurs in isolation. One person is under lots of pressure, and developing a proposal is usually completed with little, if any, time to spare. As a result, there is no clear process or coordinated effort to help people work together towards a common vision. Forming a grant team is an essential early step in preparing for grant success. As with all the essential steps presented in this chapter, creating a grant team before you start looking for prospects and writing a proposal will save time later when every minute counts.

One reason for Research Associates' success is the use of grant writing teams. Over a 20-year period, our firm has secured more than $250 million in grants for our customers with a success rate around 90 percent. This would not have been possible without the participation of many individuals with varying expertise working together as a team. We firmly believe "it takes a village" to write a grant. The characteristics of a successful grant writing team—organization support, diversity, clearly defined roles and responsibilities, and training—are discussed below.

Organization Support

An organization applying for a grant should empower a grant writing team. Indicators of support include things such as meeting space, quiet areas for writing, and designated staff time for meetings and team responsibilities. The organization must also recognize that people work more efficiently and effectively if they are rewarded for their work. Rewards for successful team efforts might include bonuses, funding for travel to national conferences, extra time off, gift certificates, and new office equipment. Recognition in front of peers and the community is also essential in sustaining a successful team.

Diverse Team Members

Involvement from a representative cross-section of community members will result in a grant proposal that is more realistic and more likely to win funding. This diversity includes representation from different races, genders, cultures, ages, employment histories, experiences, and educational backgrounds. For example, a member of the target population who has little formal education will provide different insights than someone with a graduate degree. Both team members are equally important.

Roles and Responsibilities

We have seen some of our customers mistakenly secure team members who are all considered good Grant Writers. The writing of the proposal, however, is only one component in developing an application that will be funded. While a skilled, experienced Grant Writer or two on your team is necessary, consider these other important roles that will contribute to your success:

- **Team leader.** This is a highly organized and personable individual who guides the team and serves as facilitator and motivator. The primary goal of the team leader is to ensure all activities occur in a timely fashion so the grant deadline is met without stressing out other team members.

- **Skilled writer.** This person assembles all parts of the grant proposal submitted by different writers. The writer edits the work to yield clarity, consistent language, proper grammar, smooth flow, and cohesiveness. This member can be an English teacher, a 12th grade honor student, a newspaper reporter with a journalism degree, or sometimes, just a talented writer.

- **Literature researcher.** This person assesses the literature concerning the problems and solutions to be addressed in the proposal and should be involved in the needs assessment process we will discuss later. Find someone who does not mind spending long hours in the library or surfing the Web. Recent college graduates or graduate students accustomed to using technology for research are good candidates.

- **Program expert.** Professionals with expertise in the problem you are addressing are not only knowledgeable about the situation but are often passionate about the cause. Program experts can also help ensure the components of your project are solid and credible.

- **Needs assessment coordinator.** This person researches statistics, conducts interviews, and seeks information that can document or prove the need. The steps to conduct a needs assessment are presented in the next section of this chapter.

- **Consumers.** Brainstorming with members of the target population is important to the process. This is an excellent way to ensure that what you are proposing matches what potential consumers perceive they need and want.

- **Budget developer.** This should be someone who is comfortable with numbers and familiar with budgeting or accounting principles. This person will have to create a budget that supports the components of the proposal narrative.

- **Experienced word processor.** Our research and experience indicate that a proposal pleasing to the eye will score more highly. Consider administrative assistants or students who are thoroughly familiar with word processing software and can produce a professional-looking document that meets the requirements of the funder.

- **Proofreader.** Mistakes of any type can affect the credibility of your proposal and the impression you make on reviewers. All materials submitted as part of a proposal should be error-free. The proofreader should *not* be involved in the planning and grant writing so he or she can proof materials without preconceptions. This person must have an eye for detail; complete knowledge of punctuation, grammar, spelling, and sentence structure; and plenty of sleep the night before reviewing any materials.

- **Gopher.** This "lifesaver" assists in the last-minute details before submitting the final proposal such as collecting letters of support. Having a gopher helps other team members stay focused on polishing the proposal components.

When it comes to team meetings, you should not have to assemble all team members for every meeting. For example, the budget developer is not needed until the major program components of the program are identified. In fact, you may not need formal team meetings but instead can share information, assign tasks, and assess progress in smaller groups or with individuals. The key to success, however, is to establish the team before writing the proposal, searching for foundations, or conducting a needs assessment. Remember, the goal is to organize on the front end to reduce challenges on the back end!

Training

Experience has shown us that intimidation is the number one killer of successful grant teams. The more knowledgeable and skilled your grant team members are in proposal development and grant writing, the more likely they are to not only complete the task but also produce a winning proposal. To address this problem, each team member should receive professional training on how to find grants and write proposals. An investment in this area can produce significant returns in fostering team spirit and securing grant awards.

Step 2. Assess Organizational and Community Needs
Why do you need money?

In working with various private nonprofits, school districts, and government agencies, Research Associates has found most people seek foundation opportunities *first* and then try to design their programs around the foundation's priorities. Grant seekers soon discover two problems with this approach.

First, the foundation realizes that the applicant's program is not a true fit and the applicant is simply seeking funds. In this case the foundation denies funding. Several foundations in our Study of Foundation and Corporate Funders cited that those who solicit funds should never try to change their mission to fit the foundation's.[1] According to one foundation, "If it is a good fit, then it will be obvious." Second (and worse), the nonprofit receives funding from the foundation but quickly learns that it is not meeting the needs of consumers because the program was designed around foundation interests rather than consumer needs and the nonprofit's mission.

Do not underestimate the process of conducting a sound organizational and community needs assessment. Several foundations we interviewed revealed weaknesses in programs or proposals that can be linked back to a poor assessment: unclear needs, poorly planned projects, limited information on how project benefits consumers, and unclear goals.[2]

In our book, *Developing Successful Grants* (available through our website at **grantexperts.com**), we presented the components to conduct an effective community needs assessment in detail. A successful assessment will include at least four or five different strategies for credible, independent documentation of community needs. The following strategies in this process are what we call "digging for the dirt":

1. **Research available statistics.** One of your first stops should be the United States Census Bureau (**census.gov**). The Census compiles numerous statistics at national, state, county, and census-tract levels. Most states and some counties also provide statistical information that can quickly be obtained from the Internet. If you are unsure how to begin an Internet search, go to a search engine such as **yahoo.com**, **google.com**, or **excite.com** and use its search capabilities. By simply entering your state's name and the word *statistics* in the search box, you will have access to a wealth of information. You local library may also have useful resources.

2. **Use several methods to collect information.** There are many ways to gather critical information for your needs assessment. Sometimes a simple *survey* conducted in the target area will provide useful information. This can be helpful when statistics are not readily available for your target area. Community meetings are a valuable source of insight into community problems as well as an effective resource for creative, workable solutions to the same problems. *Interviews* with key informants in the local community are helpful for identifying local problems; these can also enlighten your interpretation of community issues. Do not forget to collect direct quotes as you gather information. You can often employ quotes for a powerful effect in your grant proposal.

3. **Go to the target population.** Use one or several of the methods above to solicit input from the target population. Gathering information about needs from a representative group of the impacted population can be very revealing. After all, these people have firsthand knowledge!

4. **Seek input from professionals.** Local professionals and experts who work with and study the target population are another valuable source of information. These professionals often have access to information unavailable by other means and can offer evidentiary support to substantiate the severity of need in the community. Further, they may offer anecdotal support that is credible due to their professional standing. Using this input coupled with statistics from other sources to back up what professionals are stating can make a powerful needs assessment.

5. **Review the literature.** A thorough review of current literature addressing the same problems or ones similar to those you are addressing is beneficial. By reading the methodologies, approaches, and solutions reported by others, you may identify additional needs and barriers that are impacting your community. This research will also help when you write the grant proposal. Foundations love to hear the phrase, *based on scientific research.* Do not forget the newspaper. It is a good practice for every Grant Writer to maintain a file of newspaper clippings including any headline or article that portrays local needs.

You may be thinking, "This is really a lot of work!" But note the benefits of conducting a needs assessment:

- Your identified needs are based on the experiences of your organization and your target population, not on the interests of a foundation.

- When you write the needs assessment section of your grant proposal, your information is more credible.

- You can state that you have conducted a formal assessment, showing the funder you have done your homework.

- Your needs will drive your program.

- And finally, you can use the needs assessment results in several grant proposals, which makes the effort a worthwhile investment.

Now let's examine how to prioritize those needs for foundation funding.

Step 3. Determine Priorities
But everything is important!

As we have emphasized, you should not look to fund all your needs through foundation grants. This is because foundations are usually not interested in providing multiyear funding; they discourage dependency. If you receive funding for most of your needs through a foundation, in the next year, your program(s) may be gone because of lack of funding, or you may have to scramble around to find another source.

Look at the list of needs and programs you want to establish. The following questions will help pinpoint priority needs for *foundation* funding:

1. **Is the identified need consistent with your organization's mission?** Avoid "mission creep" (Brown & Brown, 2001).[3] This is when external conditions, such as money or the priorities of others, transform your agency's mission. When you examine the needs you have identified, ask yourself if they are consistent with your organization's mission statement. If it is not, then it is not a priority need for your organization. The ability of staff to implement a program based on the funder's priorities rather than their own is questionable. Foundations are also tuned in to this mismatch. The bottom line: stick to your mission!

2. **Does the program meet the foundation's fundability criteria?** Your need and proposed program must be fundable to foundations. To determine your priorities for seeking foundation funding, consider their fundability criteria (Greever, 2004):[4]

3. **Immediate funding.** We have estimated that it takes 6 to 12 months for foundations to make a funding decision and send a check if a grant is awarded. If your priority need and program requires funding quickly, foundations are probably not the best resource. On the other hand, a project that is already in operation and has established success may be an exception. Also, foundations prefer to fund solid organizations, not ones that are in crisis.

4. **Other funding sources.** Some of your priority needs and programs may be better suited for other types of funding sources such as the government, individual donors, special events, direct mail, and earned income. Having a diversified fundraising approach or resource development strategy is critical so your organization does not become dependent on a few funding sources. Remember that foundation giving represents only 11 percent of total giving. Foundations also like projects that can demonstrate sustainability.

5. **Innovative projects:** As we discussed in the previous chapter, foundations look for innovation. They are more likely to fund specific projects than general operating requests. If your assessment shows you need equipment or help with utilities and rent, and these needs are not linked to a specific program, then seeking foundation support is *not* your best strategy.

6. **Is the organization ready?** You, as an individual, may be ready to pursue foundation funding, but you must also consider the opinions of the grant writing team, agency staff, and any other stakeholders with an interest in the project. You do not want to labor over writing a proposal, searching for foundation matches, and developing relationships with foundation representatives only to learn your organization is not supportive.

In our Study of Foundation and Corporate Funders, most foundations stated the lack of capacity to produce a solid project was a primary reason they declined to fund a program.[5] Program staff must be prepared to develop a high-quality program and be able to answer the common questions that foundations ask about needs. If they cannot, they most likely need to re-examine the problem and proposed program or document experience more carefully before establishing a need as a priority (Brown & Brown, 2001).[6]

Another stakeholder to consider is the person in charge of finances or your organization's finance department. In large organizations, foundation grants may get lost in the system. Smaller organizations may also face the problem of the added responsibility of handling the money from foundations. Your organization must be ready for added financial responsibility.

7. **Is upper management on board?** A final consideration is whether or not your organization's upper management, such as the executive director, superintendent, or key decision-maker, considers your identified need and program a priority for foundation funding. Many times organizations are pressured to raise money, but they hurt their chances because top management or the board of directors is not ready. Here are some indicators that these individuals are prepared for the program and grant:

    - They understand the need and are supportive of this priority for foundation funding.
    - They confirm that the needs and program are consistent with foundation fundability criteria outlined above.
    - They demonstrate enthusiasm and support the program publicly.
    - They express willingness to meet with foundation representatives to support the approach process.

Step 4. Get Organized

I know I put that report somewhere!

Information management is another critical step in preparing for grant success. Taking time to get organized *before* writing and searching for grants can save you much pain and suffering. We were surprised to learn from our Study of Foundation and Corporate Funders that some organizations actually submit their proposals after the deadline, resulting in a declined proposal.[7] Designing a simple system that works for you and your team members will help you manage information about grant opportunities, deadlines, proposals, and other items with ease.

Information Nightmare

Let's consider an example when information was not managed appropriately. We mentioned previously that one of our staff formerly led the foundation unit at a large nonprofit organization. Before she joined this organization, it had received more than 50 foundation grants and had developed solid relationships with many local foundations. What a great way to start!

Unfortunately, in this case, the information was not well managed or organized. Some of the previous grant proposals were stored in various file cabinets, while others were in computer files. There was no easy way to find out how often or how much a foundation gave or which programs they supported. While there appeared to be great relationships with foundations, there was no documentation of what was said or agreements that had been established. What a mess!

You can avoid this situation if you establish an organized process for collecting and storing information, and make sure all who are involved in proposal development know how the process works and follow it.

Organization Techniques

There are some fancy computer grant management programs out there, but they can be very costly. We have found that by taking a few simple organizational steps and sticking to a system that works for you and your team is all you need. Here are the components of a simple information management system that has worked for us:

- **Hard copy files.** A special filing cabinet must be set aside for your foundation files only. Assign each foundation a separate hanging file folder and place the folders in alphabetical order. Resist the urge to stuff everything into each foundation's hanging file randomly. Some common folders within each foundation's hanging file are labeled *guidelines*, *foundation history*, *letters sent to foundation*, *letters received from foundation*, *grant proposal* (include title), and *meeting and telephone notes*. Easy, quick access is the key to success!

- **Computer files.** Each foundation you pursue or have any correspondence with should also have its own computer file folder. Computer files including grant proposals, letters, guidelines, meeting notes, and any other files for a particular foundation should be located in its folder. This method ensures that anyone on your team can locate the correct computer folder and find all computer files related to the foundation. Even if you have not yet applied to foundations, establish your system now so there are no questions or confusion later.

- **Correspondence notes.** Anytime you talk with a foundation representative via a phone call or face-to-face meeting, the contact should be documented. Why is this important? Maybe the foundation requested specific information in your proposal. With lots of other information coming at you while you are drafting different proposals, you can easily return to your notes and remember exactly what was said. You may have had a conversation with a foundation representative who told you the foundation was not interested this year but advised that you come back in two years. That information needs to be documented for future reference. You may have found out through the grapevine that the foundation director changed and thus your proposal should be addressed to the new person. We place our handwritten notes in our hard copy files. We also take the extra step of typing up the notes and adding them to our foundation computer file. We have one file within each foundation's computer folder for all verbal correspondence. Each entry is dated and summarizes what was said.

- **Foundation database.** We always encourage our customers to develop a foundation database. This database contains all the foundations you are applying to and provides a summary of key factors that you can glance at quickly. If you are applying to other sources of funding you may also want to include these in your database. We used Microsoft Excel to create our database. Regardless of the program you decide to use, be sure to incorporate the following components for *each* foundation:

Foundation name	Program area	Volunteer help
Proposal due date	Date response expected	Trustee names
Amount requested	Staff responsible	Thank you note sent
Amount awarded	Previous giving amount	Other special notes

Since deadlines are critical, you may also want to develop a monthly calendar showing when foundation applications are due. A calendar can also help you determine whether or not you can manage the number of applications you plan to submit.

Backup System

Each grant proposal or letter you submit should be backed up on a diskette or CD-ROM and placed in the grant's hardcopy file. If your computer hard drive crashes, you will still have access to your information. You do not want hours of work on a proposal to suddenly disappear. Learn to anticipate the unexpected!

