



# **5 Days to Foundation Grants**

*The Secrets to Writing Funded Grant Proposals*

by Pamela Grow

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## Introduction

Grant proposal writing seems like one of the most difficult and elusive forms of writing ever to be undertaken. As the writer, your objective is to convince a grant-making foundation to donate money to your cause - without expecting anything directly in return.

Additionally, the grant proposal writer must convince the grantor why his or her nonprofit deserves the money more than the 50 other nonprofit organizations seeking the same funds.

*What's a grant writer to do?*

There have been hundreds of books and articles geared toward assisting the struggling grant proposal writer. Many colleges now offer specific courses in grant proposal writing. The advice out there is sometimes confusing, often conflicting, and rarely complete. No matter where you turn though, you'll typically hear that grant proposal writing is a specialized skill that can take years to develop and is often a hit-or-miss proposition anyway.

The truth is grant proposal writing is far simpler than these experts would have you believe. In fact, you can become a competent foundation grant proposal writer in just five days and produce grant proposals that consistently result in funding for your organization. This book will show you how.

Whether you're new to grant proposal writing or you have been drafting proposals for years, you will learn new skills and techniques that make grant writing easier, faster, and more successful. You'll find out how to research potential grantors, create a simple system to organize and track your materials, and distill your organization's message into a powerfully persuasive proposal that translates to dollars for your programs.

Congratulations on your purchase of Five Days to Foundation Grants. You now hold the key to writing successful grant proposals with ease. Happy funding!

## **Preface**

*Why I wrote this eBook*

I've been where *you* are right now!

You're new to grant proposal writing, and you don't have a clue where to start.

Or, perhaps your grant proposals have taken on a lifeless quality, and you've approached the same funders for the past five years. You're ready to ramp up up your foundation funding.

You've read books on writing the perfect grant proposal. Some were technical and unrelated to what your organization does (you won't learn anything about following government RFPs here), or you may have gleaned helpful "kernels" of information from others.

You've nodded off in boring proposal writing workshops and seminars that lasted anywhere from two hours to the entire day telling you how to follow grant application guidelines.

You've heard about how the XYZ organization just received a \$150,000 grant from the Smith Foundation. and you wonder why your proposal was turned down.

*Let me tell you a short story ...*

When I started in development, working for a nonprofit organization with an annual operating budget of \$3 million, I'd never written a grant proposal in my life.

I had come from the "other side of the table!"

For six years, I had worked in programming and then as communications officer for one of the Philadelphia region's largest private family foundations. I examined every proposal that came in the door. It was only

a matter of time before I could successfully gauge whether a proposal would be funded or not.

I remember one day when the president of the foundation and I were reviewing a proposal from a large, hugely successful nonprofit organization seeking significant funding. We both agreed that it was a wonderful mission and a worthy proposal. The organization had followed our guidelines to a "T;" the proposal was well organized and written. But, the president of the foundation said with some resignation in her voice, *"It's a fine proposal, but it's not very compelling, is it?"*

Her words stuck in my mind.

What, exactly, makes a compelling grant proposal? I certainly knew what she was talking about that day. The proposal in question was dry and didactic. It was filled with statistics and outcomes and self-importance. It lacked any humanity.

Now though, I was in the position of crafting grant proposals for an organization in dire need of funding. And, writing them was only a fraction of the job I'd taken on - I needed to create a development department from the ground up.

I don't need to tell you that this was a daunting task!

This particular organization had run a hugely successful capital campaign just five years prior. And what had they done since?

Nothing. Not a thing. Major donors had been and continued to be ignored. Foundation contacts lapsed. Key community organizations had fallen by the wayside. Worst of all, records were missing! Frankly, I thought that I'd taken on more than I could handle.

Without any history to go on, and with many other areas to cover (community and public relations, getting a website up and running, organizing our annual membership appeal and well, you get the gist), I

needed a system for researching prospective foundations, writing effective grant proposals, and getting them out the door - fast!

I began researching regional foundations, and it was during this initial phase that my system began to come together.

I identified three different types of foundation funders, and knowing the differences among them led to the creation of my system.

I also began reading every book I could get my hands on about writing successful grant proposals. But, more importantly, I began studying marketing. When I thought about the most successful proposals I'd seen, I saw that they all shared a common theme. The truly compelling proposals engaged the reader and told a story.

I began seeking out anything at all that would tell our story from the perspective of both our donors and the people we served. Would you believe I came up empty-handed?

This was a service organization that regularly received cards and letters from grateful recipients of our services! Apparently, once volunteers and employees had seen those notes, they landed in the garbage.

Not to be deterred, I delved into our database and sought out the names of regular contributors. From my list, I randomly pulled out the addresses of about twenty folks who had given to our annual appeal every year for at least five years. And when I say random, I mean that some donors gave \$50 every year, and some gave \$5,000.

I wrote them each an introductory letter to uncover why they had chosen to give to us every year. I included a form for them to fill out and return in the enclosed, stamped return envelope.

All but two donors responded.

They gave numerous reasons, in writing, as to why they chose to regularly donate to our organization. Several sent in substantial checks as well

(although I hadn't asked for a donation). The beginnings of my "testimonials" file were born.

I learned two valuable lessons that would serve me well in grant proposal writing -- and in marketing and fundraising:

**Find out WHY donors give  
Testimonials (also known as "storytelling") give proposals an edge!**

As you read and work through the lessons in Five Days to Foundation Funding and the accompanying sample proposals, take notes. What works for one organization may not work for yours. One individual's writing style is unique and unlike another's. Before you know it, *your own* successful style of writing will evolve and take shape.

*Let's get started*



# Day One - The Key to Funded Grant Proposals: Research!

## Be a Grant Detective!

*Those who turn good (organizations) into great (organizations) are motivated by a deep creative urge and an inner compulsion for sheer unadulterated excellence for its own sake. -Jim Collins*

Welcome to Day One of Five Days to Foundation Grants. Today we're going to focus on effectively researching foundations to learn how to best approach them.

Then we'll create your research binder. Your research binder will be a key component of your grant proposal writing system.

Why is it important to know all you can about the foundation you plan to seek funding from? Isn't this all about finding funding for your mission and your goals?

Well, yes, but you want to think in terms of marketing your organization. And in marketing, the rule is: Define your customer by getting to know everything you possibly can about him or her.

## History of philanthropy

The history of philanthropy in our country is fascinating. What motivates a (generally) self-made individual to set aside thousands, millions - sometimes billions - to give away to charity? The motives behind philanthropy are more often than not very similar to yours -- a genuine desire to touch lives and give back to the community.

Julius Rosenwald was one of the founders of Sears, Roebuck & Co. After amassing a fortune in retailing, he established the Rosenwald Fund for "the well-being of mankind." The beauty of Rosenwald's foundation was that, unlike other endowed foundations, which were designed to fund themselves in perpetuity, Julius Rosenwald believed that all of the

foundation's funds should be used exclusively for philanthropic purposes. In accordance with his wishes, the fund was completely spent by 1948.

Over the course of his life, Rosenwald and his fund donated over 70 million dollars to public schools, colleges and universities, museums, Jewish charities and black institutions.

Contrast The Rosenwald Fund with The Ford Foundation, which was founded in 1936 with grants from Henry Ford and his son, Edsel. Now one of the largest foundations in the United States, with assets exceeding \$11.5 billion, Ford has long since strayed from its donor intent. No family member has been involved in the foundation that bears its name since the younger Henry Ford quit the board in disgust thirty years ago.

## **Types of foundations**

There are three different types of foundations - independent foundations, generally funded by an individual, a family or a group of individuals; corporate foundations, created and funded by companies as separate legal entities; and community and other public foundations, publicly supported foundations operated by, and for the benefit of, a specific community or geographic region. *For the purposes of this book, we will be focusing on independent foundations.*

Independent foundations may be operated by the donor or members of the donor's family—a type often referred to as a family foundation—or family involvement may have long since ceased and the foundation is operated by a governing board.

## **Research tools**

There are many tools you can use to research prospective funding foundations. Budget and convenience will determine which method you start out with, but in any case you should be as thorough as possible within your means.

## **Researching with a directory**

Your best start for small to mid-sized regional foundations, particularly if you have a limited budget, is a foundation directory.

In Pennsylvania, the Pennsylvania Foundation Directory has long been a staple of grantseekers. Formerly a print directory, like most state directories, the Pennsylvania Foundation Directory is now exclusively online.

Many states have similar guides. If there is a directory available for your state, purchasing a subscription should be your first step if you're a regional organization. You will find a partial list of foundation directories by state in the Resource section of this eBook.

### **Researching with a service**

There is a wealth of information on the Internet, including a number of services you can pay to do your research for you.

Whether or not you can afford the subscriptions, there are a number of websites you'll definitely find useful to foundation prospect research. Take some time to really explore these sites if you're not already familiar with them:

[www.guidestar.com](http://www.guidestar.com): Note that you must register to use Guidestar but registration is free. Guidestar does offer paid subscriptions. There is no charge for viewing an organization's three most recent 990s.

<http://fdncenter.org/>: The Foundation Center; one of the oldest and best resources on the web. The Foundation Center offers a number of paid subscription programs, ranging in price from \$19.95 a month to \$179.95 a month. There are also participating libraries which carry The Foundation Center's Cooperating Collections of fundraising information free of charge. It pays to schedule a day or two every three to six months at a participating library.

<http://www.foundationsearch.com/>: Also known as Metasoft Foundation Search this is a Canadian-based company carrying up-to-date information culled from foundations' most recent 990s. It carries a hefty price tag.

<https://www.nozasearch.com/>: Billing itself as the "world's largest database of charitable donations," Nozasearch offers information on both individuals and foundations. Currently information on people is a subscription-based program, however foundation searches are free. At present it is my favorite free resource for foundation searches. Nozasearch was acquired by Blackbaud in 2010.

<http://www.cof.org/>: The Council on Foundations.

<http://www.smallfoundations.org/>: An organization devoted to 60,000 smaller United States foundations, the Association of Small Foundations is an excellent resource.

## "Competitor" research

Another research method that is useful, especially if you're on a limited budget, is "competitor" research. Here's an example:

Let's say that you're working with a regional children's theatre. Take a look at who is funding other children's theaters, children's museums, children's programming in your area. Read your competitors' websites, newsletters and brochures to discover who they have received funding from.

Regularly poll your board to explore connections between them and foundation trustees.

No matter what your organization's focus, investigating the funding practices of similar organizations in your area can give you a lead to a prospective grant foundation. Be sure to research competing organizations and be prepared to explain what makes yours different—I will cover this process with more detail in *Day 4 - Discover Your Organization's USP*.

## **Researching funders on a regular basis**

I highly recommend researching funders on a regular basis. I've worked with organizations whose past funding success with foundation funders caused them to "rest on their laurels" and rely on the same foundation funders, year after year. When the time comes that one (or more) foundations pull back, either because of budgetary constraints or because the foundations have determined to fund other worthy organizations, the organization is left scrambling.

### **Step by step: Using free Internet research tools**

Your budget will determine how you will begin your foundation research. Whether you're able to afford a paid subscription to *The Foundation Center* or another fee-based service or a directory, you'll use your prospect research forms as you begin to determine whether a foundation is a match or not.

And if you are working with a limited budget, don't despair. Follow along with me. Sign up for free accounts with both Guidestar and Nozasearch. In one browser window open up Guidestar and log in to your account. In another open up Nozasearch and sign in.

Hypothetically we're seeking funding for a community-based nonprofit hunger organization serving senior citizens and located within the city of Philadelphia (but serving five counties). Let's take a look at our Nozasearch criteria possibilities ...

