

The Four “R’s” of Working with Foundations

RESEARCH

- Research foundations in general. Community foundations are different from family foundations, which are different from corporate foundations, etc. *Websites listed on back of this page can help explain differences.*
- Foundations often spend significant time studying systemic issues as well as learning about your organization as part of funding decisions. Return the favor by learning about them before reaching out with a request.
 - This makes initial conversations more productive; avoid asking questions about information readily available online. Use the time to ask thoughtful questions that shows you’ve done your research.
- Learn via foundation websites, social media, annual reports. Sign up for e-news, follow them on Facebook
 - NOTE: Keep your own website/FB page current for when foundation researches YOU. 😊
- **Research your own specific project and demonstrate a robust understanding of the problem and solution.**

RELATIONSHIPS

- Many foundations truly value relationships with prospective grantees/partners and appreciate the opportunity to learn more about your organization and how you fit into the bigger picture of systems change.
- Consider cultivating the relationship before you ask for money.
 - Reach out with a succinct but informative email, providing any one-pagers, infographs, links to socials or online articles, etc. Ask for the opportunity for brief virtual or in-person meeting and say **you would like to learn more about the foundation’s priorities.**
 - Be patient for a response; if you don’t hear back within 3 weeks, email again.
- Recognize that many foundations often offer more than “just money;” there might be opportunities for TA, resources, networking, connections, advice, feedback, moral support, etc.
- While appropriate to ask direct questions about funding parameters, avoid being rude, presumptuous or patronizing to foundation staff – they are people too and have rules to follow.
- If a foundation offers virtual or online education or networking events – take advantage of them!

REALISTIC

- Private foundations typically have strategic plans, funding priorities and grant parameters established through board and staff; these can’t be changed overnight even if you have a really, really good idea.
 - **There is still value to sharing your organization’s story and starting a relationship, as you never know when funding priorities may change.**
- Foundations set their budgets every year to fit funding priorities with available funds to use. There often isn’t a lot of “extra” money just lying around – even if you have a really, really good idea. Do not get discouraged!
- Patience is key. Foundations might operate on a different timeline than your needs. In general, foundations are not intended to be a source of funding SOS. They prefer to invest in long-term, system-based initiatives.

RESPONSIVE

- If a foundation responds to your request for information, always acknowledge their response with thanks. This is especially important if staff have spent time gathering tailored information for you. If they have asked for additional information from you – send it in a timely manner.
- If foundation staff makes a recommendation, let them know when you have followed up.
- Every grant you receive is an audition for the next grant. Avoid creating more work for the foundation by ignoring emails, grant report deadlines, etc. If you have questions or concerns, be positive and proactive
- Always be ready to answer this question: **In what specific ways can funding advance your mission and goals?**

This handout created by Elizabeth Burger (Sunflower Foundation) with the caveat that every foundation is different and some tips may not be applicable to some foundations.

Great Grant Seeking/Grant Writing Websites

Network for Good

<https://www.networkforgood.com/>

“Resources” in top bar menu, check out “Blog Posts, Webinars, Templates” in drop down menu

Free Will

<https://www.freewill.com/>

“For Nonprofits” in top bar menu, check out “Resources” or “Webinars” in drop down menu

Philanthropy News Digest

<https://philanthropynewsdigest.org/>

Go to “RFPs” in top address bar menu, right hand side

Chronicle for Philanthropy

<https://www.philanthropy.com/>

Check out “Advice” and “Opinion” in the top bar menu - Beware: the “Grants” section requires \$

Raise Funds – Raise Money, Nurture Relationships & Build Support for Nonprofit Organizations

<https://www.raise-funds.com/>

Check out “Fundraising” & “Donor Relations” in top bar menu - but tons of other good resources

35 Best Grant Writing Blogs and Websites

https://blog.feedspot.com/grant_writing_blogs/

Professional Grantwriter

<https://www.professionalgrantwriter.org/>

Check out “Blog” in top address bar, “Foundations” in drop down menu

Candid

<https://candid.org/>

Get free access to Candid's [Foundation Directory](#), the smartest, fastest way to win more funding.

Get free access to [GuideStar](#), nonprofit research tool, the largest source of verified information on nonprofits.

Use the map search below to locate where you can access Candid's resources.

<https://candid.org/find-us>

Information and links listed above are accurate as of July 2023.