Team Participation

We cannot stress enough how important it is for everyone on the grant team to understand the information management system you have established. At least two co-workers or grant team members must know where to locate computer files, hard copy files, and deadlines.

Imagine the following scenario:

> You are in the final stages of producing a grant proposal. You have done a lot of work and have had several meetings with foundation representatives. Unexpectedly, you are called away on a family

> emergency. It is now up to your co-workers or team members to finish the grant proposal and submit it on time.
>
> Unfortunately, you do not have a well-organized information management system—or you do, but no one knows how it works. As they try to finish the proposal, team members have a question about the format and mailing address but cannot find the guidelines. There were also important items that the foundation representative told you to address in your proposal, but the notes were not accessible in a central location so your co-workers do not incorporate them into the proposal.

You get the picture. A relationship you spent a lot of time developing and your work on the proposal are going down the tubes. As an old saying goes, "Hope for the best but be prepared for the worst."

Step 5. Gather Required Documentation

There is more than the proposal?

To award a grant, most foundations require additional documentation such as evidence of nonprofit status from the Internal Revenue Service or financial statements. You may be wondering why we are talking about this now. The answer is that too many times grant applicants wait until the last minute, right before mailing out the proposal, to gather the required documentation. But gathering the required documentation *before* pursuing a grant application is essential to preparing for success.

We have learned that assembling this information in the beginning helps maintain your sanity later when things are crazy. If you wait until the last minute, chances are you will discover you need a document such as an audited financial statement, but your financial officer is out of town and is the only person who knows where this documentation is located.

A File for Documentation

We recommend creating a special folder with high-quality copies of required documentation that can be easily located and copied for grant applications. If possible, a better option is to have this documentation on a computer file in a special folder entitled "Required Grant Documents" so a clean copy can be printed.

Most Commonly Required Documents

While not all foundations require each of these pieces, Table 3 lists items to have readily available in case a foundation asks for them.

Table 3. Required Grant Documentation	
Evidence of nonprofit status	Most recent audited financial statement
DUNS number (Dunn & Bradstreet)	Résumés and bios of key staff
Annual operating budget	Annual report
List of current board members	Organizational chart
List of organization's top funders	Résumé and bio of executive director

Several of these documents deserve special attention:

- **Evidence of nonprofit status.** This documentation should be at the top of your list. When your nonprofit organization was established, you obtained a designation from the IRS allowing you to receive tax-deductible gifts. You should have received a letter officially designating your 501(c)3 or nonprofit status. If you are a new organization and do not have this designation, you may be able to partner with another 501(c)3 organization to serve as the fiscal agent for you. The bottom line is that you cannot submit a grant application without proof of this designation. Foundations always ask for evidence of nonprofit status.

  Note: If your IRS official designation is pending, then a letter from your Secretary of State with official state nonprofit status may suffice until your IRS letter arrives.

- **Audited financial statement.** Based on our experience, foundations rarely fail to ask for an audited financial statement. You want it to be as accessible and easy to read as possible.

  Consider this: One of our staff recently volunteered to help a small nonprofit arthritis organization apply for a corporate grant. As we were compiling the final proposal, the executive director noted the professional appearance of the organization's audited financial statement. It was printed on good paper and securely bound on the side. She thought this looked impressive. Foundation staff, however, will most likely make additional copies of your grant proposal for the reviewers and will want to be able to run your document easily through a copier. Our recommendation? Have a clean, unbound copy of your audited financial statement on hand that you can submit with your proposals.

- **DUNS number.** The Data Universal Number System number is a unique nine-digit identifier obtained through Dun & Bradstreet. If your organization does not have a DUNS number, make sure to get one. From time to time, foundations will ask for this number. To get a number online, go to **www.dnb.com**; it will take approximately 14 days to get a number. Alternatively, you can establish a DUNS number by telephone in about 15 minutes by calling 800-333-0505.

Step 6. Create an Advisory Committee
You need movers and shakers!

Creating a foundation advisory committee is the last step in preparing for grant success. An active foundation advisory committee with community movers and shakers can be critical to funding success.

We recommend a committee of five to seven members. Members should not be program people, nor should they be intimately connected to the need or cause. (Use those people for your grant team.) Program people are closely associated with implementation of the program and most likely do not have connections to foundation representatives. Your foundation advisory committee should establish support from local power brokers and influential community members.

Movers and Shakers

A foundation advisory committee consists of members that are well connected such as bankers, lawyers, financial advisors, and other business people. You probably will not get a foundation staff member or trustee to serve on your committee due to conflict of interest, but local community leaders are the next best thing. In many instances, these people may go to the same parties or events as foundation representatives. Another added benefit is that they may *think* like foundation representatives, which may help get an insider's perspective.

Motivation to Serve

Many business people like to show others that they are civic-minded and will willingly volunteer to serve in their community. These individuals may welcome the invitation to serve on your advisory committee because it involves trying to raise money for a cause they support. It also gives them an opportunity to network with their colleagues.

Note: When we have worked with these committees, it is not uncommon for members to talk at least 20 minutes about what is going on in the business world before turning to the task at hand. We typically conduct meetings at the office of a committee member.

Educating Committee Members

Before you start getting information and assistance from committee members, make sure they understand your organization's priority needs and programs for which you want to request foundation funding. Provide committee members with a short "cheat sheet" summarizing needs and programs. This method enables members to speak with confidence about the organization and its programs.

Member Responsibilities

We recommend your foundation advisory committee meet quarterly or every other month. Here are some ways committee members can benefit an organization:

- **Approach foundations.** While it may be difficult for a staff person in your organization to get a face-to-face meeting with a foundation representative, a member of your foundation advisory committee may get a different response. Committee members can help you get your foot in the door, but be careful here. Our Study of Foundation and Corporate Funders showed that some foundations prefer that board members be contacted, while others strongly discourage this practice.[8]

- **Review prospect list.** Based on your organizational needs and a foundation's priorities, create a prospect list of the foundations you have identified as a potential match. (In Chapter 4, we will tell you how to develop a prospect list.) Foundation committee members can review this list and provide information that you may not be aware of. For instance, we were working with a committee that reviewed a list giving a foundation director's name for proposal submission. Fortunately, one of the committee members knew that the director had passed away several months before. We would have never known about this and would have addressed our letter to the individual named on the list.

- **Sign grant proposal cover letters.** We ask our foundation advisory committee members to sign their names on the foundation proposal cover letter along with the executive director of the organization. This can be beneficial when committee members know or network with representatives at the foundation. In some instances, another effective strategy is to have a committee member write a short note on the bottom of the cover letter to make it more personal; for example, "George, I am involved in this project and will appreciate your consideration and support."

- **Discover new opportunities.** Foundation advisory committee members may be privy to information that is not yet public knowledge. For example, Research Associates was working with a nonprofit organization that needed funding for an early childhood program. One of the advisory committee members for the organization knew a woman who was starting a small local foundation to help fund early childhood programs. We developed a proposal and the committee member hand-delivered it to the foundation. In a few months the foundation issued a check for $20,000.

In the remaining chapters you will learn more about how foundation advisory committee members can contribute to your grant seeking, help you approach foundations, and support application processes. Do not forget to include what you learn from advisory committee members in the information management strategies we have discussed. Now we turn to developing the foundation proposal.

Tips for Success

- Avoid grant writing in isolation. Create a grant team before you start writing a proposal or looking for prospects; this will save time later when things are tight.
- Empower a grant team with organizational support, diverse team members, clear roles and responsibilities, and grant writing training.
- Conduct a community needs assessment first, using at least four of our suggested strategies, before seeking foundation funding.
- Ensure your identified community need is consistent with your organization's mission.
- Verify that your need and the program to address it meet foundation fundability criteria.
- Determine the readiness of your organization for foundation funding. Top management, grant team members, staff, board of directors, and finance people need to be supportive and prepared.
- Establish and implement a simple information management system. This system should include hard copy files, computer files, correspondence notes, a foundation database, a backup system, and team member knowledge of the system.
- Gather required documentation such as your 501(c)3 private nonprofit status in a special file for easy access before pursuing any grant opportunities.
- Use movers and shakers to create a foundation advisory committee to help you approach foundations, review prospect lists, sign proposal letters, and update you about new funding opportunities.

Chapter 2 References

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[8] Research Associates. (2005, January). Study of Foundation and Corporate Funders.

CHAPTER 3 ➤ THE FOUNDATION PROPOSAL

We have discussed the importance of conducting a needs assessment and determining priorities. You may be thinking the next step is to search for funding opportunities. But before looking for funders, we recommend developing a *core proposal* from which you can develop your final proposal. After reading this chapter, you will understand why we develop the proposal next and you will learn useful strategies for developing an outstanding foundation proposal.

Proposal Quality
Strive for excellence.

In our Study of Foundation and Corporate Funders, we asked foundations, what distinguishes a good proposal from an excellent one?[1] The top five foundation responses were:

1. The application is clear and concise.
2. The grant seeker follows foundation guidelines.
3. There is a clear strategy to achieve measurable outcomes.
4. The idea is original.
5. The organization runs parallel to the foundation's focus.

One of the foundations in the study answered in this way: "A good proposal will just answer the questions in the guidelines; an excellent proposal will tell the story of the organization and what it does." In the sections that follow we will provide specific strategies to help you achieve excellence in your proposal development.

Core Proposal
Establish a base.

As all Grant Writers know, applying for grants requires meeting tight deadlines and facing tough competition. Developing what we call a *core*, or basic, proposal before finding grant opportunities will save time and help make the grant application process less stressful.

A core proposal is a document based on the components (e.g., the need statement and project design) that are found in most foundation proposals. You should draft a core proposal for each program you plan to fund through foundation funding. After you identify the foundations you will approach, you then tailor the core proposal to meet the foundation guidelines. We will discuss strategies for modifying your proposal in Chapter 5.

Why develop a core proposal? There are several reasons. First, writing the proposal before seeking funding opportunities helps you avoid changing your program to meet foundation priorities that may not be the same as yours, as we discussed in the last chapter. You may also identify several foundations that are a good match but find that their applications are all due in the same month. The core proposal allows you to respond to multiple opportunities more quickly. And finally, creating a core proposal enables you to produce a high-quality proposal early in the grant seeking process without the stress of developing program ideas under a tight deadline.

Consider the following example: In the previous chapter, we told how a foundation advisory committee member for a nonprofit organization was alerted to a donor that wanted to fund an early childhood program. The organization was able to respond to this opportunity quickly because it had developed a well-conceived core proposal for an early childhood program. The organization was able to tailor the core proposal to match the donor's preferences and submit something quickly. It was a $20,000 success!

What Your Proposal Must Communicate

Make the reader believe.

Successful proposals convey five important messages to a foundation reviewer:

1. Clarity
2. Capacity
3. Feasibility
4. Competence
5. Credibility

Clarity

In some instances, the proposal may be the only communication between you and the foundation (McIlnay, 1998).[2] A well-written proposal is the first step in demonstrating that you are able to perform the program under consideration. Foundations want to see a proposal that is clear and easy to understand. Proposals that use "proposal-ese," or words that are vague, unfamiliar, and big, do not demonstrate clarity to a foundation (McIlnay, 1998).[3] Rather, big words may indicate you are covering up shortcomings. Wordiness may also be a sign that you are unable to see your own project design clearly. Recommendations for achieving clarity from some of the foundations in our Study of Foundation and Corporate Funders include use of direct, concise statements; absence of jargon or buzzwords; adherence to guidelines; well-articulated project goals; no mistakes; and correct grammar.[4]

Capacity

Proposals must demonstrate that the organization is capable of carrying out the proposed project. Foundations look at several areas to make this determination (Orosz, 2000).[5]

- **Project costs**. Your proposed budget and audited financial statement are important in determining capacity. Are you asking the foundation to fund a project that represents a third of your overall budget? This request would be too large.

- **Program logic.** Foundations also look at the logic of a proposal to determine capacity. A proposal free of contradictions and inconsistencies indicates you are not just "making something up as you go along."

- **Prior history.** Foundations want to see your demonstrated capacity for implementing similar size projects in the past.

- **Comparison to others.** Foundations also examine whether or not your proposed project is consistent with what others in the same field have been able to accomplish.

One of the foundations in our foundation study summed it up like this: "An excellent proposal doesn't use any fluff to try and make the organization look better than it really is."[6]

Feasibility

Foundations get hundreds of proposals each year proposing conceivable and not-so-conceivable projects (McIlnay, 1998).[7] A proposed project is considered feasible by foundations if they get a sense that there are adequate staffing, materials, and money to reach the goals (McIlnay, 1998).[8] In other words, your proposal to eradicate poverty with only $1,000 from the foundation is probably not going to be considered "feasible." In addition, consider whether or not your proposed strategies can actually achieve the intended outcome. Foundations are also wary of proposals that are beautifully written but lack the depth to produce.

Competence and Credibility

The ability of your organization to carry out the proposed work with success is considered one of the most *critical* grant making criteria (McIlnay, 1998).[9] You may have described on paper a well-thought-out program, but the foundation must get a sense that the implementers are capable and skilled enough to do the job.

Our foundation study revealed that foundations consider the organization's experience and track record as the two most important items in determining if an applicant is capable of carrying out a proposed project.[10] Your proposal must also demonstrate that your organization and your proposed project are credible. Foundations want to know about your past success with previous grants, your organization's reputation, and your experience and expertise in the proposed project.

Proposal Components

Common elements make the job easier.

The questions asked or the organization specified for a grant proposal may vary somewhat from foundation to foundation. Our experience has shown, however, that most foundations ask for similar information in a grant proposal. While proposals can vary in length, most foundation proposals are between five and 10 pages, not including required attachments.

In some states, foundations have joined together to create what is called a *common grant application*. To simplify the grant application process, a group of foundations will use the same application format. If they require something in addition to the common format, they typically state this in their guidelines.

The Foundation Center website (**www.fdncenter.org**) has links to 13 common grant applications such as the Council of Michigan Foundations and Minnesota Common Grant Application Form. Always check a foundation's guidelines to determine if it uses a common grant application.

Based on our experience in foundation and corporate proposal development and examining the common grant applications, we identify the eight most typical components of a foundation grant proposal in Table 4. Remember that some foundations may not ask for all of these components or may incorporate one component with another. These are the most common.

Table 4. Common Foundation Proposal Components

Abstract / Executive Summary	Timeline / Management Plan
Organization Information	Sustainability Plan
Need Statement	Evaluation Plan
Project Design	Budget

Organization Information

Tell the foundation who you are.

This section of the grant proposal introduces the foundation to your organization. Its goal is to summarize the organization's mission, goals, programs, and major accomplishments. You should write as if the reader is not familiar with your organization.

You want to be succinct and not overwhelm the reader with too much information. Include only enough information to demonstrate your organization is competent, credible, and capable. Let's examine some of the items foundations are looking for in this section.

- **Mission.** These days most organizations have a formal mission statement. If your organization does not have one, it should develop a mission statement before soliciting support. A mission statement should be easy to remember and familiar to all employees, such as this one from a well-known organization: "The Big Brothers Big Sisters Mission is to help children reach their potential through professionally supported, one-to-one relationships with measurable impact."

- **Goals.** List the goals developed to ensure your organization meets its mission.

- **Programs.** Briefly describe the programs your organization offers. If there are many programs, group them logically.

- **Major accomplishments.** Highlight your organization's major success stories.

- **Target population.** Describe the people your organization serves. Include details such as socioeconomic characteristics, geographic area, gender, age, and race.

- **Staff and volunteers.** Briefly describe responsibilities of staff, volunteers, and board members. Include the total number of agency staff and volunteers. The foundation needs to believe your organization is managed and staffed appropriately to handle a project.