The screenshot shows the Nozasearch website interface. On the left, there are search filters:
 

- select country:**  United States,  Canada
- select one:**  charitable foundations free,  people and companies
- donor name:** (example: Phil Anthropic)
- minimum donation amount:** (example: 10,000)
- recipient state/province:** Pennsylvania
- recipient city:** Philadelphia
- recipient cause - general:** Human Services
- recipient cause - specific:** Seniors/Senior Center
- recipient name:**
- recipient zip code range:**

The main content area shows a 'Select' header with a 'save selected' button and a 'save all (max 1000)' button. Below this, it states '94 Records Found' and provides a tip: 'Tip: Select desired records and press "save" to continue and save/export data.' It also shows '0 People and company records selected' and '0 Free charitable foundation records selected'.

Select Page	Cost to Save	Donor Name	Donation Range	Recipient Name	Donation Year
<input type="checkbox"/>	Free	George and Hannah Bricker Me	\$1,000 And Up	Center in the Park	2004-2005
<input type="checkbox"/>	Free	Claniel Foundation	\$1,000 And Up	Center in the Park	2004-2005
<input type="checkbox"/>	Free	Maria Dickinson Logan Trust/M	\$1,000 And Up	Center in the Park	2004-2005
<input type="checkbox"/>	Free	William Penn Foundation	\$1,000 And Up	Center in the Park	2004-2005
<input type="checkbox"/>	Free	W.W. Smith Charitable Trust	\$1,000 And Up	Center in the Park	2004-2005
<input type="checkbox"/>	Free	Dolfinger-McMahon Foundation	\$1,000 And Up	Center in the Park	2004-2005
<input type="checkbox"/>	Free	First Hospital Foundation	\$1,000 And Up	Center in the Park	2004-2005
<input type="checkbox"/>	Free	Samuel Fels Fund	\$1,000 And Up	Center in the Park	2004-2005
<input type="checkbox"/>	Free	Verizon Foundation	\$1,000 And Up	Center in the Park	2004-2005
<input type="checkbox"/>	Free	Clarence Rowell Trust, PNC Ad	\$1,000 And Up	Center in the Park	2004-2005
<input type="checkbox"/>	Free	ERM Foundation	\$1,000 And Up	Center in the Park	2004-2005
<input type="checkbox"/>	Free	Elizabeth B. & Arthur E. Roswe	\$1,000 And Up	Center in the Park	2004-2005
<input type="checkbox"/>	Free	Henrietta Tower Wurts Memoria	\$1,000 And Up	Center in the Park	2004-2005
<input type="checkbox"/>	Free	John C. and Chara Haas Trust	\$1,000 And Up	Center in the Park	2004-2005
<input type="checkbox"/>	Free	Alexis Rosenberg Foundation	\$1,000 And Up	Center in the Park	2004-2005

At the bottom of the table area, it says 'Page: 1 of 2 next' and provides options for 'list' and 'spreadsheet' views.

*Screenshot of Nozasearch*

As you can see, we've selected the United States, Charitable foundations, Pennsylvania and Philadelphia in our search criteria. We've chosen "Human Services" as the recipient cause and further narrowed the search by "Seniors." Nozasearch has delivered over 90 potential funders.

Your next step will be to select these prospective funders and export them into an Excel spreadsheet so that you can further research them.

	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1	Deadline	Assets	Program	Funding Interests	Other Orgs Funded	Geographic Focus/Requirement	Trustees/Staff	Past Results/Note
2								
3								
4								
5								
6								
7								
8								
9								
10								
11								
12								
13								
14								
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28								

Now you'll begin researching prospective foundations on an individual basis, using Guidestar to pull up the foundations' 990's.

When it comes to foundation grants, researching prospective foundations is crucial for locating the ideal match. And there is no finer tool for truly observing the inner workings of a grant-making foundation — and whether or not *their mission* provides a match with your organization — than with a thorough investigation of a foundation's federal 990-PF form.

What, exactly, should you be looking for?

Let's take a walk through a typical grantmaking foundation's 990-FP:

1. Do take a look at the foundation's Fiscal Year. Why? Well, here's a take-away from seven years working at a foundation. If the foundation in question happens to be closing in on the end of their fiscal year, they may have already spent the required 5 percent payout. On the other hand, if they're fairly new to grant-making, the foundation may have yet to hone their grant-making policies — and you may get lucky if they're looking to send some last minute grant checks out the door.
2. Assets: Note, of course, the total fair market value of all assets recorded in Part One for the last year reported. Now take a look

- back – has the XYZ Foundation’s assets declined or grown over the past few years? Are they a fairly new operating foundation?
3. Part I, Revenue and Expenses summarizes other sections of the report. If major contributions have been made during the year in question a founder or trustee may have recently deceased – and an increase in giving could be in the future.
  4. Part VIII – Take note – here’s one of your most important resources. Information about officers, directors, trustees, foundation managers, highly paid employees and contractors. You will certainly want to note the names and locations of the trustees. Could members of your board possibly know any of the trustees of XYZ Foundation? Does the XYZ Foundation have staff members or is it entirely family-run? Are the trustees paid?
  5. Part IX-A – Summary of Direct Charitable Activities: Here’s where you find out the exact dollar amount given in grants. If the foundation you’re researching tends to give many grants in the \$2,500 to \$10,000 range (as opposed to a few grants in the \$25,000-\$100,000 range) and you are a first time applicant, you’ll want to frame your first ask accordingly. (See [How Much Should You Request in Your Grant Proposal?](#))
  6. Part XV: This section will tell you how grant applications should be prepared, if there are any deadlines, etc. along with a listing of grantees. Although it’s still a good idea to phone and get grant application guidelines directly from the foundation in question, this section will get you started (and don’t write a foundation off if they specifically note that they only grant to pre-selected organizations – I’ve had success with smaller grants of \$250-1,000 with these foundations when there was an otherwise good match in giving!) Are there organizations similar to yours on that listing of grants given in 2003? What is the dollar range in their grantmaking and where would your organization fall?

Have your basic funding research form ready and do a little detective work to really “get to know” the foundation you’re seeking funding from. You’ll dramatically increase your chances of successful funding!



Note: Unless you're a national organization, stay regional when looking for funding sources, particularly for operating or program costs. Unless they have a tight focus on the types of beneficiary services that your organization provides, national foundations are more likely to fund capital expenses or programs that can be replicated nationally than they are to fund your specific program expenses.

*And now on to Day Two!*

## Day Two - Let's Get Organized! Establish Your "Grants File"

*Organization is your key to success.*

*I rate enthusiasm even above professional skill. -Edward Appleton*

Organization is crucial to keeping your grant writing process focused and effective. Organization will let you do more work in less time - which means more applications and more funding for your organization. This is an area in which being scattered or ineffective directly drains from the bottom line - so get it together!

The first thing to organize is your greatest asset in the writing process - your grants directory. This is a directory on your computer where you will store all of the building blocks of a successful grant application.

*The contents of your grant directory*

What will you need to include in your grant proposals? Begin with a directory called "grant attachments" where you'll keep PDF versions of just about every attachment you might include in a proposal.

This directory should include:

- A copy of the IRS letter confirming your organization's 501(c)(3) status
- An itemized annual budget for your organization's current fiscal year, with actual figures for the previous fiscal year
- An itemized budget, listing income and expenses, for this specific grant if applicable
- Your organization's most recent AUDITED financial statement or IRS Form 990
- Your organization's latest annual report or summary of the prior year's activities
- Current board list and affiliations
- One-paragraph descriptions of key staff and their relevant qualifications
- Grantee report (if previously funded)
- Letters of agreement from any collaborating agencies (if applicable), and letters of support and/or recent reviews or articles (if available)

Now when an occasional rushed proposal comes up (for instance, you've only just learned about a "perfect fit" funder, and today's the deadline), pulling together the final product will be that much easier. It also decreases the possibility you'll forget to include something, and it saves on having to keep a dozen different things in different paper files for copying.

### *Specific components of your grant application*

When you're compiling your grant file, it's important that every piece be up-to-date and readily available. Make at least 10 copies of each for your files. Be sure to discard previous documents (you don't want to accidentally include last year's budget!) Alternatively, maintain electronic copies of these documents, and print them directly yourself on-demand.

- Organization's three (3) largest funders in the last fiscal year and type of grant and/or master list of awarded grants for last five years
- Local, neighborhood or area-wide statistical data on clients served, including breakdowns by age and ethnicity
- Resumes of staff and board members

Additionally, you're sure to run across one or more of the following - so be prepared:

- Current board listing, including breakdown of ethnicity (*many grantmakers are also requesting the percentage of board members who contribute financially to your organization*).
- A copy of the organization's charter and bylaws

Foundations are increasingly accepting online applications, and many corporate foundations only accept online proposals. In addition to hard copies, you'll want to have PDF copies of all of these attachments handy.

When it comes to organizing the remainder of your files, remember that no single method is perfect. The key is coming up with a system that makes sense for you - while keeping in mind that someday, another staff person or writer might succeed you. Unfortunately the field of nonprofit

development witnesses a lot of people coming and going - and the files usually show it!

Likely categories for a typical grants information system might include:

- Grant proposals
- Post-Award Management
- Organizational Background and Reference
- Internal Grant Administration and Finance
- Grant Reference and Resources.

A simple, efficient approach would be to have each functional area represented by a different colored file folder, file pocket, or file envelope. (File pockets are box- style, expandable folders for holding bulky documents. File envelopes are used for original and/or sensitive documents that need to be protected or secured.)

### *Grant research and prospecting*

The function of grant research files is to maintain information on funding opportunities from various funding sources. While our focus is on foundation/corporate funding, you may also require filing systems for:

- Federal government agencies
- State government agencies
- Local government agencies
- Individuals

You'll need to subdivide these categories to be able to track and find the information quickly.

Initially, you'll be keeping your foundation funding resources in your binder. Once you have decided to apply, your foundation funding sources will mostly be filed under the major heading of "Foundations." followed by file folders containing information about each foundation in alphabetical order. Larger foundations that have several grant programs or initiatives can also be sub-divided so that individual programs are accounted for.

Corporate giving would be treated similarly to foundations. The major heading would be "Corporations," followed by company names in alphabetical order. Consider segmenting these sources into local, regional, and national groups.

### *Grant application management*

Once the decision has been made to write a proposal, you should create files to contain the application instructions and application drafts. Working copies can go in a file folder or file pocket, but a clean copy of the final application, as it was transmitted to the grantmaker, should go into a secure file envelope. It is important to protect the formal file copy for archival reasons and because you might need to know later which exact materials you sent to the grantmaker.

Model or sample proposals related to an application effort might be placed in folders of a different shade and placed behind the darker green folders. Alternatively, you may choose to keep model/sample proposals in your research binder.

### *Organizational background and reference*

Whenever it's time to write a grant application, regardless of the funding source, there is certain basic information you'll need to have available to you. This will save you (and your organization) a lot of time and frustration!

Examples of things to keep on file (and updated) include:

1. Your organization's mission statement and strategic plan.
2. Resumés or curriculum vitae of key management and staff. (For individuals with long resumés, keep a two-page biographical sketch as well as the full version on file.)
3. Your organization's history and management structure--both a brief narrative and charts.

4. Descriptions of your key programs, including relevant statistics, case histories, and other documents supporting your past and current successes.
5. Organizational budget and audit report.
6. IRS tax-exemption determination letter.
7. Contact information for potential co-applicants, collaborators, and supporters of your grant.

Every grants office must maintain up-to-date files of institutional background data in support of its efforts. A precise file scheme for this data will depend on the size of your organization, its scope of authority, and functional purpose.

#### *Grant reference and resources*

Grant reference and resource files are those containing information about books, publications, subscription items or other information associated with grants. Keep your passwords stored here as well.

#### *Post-grant management*

After a grant has been awarded, you'll need a file folder for post-award management. If your budget allows it, a partitioned file folder works best. Into this file might go (1) the award letter and grant agreement; (2) a copy of the approved grant application; (3) the official budget as approved by the grantmaker; (4) finance and performance reports; (5) audit information; (6) correspondence and close-out documents.

