

Researching Potential Funders

Adapted from The Foundation Center's Guide to Proposal Writing

Do your research. Know who you are going to and how to approach them.

Before you Begin...

Do you have a clear picture of the purpose of the program or project for which you are seeking support? It is a good idea to have at least a detailed outline of your project or a preliminary proposal in hand before you begin your foundation and corporate funding research.

What is your organization's mission? Know your organization's guiding principles and fundamental goals.

Can you describe the audiences served by your organization's programs? Does your organization serve the general population, or does it address the needs of one or more specific racial, ethnic, age, gender, or other group?

Where does your organization operate its programs? You should be able to describe the geographic scope of your activities, such as in what town, city, county or state you perform your services.

What are the distinctive features of your project/organization? Are you collaborating with, or do you have an affiliation with another organization? Do your services generate income? Are you creating a model program that other organizations can replicate? Does your organization provide services direct, or are you an advocacy or research group? Your organization or project may have other features that distinguish its activities.

Do you know the total dollar amount needed from foundations for your organization or project? When you create an outline for your proposal, you will be deciding whether you are seeking general support for your organization or support for a specific project. If you are seeking project support, you must create a budget to determine the amount of money you will need for a specific time frame.

What is the grant amount you are seeking? Before you start your research it can be helpful to consider the general size of the grants you are seeking. This, in turn, will help you gauge the number of funders you will need to fully fund your project.

- *The Foundation Directory Online* contains information on more than 4,000 company-sponsored foundations and other corporate giving programs. These are also available in the Grantmakers database, but selecting this one allows you to search corporate-specific data. For example, since corporations generally contribute in the geographic areas in which the company operates, you can search to find corporations that have headquarters, subsidiaries, or plants in your local area or that have international operations in countries in which your organization operates programs.
- The 990 database can be helpful in uncovering smaller grants and/or grants awarded by smaller foundations that are not covered in the Grants database.
- News sources that cover philanthropy can also be helpful in creating and refining your prospect list. One such source is *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*.
- The majority of grantmakers do not have web sites (only about 7000 do), those foundation web sites that do exist provide helpful information.
- A foundation or a corporate giver's application guidelines provide critical information for the grantseeker. Guidelines generally provide a description of the types of programs and organizations grantmakers will and will not fund, as well as other restrictions on their giving.