Exhibit 1 presents a sample organization information section for a foundation grant proposal.

Organization Information

The mission of Arthritis Patient Services is to promote health and provide hope to persons with arthritis and related conditions. Since 1977 our programs have focused on education, exercise, and support to empower persons with arthritis to develop the necessary skills for pain management.

The goals of our organization focus on helping persons with arthritis to: (1) increase knowledge of self-management skills; (2) raise self-confidence in managing their condition; and (3) improve strength and function.

Our target population includes seniors (persons over 55 years) who have or are at-risk for arthritis and related conditions. We focus on poor seniors who cannot afford exercise and support programs, particularly Hispanic and African-American seniors at public housing sites and in low-income neighborhoods. With four full-time staff, we provide a variety of services to help individuals with arthritis including phone and personal consultations with a registered nurse, multicultural osteoporosis screenings and education, arthritis and fibromyalgia self-help and educational courses, exercise training, educational materials according to literacy level, relaxation classes, and financial aid for medication, among many others. Without our work in the community, over 3,000 people who suffer from arthritis and who received our services last year would be left with limited ability to manage their pain.

Exhibit 1. Sample Organization Description

Note: Keep in mind that we have highlighted the common components of the organization information section of a foundation proposal. If the foundation guidelines ask you to include something other than or in addition to what is mentioned above, by all means add it.

Need Statement

Why is your proposed program necessary?

The need statement, or problem statement, makes the case for the project design and describes the issues that your program will address.

In Chapter 2 we discussed how to determine organizational and community needs. The data collected and the interviews conducted for the needs assessment are used to develop your need statement. This section should discuss only the needs for the program described in the proposal; other needs should be targeted in a separate core proposal for another program.

In our grants development workshops, we often state that our goal in writing the need statement is "to make reviewers cry." Part of our success is due to our ability to create foundation proposals that convey compelling needs in our community and target population.

Before writing the need statement:

- **Think negatively.** Nothing positive should be conveyed in the need statement! Your goal is to describe the problem(s) in your community in a way that compels the foundation to want to help by funding your program. You do not, however, want to make the need statement so negative that the foundation will decide that nothing can be done to solve, prevent, or lessen the severity of the problem even if it funded your program.

- **Assume reader ignorance.** Develop your need statement as if the foundation knows nothing about your state, county, community, or target population. Each aspect of your need that is relevant to the proposed project must be described. A foundation located in a large, urban area of the Midwest may have a much different perspective than a foundation located in the rural South. Also keep in mind that the foundation may not be familiar with local statistics you employ. You should always compare your local data with national and state figures.

- **Address unfamiliarity.** The foundation may be unaware of the relationships among demographics, underlying causes, and resulting problems. As you describe your needs, you must help the foundation understand these relationships. For example, if you cite the high incidence of single-parent families in a community as evidence of need, you may have to explain its relationship to other factors that you are planning to address such as higher poverty levels or lower parental involvement in the schools.

In the sections that follow we present strategies to help you develop the compelling need statements that are likely to attract a foundation's attention.

Getting Started

One way of getting your need statement off to a good start is to compose three statements that can be developed into a more complete picture of your need. These statements and examples of each are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Need Statement Starters

Write…	Add…	Example
The problem is…	*A concise description of the problem*	The problem is that Liberty County high school students are falling behind their counterparts in neighboring counties in academic achievement and life skills.
The problem is caused by…	*The cause(s) of the problem*	This problem is caused by high rates of family illiteracy and poverty, limited access to educational support programs, and a lack of role models to provide guidance.
Long term and without intervention	*The long-term consequences if there is no intervention*	Without intervention, many children will fail academically, drop out of school, and find themselves unable to find jobs to adequately support themselves and eventually their families.

After you develop this opening statement, expand the discussion of the need supported by facts and statistics.

Personalizing the Need

The need statement should tell a story about your target community. It is critical to concentrate on the community's needs rather than your organization's (Burke & Prater, 2000).[11] Foundations will connect more quickly to your consumers. Winning proposals typically tell their story in first person (i.e., using the words such as *we, us,* and *our*) as though the Grant Writer is a member of the community. Reviewers will have a sense of reading a proposal from someone close to the need and with ownership of the problem. It will help engage the foundation in its solution.

For example, compare the two "before" and "after" paragraphs below and note the more personal tone of the second.

Before: The district high school dropout rate last year reached an all-time high of 40 percent. As a result, there are many young people in the community without the skills to find and keep a job. Many are involved in drug use and criminal behaviors that threaten neighborhoods, set a dangerous example for younger children, and often result in tragedy.

After: Last year, when the high school dropout rate in *our* district reached an all-time high of 40 percent, *we* knew it was time for action. Too many young people in *our* community find themselves without the skills to find and keep a job. As a result, many are involved in drug use and criminal behaviors that threaten *our* neighborhoods, set a dangerous example for *our* younger children, and often result in tragedy.

Compelling the Foundation to Help

The goal of the need statement is to make the foundation want to do everything it can to help solve your problem. To achieve this, you should use strong, emotional language (words like *misery index* and *poorest of the poor*) and attention-getting or startling facts and statistics to describe the intensity of the need. You want the description of your need to be so convincing that the reviewer wants to call you and volunteer to help your program immediately. Remember, your need statement establishes the path for the rest of your proposal, and it should be compelling so that the foundation quickly recognizes its value (Burke & Prater, 2000).[12]

Using Your Needs Assessment

In Chapter 2 we explained why and how to conduct a needs assessment. Use the information from the assessment to validate the need and show the foundation you have done your homework. Table 6 presents sample statements for incorporating assessment information into your need statement.

Table 6. Statements to Introduce Assessment Information
The table that follows summarizes our severe problems based on our 2006 Community Needs Assessment.
We formed an Early Childhood Task Force to examine the problems facing our children and pinpointed five priority needs.
Community meetings with the target population in June 2006 revealed that lack of transportation and limited doctor office hours were barriers to receiving preventive health care.
Research from the School of Public Health at the university (2005) shows that students with the risk factors we find in our students are candidates for failure.
Interviews with local experts in March 2006 revealed that mental health screenings are not being utilized by families for a variety of reasons.
In our September 2005 survey, over 80 percent of students in our poor area reported being solicited by drug dealers at least once a month.

Using Statistics to Prove Need

Use the statistics you collected during your needs assessment to prove need and enhance your credibility. Four or five different, independent sources of statistics are recommended. Always document the date and source for every statistic you use.

You should select the most critical statistics, that is, those that make the best case for your need. You do not want to overwhelm foundation reviewers with too many numbers or you will lose them.

You can present statistics within the text or within a table. Based on our experience, successful need statements combine these methods. A large group of statistics is more difficult to read in a text format. Statistics within a table are often easier to read but may require interpretation. The excerpt from a need statement in Exhibit 2 combines text and table presentations.

Our misery index clearly indicates that many families and the workforce of our county are very distressed and need intensive assistance. Families have become trapped in a desperate and grim lifestyle. The following factors illustrate the plight of many families in our community:

Social Indicator	County %	State %
Children in poverty	30	16
Families in poverty	21	13
Students eligible for free / reduced-cost lunch	42	43
Graduates ineligible for HOPE Scholarship	65	45
Households without a computer	61	36
Source: State Guide 2006, State of the Workforce Report 2006		

Our state is ranked 50^{th} in the nation in SAT scores among high school seniors. Of our ninth graders, 43 percent do not complete the 12^{th} grade, yet 65 percent of jobs require more than a high school diploma. We rank at the bottom of high school graduates who go on to postsecondary training of any kind. Furthermore, according to the 2005 County Guide, our county's students average 50 points lower than the state average for SAT scores.

Exhibit 2. Sample Statistics Presentation

Closing with Hope

Although you want the need statement to present the problem as serious and requiring immediate attention, you also want to leave the reader the belief that something can be done. You do not want the foundation to conclude there is no way to solve the problem. We recommend concluding the need statement with a few sentences that summarize your findings and suggest that solutions do exist, for example:

> Technology intervention is critical to improving the high school graduation rate and the economic condition of our county. Some in our community worry that little can be done to improve the situation. We disagree. Based on our research, we believe that partnering with our county library system to expose young people and adults to technology is a step in building a strong foundation for lifelong learning and self-sufficiency.

Project Design

You respond to the problem.

The project design is your opportunity to describe how you will address the problem presented in the need statement. One key tip we can give you here is to focus on *differentiating* your program from similar or competing organizations. The project design must demonstrate how your proposed activities are innovative and do not duplicate existing services. You also do not want to present the same solutions foundations have been reading about for years. Although a familiar approach might be valid, it may not be one that generates excitement and funding. As one of the foundations in our Study of Foundation and Corporate Funders stated, "[A winning project] is real; it comes alive and is compelling!"[13]

As with the need statement, research is essential in the project design. While the need statement presents a gloomy picture, the project design is your opportunity to create hope and excitement (nothing negative here). Again, you want to show that the strategies or program design you present are valid and credible.

We reviewed a variety of foundation grant applications. The most common elements foundations request in the project design are the following:

- an introduction
- a description of target population
- goals and objectives
- program strategies
- partners
- qualifications
- expected outcomes

We will review each of these components, giving you tips to ensure your foundation proposals score high points from reviewers.

Introduction

It is helpful to begin with a brief paragraph to move the reader from the need statement to the project design. This paragraph should introduce the name of your program and state its overall purpose or vision. The following is an example of an introductory statement from a funded proposal:

> A coalition of five school districts in eastern North Carolina created ANCHOR (Alliance in North Carolina to Help Our Children Read) to transform our good programs into five centers of excellence. Our vision is to expand and *anchor* our existing programs with high expectations so that children and their families benefit from quality literacy experiences.

We have discovered that developing a short, creative name for a program helps the program stand out in readers' minds, especially if they are reading several proposals at once. Exhibit 3 contains some program names from funded Research Associates proposals.

Before	**After**
The Technology Program	**Ca**pable **P**rofessionals **a**nd **C**hildren **I**mprinting **T**echnolog**y**, or CAPACITY
Workplace Education Program	Opportunity Knocks
Arthritis Manager Program	**T**ransforming **E**veryone into **A**rthritis **M**anagers, or TEAM
Music Afterschool Program	Music Makers

Exhibit 3. Sample Program Names

Target Population

In this section foundations like to learn the size and characteristics of the population to be served, how it will benefit, and its involvement in your organization and project planning (volunteers, board members, etc.). You may have a primary target population (e.g., high-risk youth) and a secondary target population (e.g., parents and siblings).

Your description should be clear and concise. Depending on the characteristics of your target population, sometimes it is necessary to include how you will identify the target population and how this group will be screened. Successful proposals describe the target population using what we call the *four essentials*.

1. Number of participants

2. Location of the target population (e.g., city, grade level, school, state, geographical area)

3. A descriptive phrase that identifies the target group (e.g., children with disabilities, adults with mental illness, individuals with arthritis)

4. How participants will be recruited

The following is an example of a description of a target population from a funded corporate foundation proposal:

> Our target population includes seniors (persons over 55 years) who have or are at risk for arthritis and related conditions. We focus on poor seniors who cannot afford exercise and support programs, particularly Hispanics and African-Americans at housing authority sites and in low-income neighborhoods. Our program will target 42 African-American women at The Hall House, a public housing site in the city. Flyers, as well as referrals from their primary physician printed in English and Spanish, will be used to recruit participants.

Goals and Objectives

Foundations want to know the overarching purpose of the project and what will be different at the end of the project period, including short-term and long-term changes. The goals and objectives section should also show how your project fits with your organization's mission and goals and if the project is new or ongoing. Goals and objectives are essential to your project design and help the foundation understand what you plan to accomplish.

Goals are the ultimate outcomes desired over a long period of time. Goals are general and broad and convey the long-range benefits of your program. One to four goals should suffice for almost any program. In general, programs with budgets over $100,000 have more, and smaller programs have fewer. Be careful! Too many goals may confuse and demonstrate a lack of focus. Goals never contain dates or numbers and should not be measurable. (Save measurement for your objectives.)

Exhibit 4 provides examples of goals from funded proposals. Notice how the examples provide a brief summary of the goal, providing a quick glimpse of your purpose.

Student Achievement. To develop student mastery of early reading skills in the areas of phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension.
Professional Capacity. To build teacher technology proficiency and instructional capacity.
Decrease Drug Abuse. To reduce conflict, violence, alcohol, tobacco, and other drug abuse in school-age children.
Empowerment. To ensure low-income seniors with arthritis are empowered with the necessary skills to manage their condition effectively.

Exhibit 4. Sample Goals

Objectives are measurable and specify criteria you will use to determine if you are successful at meeting your goals. Remember that for each objective you present, you must be able to evaluate the measure. Incorporate objectives that do not take extensive work but illustrate your competency. Depending on the size of the program, each goal may have one to five (or sometimes more) objectives.

Well-written, winning objectives:

- Include a number or percentage
- State a time period or deadline for completion
- Use phrases such as *at least* or *a minimum of*
- Identify the target population
- Are results-oriented
- Specify the level of performance with clear descriptions
- Are attainable and realistic
- Employ action verbs such as assess, build, serve, develop, increase, decrease, etc.

Consider the quality of the sample objectives in Exhibit 5. This will help you create objectives that show the foundation your program is well thought out and concise.

Quality	Objective
Poor	To provide in-depth training.
Fair	To provide in-depth training by June 24, 2005.
Good	To provide at least 4 training sessions in assessment by June 24, 2005.
Excellent	To provide at least 4 training sessions in assessment for a minimum of 80% of our early childhood teachers (25) by June 24, 2005.

Exhibit 5. Sample Objectives

Use caution in projecting the scope or scale of your planned program's impact. Our experience has shown us that it is best to *under promise* and *over deliver!*

Program Strategies

Program strategies can be defined as program activities, program design, or the approach. In other words, what do you plan to do about your problem?

Present strategies by describing the issues your project will address. We recommend you begin by creating a list of every possible component of your program. Try to imagine every step involved. Apply the "6 Ws": who, what, when, why, where, and how. Successful strategies that lead to funding do the following:

- **Tell a story.** After foundation reviewers read your strategies, they should know what activities will occur each day. Present the strategies in the order in which they will occur, as if you are telling a story.

- **Include an advisory committee.** The purpose of an *advisory committee* (or *task force*) is to assist your program by monitoring the program and making recommendations. Creating this group demonstrates a desire for accountability and adds credibility to your project. Foundations usually like to see this oversight in your proposal even though they may not specifically ask for it. A description of the advisory committee typically includes its purpose, number of participants, why members are selected, backgrounds, and responsibilities.

- **Demonstrate innovation.** As we have stated, foundations are typically more interested in funding innovative ideas. Describing the program activities that will occur is your chance to demonstrate your creativity. Remember to incorporate your research to show that the approach is valid and credible.

- **Link strategies to needs.** It is critical to establish a clear connection between your identified needs and strategies. Inexperienced Grant Writers often mistakenly introduce a strategy that is not a possible solution to problems in the need statement. One technique we have found to link strategies to our needs is to indicate in parentheses which need is addressed by each strategy we present. For example:

  > Under the leadership of the YMCA, 30 minutes of each day will be filled with structured and supervised group recreational activities to direct the students' youthful energy into positive physical activities (Need 4).

- **Connect to objectives.** Your strategies must also be connected to your goals and objectives. Do not introduce a strategy that does not help you accomplish your objectives.

- **Focus on root causes.** As we learned in Chapter 1, foundations usually focus their giving on addressing root causes of problems rather than funding band-aid efforts. Successful strategies are reflective of this fact.