In cases where a grant is awarded for more than one program year, it may be beneficial to have a new file for each year—as your budget will probably be revised each year. You will still need a running summary of your grant award as well as of any administrative amendments. Plan to have enough of these partition file folders in stock to accommodate both current awards and anticipated new awards.

Most grantmakers require that funded organizations file a grant report after the funds have been used. When looked at in the right frame of mind,

these reports really do serve as an excellent vehicle for you to obtain future support from the grantor:

1. The report places your organization back in front of the people making funding decisions. It may have been as long as a year since you had substantive contact with the grantor, especially if it was a corporation or small foundation. The final report is the perfect opportunity to reintroduce your organization or program to the sponsor and celebrate the successes their support has helped to fund.
2. You create the narrative - the story of the successes (and challenges) you faced during the grant period. Write about the outstanding work you have done and the problems you have solved. Don't ignore things that went wrong, but emphasize how your organization successfully addressed the problems.
3. You can lay the groundwork for future funding needs: what you could not accomplish during the funding cycle, how the current program will be expanded, or other opportunities you may have identified while carrying out the original project.

*Now that we've set up your organizational structure, let's move on to Day Three!*

## Day Three - Assemble Your "Testimonials"

*The best grant writing tells a good story*

*Enthusiasm is the greatest asset in the world. It beats money, power and influence. -Henry Chester*

What makes for a truly compelling grant proposal? How do you engage the program officer (your reader - your audience!) when your proposal may be the twelfth one he or she has read today?

Nothing accomplishes the goal of readability (or "fundability") quite like effective storytelling, and testimonials serve as a powerful tool to inject some relevant storytelling into what would otherwise be a lifeless piece of writing.

*Engaging the reader*

The importance of capturing a reader's attention in a grant proposal can't understated. Competition for grant monies is fierce. Keep in mind that even though you believe your cause is important and your organization deserves grant funding, every other organization submitting proposals to grant resources believes that exact same thing. It is imperative that your grant application stands out from the crowd!

Read this excerpt from the Kellogg Foundation website on the power of storytelling:

*Stories can accomplish what no other form of communication can - they can get through to our hearts with a message. In our world of information transfer, data exchange, and media impressions, where we have become callused by so much communication, stories have the power to speak to us about what truly matters. In our work we, are surrounded by stories of hope, stories about healing, stories about fairness, stories about making a difference, stories about community, stories about connection. -Will Rogers in [The Story Handbook](#), a Center for Land and People Book*



*Why would your nonprofit use storytelling to convey your messages? Because facts, data, and statistics are boring to listen to and easy to forget - they don't move people. It isn't that facts have no place in your messages; rather, you might try constructing your messages in a narrative format and gently weaving in a few facts here and there. Ira Glass, host of This American Life states it precisely in Andy Goodman's [Storytelling as Best Practice](#): "The most powerful thing you can hear, and the only thing that ever persuades any of us in our own lives, is [when] you meet somebody whose story contradicts the thing you think you know. At that point, it's possible to question what you know, because the authenticity of their experiences is real enough to do it."*

*Nonprofits and businesses alike are rediscovering the power of one of humankind's most ancient media: **stories**. Stories stir our emotions and bring us into the worlds of the characters. It is easy to have a cold, hard reaction to the cold, hard facts but when your messages reach above the facts to engage your listeners, it becomes much more difficult to ignore them. (A note of caution: Avoid telling a story that does not convey the societal and political conditions that created the circumstances of an individual's story. Failing to include societal and political conditions may encourage the audience to blame an individual for his/her problem instead of seeing the true shortcomings of a system or may make serious problems seem easily surmountable if people "just work hard enough" to overcome them like the "heroic" individual in your story.)*

*Storytelling does not apply only to spoken and written communication. Digital storytelling combines video, audio, and narration to show an audience your story in addition to telling it. Digital storytelling can be viewed at any time if you can host the video on your website.*

*--From the Kellogg Foundation website, 2006*

Get the picture? Storytelling is essential to crafting truly compelling grant application proposals. And your best storytelling will come from those individuals you serve—your testimonials. Do you run a tutoring program for low-income schoolchildren? You'll want either individual (**preferable**) or composite stories about a child caught up in the struggles of inner city

public education and that detail exactly how your program succeeded. Does your organization offer a community art school? Survey a wide variety of students - you'll be surprised at the array of enthusiastic responses you'll get!

Every organization has a story (usually hundreds!) to tell. Your job is to find them and record them. I like to weave individual quotes within my proposals, creating anecdotal backups to concrete statistics. Use your imagination, create program-end surveys, get in the habit of carrying a tape recorder with you for a few weeks, and talk to strangers. There are many methods for gathering the materials that make for a compelling grant proposal.

Why do your board members support your organization? Talk to them and find out! Do the same with your individual donors. Why do they regularly send checks to your organization? Find out! Put their responses in writing and save them.

Gathering "testimonials" will become second nature for you. You'll hear a snippet of a conversation and know instinctively that the comment you just heard would work perfectly in the proposal you're writing now.

*Where do testimonials come from?*

Testimonials can be found everywhere within an organization that has a stated goal of helping people. Here are some of the most common places you'll find testimonials you can use in your grant proposals:

**Your clients and customers.** If your organization provides a service, your happy clients will often thank you. Check with those employees who work closely with clients—have they received thank-you cards or phone calls? Follow up with clients who have phoned in their thanks, and ask permission to quote them in your proposal.

**Your organization's employees.** There may be an employee incentive program or other involvement scenario in place for your organization. Do the people you work with benefit from your company's services? Many of

them should be willing to provide you with material for your testimonials file on request.

**Your board members.** Anyone who knows how your organization benefits people in your community can provide testimonials for you. Don't be afraid to ask for them!

**Your website and social media.** Does your organization have a Facebook page for feedback? If not, you should consider creating one. You'd be surprised how many people turn to online resources to put forth their opinions. Twitter and Facebook can provide a terrific resource for excellent testimonials.

**Past clients and employees.** If yours is an established organization, there are likely plenty of people who have current great successes and can trace that success back to your organization. Success stories are a powerful and tangible form of testimonial that can really lend some "oomph" to your grant proposal!

### *Best practices for soliciting testimonials*

You know you need testimonials, and you know where to get them. The question then becomes, how do you get them?

The most direct answer is to ask! Anyone who is satisfied with what your organization has done for them will be likely to agree—you can ask them to write down a few sentences describing their satisfaction, or send you a brief e-mail. Of course, always be sure you have permission to quote the testimonial source in your proposal.

Here are some other ways to solicit testimonials:

### *Record conversations*

You may be tempted to rely on your memory to record the compliments your clients offer about your organization. Don't do it! It's easy to hear a wonderful turn of phrase in a conversation and think, "That's perfect!"

only to realize later that you can't come up with the exact words the client used—and your client won't be able to remember either.

Writing down what was said can work, but this takes time too, and you can miss out on that off-the-cuff remark that perfectly captures the testimonial. It's better to record conversations if possible. If you are engaged in a face-to-face discussion with a client, ask permission to use a tape recorder instead of taking notes. You can also record telephone conversations. That way, the information will be readily accessible to you later.

### *Keep those notes and cards*

At the beginning of this book, I talked about all those notes and cards the staff received, read, and then threw away. Don't let this happen to you! Encourage your organization's employees to save correspondence from clients and customers and ask them to forward it on to you after everyone has seen it. If they know you're gathering testimonials for grant proposals, they'll be more than willing to share.

### *The power of two little words*

The best way to elicit a testimonial from a client is to simply deliver a heartfelt "thank you."

Your donors believe they are giving to a terrific cause. Too many nonprofits feel the satisfaction donors receive from giving should be sufficient to sustain them.

The truth is, hearing how much you appreciate their gift—without following up the expression with a request for more money—will brighten their day, and likely lead to a glowing recommendation for your organization.

You could conceivably find yourself with more testimonial material than you will ever be able to use simply by extending your sincere thanks to

every client and donor your organization serves. Remember to keep your tape recorder or notepad ready to capture the words of praise you receive in return for your thanks.

### *Testimonial record keeping*

Keeping accurate testimonial records is a must for your grant writing activities. You must be able to easily access the information and match the various testimonials to the purpose of the grant for which you're applying.

One thing you must have to accompany all of your testimonials is written permission to use the quotes in your grant proposal if you are using a full name. This can be a simple note, or an "official" release form. Having permission can avoid costly legal battles down the road.

If you have longer testimonials or success stories, you may want to create a series of short, relevant quotes pulled from the material that can be interspersed throughout your proposals for maximum impact. These should be kept together with the original material for easy attribution purposes.

Finally, it's important to keep your testimonial files completely current. Be sure to go through your files on a regular basis and weed out any dated or irrelevant testimonials, and keep the fresh material coming in to replace it. Keep track of the circumstances of your clients and employees who provide testimonials to make sure your proposals always reflect the most current information.

*It's time to move on to Day Four!*

## Day Four - Discover Your Organization's USP

*Define what makes your organization tick*

*There is real magic in enthusiasm. It spells the difference between mediocrity and accomplishment. -Norman Vincent Peale*

Grantwriting veterans call it the 12-12-12 rule. Imagine that a foundation grant reader is about to sit down with a stack of grant proposals. She's already worked for 12 hours. It's now midnight, and your proposal is the 12th one down in the stack she's holding. The rule: in order to succeed despite all the "12s" dragging it down, your proposal has to have something special - something that will keep the reader awake, engage her interest, enthusiasm, and excitement, and even - dare we say it - get her to fall in love with your idea.

That something is your organization's or your project's USP.

*What is a USP?*

Marketers still use a concept called the *Unique Selling Proposition* (USP) to promote their products or services. The USP is a marketing concept that was devised in the early 1940s. It states that advertising campaigns make unique propositions to the customer and that this is what convinces them to switch brands or try something new.

Today, a number of businesses and corporations currently use USPs as a basis for their marketing campaigns.

A great USP has these key elements:

1. Outward Focus.

Instead of talking about you, your offering, or your credentials, your USP should focus outside, on the prospect or customer.

2. Targets a specific group or niche.

The best USP statements are personalized to the group or individual you are addressing. For example, when speaking to a doctor, I would say:

*"I help medical professionals find more profitable candidates for their elective procedures."*

When speaking to a diverse group (such as the Chamber of Commerce), I might be more general:

*"H.O.F. Communications designs hair-on-fire marketing programs that help you attract more clients and earn more money."*

### 3. Easily understood and retained.

Detailed discussion of process should be reserved for a sales presentation and are, therefore, not appropriate for an introduction.

Stating your USP clearly and quickly makes it easy for your prospect to remember you when you follow up. What you do should be self-explanatory.

### 4. Offers an obvious benefit.

Tell your prospect how you can ease his pain. This presupposes that you understand the problems of your target market and have a solution.

Some people get this backward and create a solution in search of a problem (or create a problem in search of more problems!)

### 5. Avoids jargon.

Engineers and purveyors of technical services love to talk the talk. Here's one such sample I heard recently:

*"We create enterprise software for core competency implementation."* (Huh?)

Even if your target market is highly specialized, you should assume that you share only one common language - English.

6. Integrates easily with your marketing materials.

Your USP should become part of your branding efforts and should appear on all your marketing materials, including your business cards, stationary, website and brochures. In some instances, your USP becomes tightly identified with your brand:

"Have it your way at Burger King."

Ultimately, your USP becomes your core marketing message, the "elevator speech" that you lead off with whenever you talk to a prospective client or customer - or grantmaker.

Much like scriptwriters who are coached to sum up the plot in one sentence, your unique selling proposition provides a clear, concise benefit statement that positively represents you and your company and leaves a memorable and favorable impression in the mind of your prospect.

### *Business USP examples*

For many businesses, the USP reflects an ideal or philosophy that is almost independent of their actual product line. For example, the founder of Revlon (Charles Revson) asserted that his company sold hope, not makeup. Walmart associates itself with bargains, while Neiman Marcus offers luxury.

A USP can fall into many business categories. Here are some of the most common:



**Lowest everyday prices.** Walmart is just one example of a company that uses competitive prices to set their company apart. In every industry, you can find a business that stands out with regard to price. There are also companies that offer bids or quotes instead of pricing their goods or services outright, which enables them to underbid the competition.

**Better quality.** This is the strategy of choice for many small or start-up businesses that can't afford to undercut their competitors. Neiman Marcus is just one example. Jewelers and restaurants represent two industries in which the quality USP is frequently used. There are many high-priced, fine restaurants that depend upon the quality of their food, service, or ambience to attract and keep customers.

**The only place in town.** Completely original products or services are almost impossible to create these days. However, some companies are able to offer products or services that are unique to their area or can put a unique spin on an existing market. Originality can offer a great USP for any business.

**Great service.** Many companies place emphasis on the quality, speed, friendliness, or care level of their service to set them apart from the crowd. This is one of the easiest ways to promote a USP and give a business an edge. For example, Zappos believes that anything worth doing is worth doing with WOW.

**The widest selection.** Companies that have more choices can please more of the people, more of the time. The best example of a business offering great selection is Amazon.com; its unique selling proposition is "The earth's biggest selection." This Internet giant offers millions of products in dozens of categories, and customers enjoy the convenience of purchasing a wide range of products from one central source.

**Money-back guarantee.** For companies that have confidence in their products or services, a money-back guarantee is a good way to differentiate themselves from others selling something identical. A guarantee builds consumer confidence and attracts buyers when all other factors are equal.

## *Nonprofit USP examples*

Nonprofit organizations can use some of the same principles as for-profits to create their USPs. For example, UDAC Mailing, a nonprofit, bulk mailing service based in Duluth, Minnesota, uses customer focus as its unique selling proposition. The company will do anything for its customers and often goes to extremes to meet their needs.

Another nonprofit agency sets itself apart with its policy to always provide a real, live person to answer the phone during business hours, no matter what. This organization provides a service in effect by not providing one: because they don't have an automated menu system, their customers can contact them with confidence knowing their questions will be answered right away and they won't be faced with a voice mail menu.

In some cases, branding can also work for nonprofits. One of the best examples of this is the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA).

The majority of people in the United States immediately think of the ASPCA when the topics of animal rights, animal shelters, or pet adoption arise. In fact, the ASPCA at one point had a particularly visual USP on its website at [www.aspca.org](http://www.aspca.org): it's a photograph of a dog holding an empty word balloon, accompanied by the words "We are their voice." Simple, powerful, and effective.

There are other instantly recognizable nonprofit organizations with the "only place in town" advantage. The American Red Cross is synonymous with disaster relief and blood donation. The WWF (no, not the World Wrestling Federation) is the first name in wildlife protection and zoo funding.

Any nonprofit can formulate a USP that differentiates itself from the competition. The Visiting Nurse Association of Florida defined its distinction by noting that patients who received visitation healed faster

and had fewer return trips to hospitals. This information allowed the VNA to increase revenues by 40 percent. In another medical example, the Bariatric Center at Holy Cross Hospital gained a competitive edge when a surgeon who worked at the center and underwent the surgery himself highlighted his weight loss success—but the real improvement in revenue came when the center advertised the total pounds lost by patients who had bariatric surgery: 400,000 pounds. The numbers spoke for themselves!

A USP is different from an organization's mission statement. A USP is different than an organization's mission statement.

The mission of charity: water is: "charity: water is a non-profit organization bringing clean and safe drinking water to people in developing nations.."

Their USP is "When we started charity: water, we made a bold promise to the general public — 100% of their donations would go directly to the field to fund water projects. Even the credit card fees from your donation today are sponsored so a true 100% goes to people in need."

### *USP for your organization*

If you are seeking grant funding for your organization as a whole, it's important to consider your company's overall mission and base your USP on the philosophy of your services. Many of the examples given above illustrate a top-level conception or description of the organization: animal rights and the ASPCA, everyday low prices at Walmart, Amazon's enormously diverse catalogue of offerings, and so on.

Let's use the example of a children's daycare center. What could be unique about your organization as a whole? Some examples might be:

- You encourage community interaction by bringing together families who would not have otherwise met

- You create a safe place for young children in an otherwise questionable community
- You fortify health education by offering only healthy meals and snacks in your daycare center
- You provide a service that is affordable and flexible to meet the needs of single parents

If your main fundraising goal is to benefit the entire organization, developing a basic USP can help you define and distinguish your purpose. This can translate into grant funding because your charity will stand out from the competition and offer your prospective funder a reason to say "Yes."

### *USP for your program*

You may be called upon to write a grant proposal for a particular program offered by your organization. Your program USP and directives should be separate from your general company USP. Some examples of programs include:

- Transportation programs
- Youth service programs
- Substance abuse programs
- College funding for employees/ families
- Housing programs
- Literacy campaigns
- Community drives (food, clothing, etc.)
- School benefit drives
- Educational programs
- Holiday collections (such as the Toys for Tots campaign)
- Military benefit drives
- Law enforcement benefit drives
- Awareness campaigns
- Advocacy programs

When seeking grant funds for programs outside your organization's normal range of operations, it is important to develop a USP that reflects the goals and objectives of your program. Relevance is key to a successful grant

proposal; the more specific you can be concerning your use of the funds, and the more relevant that usage is to the goals of the grantmaker, the more likely you will be awarded grant funds.

### *Finding your organization's USP*

What sets your organization's mission and results apart from other nonprofits? Say you're a children's theater - what about your theater sets it apart from the other two children's theaters in your town? Do you service low income, minority women and children? How do you do it differently / better than the other five agencies in town performing the same function?

It could be your demographic. It could be your methods. The secret is learning and focusing on what sets you apart.

### *Quick Tip*

Instead of thinking "I'm not going to bother applying to the XYZ Foundation again. They've turned us down three times!" pick up the phone and call them. Explain that your mission aligns beautifully with theirs, and you're wondering what you could do differently in your approach to them. They may well tell you that it was simply a matter of timing. Or, they may give you some advice on how to improve your chances. The trick is persistence.

I was working with a small organization and researching funders. One in particular seemed a tailor-made match for our mission. Yet further research yielded that the organization HAD applied to the foundation - three times! In fact, a former executive director had actually been encouraged to seek funding by the foundation's director. Yet we'd been declined. The files had been retired. I didn't

understand it. So I picked up the phone and called the foundation's director. I was frank with him and told him that I didn't understand why they hadn't funded us - WHAT could we do differently? He told me that funding was about to open up and encouraged me to try again. We submitted, the foundation director paid a personal visit to the program, and we were awarded a \$10,000 grant. What's more, that foundation has funded that organization consecutively -- and brought additional foundation funders aboard!

### *Goal Setting: How to Do it and Why*

Setting goals is an integral step in the grant proposal process. Without clear goals, your entire grant writing process will fall apart—the grantor will not be able to follow your thoughts, and you won't receive funds.

Having a defined set of goals in place before you begin the grant writing process will help you unify your presentation and present a compelling case for your organization. One important thing to keep in mind is to set your goal as high as you need it to be—even if it seems impossible to reach.

It's perfectly fine if your goal scares you a little. In fact, if your goal isn't scary and exciting at the same time, then your goals are set too low. Thinking about a big goal you've never achieved before is always going to make you feel a little uncomfortable and afraid. This discomfort makes most people pull back into their comfort zone.

Don't let the fear of failure or the feeling of discomfort prevent you from going after what you really want. Always step forward into growth; never pull back into safety. Refuse to sell yourself short. Raise your standards. The famous architect Daniel Burnham said, *"Make no small plans; they have no magic to stir your blood to action. Make big plans; aim high in work and hope."*

How do you set goals for your grant writing activity? Defining your organization's USP is the first step. Once you know what makes your organization different from others in your field, you can begin to

investigate the specific steps you should take to maintain that difference and uphold your quality of service.

Part of your goal setting process should be a redefinition of your vocabulary and outlook, in a positive direction. Instead of "I should" say "I must." Completely banish "I can't" from your vocabulary. Soon you'll find that your mind switches its "polarity," and the negative thoughts pop up less. Here are some examples of how you could change the negative self-talk to positive self-talk:

- How can I better express our mission to funders?
- What can I do today that will help me get closer to my organization's funding goal?
- How great am I going to feel after I send out three new proposals today?
- I am 100% responsible for my results. Whatever it takes, I'll do it.
- I like myself. I can do it. I will do it.

Now it's time to determine your goals. Here are ten guidelines to follow while setting your goals that will help you separate your grant proposal from the pile and get your organization noticed:

1. Be passionate. The enthusiasm you have for your organization's objectives will set your goals high and make them achievable. When selecting goals, make sure they match your passion to serve.
2. Be realistic. You can set a goal to receive \$500,000 in grant funds for the year, and only receive \$250,000. You've still won quite a bit, but you haven't met your goal. Or you can set a goal to receive \$50,000 in grant funds for the year, receive \$250,000, and exceed your goal by 500 percent. Aim for the stars, but plan for reality.
3. Sweat the small stuff. Details are an important part of any goal set. You should know not only how much grant money you expect to receive, but what date you will receive it by and what it will be used for once it arrives. If you determine this before you write your proposal, you can include the specifics for the benefit of the grantor.
4. Look for value over quantity. Money is your main objective in writing a grant proposal, but it isn't the driving force behind your request.

What else will your company derive from a grant award? Make that value objective part of your goals.

5. Have a plan. Begin setting goals with your final result in mind. Start with your program or organization's ultimate objective, and then work backward through the steps it will take to get you there. These steps will become your goals.
6. Be accountable. Give yourself deadlines for various points along the way, and hold yourself responsible for meeting those deadlines. You may even want to enlist a colleague to remind you of the impending due dates for your goal steps.
7. Believe in yourself and your cause. Belief is a powerful force that most people don't take advantage of. If you are assured that your goals are worthy and deserve to be met, your grant writing will automatically reflect your convictions and convey that belief to funders.
8. Ask for help. You may be writing the proposal by yourself, but you don't have to work in a vacuum. Don't be afraid to ask colleagues, supervisors, or even grant foundations for assistance in answering the questions that are sure to surface during your proposal creation process.
9. Don't give up. No grant writer receives every grant applied for. Anticipate that you will not succeed with every proposal, and don't get down on yourself when your goals are not met. Perseverance is a critical quality in grant writing. Learn to view setbacks as opportunities for growth and improvement.
10. Have fun! If you don't enjoy what you're doing, your proposals will reflect your sense of drudgery. Don't let a blah attitude creep into your goals. Hold on to the sense of excitement that brought you into your field in the first place, and set goals with that in mind.

*And now for Day Five--the last step!*



## Day Five - Begin Writing!

*Ready to write a winning proposal?*

*Creativity can solve almost any problem. The creative act, the defeat of habit by originality, overcomes everything. -George Lois*

*Bringing your efforts together*

Now it's time to bring all your efforts together! Remember the research we did on Day One? Your research will tell you which foundations you will approach with:

A letter  
A short proposal  
Or a full proposal

Additionally you'll want to learn the techniques for drafting an LOI or Letter of Intent (sometimes referred to as a Letter of Inquiry). Some foundations request that you approach them first with a letter they will review. If your program matches with their priorities, you'll be invited to submit a full proposal.

*The LOI*

A LOI exists to do three things:

- Introduce your organization to the grantmaker
- Describe the program for which you are seeking funds
- Explain how the program fits into the grantmaker's mission

This doesn't seem like a terribly ambitious agenda - but the problem is, you have one or two pages at most to cover this material. LOIs are not proposals - they are letters. You're not laying out the entire project - you're describing it in a brief, effective, and compelling way. At the same time, you have to

adequately describe the project - if your grantmaker responds to an LOI with a request for a full proposal, and the full proposal describes something substantially different from what the grantmaker thought they were going to get, you've not only lost the chance at the grant, but you've also irritated the grantmaker, who will be leery of doing further work with you.