Partners

It is rare for a foundation not to ask about your partnerships. A solid description of your collaborations is essential for fundable program. Foundations also want to know about your relationships with other organizations doing similar work to ensure duplication is avoided.

Do not forget to highlight which existing community resources you will use. For example, a faith-based organization may provide volunteers to help children in your program with homework after school. Exhibit 6 contains a sample from a funded proposal that demonstrates partnerships.

Partner	Responsibilities
First Steps	Through First Steps, the county has formed a board to assess the county needs and develop a strategic plan. First Steps will provide training for parents as teachers and reading tutors.
County Library	The Bookmobile will visit the target schools and provide additional opportunities for students to gain access to diverse, engaging reading material. The McMaster's Book Endowment will provide incentive books for families.
Literacy Council	Council will provide reading tutors and volunteer mentors.
Keep Our County Beautiful	Provide volunteers to read to children at school.
Sisters of Charity	The Sisters of Charity will provide opportunities for parent involvement in program and provide take-home materials for parents, fostering increased literacy in the home.
Trinity Presbytery	Faith-based organization will provide funding and support to expand afterschool tutorial programs.

Exhibit 6. Incorporating Partnerships

We have found inexperienced Grant Writers fail to consider all the potential partnerships that exist in their proposed project. Remember, partnerships do not have to be complicated collaborations. If, for example, another organization is providing space for a component of your program, this is a partnership.

Qualifications

Although you may have described a great program and innovative activities, foundations also need to know that the project has the potential to be implemented in a high-quality manner. Foundations usually want to learn the qualifications of key staff and volunteers who will be working with the target population. They also want to know about related program accomplishments that show why your organization is qualified to carry out your proposed program. Exhibit 7 presents an example from a funded proposal.

The core of the *EXCEL* program is the high quality of staff and consultants, with expertise in traditional American history, responsible for delivering content-based professional development activities. The staff and consultants were selected based on their ability to implement active formats for learning beyond traditional lectures and discussion, including role playing, group activities, simulations, and debates tied to historical content (American Historical Association, 2002). The table below highlights the strengths of key staff and consultants for *EXCEL*. See Appendix A for detailed *curriculum vitae*.

Provider	American History Expertise and Qualifications
Project Director	Master's level professional with a degree in history will be hired to manage project activities; experience in coordination of education programs, primary resources, web-based instruction, supervision, coaching, and professional development.
Jane Doe, Consultant	Ph.D., Assistant Professor of History; has taught a variety of American history courses; has reviewed, published, and presented over 20 books and articles; was named Andrew W. Mellon Fellow through the Virginia Historical Society.
John Doe, Consultant	Ph.D., Educational Leadership, and M.Ed., Secondary Social Studies; experience with school districts through the Department of Education; experience implementing K-12 history programs; worked with Carter Presidential Center and GA Trust for Historic Preservation; provides professional development in history content and instructional methodology (seminars and guided practice); has conducted over 250 history workshops and presentation; has authored over 35 articles for professional journals.
Community Center	Experience providing rigorous six-day graduate-level summer institutes; focus on assisting teachers in strengthening their understanding and appreciation of American history; strengths in substantive study in American history and teaching methods.

Exhibit 7. Sample Presentation of Program Staff

Expected Outcomes

Outcomes are what you expect to happen or be changed as at result of program implementation. Descriptions of expected outcomes give the foundation a sense of the significance and scope of your program. This section of the proposal does not need to be difficult to write. One quick, easy way we use to develop expected outcomes is to revisit our goals and objectives, as shown in the examples below.

Objective	Outcome
To decrease the number of incidents of student violence in the targeted high school by at least 5% per school year for each year of the three-year program.	The number of incidents of student violence will decrease by at least 15% by the end of the grant program.
To decrease arthritis pain perception among participants by at least 35% by June 24, 2006.	Arthritis pain perception will decrease.

Timeline or Management Plan

What will happen and when?

The timeline, or management plan, is the work plan your organizations will use to accomplish its goals and outcomes. Foundations are looking for the tasks and a timetable for implementing them. Usually timelines are divided into months rather than specific dates (e.g., June 24, 2006).

Our strategy for developing a timeline is simple. Revisit your project design section. As you read through it, list all the major activities. The timeline should not repeat all the details in your project design. Whenever you think you can accomplish an activity, add one to two months to your expectations. This way you can *under promise and over deliver*.

Winning proposals often present the timeline in a table. This helps keep the foundation focused and allows for ease in reading. Exhibit 8 contains a timeline showing two months of activity. Keep in mind that your timeline should cover the entire length of your program, typically 12 months.

Month	Activities	Responsibility
Sept. 2007	Install equipment for kindergarten technology centers	Computer technician
	Set up classrooms that include creative, inviting, and encouraging technology centers	Teachers
	Hold press event to kick-off *PILOT* program	Project director
	Administer language arts pre-test to all kindergarten students	Teachers
Oct. 2007	Hold quarterly meeting of *PILOT* task force	Project director
	Hold hands-on parent workshops in the computer areas of each classroom	Parenting coordinator
	Provide at least 3 hours per week of technology access to 80% of the kindergarten students	Teachers, aides
	Kindergarten teachers in all *PILOT* schools meet to share best practices and other information	Project director, teachers

Exhibit 8. Sample Project Timeline

A word of caution: do not include any new information or surprises in the timeline, that is, information that is not covered in the project design section. A new item will confuse readers. Also, make sure program activities are spread out over the project period and not all contained in a few months.

Sustainability

Plan for the future.

As you learned in Chapter 1, a foundation does not want to be the sole funder of a program. A proposal that requests all program funding from a single source is likely going to be rejected. The foundation also wants to know that if it makes an investment in your program, the program will not end once their funding is gone. Thus, a clear, concise plan for obtaining other funding to support your program, or parts of your program, in the future is essential.

Your sustainability objective is the development of a *written, diversified resource strategy*. Here are some simple strategies we have used in funded proposals to demonstrate a solid plan for sustainability.

- **Sustainability committee.** Create a committee of "movers and shakers" to develop and write up a local plan to maintain funding. Committee responsibilities could include learning and broadcasting the successes of the project; creating a list of people or resources in the community that have potential funding capabilities; and calling or meeting with at least five people from the resource list each year to ask for support.

- **Consortium.** Develop partnerships with collaborating organizations to jointly pursue and share funding from a variety of sources.

- **Diversity of funding methods.** Present non-grant methods for institutionalizing a successful program or project components such as product sales, fees for services, and endowments (Orosz, 2000).[14] For instance, a program strategy to employ family outreach workers to assist eligible families to apply for and receive public assistance may net sustainable program income in Medicaid dollars.

- **Mutual partnerships.** Explore mutual partnerships with local agencies that may serve the same clients as your organization does.

- **Staff training.** Provide more training for key staff or your grant team to learn to develop grant proposals to pursue funding from federal and state government, foundations, and corporations.

- **Current and potential supporters.** Indicate other funding sources that are contributing to the project. Do not forget to highlight resources your organization is contributing to the project such as space, staff, or equipment. Also, some funders want to know which other funders you are approaching (Geever, 2004).[15] This is not a secret; be honest with the foundation.

Caution: Do not fall into the tunnel vision trap! A sustainability plan that relies entirely on winning grants from other foundations is sure to be a loser (Orosz, 2000).[16] This would be equivalent to developing a retirement plan that depended on winning the lottery before you retire. It is not likely to happen.

Evaluation Plan

Are goals and objectives being met?

The purpose of an evaluation plan is to determine if your program has been successful in meeting its goals and objectives. Even if the foundation does not ask for an evaluation, you should always include methods of measuring success. An evaluation plan shows your organization takes its goals and objectives seriously (Geever, 2004).[17] It should also help demonstrate that the program must be continued in the future and may help to secure other funding sources.

There are two main types of evaluation: process and outcome. A *process* evaluation helps the organization know if the project tasks are being implemented as intended so that needed corrections can be made. This type of evaluation is an assessment of administrative and program activities such as the number of services delivered or number of clients attending each session.

Outcome evaluation answers the question, what were the effects of the program? Outcome effects can be short or long term. Short-term outcomes measure the impact on program participants. Long-term outcomes examine the change in the need or the increase in the positive factors that reduce the problem.

Successful foundation proposals incorporate three main components in the evaluation section: (1) a description of the evaluation process, (2) measurements of effectiveness, and (3) dissemination of lessons learned.

Evaluation Process

Foundations want to know the methods used in the evaluation process. The main point to make here is to identify those involved in the evaluation process. In other words, who will make sure the investment the foundation has made in your project is assessed honestly? You should also describe how your organization will use the results of the evaluation to improve program implementation.

Typically, we use our advisory committee or task force (mentioned in the project design) to oversee the evaluation process. Your proposal should indicate that one member of this group has the responsibility of leading the evaluation and data collection. Depending on the scope of the project, this group may meet monthly or quarterly to examine evaluation results and determine if changes need to be made. The existence of this group ensures the evaluation is independent and not overseen by staff or others who have a vested interest in making the project look good. Some foundations may require a professional, independent evaluator; this often depends on the level of funding.

Measuring Effectiveness

There are various ways to measure program effectiveness. Depending on the scope of your program, foundation staff may not be expecting major scientific effort here; they just want to know if their investment helped you achieve the results you intended.

Your methods should employ true evaluative standards and not be simply product-oriented. For instance, a videotape will document activities but does not evaluate their effectiveness. Some common examples for measuring program effectiveness include recordkeeping, surveys, questionnaires, comparison of your program results to similar projects, pre- and post-testing, interviews, observations, and experimental versus control group comparisons (these comparisons are expensive and time consuming).

You need to clearly describe your assessment methods. Make sure these are not too sophisticated for the resources you have available to conduct an evaluation. We have found that winning proposals connect their success criteria or indicators to each objective. Exhibit 9 presents an example of this strategy. Note that one objective may have more than one measure for success.

Evaluation Criteria	
Program Objectives	**Indicators of Success**
1. To decrease the number of students recommended for retention in kindergarten by at least 5% when comparing May 2006 to May 2007.	School retention forms from May 2007 as compared to previous year's retention forms.
2. To develop by December 2007 a language arts and technology testing program that will enable teachers to properly measure the skills mastered by kindergarten students.	Language arts and technology testing program installed in all kindergarten technology centers. Written evaluation by teachers on ease of program use.
3. To provide at least 3 hours per week of technology access to at least 80% of kindergarten students between October 2006 and May 2007.	Dated and timed technology center sign-in sheets.
4. To increase by at least 5% the number of students passing the end-of-year language arts comprehension test by May 2007.	Official test results from May 2007 compared to official test results from May 2006.
5. To improve the pre-test language arts results for at least 80% of kindergarten students by May 2007.	Official pre-test language arts results compared to official post-test language arts results.
6. To have at least 80% of kindergarten students successfully complete *PILOT* program by testing out of all 5-star language arts skills by May 2007.	Classroom records from each of the 5 star language arts skill tests from each student. Copy of *PILOT* success completion certificate given to students.

Exhibit 9. Sample Evaluation Criteria

Dissemination

Get the word out.

Most foundations prefer programs that include a strategy to disseminate any lessons learned (successes and failures), allowing others to benefit from your experience. While foundations may not always ask for this component, you will score extra points if you include a dissemination plan.

There are many ways to disseminate information. Here are some common methods we have used in our wining foundation proposals:

- **Website.** Develop a website with accessible, exportable products (e.g., downloadable newsletters, flyers, updates, and brochures) and progress reports for stakeholder review.

- **Program manual.** Design a program manual that highlights successful strategies and explains how to replicate your program.

- **Presentations.** Create a presentation about your program that can be delivered at state and national conferences.

- **Publications.** Publish reports in magazines, journals, and newspapers.

- **Public meetings.** Invite local stakeholders and key informants to meetings to review successful strategies and weaknesses of the program.

- **Site visits.** If the scope of the project permits, allow key stakeholders and others the opportunity to see your program in action.

- **University connections.** Create a learning lab for university professors and students to study your project.

The Budget
How much will it cost?

Many people do not like to develop the budget. If this describes you, then this is the time to use the member of your grant team with budget expertise or acquire training in budget development. Do not underestimate the importance of your budget. We have found that the budget is the first thing a budget analyst from the foundation may examine—before reading your proposal.

What the Foundation Sees

When foundation reviewers analyze your budget, what are they interested in? Typically, they are scrutinizing four key items (Orosz, 2000):[18]

1. **Compatibility with the proposal narrative.** Foundations look to see if your budget reflects what you said you planned to do in the program design. There should not be any items in the budget that have not been addressed in the project design. If the focus of your narrative is on providing nutritious meals to seniors, then most of your money should be spent on items related to that activity rather than, for example, on computers. Foundations will also look to

see if you omitted a line item (e.g., specialized training) that should be included in the budget.

2. **Clarity.** Foundations prefer budget categories and line items that are clearly labeled and easy to understand. A *miscellaneous* category is too vague and is sure to cause you to lose points.

3. **Unallowable expenses.** Your budget will also score poorly if you are requesting funds that the foundation does not allow; for example, funding an endowment or general operating support.

4. **Doctrine of proportionality.** Foundations recognize that project costs vary, but variations generally fall within a certain range. Proposal reviewers will recognize padding, so our best advice is to reflect true costs in the budget.

Presenting the Budget

Because foundations do not want to be the sole funder of a program, your budget must show the contributions of other funders (partnerships, and in-kind donations). In-kind or local contributions are also referred to as *match* or sometimes *local match*. We suggest using the term *local contributions* to make it clear your organization is not asking the foundation to pay for items listed in this category.

What does a foundation want to know from your budget? Foundations want to know specifically what you are asking them to fund. They want to know about income from other sources for the project such as grants, fundraising events, private donations, publications, products, membership income, and fees. Common budget categories include personnel, fringe benefits, travel, supplies, and contractual.

The proposed budget should have four columns:

1. Budget Category
2. Requested Funds
3. Local Contributions
4. Project Total

For each line item, column 4 would contain the sum of columns 2 and 3. This method works well for one-year proposals, which most foundations prefer. A sample budget from a funded corporate foundation grant is presented in Exhibit 10. Note how the budget indicates the sources of local contributions in the description under Budget Category.

Program Budget			
Budget Category	**Requested Funds**	**Local Contributions**	**Program Total**
I. PERSONNEL			
Exercise Facilitator – Registered nurse from Arthritis Services will provide educational services bimonthly and assist in evaluation and program administration; estimated to take 10% of full-time staff duties. Support from United Way and ABC Foundation.	$0	$4,100	$4,100
Subtotal Personnel	**0**	**4,100**	**4,100**
II. FRINGE BENEFITS			
Standard package as required by federal and state law calculated at .0765% of gross salaries and prorated for 10% time on project. Income from newsletter subscriptions and annual fundraising event.		313	313
Subtotal Fringe	**0**	**313**	**313**
III. TRAVEL			
Local – Exercise Facilitator will use personal automobile to travel to Hall House to provide services; estimated 10 miles per week @ $0.375 per mile x 20 visits.	75		75
Subtotal Travel	**75**	**0**	**75**
IV. SUPPLIES			
A. General Office – Cost estimated at $5 per week x 40 weeks (includes paper, pens, tape, etc.).	200		200
B. Education/Training – Cost estimated at $5 per week x 40 weeks (includes educational handouts, pre/post evaluations, photocopying, printing, etc.).	200		200
C. Exercise – Cost for tools for exercise such as weights and mats; estimated at $15 per person x 12 participants.	180		180
Subtotal Supplies	**580**	**0**	**580**
V. CONTRACTUAL			
A. Physical Therapist – Licensed professional to provide exercise services; 2 sessions per week x 40 weeks x $54 per session.	4,320		4,320
B. Evaluation Services – With the assistance of Arthritis Services staff, Dr. Jones, Associate Professor of Nursing, will oversee the evaluation process to help assess if objectives are on target using outcome measures; support from private donations and membership fees.		500	500
C. Program Space/Utilities – Activities to take place at Hall House; cost estimated at $98 per week x 40 weeks; facilities provided by partnership with Hall House.		3,920	3,920
Subtotal Contractual	**4,320**	**4,420**	**8,740**
Total Program Costs	**$4,975**	**$8,833**	**$13,808**

Exhibit 10. Sample Proposal Budget

Determining Total Costs

How large should your program budget be? The key is to make sure you have included *all* program costs.