The basic structure of an LOI is simple and straightforward. Start with the standard address blocks for your organization and for the grantmaker and a salutation block addressing whoever at the grantmaker will be reviewing your letter.

Introductory paragraph - say who you are, name your organization, and right up front, tell the grantmaker what you're writing to them about. This paragraph should be professional and to the point.

Sample:

*Knowing of the commitment of the XYZ Foundation towards human services needs, I am writing to inquire about obtaining funding for our homeless shelter program in Detroit, Michigan.*

The second paragraph should provide basic information about your group, including its size, scope, mission, affiliations, federal tax status, and current operations. For example:

*Helping Hand Ministries is a Michigan-based regional volunteer group. We operate homeless shelters and soup kitchens in seven cities and towns in Michigan. We are a 501(c)(3) organization with a full-time staff of two people and a volunteer base of about sixty individuals. We are registered with ECFA and have a partnership agreement with Divine Redeemer Church in Flint, Michigan.*

The third paragraph should describe the program for which you are seeking funding. This should be general and at a high level, but must accurately describe the program. Discuss the broad budget figures for the project, but don't ask for any money. If other funding sources have already

been secured, mention them - foundations appreciate funding projects that other groups have already bought into.

Sample:

*Our soup kitchen on 2712 Boyle Avenue currently serves more than 300 homeless individuals with two hot meals per day. Owing to an unprecedented increase in the number of homeless persons in Detroit, we are expanding this kitchen into a full homeless shelter.*

*The renovation and rehabilitation of the existing facility will take place beginning in August of next year, and our initial estimate is that the capital cost of the conversion will be \$120,000. Operating costs for the first year of full operation will cost approximately \$20,000. Divine Redeemer Church has agreed to meet the salary expense of the shelter coordinator and the cleaning staff. When the project is complete, the shelter on Boyle Avenue will have 24 beds, while still providing the same level of hot meal service.*

The final paragraph(s) should discuss how your program fits into the expressed mission and vision of the funding organization. This can be very general, or it can be very specific - depending on how much information the grantmaker has published about their mission! Not all funders put this information out into public; some are downright mysterious.

Sample:

*We believe that our shelter project is an excellent fit with the values of the XYZ Foundation. Your mission statement is "helping the helpless to help themselves," and that is the exact approach that Helping Hands Ministries takes in its social service work. Job training and personal behavior standards are an important part of the service we provide to residents of our shelters, and we are very proud of the fact that fully 52% of our past beneficiaries have been transitioned into paid employment and stable housing situations with our assistance.*

Finally, close with a specific proposition for the grantmaker:

*We would like to submit a formal application to your foundation for funding of this critical project. Please let us know what steps we need to take in order to move forward with this program.*

*We greatly appreciate your time and consideration, and thank you for the good work your foundation performs.*

And then include a signature, etc. If it is possible to fit all of this onto one page, great - everyone loves a one-page LOI if it gets the job done. More than likely it will take two pages. Never go longer than two pages for an LOI - if it's more than two pages, it's a short proposal, and should be handled accordingly.

You will use an LOI when you have not had contact with the grantmaker before, when you are not sure of what their requirements for an application are, or for "shot gunning" a proposal to many foundations to determine which ones are interested in funding you. LOIs are easy to do and don't cost much to generate, and they serve as a good first step for an organization new to the grant application cycle.

Another use for the LOI, conversely, is when a strong relationship with the grantmaker already exists. In this case, you may thank the grantmaker for previous assistance, update them on ongoing projects, and then briefly lay out a new program - such an LOI can very easily secure an entirely new grant with almost no preparatory work! Such occurrences really are a payback for the hours you will spend building a good relationship with a grantmaker. You will find an excellent example of such a letter in the "Foster Foundation" sample located in the manual.

### *The Short Proposal*

A short proposal can be anywhere from two to five pages. Short proposals are relatively uncommon, but some grantmakers request them in order to force candidates to sharply define their programs and cut down on excessive supporting material. Short proposals look just like long proposals - but they are cut to the bone.

Short proposals are generally solicited by foundations that already know your organization and want to get right down to business - what do these people want, and what are they going to do with it. Such a solicitation doesn't mean that you're automatically approved - it means you shouldn't burn a lot of the grantmaker's time on marketing and instead should get right to the meat of what you want to do.

The "Sample Private College" proposal included in the manual shows an excellent example of a short proposal - it contains all the key information of a long proposal, but ruthlessly trimmed and with only the most critical elements presented.

### *The Long Proposal*

A long proposal can be of any length. This is a comprehensive document that includes everything plus the kitchen sink - but it should not include anything that is not strongly supportive of your program request! One common mistake for grantwriters is to throw in "supporting" material that actually only distracts from the main point of what you're looking to get from the grantmaker.

A proposal has several key elements that you need to include.

- Summary
- Organizational Information
- Problem Description
- Work Plan Activities
- Impact of Activities
- Evaluation
- Other Funding
- Future Funding
- Budget
- Supplementary Materials

The summary section should actually be written last - after you know exactly what your grant proposal says. It should briefly and cogently sum up what your proposal is about, in a few sentences at most. The summary should include your program USP, but you might rephrase it.

The organizational information section describes your organization, its history, what it does, who works there, and so on. This section should include testimonials from past beneficiaries and brief highlights of successful programs your organization has completed in the past. This section should include your organizational USP.

The problem description is just that - a description of the problem being faced. Note that this section should never describe a problem your organization is facing - it should always describe a problem being faced by your beneficiaries. "We cannot pay all of our staff" is not a problem the grantmaker cares about; "staff cutbacks are forcing our beneficiaries to inject their own insulin shots" is.

The work plan is a description of how you intend to solve the problem. The "Creating Opportunities for Real Work" pages of the "Foundation Basic Pitch" document in the manual presents an excellent example of a work plan.

The impact of activities section is a narrative of how your solution or program (described in the work plan) will solve the problem. You need to have a compelling and believable story here - the problem, the work plan, and the impact section need to cohere. If your problem is "everyone in this town is starving," and your work plan is "we're going to hold a conference in New York," then your impact section has a LOT of work to do - probably more than even the most talented writer can pull off. The story has to work for the grantmaker to believe it.

The evaluation section details how your organization will measure its results. This should be as specific and as detailed as you can make it. Are you going to take a survey? Analyze satellite photos, and count the number of homeless people sleeping in the park? Whatever you are going to do, remember that: (a) it needs to measure something that is strongly related to your problem statement, and (b) you're actually going to have to do it.

The other funding section simply details what other funding arrangements you

Have already lined up. Foundations are very reluctant to be the first one in the pool - if you can get even a small commitment from another reputable body before you submit your application, it will improve the odds tremendously. Grantmakers like the idea of knowing that other funders are on board - it makes their decision to fund you more defensible.

The future funding section should lay out how you plan to continue paying for the program after the original grant money is spent. "We plan to ask you for more money" is not an automatically disqualifying answer, but it is not the best answer, either. The ideal answer is that the new program will pay for itself by the time the money runs out, accompanied by a compelling story of how that will happen.

The budget lays out exactly what you intend to spend and on what.

Finally, the supplemental information section is where you attach your tax status

documents, resumes, annual reports, financial statements, and anything else that the grantmaker has requested. Double and triple check this section - sometimes it is purely pro forma, and other times the grantmaker will scrutinize everything here with extreme prejudice, but either way it needs to be perfect. Include exactly what they ask for and nothing that they don't ask for.

Long proposals are the most common form of communication with a grantmaker, and you will surely do a large number of them.

Now that you know the structure of what you're going to write, it's time to get started!

Before you begin to write, check to see if your state or region has a professional grantmakers association. Here in the Philadelphia region there is the Delaware Valley Association of Grantmakers. The foundations

belonging have agreed to accept a common grant application. If your region has a common grant application form spend some time filling it out.

### *Common grant applications*

The following is a list of common grant applications you can use to format your own proposals. You can view most of these online:

[Associated Grant Makers, Inc. \(MA\)](#)

[Association of Baltimore Area Grantmakers](#)

[Connecticut Council for Philanthropy \(CT\)](#)

[Council of Michigan Foundations](#) [Delaware Valley Grantmakers \(PA\)](#)

[Donors Forum of Chicago](#)

[Grantmakers of Western Pennsylvania](#)

[Minnesota Common Grant Application Form](#)

[National Network of Grantmakers](#)

[New York/New Jersey Area Common Application Form](#)

[Philanthropy Northwest](#) (Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington)

[Rochester Grantmakers Forum](#)

[Washington Regional Association of Grantmakers](#)

[Wisconsin Common Application Form](#)

### *Basic writing tips*

Remember how we began to build a listing of useful websites on Day One for

Research purposes? It's also useful to compile a folder full of writing-related sites to give an edge to your writing. Begin bookmarking sites that are useful to you whenever you find them in the course of your other online activities. A few that I like include:

The Armchair Grammarian: <http://community-2.webtv.net/SOLIS-BOO/Grammar1/>

Roget's Thesaurus Online: <http://thesaurus.reference.com/>



Bartleby's Quotations: <http://www.bartleby.com/100/>

Developing your writing skills is an important part of producing a successful grant proposal. Here are a few basic tips to put you on the right track:

*Write actively, not passively.*

With a grant proposal, your goal is to move the person reading it to take action. Therefore, you will want to develop an active voice in your writing. This means putting the action first in your sentences and cutting out the clutter, while providing concrete illustrations. Here's an example of passive voice:

*Our company has been known to provide excellent service for our community. We have delivered financial and material aid to six area schools over the past two years and will be expanding our efforts to include ten more. The local board of education presented us with a community award for excellence in volunteerism.*

Now, here's the same information written in active voice:

*Our organization provides excellent and much-needed service for the community of White Falls. We donated over \$10,000 in supplies and provided 3,500 hours of volunteer service to six area schools in two years. In 2007, we will expand our coverage to include sixteen schools. In 2009, our agency received a Service Excellence commendation from the local board of education.*

When writing in active voice, one good trick is to eliminate the use of the words "had" and "was/were" (past participles) as often as possible. Reword your sentences to use -ed verbs rather than -ing verbs, which are often preceded by "was" or "had".

*Speak to the reader*

"Humanize" your grant proposal by writing as though you were talking to a single person instead of a faceless organization. Remember - your application actually will be read by a single person, at least at first!

Don't be afraid to use the word "we" in reference to your company, rather than naming your organization every time. Also—particularly in the opening and conclusion—use the word "you" in reference to the grantor. This makes your proposal personal and meaningful.

### *Break it up*

It is a rare individual who enjoys reading through long blocks of text. You don't want whoever is reading your proposal to glance at the pages and dread trying to get through all of your material.

It is a good idea to keep your paragraphs short whenever possible. Also, you can make your writing more attractive to the eye by breaking up the text with headings and subheadings, sections, and bulleted or numbered lists. Appropriate pictures, charts or graphics, *used sparingly*, can do a lot to make your proposal more visually interesting. This is also a useful technique for making crucial pieces of information stand out.

### *Keep it relevant*

Make sure everything you include in your grant proposal is relevant to the project for which you're requesting funding. Don't include unnecessary information just because you think it makes your organization sound better. Remember, the grantor will be reading through more than one proposal, and he or she will appreciate you getting to the point!

### *Proofread, proofread, proofread*

The importance of excellent grammar and spelling cannot be understated. Errors in your proposal look less-than-professional, to say the least. Have multiple people in your organization proofread your application before it goes out - the more sets of eyeballs, the better.

### *More quick tips on writing grants*

Keep the following guidelines in mind as you begin the actual writing of your proposal:

- The shorter, the better. Get your point across as quickly as possible, and eliminate "fluff." Padding your proposal will only give the reviewer a headache trying to decide which parts are important—and may make them give up on you before they reach the end.
- State the amount you're seeking and the reason for your request right at the start of your proposal. If you withhold this information until the end, the reviewer will have to go back and read your proposal through again—with a grumpy attitude.
- Try talking to others who have successfully received funding from your prospects, and ask them about the length, complexity, budget detail, and supporting information included in their winning proposal. They may be willing to share their actual proposal documents with you - it can't hurt to ask!
- Prepare your budget first, and then make sure each item in the budget has ample support in the proposal.
- Write your summary last—sum up everything you've included, and highlight the benefits to the grantor.
- Use contractions for a more conversational feel and avoid "ten-cent" words, which tend to confuse rather than impress.
- Whenever possible, incorporate charts and graphs. Visual impact is a strong influence on grant decisions.
- Avoid using hopeful or iffy statements; be firm in your convictions. You can usually find a way to use definite language without over-committing yourself.
- Fill in every blank on the application (write "n/a" in sections that don't apply to your organization), and never miss an application deadline. If possible, submit your proposal early.

Many grant writers focus on their organization's need, while forgetting that they need to fulfill the grantmaker's needs too. I'm not referring to their technical needs, but rather the need to fulfill their own mission. Know the grantmaker's goals. Know the grantmaker's culture. Know the grantmaker's attitudes. Meet their needs.

## *Tip*

Focus on the needs of the clients (students, audiences, etc.), not the needs of the organization. I just reminded a VP of a college, with whom I am writing a scholarship proposal to a foundation, that we need to tell the grantor how the scholarship endowment will help the students--more than how it will help the college.

## *Know your target*

It is important to know exactly what your prospective funding source is looking for in a grant application. While every foundation is unique, the Natan Foundation has produced a great general checklist of questions that you can use to assess your proposal. While your proposal does not necessarily need to answer every one of these questions, it should explicitly or implicitly answer most of them.

1)

How do this agency and the request correspond with the foundation's mission statement and grant guidelines?

2)

Is this particular service, population served, neighborhood, etc. a priority for the foundation?

3)

What is the purpose of the request?

- a) To serve more people?
- b) To stabilize and continue to serve the same numbers?
- c) For internal capacity building?
- d) To meet an unmet need?

4)

How does the request fit with the organization's mission?

- a) Are there signs of mission drift?
- b) Does the request support and reinforce the agency's mission?
- c) Is there infrastructure in place (technology, business/development plans, staff/volunteers) to adequately design and implement the program?

5)

Is the request in response to a crisis/emergency, or is it an innovative way of solving a problem?

6)

How is the agency the same/different from other agencies providing a similar service or serving a comparable population?

7)

Is there evidence of collaboration with other agencies?

- a) If so, in what way and how does it affect services/programs?

8)

Do staff and volunteer leadership have the necessary qualifications, expertise, and experience to undertake and implement the request?

9)

What is the track record of the agency:

- a) (If a current grantee) with past funding from the foundation?
- b) With other funders or professionals in the agency's field?
- c) With organizational performance (is management financed, but not the program?)

10)

Evaluation, success and quality:

- a) Are these mentioned?
- b) How will these items be measured?
- c) What can the foundation do (money, technical assistance) to help ensure the organization's success?
- d) How can we be better partners in the endeavor?

*Using a good "swipe file"*

Coming up with your own original material for a grant proposal is great. However, you can make the process easier by "borrowing" from successful proposals.

Make a note: this does not mean you should copy other proposals, either entirely or in part. This is plagiarism, and it's not only unprofessional, it's illegal. But you can use existing proposals as models for crafting your own successful grants, or for ideas to get you started on the right foot.

What is a swipe file? As the name implies, it is a collection of material you can reference for starting points or working models. You'll find a number of sample proposals in the manual to get you started, and you should add to this collection as you come across impressive grants or write successful ones of your own.

What can you get from a swipe file? Here are just a few examples:

Introductory letters. Perhaps you've come across a letter that moved you or made you think. You can adopt the style and tone of that letter and include the details of your organization to invoke the same emotions for your proposal.

Great opening lines. In your proposal, you should strive to start each paragraph with a strong topic statement. Swipe files are a great resource for finding good opening sentences to modify.

A get-started kick. Staring at a blank page can be daunting. Your swipe file will help you get those creative juices flowing.

Format and layout. You may find a proposal that makes particularly good use of charts, bulleted lists, statistics and examples. You can adopt one of these appealing layouts for your proposal.

Your swipe file will grow as you write more grants and gather more examples and information. A strong swipe file is an important tool in your grant writing toolbox.

### *The power of enthusiasm*

Many organizations attempt to write grant proposals "by committee," with the belief that everyone should have a say as to what goes in the proposal. However, this approach will not only cause confusion and dissension in the ranks, it will also result in a substandard grant application with a low chance of success. There is a reason that committees do not rule the world.

One of the best things you can do in grant writing is to develop "one voice." If your job is to write grants for your organization, you should not enlist others for the actual writing. Gathering information from your co-workers is essential, but when it comes to putting your request into words, you need a unified presentation speaking with a single voice.

If you work for a nonprofit organization, chances are you love what you do—or at least what your organization does. When it comes to grant writing, you should channel your enthusiasm for your job into your proposal. Nothing beats a healthy dose of passion in a grant application; when you believe in your cause, your voice and belief shine through!

The more you write, the more developed your "voice" will become.

### *Proofread*

Despite the apparent decline in strong English skills due to the proliferation of e-mail and instant messaging, it's still important to make sure your grant proposal is error-free. Mistakes and spelling errors are unprofessional and can make your organization seem incompetent. They can also cause confusion and obscure the points you're trying to make.

It is important to proofread your grant proposal thoroughly before you send it off.

You should go through the whole thing multiple times to make sure you've caught any mistakes: check your spelling, grammar, punctuation, formatting, and figures.

Don't rely on spell-check to catch everything, either: your word processing problem won't notice things like "We put forth 500 volunteer ours threw our Youth Free program."

Here's a quick list of things to pay attention to in your proposal:

- Is your spelling and grammar correct?
- Do you use proper punctuation?
- Are your tables and figures positioned visibly and legibly?
- Are all of your pages numbered?
- Are your headers and/or footers correct?
- Have you inadvertently cut or overlapped sections?

If possible, it's a good idea to put your completed grant proposal aside for a few days and then read it one final time before you submit. Additionally, you should get someone else (or several people) to read it for you and point out any mistakes they find. A fresh pair of eyes is invaluable when it comes to proofreading.

### *Final grant checklist*

Are you ready to submit your proposal? Before you send off your package, go through this list and make sure—you never get a second chance to



make a first impression, and sending an incomplete package will likely get you turned down.

Is your grant application complete? Have you written 'n/a' for those sections that don't apply to your organization?

Have you included every section of your proposal? Check for misplaced or missing pages.

Did you proofread the whole thing? Did you get someone else to proofread it too?

Is your proposal printed clear and smudge-free on good-quality paper?

Have you packaged your proposal in a binder or folder or secured loose pages with a paper clip (not a staple)?

Is your mailing envelope large enough to hold the entire proposal flat, without crumpling or folding?

Do you have the correct contact information for the organization you are proposing to? Call them to make sure!

Once you've answered "yes" to all of these questions, your proposal is ready to send!

### *Tip*

*Once you've sent the proposal, do not continually contact the grantor to ask if they've reviewed it yet. Submit the proposal (send it with delivery confirmation if you want to make sure it was received) and then wait for follow-up from them. A polite request for a status report is acceptable, but only after a reasonable amount of time has passed with no response.*

### *Tip: Elements of a Strong Proposal*

Foundations receive many proposals. Yours is not going to be perceived as special or unique, even if it is, unless you can make it stand out from the avalanche of material that foundations have to wade through every day.

A strong proposal:

- Documents a track record of success for your organization at achieving goals
- Describes successful past efforts in the same general area as your new proposal
- Establishes that your organization's beneficiaries are central to the shaping of your mission
- Presents a strategy for continuously developing the connection between you and your beneficiaries
- Demonstrates a growing organizational membership base
- Explicitly defines the outcomes it seeks
- Describes how your organization has worked or will work with other groups
- Has a strong fundraising plan that shows solid support from the grass roots

### *Conclusion*

Congratulations! You're now ready to write grant proposals that result in funding for your nonprofit organization.

Be sure to review this material often, and use it for reference each time you write a grant. Allow me to offer some additional advice—you may want to print this list out and keep it handy:

### *Advice for Grant Seekers*

Don't expect the righteousness of your cause to win you the grant. All proposals that foundations consider are nothing but righteous causes. You need more than your cause; you should have a series of ingredients that allow you to compete against other causes vying for the same funds.

Before you begin the application process, make sure you have clarified your own objectives and purpose as well as your methods for

accomplishing them. Don't put yourself in a position to be manipulated by the priorities of the foundation program you're applying for.

Use the tools available to help you. There are many directories and grant services on the Internet and in libraries that can help you set priorities and find good matches for your organization.

Do your homework: find out exactly who the foundations you're applying to are, what their interests and priorities are, how often they meet to make grant decisions, and their preference for being contacted (phone, fax, mail, e-mail).

Expect the process of seeking a grant, from submission to decision, to take from four to **over twelve months**. Some foundations meet four times a year to make decisions; others meet more often, but most meet less often.

Most of the time, your first contact with the foundation will be a "letter of inquiry" or "letter of intent." This is basically a request to be allowed to submit a proposal. Find out whether the foundations on your list prefer to be contacted initially with a letter—and if so, keep it brief and to the point.

Asking questions is not a sign of weakness or ineptitude. If you don't understand something, ask! Foundations will be far happier answering your questions now than receiving a proposal that doesn't meet their guidelines or expectations.

If your proposal is accepted, meet all of the foundation's follow-up requirements promptly and completely. Again, don't be afraid to ask questions.

Don't ask for more money than the foundation typically grants. Here's where your homework comes into play again: find out what their average awards are, and adjust your proposal accordingly.

Always be crystal clear in your proposal in regard to the amount you are seeking and what the funds will be used for. Mystery and suspense

belong in fiction, not in your grant writing! Also, remember that longer is not necessarily better.

Once you have submitted a proposal, be patient. If you pester the foundation for a decision, you will definitely be remembered—but not in a positive way. Wait until sufficient time has passed without a response, and then send a polite inquiry about your proposal.

Remember to continue collecting testimonials and community support for your program. A foundation may be undecided in regard to proposals, and your testimonies can help you get the edge you need to make the final cut.

Don't hesitate to address controversy if it relates to your organization. Trying to hide any controversial elements in your programs will only backfire on you when the foundation discovers them—and they will. Practice full disclosure when presenting your financial information, and don't try to hide any problems past or present. If necessary, explain what your organization has done or is doing to correct the problems. Keep in mind that foundation members are real people, and treat them with the respect you would like to receive in return. Expect that not every proposal you submit will be successful. Many deserving requests are turned down simply because the funds are not available. Don't take it personally. Keep trying! The most successful fundraisers and grant writers are those who learn from their experiences and continue to apply for funds. Persistence will bring eventual success.

You can learn to write grants that get noticed and are awarded funding if you are diligent, do your research, and pay close attention to detail.

Here's to your funding success!

*Setbacks are only ever devastating when one thinks they'll last forever. They never do.* -Notes from the Universe

# Foundation Directories by State

## ALABAMA

**Guide to Alabama Grantmakers. Birmingham, AL: Alabama Giving/Alabama Funders Forum, 2004.**

Co-published by the Alabama Giving/Alabama Funders Forum and the Foundation Center, the directory contains profiles of more than 765 funders in Alabama as well as 107 out-of-state grantmakers whose geographic focus includes Alabama. Available from Alabama Giving/Alabama Funders Forum ([www.alabamagiving.org](http://www.alabamagiving.org)), P.O. Box 530727, Birmingham, AL 35253-0727. Tel.: (205) 313-4830.