One of our staff was volunteering with a nonprofit organization to help write a small corporate grant proposal. As she examined the draft budget for the program, the executive director pointed out that the total program cost consisted of the expenses for the contracted services of a physical therapist and exercise supplies, totaling about $4,500. This was the amount the organization wanted in a grant.

Look again at the budget in Exhibit 10. The $4,500 budget was transformed into a $13,800 budget by our staff member. The increase was the result of including the *true costs* of the program that had not been accounted for by the executive director, such as program space, travel costs and evaluation services. When all costs are included in the budget, foundation reviewers get a better picture of the program, and the foundation knows it is not being asked to pay for the entire program.

Foundations generally accept the strategy of including line items in your budget that are operating costs specific to implementing the program (Geever, 2004).[19]

Budget for Core Proposal

When developing the core proposal, you may not know which categories the foundation is willing to fund. We recommend waiting to finalize the costs you will request from a foundation until you have selected one. Always follow foundation guidelines. For example, in the budget shown in Exhibit 10, the foundation stated specifically that it would not fund staff salaries. If we overlooked this, our program might have been rejected immediately.

We have seen some foundations provide their own budget forms, which can vary greatly from foundation to foundation. Always use a form if one is provided. In Chapter 5, we will discuss strategies to adjust your core budget for a specific foundation.

Abstract

It's positioned first but written last.

Most foundations ask for an abstract (or executive summary) summarizing the main components of your project. Even though this is usually positioned first in your proposal application, our advice is to write this section last. This way you can select components from your fully developed proposal for the abstract.

The length of the abstract varies. Some foundations request a few sentences while others ask for a full page. We recommend a one-page abstract for your core proposal, which can be reduced as needed based on your funder's application guidelines. Most foundations are seeking the common items presented below.

- **Purpose of agency.** State your organization's full name and add a brief statement about its purpose. Typically your organization's mission statement is useful here.

- **Need and target population.** Highlight the most pressing needs and geographical location of those your program will serve. Do not forget to include the number of individuals who will benefit from your program. Revisit your need statement. You already have the information there; use the main ideas.

- **Purpose and goals.** Summarize the purpose of your project and the funding request. The goals should be expressed exactly as you presented them in your project design section: no changes. Numbering your goals in the narrative is helpful for readers as they scan your abstract (and your proposal).

- **Project activities.** Review your project design and pull out the main activities that will take place.

- **Projected outcomes.** This item demonstrates to the funder what the project will accomplish. Again, review this component in your project design and summarize it for the abstract.

- **Link to foundation mission.** Help the foundation make an emotional connection with your program by connecting your program goal(s) to its strategic mission. This demonstrates you have done your homework and know this foundation is a good match with your program. Also, name the foundation to personalize the abstract and create a sense of partnership. An excellent proposal will show that there is, according to one foundation in our study, "a win-win collaboration; the organization helps us fulfill our mission and share our vision."[20]

- **Funding request.** Most foundations prefer a request for a specific dollar amount. Also, give the funder a sense of how the project will use its funds, touching on what you plan to accomplish.

Make sure to end the abstract on a positive note. We typically insert a catchy phrase, often linked to our program name. The sample abstract in Exhibit 11 demonstrates the use of the components described above.

ABSTRACT

Monroe Public Schools has formed a collaborative with the YMCA to address the need for safe, productive activities outside school hours for our target area. Students from our target schools exhibit some of the greatest risk factors for low achievement including high rates of families in poverty, limited English proficiency, single-parent families, and adult illiteracy.

Our program will serve 3,600 at-risk youth (100 per site) and their families, predominantly Hispanic and low-income, in grades Pre K-5. The acronym *HORIZON* (***H**elping **O**thers **R**each **I**ndividual **Z**eal and **O**pportunities **N**ow*) was chosen to represent the program's focus on the pursuit of academic excellence and to emphasize students' inherent passion for success!

HORIZON is consistent with ABC Foundation's mission to help underprivileged children succeed in life. Our three goals include the following: (1) students will reach high standards attaining proficiency or better in reading and mathematics; (2) low income and Hispanic families will participate in literacy and related educational activities; and (3) a safe, drug-free, and supervised environment will be accessible to all students a minimum of 15 hours per week. We will provide a comprehensive, research-based program that addresses academic and youth development needs of our students and the literacy and related educational needs of our families. These needs include tutoring; mentoring; homework assistance; academic enrichment and community service activities; computer training; English proficiency; and cultural activities.

Our expected outcomes include a reduction in conflict and violence, an increase in student scores in reading and mathematics, and increased student and family involvement in literacy activities. Our total project budget is $985,234, and we are requesting $250,145 from the ABC Foundation. With your assistance, we will help our students reach the *HORIZON*!

Exhibit 11. Sample Abstract

Although you are writing this section last, do not underestimate its importance. Over 58 percent of the foundations in our foundation study said they read proposal sections in the order which they receive them.[21] This means that your abstract is likely the first item the foundation reviews in your application. While the program officer probably reads the entire proposal, the abstract may be the only part of your application a trustee reads to stimulate interest or make a decision.

After the core proposal is developed, you are ready to find the foundation and corporate grant opportunities that exist. We will explain how to make a good match in the next chapter.

Tips for Success

- Taking the time to develop a *core proposal* before finding grant opportunities will save you a lot of time later.
- To be fundable, your proposal must communicate feasibility, competence, and credibility.
- Write the organization section as if the foundation is not familiar with your organization.
- Nothing positive should be conveyed in the need statement.
- Strive to make the reviewer *cry* when reading your need statement, but be sure to close with a sense that something can be done.
- Use text and tables in the need statement.
- Goals never contain dates or numbers and should not be measurable. Save this information for your objectives.
- Successful program strategies are innovative, based on scientific research, linked to needs and objectives, focus on root causes, and use a collaborative approach.
- There should be no information in the timeline that has not been addressed in your project design.
- A sustainability plan that relies entirely on winning grants from other foundations is sure to be a loser.
- A solid evaluation plan will indicate the program should be continued in the future and may help secure other funding sources.
- A foundation may not always ask for a dissemination plan; however, you will score extra points if you include a brief one.
- Do not underestimate the importance of the budget. It is often the first item foundation budget analysts examine before reading your proposal.
- Write your program abstract last, ending it on a positive note. This may be the only part of your proposal the final decision-maker reads.

Chapter 3 References

[1] Research Associates. (2005, January). Study of Foundation and Corporate Funders.

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[21] Research Associates. (2005, January). Study of Foundation and Corporate Funders.

CHAPTER 4 ➤ FINDING GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

After writing a core proposal and developing a strategic focus based on your organization's needs (not on what a foundation wants to fund), it is time to locate foundation and corporate grant opportunities. We often hear from grant seekers that they don't know where to look for grant opportunities, or they assume that only limited or no funding is available for their programs. This assumption could not be more wrong. There are more than 60,000 foundations and over 5,000 corporations that currently support a wide variety of programs! Surely, there is a potential match for your needs.

We cannot stress enough the importance of good foundation research. In our Study of Foundation and Corporate Funders, the most repeated advice for grant seekers from foundations was to (1) read and follow guidelines, and (2) research the foundation.[1] In addition, the top two reasons a foundation declines funding are (1) the proposed program is not aligned with the foundation's mission, and (2) the program is not located in the geographic area served by the foundation. It is a waste of your time and the foundation's to submit an application that is not eligible for funding.

The key to successful grant seeking is knowing where to look for opportunities and how to make the best use of them. In this chapter, we discuss the tools you need to find these foundation grantors. You may be surprised when you actually find too many funding sources! We will show you how to develop a strategic process to narrow down your list of potential funders so you have the best matches—the foundations most likely to fund your program.

Beginning the Search

Avoid spinning your wheels.

There are numerous resources to help you find grant opportunities. Before we discuss what these are, we are going to talk about what you are looking for when reviewing these resources. This will help you narrow the candidates by eliminating foundations whose interests are not compatible with what your organization wants to do.

We use five criteria to determine whether or not a foundation makes a good prospect:

1. Geographic focus
2. Areas of interest
3. Type of support
4. Institution preferences
5. Populations served

Any potential funder should satisfy all five of these criteria to ensure it is a good candidate for your prospect list.

Geographic Focus

Most foundations have a specific geographic focus. This means they will consider funding programs that benefit consumers only in the geographic area they serve. Their focus could be national, regional (e.g., the Midwest), statewide, a multiple-county area, a single county, or a city.

A foundation's geographic focus is a quick way to determine whether or not to put the foundation on your prospect list. You may discover a foundation funds projects in your interest area (e.g., early childhood) but not in the geographic area your organization serves. In this case, don't waste time applying.

For instance, the Idaho Community Foundation was established to enhance the quality of life for people in Idaho. The foundation makes grants in a variety of areas including health, human services, arts and culture, education, public projects, and the environment. Based on geographic focus, a program to improve the oral health of seniors in Florida will not interest this foundation.

You can generally determine geographic focus by reviewing the foundation's annual report, examining its website, or assessing the foundation's grant application guidelines.

There may be special circumstances when a foundation will fund a program outside its usual geographic focus. When this happens, the foundation usually gives permission to submit a proposal. As a rule, we do not recommend submitting a proposal to a foundation whose geographic interests do not match your organization's unless you have talked with its staff first.

Areas of Interest

Next you want to know the foundation's areas of interest, or funding priorities. Many foundations have several, while others focus on just one or two areas. Commonly funded areas include arts and culture, health, human services, education, youth development, and the environment. Some foundations further define their priorities. For instance, a foundation may fund educational programs but only in higher education. Thus, you would probably be wasting your efforts to submit a proposal for a summer camp for adolescents.

Type of Support

Look for foundations that provide support for programs like yours. Foundations may limit funding to specific areas or activities such as capital campaigns, general operating support, research, student aid, seed money, or program development. Some foundations may fund several areas while others may restrict giving to a specific area of interest such as building construction. Some foundations state what they will <u>not</u> fund (e.g., no scholarships).

The Kresge Foundation awards grants on a national basis; however, over 80 percent of its grants are for "bricks and mortar," and other grants typically fund equipment, operating costs, and endowments. If you need program support, this foundation is not a likely candidate for your list. On the other hand, if you have an afterschool program that needs program support funding (e.g., teachers, supplies, etc.) as well as a new playground, you may strategically pick one foundation to fund your program support needs and another foundation to fund your building needs.

Institution Preferences

Some foundations limit funding to particular types of institutions. Major recipient institutions include educational support agencies, colleges and universities, human service agencies, and museums. If a foundation's guidelines state that it awards grants only to universities and you are looking for museum support, then this foundation may not be a good candidate for your list.

If a foundation does not fund your type of institution, you do not necessarily need to take it off your list. For example, you may have found a foundation that meets all the other criteria listed here (geographic focus, type of support, etc.), but it funds only institutions of higher education. One way you might pursue assistance from the foundation is to establish a partnership with a local college or university and designate it as the lead applicant. Then it contracts with your organization to provide part or all of the services. Most partners, however, will want some funds from the partnership grant.

Populations Served

Some foundations award grants to assist all types of populations, while other funders designate their grants for specified populations. These might include children and youth, women and girls, people with disabilities, economically disadvantaged, ethnic or racial minorities, elderly, crime or abuse victims, and men and boys.

Research Resources

Seek and you will find.

Now that you know what you are looking for when doing research, let's examine the variety of ways to discover foundation funding opportunities. We recommend you use all or a combination of these resources to maximize your opportunities to receive continuing information about grant opportunities.

Internet

Increasingly foundations are using websites to disseminate information about their missions and grant application requirements. For example, the website of The William Randolph Hearst Foundation (**hearstfdn.org**) tells visitors about funding priorities, application guidelines, grant opportunities, and special programs and gives answers to frequently asked questions.

Currently, nearly 2,700 foundations have websites.[2] The only limitation here is that you need to know the name of the foundation before you can find its website. It is always best to know that a foundation has some interest in funding your program area before taking the time to thoroughly examine its website.

Directories

The use of grant or foundation directories is another excellent way to locate appropriate foundations. Grant directories can be specialized publications (such as funding for museums), or they may have a broader focus (such as the largest national foundations funding a variety of programs). Although most libraries have grant directories, private companies that update their directories once or twice a year often provide the latest, most up-to-date information about funding opportunities.

For instance, Research Associates publishes nearly 40 different grant directories annually (e.g., Aging and Senior Services; Art, Music, Dance, and Drama; Computer Technology). Once you locate potential sources that share your area of interest, you can then visit their websites or call to collect more detailed information.

Specialized Libraries

Making a visit to a library specializing in grants information may be a worthwhile trip. Some libraries provide access to grant directories and foundation databases. Some locations also have librarians to provide technical assistance in searching for foundation grant opportunities. Be aware, however, that information you may find could be several years old.

Newsletters

Grant-related newsletters and listservs offer current information about existing and new grant programs. Go to an Internet search engine like **google.com** and type “grants newsletter”. (Research Associates publishes a grants newsletter that identifies hundreds of grant opportunities annually.)

Also make it a habit to read agency newsletters and annual reports from organizations similar to yours. These will often profile funders in articles or provide a listing of foundations and corporations that have funded their programs. If a foundation is interested in this organization, it may also be interested in yours.

Newspapers and Periodicals

It is unlikely that a foundation will announce its funding interests and application information in the newspaper. However, newspapers often contain articles about local nonprofit organizations that have received a large grant; they even provide the details of the program and foundation award. These articles will give you a foundation name and a sense of the foundation's current interests that may not be available at the library or in directories.

The newspaper can also tell you about economic circumstances that may impact a foundation's giving.[3] Funding levels may be modified in response to company mergers, corporate financial performance, and the stock market. This recent information will not be reflected in an annual directory or report.

Periodicals are also a great resource for generating foundation leads.[4] *The Chronicle of Philanthropy* and *Foundation News and Commentary* are two periodicals about philanthropy that provide valuable information.

Annual Reports and Application Guidelines

Foundation annual reports typically highlight their mission, priorities, and grant recipients. Application guidelines will help you determine if your organization meets the requirements of the foundation.

Foundation websites often provide this same information. You may also request information by writing to the foundation or by making a telephone call. Use grant directories or Internet search engines to pinpoint potential foundations, and use annual reports and grant guidelines to learn more about them.

Networking

Let people in your community know you are a Grant Writer interested in collaboration with other agencies. Grant programs are announced in many ways, and contact with professionals in other disciplines is every writer's best asset.

Use your professional associations to learn about funding opportunities. They have staff at state and national levels who often know about foundations that have supported groups like yours in other locations. Also check your professional publications for articles and announcements about company support for organizations in other locales.

Do not forget about your foundation advisory committee. These individuals may be privy to information that is not yet public knowledge. Your nonprofit board members should always be aware when the organization is looking for grant opportunities and in what program areas. As these members network with others in the community, they may uncover valuable information.

Form 990-PF

If you are having a hard time finding out information about a foundation and you have exhausted the resources above, you may want to try reviewing the foundation's Form

990-PF (Private Foundation). You may recall from Chapter 1 that each year foundations must file this Internal Revenue Service form. While the form can be confusing, careful review will reveal the foundation's officers, assets, grants distributed, and names of organizations that received funding.

In Chapter 1 we also explained how corporations have two vehicles for distributing grants. If they use a corporate foundation, then they will also file Form 990-PF. On the other hand, corporate giving programs are not classified as foundations by the IRS and do not submit the form.[5]

The 990-PF will not usually indicate the foundation's funding priorities, but by looking at the organizations that received funding and the amounts awarded, you can get a sense of the foundation's priorities for that particular year. Be aware that this information may be limited since you may be looking a tax return that is one to two years old. To locate an electronic version of a foundation's 990-PF, visit The Foundation Center's website at **www.fdncenter.org**.

Making a Match

Opt for quality over quantity.

Your carefully developed prospect list will most likely include a number of foundations. If you used the criteria we recommended above, your list will consist of foundations that (1) fund in your geographic area, (2) have areas of interest that match your program needs, (3) provide support for activities similar to the one described in your proposal, (4) support organizations or institutions like yours, and (5) serve the same population(s) as your organization.

Even so, your list may still be too large. You want to narrow this list down to those prospects most likely to fund your proposed program.

Narrowing Your List

This step may seem unnecessary, requiring time you don't have. In fact, we often see folks who apply to every foundation that seems a match. However, taking the time for additional research is a strategy more likely to improve your chances for funding. For example, we have found that targeting five foundations that are great matches rather than 20 so-so matches produces greater funding yields. (You also submit fewer applications). So be patient; the research and work will pay off.

Foundation and Corporate Funders Match Checklist

We have created a checklist, shown in Exhibit 12, to help you determine which foundations are your best matches. This does not necessarily mean you will not submit an application to the other foundations on your list, but it will help reduce the number of foundations to a manageable number.

Complete the checklist for each of the foundations on your initial list. A *yes* response implies that you can easily answer the question in the affirmative. *No* is a clear negative answer to the question. Use *not sure* if you do not know or cannot give a firm *yes* or *no*.

Foundation and Corporate Funders – Match Checklist					
Foundation Name:		**Yes**	**No**	**Not Sure**
1. Prospect Criteria	Does the foundation meet *all* 5 criteria of a good prospect: geographic focus, funding priorities, type of support, institution preferences, and target populations?			
2. Average Grant Size	Is the average grant size worth the time to submit and consistent with my program needs?			
3. Funding Odds	Are the chances of getting a grant from this foundation good (e.g., 1 in 10,000 is probably not, but 1 in 20 may be very good)?			
4. Proposal Length	Are required proposal length and documentation reasonable based on average grant size (e.g., a 20-page proposal is probably not worth your time for a $1,000 grant)?			
5. Reporting	Are reporting requirements (if grant awarded) reasonable for the average grant size (e.g., monthly 10-page progress reports are probably not worth receiving a $3,000 grant)?			
6. Recent Grant Awards	Are the most recent grant awards to organizations and for purposes similar to my program needs (remember actual awards may be different from stated priorities)?			
7. History with Funder	Is the foundation familiar with my organization (e.g., previous grants or partnerships) and does it trust and respect us?			
8. Local Foundation	Is the foundation located in our city or county (e.g., can you show local support)? Local foundations are often smaller and give less grant money, but a national or statewide foundation may be looking for local foundation support when considering your grant.			
9. Grant Recipients	Do the grant recipients vary from year to year (if they remain the same from year to year, it may be harder to get a grant)?			
10. Economic Influences	Is this a foundation that will most likely *not* be impacted in the near future by corporate bankruptcy or cutbacks?			
11. Unsolicited Applications	Does the foundation accept unsolicited applications (proposals submitted without completing the foundation's application forms)?			
12. Connections	Does someone from our foundation advisory committee or board have a connection to the foundation?			
Other Considerations:				
	TOTALS			

Exhibit 12. Match Checklist

Target Foundations

Now it is time to rank your foundations to come up with a target foundation list. Generally, the foundations with the most *yes* responses should be at the top. You may find that some of these assessment items weigh more heavily for your organization than others. For instance, having a connection to the foundation may count as four points while whether or not the foundation accepts unsolicited applications is worth only one point. You can modify the match checklist to meet your organizational and program needs.

Your foundation advisory committee should review the target list and provide any additional information not available through the research strategies we have covered. Record their comments.

After your foundation advisory committee reviews the list, do some additional research about foundations you plan to approach. Foundations want to know that you have spent the time to learn about them and have selected them strategically. More importantly, your intent should be to move beyond compatible interests and identify what they consider compelling and natural to fund.[6]

Examine what the foundations want to *buy* by outlining the Request for Proposal (RFP) or application. Do not forget to use the information management system we proposed in Chapter 2. Organization is now critical. Meet with your grant team again to review deadlines and delegate responsibilities.

In the next chapter, we will discuss strategies for approaching foundations for funding support.

Tips for Success

- It is a waste of your time and the foundation's to submit an application that is not eligible.
- Use five basic criteria to determine if a foundation is a good prospect: geographic focus, areas of interest, type of support, institution preferences, and populations served.
- Use a combination of grant resources (Internet, directories, newsletters, etc.) to ensure you are receiving continuous information about grant opportunities.
- Check out newsletters and annual reports from organizations similar to yours. Most agency newsletters and annual reports will highlight a funder in an article or provide a listing of foundations and corporations that have funded agency programs.
- Grant programs are announced in numerous ways, and contact with professionals in other disciplines is every grant writer's best asset.
- Targeting fewer foundations that are great matches rather than more that are just so-so matches produces greater funding yields.
- Use our Foundation and Corporate Funders Match Checklist to help identify the best foundations to approach.
- After you have developed your target foundation list, do not forget to use your foundation advisory committee and grant team. Organize for grant success.
- Foundations want to know applicants have done their homework and have selected them strategically. Your strategy should be to move beyond simple compatibility and identify what a foundation will consider compelling and natural to fund.

Chapter 4 References

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CHAPTER 5 ➤ APPROACHING A FOUNDATION

You should know by now that applying for a grant is a much larger process than simply writing a proposal. As with the other strategies we have discussed, there is also a process for approaching foundations. Yes, you may opt to skip straight to submitting the proposal. It is very likely, however, that engaging in the approach strategies we outline in this chapter will increase your chances of receiving funding.

First Things First

Be prepared.

To implement successful approach strategies, there are several things every grant seeker needs to do or be aware of before contacting the foundation.

Before the Ask

Before you approach any foundation, make sure you have taken the following steps:

1. **You have made a good match.** Ensure that any foundation you are targeting is the best possible match for your program. (You have used the Foundation and Corporation Match Checklist presented in Chapter 4 to help make this choice.)

2. **You have researched the foundation thoroughly.** You have done your research and know where the foundation's interests lie. You have organized this information in a hard copy file and a computer file using the system we outlined in Chapter 2. One of the foundations in our foundation study stated that an organization should never engage in contacting the foundation before doing the research.[1] You will reduce your chances of securing funding if you do this.

3. **You have created a foundation summary sheet.** We have found that a foundation summary sheet (containing foundation goals, mission, assets, trustees, etc.) is helpful for grant team members and others involved in the grant application process.

4. **Your organization is sending only one proposal to any one foundation.** Check to ensure that no more than one proposal is being submitted to a foundation. This may be more of an issue for larger organizations that may be seeking funding for a variety of programs and have multiple staff members involved in the process.

5. **Your team is ready.** All members of the grant team from the proposal writer to the gopher are aware that the approach process is about to begin. They are ready to respond as needed. All grant team members have a foundation summary sheet, an understanding of your proposed program, and access to your filing system.

6. **Your advisory committee has been briefed.** Each foundation advisory committee member should review the list of foundations you are going to approach. Include the names of key foundation staff and trustees. For each foundation, have one or more committee members sign up to support your approach strategy. Provide a foundation summary sheet as well as a summary of your proposed program so the committee member is on the same page.

7. **Your organization has been informed about the proposal.** Board members and key organization staff should know you are planning to approach a foundation, particularly foundations located in your community. Think what would happen if your organization's CEO attends a meeting with a foundation executive who remarks, "We had a nice phone conversation today with John Doe from your organization regarding the proposal you plan to submit. Will you tell me more about the marketing plan?" Unfortunately, the CEO doesn't know about the proposal. Make sure key staff in your organization, particularly those who network extensively in your community, have a summary of the foundation and the program for which you are seeking support.

Approach Etiquette

Our experience has shown us that some grant seekers approach foundations as though these funders *owe* them a grant. Nothing is further from the truth.

The following etiquette reminders will go a long way in making a good impression. Remember, too, that common sense is essential.

- **Respect others' time.** You may recall in Chapter 1 that we highlighted the typical day of a foundation program officer. From telephone inquiries to reviewing proposals, theirs is a very busy day. Be respectful of this schedule and show the foundation you recognize this. Don't expect immediate responses and don't hound staff for answers. Activities such as repeated calling or dropping by unannounced are, in fact, disrespectful of the foundation staff's time and could hurt you.

- **Avoid extensive flattery.** Foundation representatives are accustomed to dealing with people who want to please them and make a good impression. Keep your interactions cordial and professional. Don't gush. One of the foundation directors interviewed in our foundation study commented, "It's amazing how many people suddenly are our best friends and want to wine and dine us when a grant application is announced."

- **Express thanks.** If the program officer or anyone from a foundation gives you their time (phone call, meeting, etc.), send a thank you note. A handwritten note on nice stationery signed by you and, if possible, one of your advisory committee or board members who went with you (if a meeting) is preferable.

- **Use caution in making contact.** Deciding whom to contact at a foundation is, unfortunately, a gray area. Bypassing a program officer and going directly to a trustee is usually not a sound approach. In fact, this action may offend a program officer who finds out. Remember from Chapter 1, the program officer is probably the first to reviewing your proposal. You do not want to underestimate their influence.

  Use information gathered about the foundation and good judgment to make the best decisions about how to contact foundation representatives. A simple phone call or e-mail to let the program officer know you are approaching others at the foundation will be appreciated much more than sneaking in the back door.

The message here: use common sense and common courtesies when approaching foundations for support. Think how you would like to be treated if you had the ability to fund programs. For instance, one of the foundations in our foundation study stated that "threatening to call the press or government officials" is not going to help lead to funding.[2] Our study also revealed five ways grant seekers have shown lack of etiquette:

1. Frequent calling
2. Trying to push up the review time
3. Getting upset if they do not meet foundation guidelines
4. Offering gifts
5. Dropping by the foundation office unexpectedly

Contact Options

Get your foot in the door.

In this section, we discuss strategies prior to proposal submission to establish a relationship with the foundation. Following these recommendations will increase your chances of funding over submitting a proposal in which the foundation meets you for the first time in writing. It may also help you to determine finally whether you are a good match with the foundation.

The first rule: Relationships are important! Over half of the foundations in our foundation study said that it is important to establish a relationship with the foundation *before* a proposal is submitted.[3] In fact, the funding success rate for applicants with no initial contact is less than five percent (McIlany, 1998).[4] To improve your odds for funding success, your goal as a grant seeker is to "put a face" on your proposal by establishing a relationship with the foundation,

Note: One word of caution: Not all foundations want to establish a relationship before the proposal is submitted. While over half the foundations in our study said it is important to establish a relationship before proposal submission, 43 percent consider it "unimportant" or having no effect on the outcome.[5] The top three activities foundations listed that an organization should <u>not</u> engage in when soliciting support include (1) contacting board members; (2) lobbying and exerting political pressure; and (3) ignoring foundation guidelines.[6]

Foundation Guidelines

Does the foundation have guidelines for an approach? If so, follow them. There may be instances, however, where an advisory committee member or member of your organization's board of directors has a special connection to the foundation that can get your foot in the door. For example, the guidelines may say no phone calls, but a phone call from one of your foundation advisory committee members may be welcomed because of the personal connection.

Going outside the guidelines should be a strategic decision between you and your advisory committee or board members. You take the risk of annoying foundation staff, but this risky move could also personalize your proposal and improve chances of funding. This may be particularly true of foundations that say they do not accept *unsolicited* proposals.

Phone Calls

There are four primary reasons to make an initial contact by telephone: (1) to advance name recognition of your organization; (2) to gauge the potential compatibility between the foundation and your program; (3) to collect additional information about the foundation; and (4) to obtain possible feedback on your project before proposal submission (Geever, 2004).[7]

Tips for conducting a successful phone call with a foundation are listed below (Geever, 2004).[8] Keep in mind, however, that not all funders want phone contacts so be sure to read cues if necessary.

1. Rehearse what you want to say. You may get only a few moments.

2. Time your call so the person you are calling is likely to be most receptive (e.g., not Monday morning or right before lunch).

3. Introduce your organization, its purpose, and goals. If you have previously established a relationship, mention it.

4. Make it apparent at the beginning of your call that you are not making a solicitation by telephone and you have carefully reviewed the foundation's guidelines. The purpose of your call is to obtain additional information to determine the fit of your project. During this call, keep the foundation summary sheet in front of you.

5. If you are granted a conversation, *listen* attentively to what is being said—even if it is not what you want to hear. Take notes.

6. It is always best to talk to the foundation president or program officer, but this may not be possible. Always be respectful and appreciative to anyone who spends time talking with you. Do not underestimate the importance or influence of any foundation representative.

7. Get the name and title of the person you speak with. You should reference your conversation when you submit a proposal (to serve as a reminder).

8. Close the call by asking for a face-to-face meeting. Foundations typically prefer not to meet before a proposal is submitted, but it does not hurt to ask. Remember that you are trying to put a face on your proposal. (It is harder to say "no" to someone you know.)

Some foundations have very limited or no paid staff. For these organizations, it may be difficult to respond to your telephone call (Geever, 2004).[9] "Acceptable" persistence is essential and will set you apart from those organizations that give up too easily. If you do not get the opportunity to talk with a foundation representative on the phone, this does not eliminate you from submitting a proposal or letter of inquiry. Be prepared to submit because, based on your research, you know there is a match.

Written Inquiry

A written inquiry is another way to put a face on your proposal before submitting a formal application. A written inquiry is also known as a *letter of intent* or *concept paper*. Basically, it is short version of your formal proposal. The purpose of a letter is to identify who you are, what you are proposing to do, and how much you are asking for (Burke & Prater, 2000).[10]

If you are unable to obtain a telephone conversation with the foundation, we suggest sending a written inquiry (unless stated otherwise in the guidelines). Some foundations request a written inquiry or letter of intent before proposal submission. If you already had a telephone call with the foundation, writing a letter of intent is an excellent way to follow up with the foundation, summarizing your conversation.

Note: Some foundations do not want letters (Geever, 2004).[11] They add more paperwork to the decision-making process and take up more of the foundation staff's limited time.

A letter of intent introduces your organization and your project to the funder and helps you determine if there is a potential fit with the foundation. The letter also saves you the time of submitting a full proposal only to learn the foundation is not interested.

Here are some strategies for developing a written inquiry or letter of intent:

1. The letter should not be a form letter. It should be written specifically for the foundation you are targeting.

2. Letters of intent are usually two to three pages. Some foundations may request a one-page letter, while others may request a three- to five-page concept paper. The letter (first page) should be presented on your organization's letterhead.

3. Use your core proposal to develop the concept paper or letter of intent. The easiest strategy we have found to develop a solid letter is to cut and paste from the main sections of your core proposal that give a good summary. Typically, four or so sentences from each main section of your core proposal are sufficient. Your abstract or executive summary may also be a helpful start. Call attention to the sections of the concept paper or letter of intent by using section headings (need statement, project design, etc.) to improve clarity.