## ALASKA

**The Alaska Funding Guide. Anchorage, AK: The Foraker Group,**

Online version only. Contains entries for foundations and corporations that are located, or fund projects in, the state of Alaska. Available from The Foraker Group, (<http://www.forakergroup.org>) 161 Klevin Street, Suite 101 Anchorage, AK 99501. Tel.: (907) 743-1200., (877) 843-5003

See also WASHINGTON, *Philanthropy Northwest Member Directory*.

## ARIZONA

**Boess, Marilyn, M., ed. 2010-2011 Arizona Guide to Grants and Giving. 9th ed. Glendale, AZ: Just Grants! Arizona, 2010.**

Profiles of nearly 1,800 corporations and foundations with a history of making grants in Arizona. Also available as an online subscription from Just Grants! Arizona ([www.azgrants.com](http://www.azgrants.com)), P.O. Box P. O. Box 16162; Phoenix, AZ 85011. Tel.: (866) 472-6878;

## ARKANSAS

No directory

## CALIFORNIA

**California Foundation DataBook. Portland, OR: C&D Publishing, 2000.**

Descriptions of more than 220 California-based foundations and the recent grants they awarded. Available from C&D Publishing ([www.foundationdatabook.com](http://www.foundationdatabook.com)), 1017 SW Morrison Street, #500, Portland, OR 97205. Tel.: (503) 274-8780.

**East Bay Funders Directory. San Francisco, CA: CompassPoint Nonprofit Services.**

The online directory lists foundations that are headquartered or fund in the East Bay of the San Francisco Bay Area. Available at: <http://www.eastbayfunders.org>. Published by CompassPoint Nonprofit Services ([www.compasspoint.org](http://www.compasspoint.org)), 706 Mission Street, 5th Floor, San Francisco, CA 94103. Tel.: (415) 541-9000.

**Guide to Funders in Southern California. Santa Ana, CA: Nonprofit Resource Center.**

The online, fully-searchable, directory provides information on more than 750 grantmakers in southern California, many of which are located in Orange County. Available from One OC; Orange County's Nonprofit Resource Center (<http://www.oneoc.org>), 1901 E. Fourth Street, Suite 100, Santa Ana, CA 92705. Tel.: (714) 953-5757.

**San Diego County Directory of Foundations. San Diego, CA: San Diego Community Foundation.**

The online directory provides information on approximately 450 grantmaking organizations located in San Diego, California. Available from the San Diego Community Foundation ([www.sdfoundation.org](http://www.sdfoundation.org)), 1420 Kettner Blvd., Suite 500, San Diego, CA 92101. Tel.: (619) 235-2300.

## COLORADO

**Colorado Grants Guide 2004-2005. Denver, CO: Community Resource Center, 2005.**

Includes foundations, corporate givers, government, and religious agencies within the state and outside the state with an interest in Colorado. Available in print and online from Community

Resource Center ([www.crcamerica.org](http://www.crcamerica.org)), 655 Broadway, Suite 300, Denver, CO 80203-3426. Tel.: (303) 623-1540.

## CONNECTICUT

**Connecticut Grantmakers Online. Hartford, CT: Connecticut Council for Philanthropy.**

Profiles of more than 2,200 foundations, corporate giving programs, and charitable trusts located or giving in Connecticut. Available from the Connecticut Council for Philanthropy ([www.CTphilanthropy.org](http://www.CTphilanthropy.org)), 221 Main Street, Hartford, CT 06106. Tel.: (860) 525-5585.

## DELAWARE

**2011 Directory of Delaware Grantmakers Both print and online edition. Wilmington, DE: Delaware Association of Nonprofit Agencies. (DANA) [www.delawarenonprofit.org](http://www.delawarenonprofit.org) 302-777-5500.**

## DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

**Guide to Greater Washington D.C. Grantmakers on CD-ROM. New York, NY: The Foundation Center, 2010.**

Features separate, searchable grants database. Profiles more than 2,500 foundations, corporate giving programs, and public charities with a primary and/or application address in the Washington, D.C. area or stated funding interests in the Washington, D.C. area. Available from the [Foundation Center http://foundationcenter.org/](http://FoundationCenter.org), 79 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10003-3076. Tel.: (800) 424-9836.

## FLORIDA

**Adams, John L., ed. *The Complete Guide to Florida Foundations*. 21st ed. Miami, FL: Florida Funding Publications, 2010-2011.**

Provides profiles of more than 3,900 Florida-based funders. Available from Florida Funding Publications ([www.floridafunding.com](http://www.floridafunding.com)), 8925 SW 148 Street, Suite 110, Miami, FL 33176. Tel.: (305) 251-2203.

**Donors Forum of South Florida. *Profiles of South Florida Donors: 2010***

. Provides detailed profiles of 200 foundation and corporate funders in the South Florida area. Available from the Donors Forum ([www.donorsforumsf.org](http://www.donorsforumsf.org)), 200 South Biscayne Blvd. Suite 3300, Miami, Florida 33131. Tel.: (305) 371-7944.

## GEORGIA

*No Directory*

## HAWAII

*No directory.*

## IDAHO .

***Philanthropy Northwest Member Directory***

A searchable, up-to-date online database of over 150 Northwest foundations, <http://www.philanthropyNW.org/s>. 2101 Fourth Avenue, Suite 650 Seattle, WA 98121 (800) 769-2752

## ILLINOIS

***Directory of Illinois Foundations*. 10th ed. Chicago, IL: Donors Forum of Chicago, 2009.**

Alphabetically arranged directory provides information on 3,000 foundations and corporate giving programs in Illinois. Available in print or as an online subscription to Illinois Funding Source from the Donors Forum of Chicago ([www.donorsforum.org](http://www.donorsforum.org)), 208 South La Salle, Suite 1540, Chicago,

IL 60604-1006. Tel.: (312) 578-0090.

## INDIANA

*No Directory.*

## IOWA

***Iowa Foundation DataBook. 3rd ed. Portland, OR: C&D Publishing, 2005.***

A directory of more than 1,100 foundations in Iowa, with in-depth descriptions of the top 259 largest grantmakers. Available from C& D Publishing ([www.foundationdatabook.com](http://www.foundationdatabook.com)), 1017 SW Morrison Street, #500, Portland, OR 97205. Tel.: (503) 274-8780.

## KANSAS

***The Directory of Kansas Foundations, 2010-2011. Topeka, KS: Kansas Non Profit Association, 2004.***

Provides information on 750 foundations. Available from the Kansas Non Profit Association ([www.mainstreaminc.net](http://www.mainstreaminc.net)), P.O. Box 47054, Topeka, KS 66647. Tel.: (785) 266-6422 or (800) 582-1428.

## KENTUCKY

***Kentucky Foundation DataBook. Portland, OR: C&D Publishing, 2003.***

A directory of foundations in the state, with in-depth descriptions of the top 162 largest grantmakers. Available from C&D Publishing ([www.foundationdatabook.com](http://www.foundationdatabook.com)), 1017 SW Morrison Street, #500, Portland, OR 97205. Tel.: (503) 274-8780.

## LOUISIANA

***Louisiana Foundation DataBook. Portland, OR: C&D Publishing, 2002.***

A directory of 901 foundations in the state, with in-depth descriptions of the top 227 largest grantmakers. Available from C& D Publishing ([www.foundationdatabook.com](http://www.foundationdatabook.com)), 1017 SW Morrison Street, #500, Portland, OR 97205. Tel.: (503) 274-8780.

## MAINE

***Directory of Maine Grantmakers. 7th ed. Portland, ME: Maine Grants Information Center, 2009.***

Brief profiles of more than 400 Maine foundations that file IRS 990-PFs and out-of-state foundations that give in Maine. Also available online from the Maine Philanthropy Center (<http://www.maine philanthropy.org/>), USM Library, Box 9301, Portland, ME 04104-9301. Tel.: (207) 780-5039.

## MARYLAND

***Maryland Association of Nonprofit Organizations. Maryland's Leading 500 Foundations. Frederick, MD: Jankowski Associates, Inc., 2010.***

Directory provides detailed profiles of 500 independent and community foundations, as well as basic information for smaller funders. Available from Jankowski Associates ([www.grantsdirect.com](http://www.grantsdirect.com)), PO Box 955, Poolesville, MD 20837. Tel.: (301) 916-3303.

## MASSACHUSETTS

***Associated Grant Makers. AGM Grant Makers Directory 2005. Boston, MA: Associated Grant Makers, 2005.***

Contains descriptions of more than 300 funders in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and New Hampshire. Also available online from Associated Grantmakers of Massachusetts

([www.agmconnect.org](http://www.agmconnect.org)), 55 Court Street, Suite 520, Boston, MA 02108. Tel.: (617) 426-2606.

## MICHIGAN

***The Michigan Foundation Directory. 16th ed. Grand Haven, MI: Council of Michigan Foundations, 2010.***

Identifies more than 1,500 potential grantmaking sources in Michigan.

Co-published by the Foundation Center and the Council of Michigan Foundations

([www.michiganfoundations.org](http://www.michiganfoundations.org)), P.O. Box 599, One South Harbor Ave., Suite 3, Grand Haven, MI 49417.

Tel.: (616) 842-7080.

## MINNESOTA

**Minnesota Council on Foundations,**

Minnesota Grantmakers Online Database Lists more than 1,300 Minnesota grantmakers; provides full

profiles for 391 of them. Available online from the Minnesota Council on Foundations ([www.mcf.org](http://www.mcf.org)), 100

Portland Avenue South, Suite 225, Minneapolis, MN 55401. Tel.: (612) 338-1989.

## MISSISSIPPI

No directory.

## MISSOURI

**Borman, Anne E., ed. *The Directory of Missouri Foundations*. St. Louis, MO: Directory of Missouri Foundations, 2010.**

In-depth profiles of more than 500 large foundations and a listing of smaller foundations in the state. Available from Directory of Missouri Foundations, P.O. Box 50299, St. Louis MO 63105. Tel: (314) 725-6834.

**Foundation Center and Metropolitan Association for Philanthropy. *Directory of Missouri Grantmakers*. 5th ed. New York, NY: The Foundation Center, 2003.**

Contains entries for more than 1,400 grantmakers located in Missouri and more than 300 out-of-state grantmakers with funding interests in Missouri. Available from the Foundation Center

([www.fdncenter.org](http://www.fdncenter.org)), 79 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10003-3076. Tel.: (800) 424-9836.

## MONTANA

**Bares, Joan, ed. *Montana Foundation Directory 2009*. Billings, MT: MSU-Billings Library, 2004.**

Contains entries for foundations active in Montana. Available from the Montana State University-

Billings Library (<http://www.msubillings.edu/library/grants/FoundationDirectoryOrder.htm/>), 1500

University Drive, Billings, MT 59101-0298. Tel.: (406) 657-2262.

See also WASHINGTON, *Philanthropy Northwest Member Directory*.

## NEBRASKA

**Junior League of Omaha. *Nebraska Foundation Directory, 2004-2005*. Omaha, NE: Junior League of Omaha, 2009.**

Profiles of every foundation in the state. Available from the Junior League of Omaha

([www.juniorleagueomaha.org](http://www.juniorleagueomaha.org)), 608 North 108th Court, Omaha, NE 68154. Tel.: (402) 493-8818.

***Nebraska Foundation Databook*. 2nd ed. Portland, OR: C&D Publishing, 2003.**

Profiles of 783 foundations in Nebraska, with information on their recent grants. Also available as a

CD-ROM from C&D Publishing ([www.foundationdatabook.com](http://www.foundationdatabook.com)), 1017 SW Morrison Street,

#500, Portland, OR 97205. Tel.: (877) 924-7268.

## NEVADA



Reed, Ellen B., comp. *Nevada Funding Directory*. 4th ed. Las Vegas, NV: Las Vegas-Clark County Library District, 2000.