4. Unless requested, you will most likely not provide a full budget. The letter should, however, indicate the total project budget and how much you anticipate requesting from the foundation.

5. The executive director or the board chair should sign the letter to indicate the project has the full support of your agency's board of directors (Geever, 2004).[12] One strategy we have used is to have a foundation advisory committee member also sign the letter, especially when there is an appropriate connection (i.e., someone on *our* side knows someone on *their* side). Never miss a chance to put that face on your request; we personalize whenever we can!

6. The letter should thank the foundation for its time and clearly indicate the individual the foundation should call (with a direct line if possible) if it needs more information. This is probably not the president of your board. Send the funder to the person most knowledgeable about the proposed project, but also list key decision makers about your proposal.

Meeting with Foundation Staff

A meeting with a foundation representative is the best way to develop a relationship and personalize your proposal. However, a face-to-face meeting is probably one of the hardest strategies to implement. Program officers or staff cannot possibly meet with all potential program applicants.

If possible, use your influential foundation advisory committee members to arrange a meeting. For example, if one of these individuals is the president of a large bank, he or she will command more attention. If you are lucky enough to get a personal meeting before proposal submission, the purpose of the meeting is the same as the strategies outlined above for phone calls and written inquires. You just have the advantage of meeting in person.

Take a foundation advisory committee member with you. Be sure you agree before the meeting on what you would like to cover and the structure of the meeting. Bring a short concept paper so you can leave the foundation representative with a summary or reminder of your meeting. Try to schedule the meeting when the foundation representative is likely to be energized and attentive (not Monday morning, late Friday afternoon, before lunch, etc.). Also, be sure to go into the meeting with several ideas so you can “shop” with the funder. At the end of the meeting, summarize what you heard (next steps, when to submit, etc.) from the foundation representative to prevent misunderstandings.

Yes, a meeting is great because it helps you develop a relationship with a potential funder. Do not, however, assume that getting a meeting means you will get a grant or that it will lead to a grant (Orosz, 2000).[13] No decisions are made at this meeting. As with the telephone call or letter of intent, your purpose is to introduce your organization and program to the foundation and learn the foundation’s interests.

On the other hand, do not be discouraged if you are unable to arrange a personal meeting (Brown & Brown, 2001).[14] Foundations differ as to the approaches they prefer. We have learned, however, that sometimes what is stated on paper (e.g., do not call) may be different from what is actually practiced or accepted. Use information gathered about the foundation and the advice from you advisory committee members to make the best approach decision.

Document

Finally, make sure you document in your organizational system all your efforts as well as the information and responses you receive from potential funders. This information is essential to your funding efforts (no one remembers everything) as well as future proposals.

Finalizing Your Proposal

Customize your core proposal.

Now it’s time to consider your formal application. Revisit the core proposal you developed. Compare it to what your selected foundation is looking for. Strategies for tailoring your core proposal to a specific foundation are discussed in the sections that follow.

Adherence to Application Guidelines

Follow application guidelines exactly. In our Study of Foundation and Corporate Funders, nearly 90 percent of foundations reported they require grant seekers to follow established guidelines.[15] This means if the foundation asks for the evaluation plan to precede the need statement in the proposal, you do it (even if that order seems odd to you). If the guidelines specify the type to be in a 14 point font, you do it. You do not want to start off on a bad foot with the people who may be giving you money.

To make sure you follow a foundation's guidelines, outline its specifications; this creates a helpful checklist. Your core proposal may be in a different order from the one requested, and the checklist will be helpful in re-ordering your proposal. Use the core proposal as the basis of your application. The ability to use a word processor's cut and paste capability will work to your advantage.

Respecting Foundation Priorities

Your proposal needs to reflect that you understand the foundation's priorities. Help the foundation make a connection between your proposed project and their stated priorities. Don't forget to refer to the foundation by name in your proposal. This helps demonstrate that you are not just sending out a boiler-plate proposal (e.g., sending one proposal out to 30 foundations).

This does not mean that you should borrow language from the foundation annual report and cite it back to them (McIlany, 1998).[16] Your goal is to show that you understand the foundation's priorities and demonstrate how your proposed project is aligned with them.

Modifying the Project Design

One way you can tailor your proposal for a corporate foundation is by giving the corporation's employees an opportunity to participate in the program. We have learned that some corporate foundations look very favorably upon opportunities for their employees to volunteer. For instance, in your project design you could suggest that a company employee will have the opportunity to participate on the project advisory committee. If your project design allows for volunteers such as mentors, state that you will recruit volunteers from their company. (Some companies limit their funding to programs or agencies in which their employees volunteer.)

If appropriate to the project design, you might also describe how your target population includes the corporation's employees or its families. The corporate foundation may prefer to fund a program that benefits its employees.

You may also want to find other projects and agencies the foundation has funded in recent years. Consider whether or not these organizations could potentially partner in your project. Foundations may look favorably upon a partnership with an agency they have supported.

Tailoring the Budget

In Chapter 3 we discussed the core budget, which does not take into account a specific foundation. The core budget you create includes all program costs, recognizing that a foundation will not be asked to fund all of the items. After you target a foundation, you must review your research and determine what the foundation will and will not fund and what its funding preferences are.

For instance, foundation guidelines typically state what the foundation will not fund (e.g., staff salaries, construction, utilities, etc.). It is okay to have these expenses in your program budget, but you do not want to list any of these items in the Requested Funds column of your budget. Be sure those items are clearly presented as local contributions.

Grant seekers often ask, "How much money should we request?" Some applicants prefer to ask for an amount near the top of the possible range, while others ask for much less than the foundation is capable of granting. The following tips will help you determine an appropriate size for your request (Brown & Brown, 2001).[17]

1. Determine the range of grant awards and the average grant amount. If the research on the foundation does not reveal these facts (funding history is generally not covered in the annual report), you can use Form 990-PF to acquire this data, as discussed in Chapter 4.

2. Learn what percentage of these grant awards was given to organizations or projects similar to your agency. Find out the average grant amount for programs similar to yours. Foundations may have several priority areas and may focus their awards more heavily in one area than another.

3. Know whether your organization has a history with the foundation. For instance, has your organization received a grant from the foundation in the past? If the program was successful, the foundation may have more trust and respect for your organization than it would have for one it does not know. With an established history (and good track record), it may be more appropriate to push for the higher end of the grant award range.

As this book has emphasized, foundations typically do not want to be the sole funder for a program (Orosz, 2000).[18] They want you to demonstrate that you have other funders, partnerships, local, and in-kind donations. When foundation reviewers examine your budget, one of the first things they will probably do is calculate what percentage of the total budget the foundation is being asked to fund. Then they will look for others who are or who may contribute to the project. They want to leverage their funds to maximize the impact of their financial support.

Make sure your budget (and overall proposal) demonstrates your organization is committed to implementing the project no matter what (Orosz, 2000).[19] If your proposal conveys somehow that if the foundation does not fund your request the project will *die*, it is unlikely you will gain the confidence of the foundation.

In addition to identifying funding you have already secured for the project, the budget should reflect foundations and other funding sources you are asking for support. This keeps your relationship open and honest while also giving more credibility to your planning skills and capacity to operate the program.

Providing Visibility for the Funder

Another technique for tailoring your proposal to a specific foundation is to provide visibility for the funder. Be aware, however, that some foundations do not like to be given "credit" and prefer that their gifts remain anonymous. Corporate foundations, on the other hand, may gladly welcome the extra publicity. Check the foundation's guidelines carefully.

You can provide visibility to the funding foundation in several ways. Some of these items are probably already implemented in your organization.

- **Newsletter and brochures.** Most agencies produce periodic newsletters updating recipients on the activities of their organization. A common practice is to list funders in a special section. Offer this opportunity to a foundation, if appropriate. You may even choose to highlight the foundation in an article in your newsletter.

- **Internet.** Your organization's website is another opportunity to provide visibility to the foundation. You could highlight the project that the foundation helped fund.

- **Annual report.** Naming the foundation in your organization's annual report will also provide visibility.

- **Creative opportunities.** Consider opportunities for visibility that may associate the foundation, especially a corporate foundation, to its company's products. For example, we developed a literacy proposal for a corporate foundation in which its parent company was a paper producer. The project targeted young children and their parents during well-child visits to the pediatrician. During each visit, the doctor wrote a prescription for reading and discussed the importance of reading to children with their parents. Each child got a brand new book. Inside each book was a sticker with the corporate foundation's name. The foundation also liked that books were a paper product.

In your proposal, be careful not to offer too much recognition for the foundation's level of support. If you are asking for a $1,000 grant, a sticker in each book with the foundation's name is probably too generous; however, listing the foundation's name in the annual report would be appropriate. Your decision as to what visibility to give the foundation will depend on the level of funding you are requesting.

Submitting the Final Proposal

What else is there to do?

We have only a few final recommendations to help ensure success. Don't underestimate the importance of last-minute considerations.

Cover Letter

Although foundations may not request it, we include a cover letter with all proposals. Your cover letter should be less than one page long and printed on your organization's letterhead. The purpose of the cover letter is to introduce your organization (or reestablish your connection) and to show how your proposal is a great fit with the foundation's mission and goals.

Your cover letter should include the following components (Geever, 2004):[20]

1. The name of your organization and its mission
2. The reasons you are approaching the foundation (strategic link)
3. Prior discussion of your project (e.g., phone call, meeting, letter of intent)
4. A project summary (usually three sentences)
5. How much your project costs and how much you are asking the foundation to fund
6. An offer to set up a meeting and to provide additional information
7. A direct-line telephone number to the person in your organization most knowledgeable about the project
8. A letter signed by your organization's CEO or executive director and any advisory committee member who helped.

Supporting Documentation

Some foundations ask for additional attachments (appendix, letters of support, etc.) along with your proposal narrative. If they ask for this, by all means, include it. However, if they prohibit attachments in their guidelines, do not include them. If the guidelines do not say whether or not to provide supporting documentation, we suggest not including anything else or a very limited number of attachments. You do not want to overwhelm reviewers with too much information. Avoid items like DVDs and videotapes.

Items we have used in various grants for supporting documentation include resumes, job descriptions, organizational charts, partnership agreements, memorandums of agreement (MOAs), memorandums of understanding (MOUs), letters of commitment, data collection instruments, reference page, and contractual agreements. Selection of these items will depend on the nature of your proposal. For example, for a $3 million grant funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the foundation wanted to see many of these attachments, but fewer attachments would be requested for smaller grants. If you choose to provide documentation, be sure it serves a clear purpose and is not simply extraneous information.

In Chapter 2, we asked you to create a special folder for key documentation (evidence of nonprofit status, list of board members, etc.). This folder and your groundwork will come in handy now with all documents ready for inclusion. Submit only what the foundation specifically requests.

Proposal Format and Presentation

The appearance of your proposal can tell a lot about your organization. Fancy paper, printing, binding, and costly brochures, among others, typically do not impress foundations (McIlany, 1998).[21] Actually, what those "frills" tell the foundation is that your budgeting may be questionable, i.e., not focused on consumers, or that you are trying to hide inadequacies.

Recommendations for presenting high-quality proposals are listed below. Most importantly, always follow the formatting requested by the foundation, even if you do not like it! You want the foundation to know you respect and take their requirements seriously.

- **Block-style formatting.** Paragraphs are not indented and are separated by a blank line. The right side of the text forms a straight line down the page and is not jagged (i.e., fully justified).

- **Section headings.** Use section headings (need statement, project design, evaluation, etc.) to break up the text. This also gives reviewers focus and clarity as they scan and read your proposal.

- **Text enhancements.** These are the simplest ways for focusing the attention of the reader. Using bullets and tables breaks up text and highlights important information. Don't use bullets that are ornate or too cute.

- **Font style and size.** Font appearance can actually set the mood of your proposal. Avoid fancy or exotic fonts. We recommend Times New Roman in 12-point. If the font size is too small, you will certainly irritate the reviewers by making your proposal difficult to read.

- **Line spacing.** We recommend line spacing of 1.5. When single-spacing is required, we recommend setting the line spacing of your word processor to 1.2 unless you need to conserve space.

- **Margins.** Allow one inch on all four sides of your text. This is considered a standard margin and is a good choice if you have no other guideline. Sometimes we may be hard pressed for space, and we decrease our margins to .75 inch.

However, the margin should always allow fingers to hold the document without covering the text.

- **Pagination.** Every page of the project narrative must be numbered even if the foundation does not ask for this. We recommend, at a minimum, formatting a page number centered and located one-half inch above the bottom edge of the page in the "page 1 of 2" format.

- **Paper.** Use letter-size white paper that is 23-pound weight. Avoid colored paper. We recommend using paper rated in the brightness range of 90. (The most frequently used paper is 20-pound weight with 84 brightness.)

- **Simple binding.** The final proposal should be bound with a binder clip in the left upper corner. Binder clips will protect the integrity of the proposal while allowing immediate release when necessary. Do not use fancy covers or spiral binding unless requested by the foundation.

Proofreading

Proofreading your proposal is probably one of the most important steps in submitting a high-quality proposal. A proposal that is presented to a foundation with grammatical, spelling, and typographical errors is a sign to the funder that your organization may not be capable of carrying out a project.

Use the grant team here. Your proposal should be reviewed numerous times by various reviewers. Reviewers should be a diverse group representing different cultures and educational levels. Some reviewers should focus on grammar, flow, consistency, and writing styles. Others should concentrate on programmatic and budgetary soundness.

Let the proposal sit for a few hours or days between readings. We always find additional errors after a "rest period." We have even found errors after three different people read a proposal. Most often, foundations will ask for you to send multiple copies of your application. Make sure someone who is awake and focused (i.e., not the Grant Writer who was up all night) reviews the copied application to ensure there are no missing pages and pages are ordered correctly.

Proposal Delivery

After proofing final proposal and making the required copies for the foundation, you are ready to get this thing out of your hands. We have some final reminders to ensure successful delivery.

- **Check delivery address.** Double-check the application guidelines to be sure you have addressed the package to the foundation correctly. Sometimes the foundation requests you mail the proposal to a different address (e.g., a PO Box) than its main street address. Don't forget to make sure your return address (organization submitting application) is printed correctly. It would be devastating if your proposal got lost or went to the wrong address, causing you to miss a deadline!

- **Check delivery due date.** Some foundation guidelines specify the date by which proposal must be received or "postmarked" by the postal service or carrier. Others state the date and time the proposal must physically be at the foundation office. *Make sure you interpret the date correctly*. Avoid the use of private meters.

- **Delivery timing.** To provide adequate time for the foundation's decision-making process and response, it is recommended that you submit your application six to 12 months *before* your program's start date (Brown & Brown, 2001).[22] We recommend timing the delivery of proposals to arrive at the foundation around midday on the actual due date. We believe this places our proposal near the middle of the stack of applications, which is the best placement for review! (We don't want to be among the first proposals reviewed when reviewers are still scoring conservatively. On the other hand, we don't want to be at the end of the stack when reviewers may be tired and hurrying to finish.)

- **Use a private carrier.** We highly recommend that you use a private carrier such as FedEx or United Parcel Service (UPS) to send your proposal. This enables you to track your package online and have proof of delivery. In case your proposal gets lost at the foundation, you will be able to show the dates you submitted your application. We even go so far as to ask the clerk (at the private carrier's office) to sign a form to verify we delivered the packet for mailing. Don't forget to save a copy of your receipt in your foundation file.

Your proposal is finally submitted. In the next chapter we will discuss the importance of communication after proposal submission, how the foundation makes a decision, and what to do whether the proposal is denied or, hopefully, funded.

Tips for Success

- Put a "face" on your program by establishing a relationship with the foundation and improve your odds of funding.
- Before you approach a foundation, make sure you have the following in place: a solid match, foundation knowledge, only one application being submitted, a ready team, committee link, and approach awareness.
- Use common sense and etiquette when approaching a foundation: respect time, avoid excessive flattery, express thanks, and use caution in contacts.
- Always follow the foundation's guidelines for approaching it. Use telephone calls, written inquires, and personal meetings to personalize your proposal.
- If you do not create an opportunity to talk with a foundation representative on the phone or first-hand, don't give up. You may still submit a proposal or letter of inquiry.
- A personal meeting is probably one of the hardest strategies to implement. Program officers and staff are too busy to meet with all potential program applicants.
- Use the information gathered about the foundation and the input from your advisory committee members to make the best decision about how to approach a foundation.
- Outline foundation guidelines to develop a checklist; this will help you meet specifications.
- Tailor your core proposal to a specific foundation by following the foundation's guidelines, linking your project to the foundation's priorities, and providing visibility (for corporate foundations).
- Research to determine what your targeted foundation will and will not fund. Your budget should reflect this knowledge.
- Include a one-page cover letter with your final proposal.
- Understand that the presentation of your final proposal can tell a lot about your organization.
- Proofreading is essential! A proposal presented to a foundation with misspellings, grammatical errors, typos, and other errors is a sign to the funder that your organization may not be capable of carrying out a project.
- Check and double-check the proposal due date and use a carrier that can track and document the delivery of your proposal.

Chapter 5 References

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CHAPTER 6 ➤ AFTER PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

What happens after the foundation has your proposal? Are you done? Not quite; there are additional strategies to ensure funding success after proposal submission. In this final chapter, we will review those remaining strategies, including managing internal and external communication, responding to foundation requests, understanding how the foundation makes a decision, and steps to take whether your proposal is funded or denied.

Communication Is the Key

Keep your speed-dial up to date!

Communication is essential after proposal submission. We have learned that even though you name a specific contact person in your grant proposal, the foundation may still choose to contact others in your organization—particularly when the foundation is located in your community. Therefore, communication is important both within your organization and with the foundation.

Occasionally, contact with the foundation happens by accident. For instance, your CEO and a foundation representative may attend the same meeting and have a spontaneous discussion. In other cases, contact may be purposeful. For example, if one of your foundation advisory committee members crosses the path of a foundation trustee, your volunteer may engage in a discussion (if appropriate) that may help focus interest in your proposal.

Internal Communication

Ensure potential key informants are prepared to respond to foundation inquiries. Be sure staff within your organization are not caught off guard, giving the impression of disorganization and waving a red flag to the funders who are assessing your organization's ability to carry out a project.

Foundations report that some of their most frustrating moments occur when they call an applicant agency but no one there knows about the application (Geever, 2004).[1] The following actions will ensure your organization is prepared so that communication regarding your proposal is seamless and beneficial.

- **Identify key informants associated with your agency.** Some of these targeted informants include top executives in your organization such as the CEO or CFO, program implementers, program partners, members of the board, and your foundation advisory committee. Also, the person answering the phone for your organization should know who these individuals are.

- **Provide a summary sheet.** Prepare a summary of the grant proposal for the key informants. The summary should be a one-page document containing: (1)

information about the foundation such as its name, a brief description, and a list of trustees; and (2) a description of the proposed program, the date submitted, the amount requested, the total budget, and your contact information.

- **Know when to ask for more information.** It is unlikely that your key informants will know the fine details of the proposal. Remind them that it is okay to tell a foundation representative that they do not know the answer to a question but will find the answer. This response will ensure that informants do not make promises beyond the scope of your program.

- **Keep your foundation database up to date.** Use the foundation database we discussed in Chapter 2 to update the proposals that have been submitted. This will be particularly helpful if you have applied to multiple foundations. This process will enable your key informants to monitor the progress of your grant seeking, know when deadlines are approaching, and recall which programs have been funded or denied.

- **Watch for the foundation's response.** Even though your proposal names a specific contact person, the foundation may send the award letter directly to your CEO or someone else in your organization. Be sure staff knows the primary contact for the grant proposal! For instance, one of our staff at her previous organization discovered that a check from a foundation had been sitting on someone's desk in the finance office for several months. No one knew about the award! As a result, a very tardy thank-you note was sent to the foundation.

- **Share the news.** When you learn your proposal is funded or denied, make sure your key informants also know. Again, if they encounter a trustee or program officer, you definitely want them to express thanks. Even if the program is not funded, it is still good practice to say "thanks for considering our proposal," and you may get some feedback to help with future submissions.

External Communication

Contact with the foundation after proposal submission does not need to be one-sided, from only the funder. However, you do not want to overdo your contact either. It is appropriate to call the foundation or send an e-mail about two weeks after submitting the proposal to ensure it has been received (Geever, 2004).[2] This process will continue to call attention to your proposal and also provide an opportunity for the foundation to let you know if it needs additional information.

There may also be instances when you should initiate communication to bring a matter of substance to the foundation's attention (Brown & Brown, 2001).[3] For example, if you receive funding for a portion of the costs of your proposed program from another source, let the foundation know. This news demonstrates that other funders are taking your program seriously. It also gives you the opportunity to highlight an important aspect of your proposal—and continue to put a face on it. If you make changes in your program, you will want to alert the foundation as well.

How Foundations Make Decisions
When the foundation calls, be ready.

After you submit your proposal it is the foundation's turn to take action. Depending on its size and type, the foundation may use some or all of the methods below to make a funding decision.

Initial Review

Most foundations will conduct an initial review of proposals to weed out a "definite no." A quick denial typically comes from a proposal that does not follow foundation guidelines based on geographic focus, funding priorities, institution type, or subject focus. Fortunately, if you have implemented the Foundation and Corporation Match Checklist in Chapter 4, you have avoided the "definite no" list. You know the proposed program fits foundation preferences based on research and possible communication with the foundation before submission.

Full Proposal Review

If your proposal gets beyond the "definite no" list, the foundation will then most likely engage in a full proposal review. Our foundation study revealed that over 50 percent of proposals are reviewed by foundation staff. (Remember how important they are.)[4] Less than one in four foundation board members or trustees in our study actually reviewed proposals.

Our experience has shown us that the larger the foundation, the greater the probability that trustees will read only a summary rather than a full proposal. This is a good reminder of how important it is to put a face on your proposal. For instance, when reviewing the summary, the trustee may recall a positive conversation that occurred with your CEO or another volunteer. Also take into consideration that smaller foundations may not have program officers or many available staff, and thus the trustees are more likely to read the full proposal.

Request for Additional Information

After reviewing your proposal, the foundation may contact you to ask for additional information or to clarify something in your proposal. It is very exciting to have the foundation call or send a letter because it may be an indication it is interested in your proposal!

Our experience indicates that successful responses to foundation inquiries are those provided in written form. This strategy ensures that any promises you make are documented, in writing, to prevent possible misunderstandings. Thus, if the foundation calls with questions regarding your proposal, your first step is to clarify the questions: write down exactly what is being asked. It is very tempting to begin answering questions quickly during a phone call. Providing a written reply, however, will allow you time to carefully construct your responses and confer with your grant team.

Kindly ask if you may respond to the questions in writing within a specific time frame that is appropriate (five days is usually good). Summarize the foundation's questions before hanging up. Obviously, if the foundation needs an answer right away, you must provide one. At the least, try to "buy" yourself a few hours (preferably a day) until you respond. This will enable you to provide the best possible answer and increase your chances for success.

To request additional information, a foundation may also send you a "questions and concerns letter" after reviewing your proposal (Orosz, 2000).[5] The purpose of this letter is to gain important information that is missing from your proposal or needs clarification. Your response is critical since the foundation representative will use this information to make a decision about your proposal. Remember that your response must continue to convey the components successful proposals communicate as outlined in Chapter 3: clarity, capacity, feasibility, competence, and credibility.

Request for a Site Visit or Meeting

Although foundations cannot visit all potential grantees during the proposal review stage, you may receive a request for a site visit or meeting from the foundation. View this as opportunity to let your proposal "shine." Don't assume, however, that the foundation is planning to fund your proposal because they are making a trip to see you. What happens during this visit is critical and can make or break the funding of your proposed program.

Consider the following tips to ensure a successful site visit or meeting:

- **Know the goals of each party.** Your main goal is to impress the foundation representatives, and they know this (Orosz, 2000).[6] The foundation wants to be impressed. Recognize, however, that the foundation is also attempting to detect any hidden problems. (This is not the day you hope your most problematic board member will drop by!)

- **Establish an agenda.** Assume responsibility for the meeting by setting up an agenda (Geever, 2004).[7] Ask the foundation whom they would like to meet, where they would like to go, etc. Your idea of what you want the foundation representatives to experience may be different from theirs. Don't resist if a foundation requests to see or do something you did not anticipate. Resistance indicates you are trying to hide problems, true or not (Orosz, 2000).[8] Your agenda should include: an icebreaker to get started; introductions with names, titles, and roles; brief overview of your organization's mission, history, and programs (and tour if time permits); description of the proposed project; ongoing dialogue and questions from both parties; and clarification of the next steps (Geever, 2004).[9]

- **Select the right team.** Your CEO or executive director should attend the meeting and be able to answer questions about the proposed project (Geever, 2004).[10] A board member should also participate to reinforce board awareness and support for the application. Last, at least one or more service staff should attend—those who know the ins and outs of the project. Foundations are not interested in the Grant Writer or fundraiser, preferring to see the staff who are doing the work. Avoid bringing too many staff and volunteers into the meeting; you don't want to overwhelm your visitors. Each participant should have a role in the meeting; none should attend to simply fill the room or sit.

- **Be aware of nonverbal communication.** Foundation representatives will be looking for nonverbal clues to help evaluate your request (Orosz, 2000).[11] Staff should be motivated and enthusiastic, displaying no negativity. Unmotivated, glum employees generate concerns about the health of the organization and its ability to manage the proposed program.

- **Make sure your site reflects what you described in the proposal.** Foundations use the site visit to evaluate the claims stated in your proposal (Orosz, 2000).[12] For instance, do the high-quality classrooms described in your proposal really meet that claim? Did you fail to mention something in your proposal that should have been included because it will impact the proposed program? Foundations will be assessing the efficiency with which you operate your programs; they are usually looking for strong board and management involvement (Geever, 2004).[13]

After the site visit, send a thank you note to the foundation. The note should summarize the meeting and key strengths of your proposed program. Again, a written note helps prevent future misunderstandings.

Funding Recommendations

Our foundation study revealed that more than half of *funding recommendations* come from foundation staff (55%) while only one-third come from board members (33%).[14] However, nearly two-thirds of the foundations in our study stated that the *funding decision* comes from board members (62%). Thus, both foundation staff and trustees are vitally important to getting funded.

Instead of reviewing your full proposal, most foundation board members or trustees utilize the *funding summary* to review your proposed program (Orosz, 2000).[15] Developed by the program officer, a funding summary presents essential information about your request. Most importantly, it makes the case for granting your request. See how important the program officer is?

The program officer documents the need for and the strategic choice for making an investment in your program. Since the trustees are getting a condensed version, this is why it continues to be critical to have a face on your proposal (with the program officer and trustees). In addition, if your proposal is well written and concise, you enable the program officer to develop (hopefully) a glowing funding summary.

If the Proposal Is Denied

You don't need CPR; you do need a plan.

You receive a letter from a foundation. Your heart is pounding, but you can see that the letter is thin, signifying bad news. Your proposal was declined. You are disappointed, especially given all your time and effort.

There are many reasons a foundation may decline your proposal. Our foundation study identified the following primary reasons a foundation declines funding:[16]

1. Not aligned with foundation's focus
2. Not located in a specified geographic area
3. Duplication of services
4. Poor quality or weak project development
5. Insufficient resources to fund every good proposal

Fortunately, if you have followed the strategies we have outlined in this book, you have avoided a rejection based on the first four reasons. Unfortunately, foundations are not able to fund everything, even when you presented a high-quality program that follows their guidelines. Consider these steps if your proposal is denied:

- **Don't assume denial is the end.** There are many reasons a foundation may decline your proposal. It doesn't necessarily mean that another opportunity for future funding with the foundation is not possible. Thus, remain kind!

- **Avoid negativity.** Do not take it personally, show frustration to the foundation, or speak negatively about the foundation. Foundation staff and trustees talk to one another so you do not want to hurt your chances somewhere else.

- **Express sincere thanks.** Send a thank you for the opportunity to present your program. This strategy will help you stand out from others, especially if you decide to resubmit. If additional funding becomes available or you resubmit in the next cycle, the foundation may remember your kindness.

- **Ask for input.** A few weeks after the denial, ask the foundation for feedback on your proposal. Do not assume you can resubmit with changes. Foundations may or may not provide this feedback, but it does not hurt to ask.

- **Evaluate.** Assess your grant process. Ask grant team members for feedback. Use your backup and always approach at least three funders for every grant you need (Geever, 2004).[17]

If the Proposal Is Funded

You can breathe again!

This is the wonderful news you have been hoping to hear! Notification that your proposal has been funded is exhilarating and gives you a momentary sigh of relief. All of that hard work has paid off, and now you can begin to focus on the needs presented in your proposal.

Spread the good news by informing everyone who has been involved in your grants process including your grant team, key organizational staff, foundation advisory committee, community partners, CEO, and agency board of directors. If staff or volunteers encounter foundation staff or trustees in the community, they can offer sincere thanks. If possible, do something to award your grant team by offering them recognition in front of their peers or taking them to lunch.

Last but not least, follow our etiquette rules and send a thank you note to the foundation for its funding. Consider a handwritten note on nice stationery to personalize your thank you. Also, be sure to have your CEO or one of your foundation advisory committee members sign the note or write their own notes. Good manners never go out of style and can only strengthen your relationship with the foundation.

Final Thoughts

Never, ever give up!

In our 2005 Study of Foundation and Corporate Funders, we asked foundations for the most important advice they would give grant seekers applying for funds. Remember their recommendations:

1. Read and follow guidelines.
2. Research the foundation.
3. Contact the foundation before the application process.
4. Provide information in a concise and accurate manner.
5. Be vigilant and do not give up.

We particularly like the last statement, which is so important. As Winston Churchill said, “Never, ever give up.” If you have a high-quality program that addresses a crucial need, you *will* find funding. And now you have the tools for developing successful foundation and corporate grant proposals.

Here’s one last tip: Never spend any money until you have the foundation’s award letter and check in hand! Happy grant hunting!

Tips for Success

- Communication is essential after proposal submission. Ensure potential informants in your organization are prepared to respond to the foundation. It is very frustrating for foundation staff to call an applicant organization where no one knows about the application.
- Contact with the foundation after proposal submission does not need to be one-sided, originating only from the funder.
- A quick “no” from a foundation typically comes from a proposal that does not follow its guidelines based on geographic focus, funding priorities, types of programs supported, institution preferences and target populations.
- Trustees usually do not read a full proposal (only a summary), particularly in larger foundations. This is why it is so important to “put a face” on your proposal.
- Successful responses to foundation inquiries are those provided in written form. This strategy ensures that what you promise to do is in “writing” to prevent any misunderstandings.
- Foundations use the site visit to determine how realistic the claims stated (or not stated) in your proposal are. A well-planned meeting with an agenda and strategically selected team is essential. Always send a thank-you note that summarizes the discussion.
- If your proposal is denied, don’t assume this is the end. Avoid negativity, say thanks, ask for help, and evaluate the process.
- If your proposal is funded, breathe a sigh of relief. Be sure to thank the foundation and let staff and volunteers in your organization know the good news.
- Be vigilant and do not give up!

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