Describes approximately 300 Nevada-based funders, as well as almost 300 out-of-state funders with a history of giving in NV or those who have indicated a willingness to give in NV. Published by [Clark County Library](http://www.lvccl.org/), (http://www.lvccl.org/) 1401 East Flamingo Road, Las Vegas, NV 89119. (702) 734-READ

## NEW HAMPSHIRE

**New Hampshire Office of the Attorney General. *Directory of Charitable Funds in New Hampshire*. Concord, NH: State of New Hampshire.**

Updated every two months, the online database is available at the Web site of the Department of Justice, Charitable Trust Division, Office of the Attorney General (<http://www.doj.nh.gov/publications/directory-main.html>),

State of New Hampshire, 33 Capitol Street, Concord, NH 03301-6397. Tel.: (603) 271-3591.

## NEW JERSEY

***The Mitchell Guide: A Directory of New Jersey Foundations*. 10th ed. Pennington, NJ: Mitchell Guide, 2001.**

Profiles 689 foundations that have made total grants of \$15,000 or more annually and/or have assets of \$150,000 or more.

## NEW MEXICO

No Directory

## NEW YORK

***New York State Foundations: A Comprehensive Directory*. 7th ed. New York, NY: The Foundation Center, 2010.**

Comprehensive directory of more than 7,000 independent, company-sponsored and community foundations currently active in New York State that have awarded grants of one dollar or more in the latest fiscal year. Published by the Foundation Center (<http://www.fdncenter.org>), 79 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10003-3076. Tel.: (800) 424-9836.

## NORTH CAROLINA

No directory

## NORTH DAKOTA

No directory.

## OHIO

***The Cincinnati Area Foundation Directory*. 7th ed. Cincinnati, OH: MR & Co., 2010-2010.**

Profiles of approximately 135 foundations and charitable trusts located in Cincinnati and the northern Kentucky region. ([www.cincinnati-foundation-directory.com](http://www.cincinnati-foundation-directory.com)) Available from MR & Co., P. O. Box 9223, Cincinnati, OH 45209-0223. Tel.: (513) 871-9456.

***Guide to Ohio Grantmakers*. New York, NY: Foundation Center, 2003.**

A joint project of the Ohio Grantmakers Forum, the Ohio Association of Nonprofit Organizations, and the Foundation Center, the CD-ROM provides information on more than 3,800 grantmakers located in Ohio and 300 out-of-state grantmakers with funding interests in Ohio. Searchable by multiple fields. Available from the Foundation Center ([www.fdncenter.org](http://www.fdncenter.org)), 79 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10003-3076. Tel.: (800) 424-9836.

## OKLAHOMA

**Oklahoma Foundation DataBook. 2nd ed. Portland, OR: C&D Publishing, 2010.**

A directory of the foundations in the state, with in-depth descriptions of the 214 largest grantmakers. Available from C&D Publishing ([www.foundationdatabook.com](http://www.foundationdatabook.com)), 1017 SW Morrison Street, #500, Portland, OR 97205. Tel.: (503) 223-2157.

## OREGON

**Oregon Foundation DataBook. Portland, OR: C&D Publishing, 2010.**

Descriptions of 348 Oregon-based foundations and the grants they gave in the most recent year on record. Also available as a CD-ROM from C&D Publishing (<http://www.foundationdatabook.com>), 1017 SW Morrison Street, #500, Portland, OR 97205.

See also WASHINGTON, *Philanthropy Northwest Member Directory*.

## PENNSYLVANIA

**Kletzien, S. Damon, comp. and ed. *Directory of Pennsylvania Foundations*. 7th ed. West Chester, PA Triadvocates Press, 2010.**

Profiles of more than 1,600 foundations in Pennsylvania. Available as an online subscription. (<http://www.pafoundations.net/>) Published by Triadvocates Press, 103 Oak Lane, Suite 101, West Chester, PA 19382. Tel.: (610) 544-6927.

## RHODE ISLAND

**Rhode Island Grantsbook 2011: A Resource for Grantseekers in Rhode Island. 5th ed. Pawtucket, RI: The Nonprofit Institute, 2011.**

Provides entries for grantmakers located in Rhode Island or with significant giving in Rhode Island. Available from The Rhode Island Foundation, (<http://www.rifoundation.org/>) One Union Station, Providence, RI, 02903 Tel.: (401) 274-4564

## SOUTH CAROLINA

**McMullen, Karen D., ed. *South Carolina Foundation Directory*. 7th ed. Columbia, SC: South Carolina State Library, 2010.**

Based on 2009 990-PF returns filed with the IRS by active private and community foundations, as well as grantmaking public charities located in the state. Available free for download at the Web site of the State Library ([www.statelibrary.sc.gov/grants/](http://www.statelibrary.sc.gov/grants/)). Published by the South Carolina State Library, 1500 Senate Street, P.O. Box 11469, Columbia, SC 29211. Tel.: (803) 734-8026.

## SOUTH DAKOTA

***The South Dakota Grant Directory*. Pierre, SD: South Dakota State Library.**

An online database that indexes and describes more than 400 grantmaking programs in South Dakota, including foundations, state government programs, corporate giving programs, and some South Dakota scholarships. Also lists some major foundations located outside the state that have shown an interest in South Dakota. Available free at the Web site of the South Dakota State Library ([library.sd.gov](http://library.sd.gov)), 800 Governors Dr., Pierre, SD 57501-2294. Tel.: (800) 423-6665 (SD only); (605) 773-3131.

## TENNESSEE

***Grantseeker's Guide to Tennessee Funders*. 5th ed. Nashville, TN: Center for Nonprofit Management, 2009.**

Profiles more than 500 foundation and corporate funders in and outside the state with an interest in Tennessee. Available from Center for Nonprofit Management, ([www.cnm.org](http://www.cnm.org)), 44 Vantage Way, Suite 230, Nashville, TN, 37228. Tel.: (615) 259-0100.

## TEXAS

**Guajardo, Frances, ed. *Directory of Texas Foundations*. 24th ed. San Antonio, TX: Nonprofit Resource Center of Texas, 2005.**

Profiles more than 2,400 private and community foundations located in Texas. Also available online from the Nonprofit Resource Center of Texas ([www.nprc.org](http://www.nprc.org)), P.O. Box 27215, San Antonio, TX 78227-0215. Tel.: (210) 225-2243.

**Mays, Sara; Perez, David; and Wright, Teresa, eds. *Directory of Tarrant County Grantmakers*. 9th ed. Fort Worth, TX: Funding Information Center, 2010.**

Based on 990-PF returns or questionnaires answered by more than 200 grantmakers with a funding interest in Tarrant County, Texas. Also available online from the Funding Information Center ([www.fic-ftw.org](http://www.fic-ftw.org)), 329 S. Henderson St., Fort Worth, TX 76104. Tel.: (817) 334-0228.

## UTAH

No directory

## VERMONT

No directory

## VIRGINIA

***The Directory of Virginia Foundations*. Richmond, VA: The Grants Connection.**

This online database currently provides entries for nearly 2,000 foundations based in Virginia. Also available in print format from the Grants Connection ([www.grantsconnection.com](http://www.grantsconnection.com)), P.O. Box 7418, Richmond, VA 23221. Tel.: (800) 658-4668.

## WASHINGTON

***Philanthropy Northwest Member Directory*. Seattle, WA: Philanthropy Northwest, online.**

Profiles approximately 150 grantmaking organizations that are members of Philanthropy Northwest. Their members fund programs in the states of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, and/or Alaska. Only available as an online subscription from Philanthropy Northwest ([www.philanthropynw.org](http://www.philanthropynw.org)), 2505 Third Avenue, Suite 200, Seattle, WA 98121. Tel.: (206) 443-8437.

**Washington. Office of the Secretary of State. *Charitable Trust Directory, 2011-2012*. Olympia, WA: Office of the Secretary of State, 2011.**

Based on the records of the more than 200 charitable trusts reporting to the Secretary of State. Available on CD-ROM and online formats from the Office of the Secretary of the State, Charitable Trust Program (<http://www.secstate.wa.gov/charities/>), 801 Capital Way South, P.O. Box 40234, Olympia, WA 98504-0234. Tel.: (360) 725-0378.

***Washington Foundation DataBook*. 6th. Portland, OR: C&D Publishing, 2010.**

Profiles of 375 Washington-based foundations and information on all their recent grants. Also available as a CD-ROM from C&D Publishing ([www.foundationdatabook.com](http://www.foundationdatabook.com)), 1017 SW Morrison Street, #500, Portland, OR 97205. Tel.: (503) 274-8780.

## WEST VIRGINIA

No directory.

## WISCONSIN

**Frenn, Mary C., ed. *Foundations in Wisconsin: A Directory*. Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Funding Information Center, 2010.**

Contains information on 1,184 active grantmaking foundations. Also available in online format. Published by Marquette University Raynor Library ([www.marquette.edu/library/fic](http://www.marquette.edu/library/fic)), 1355 W. Wisconsin Ave., P.O. Box 3141, Milwaukee, WI 53201-3141. Tel.: (414) 288-7556.

## **WYOMING**

**Miller, M. Ann, comp. and ed. *Wyoming Foundations Directory: A Guide to Private Foundations*. 8th ed. Cheyenne, WY: Laramie County Community College, 2001.**

Profiles Wyoming foundations and out-of-state funders with an interest in Wyoming. Published by Laramie County Community College Library, 1400 E. College Dr., Cheyenne, WY 82007-3299. Tel.: (307) 778-1378.

## Resource Section

These Web resources will be useful to you in your ongoing research.

### *Search Engines*

- Google •• <http://www.google.com> ••
- AltaVista •• <http://www.AltaVista.com> ••
- Search Engine Colossus •• <http://www.searchenginecolossus.com/USA.html> ••
- Northern Light •• <http://www.northernlight.com> ••
- MetaCrawler •• <http://www.metacrawler.com> ••
- Teoma •• <http://www.Teoma.com> ••
- WiseNut •• <http://www.WiseNut.com> ••
- Yahoo! •• <http://www.yahoo.com> ••
- Dogpile •• <http://www.dogpile.com> ••
- Forbes Magazine's "Best of the Web" reviews of search engines (because search engines change, too).
  - <http://www.forbes.com/bow/b2c/category.jhtml?id=37> ••

### *Research Links*

- The Grantsmanship Center •• <http://www.tgci.com/funding/resources.asp> ••
- The Foundation Center •• <http://www.foundationcenter.org> ••
- GuideStar •• <http://www.guidestar.org> ••
- Chronicle of Philanthropy •• <http://Philanthropy.com> ••
- Chronicle of Higher Education •• <http://chronicle.com/> ••
- NonProfit Times •• <http://www.nptimes.com> ••
- Hoover's •• <http://www.hoovers.com> ••
- Independent Sector •• <http://www.independentsector.org>
  - <http://www.fundsnetsservices.com> ••
  - <http://www.communityfoundationlocator.com/search/index.cfm> ••

### *Other Resources*

- <http://www.grantsdirect.com> ••
- <http://www.givingforum.org> •• (Forum of Regional Association of Grantmakers)
- <http://www.cof.org/index.cfm?containerID=76> •• (Council on Foundations resource page)
  
- <http://www.lambresearch.com> •• (a great site for researchers)
- <http://ci.coe.uni.edu/facstaff/zeitz/web/tc/TCgrantresources.html> •• (there is a

link off this site to writing resources)

- ● <http://www.nccs.urban.org> ● ● (for non-profit charity statistics)
- ● <http://www.grantsalert.com> ● ●
- ● <http://www.grantseeker.com> ● ●
- ● <http://www.grantselect.com> ● ●
- ● <http://www.grantstation.com> ● ●
- ● <http://www.powersponsorship.com> ● ●
- ● <http://www.schoolgrants.org> ● ●
- ● <http://www.sponsorship.com> ● ●
- ● <http://www.srainternational.org> ● ●
- ● <http://www.webclipper.org> ● ●

## *Special bonus article*

### **"Making Your Case in an Online Proposal"**

Why do you need to learn the basics of online proposal submission?

There are two good reasons, actually. In increasing numbers, foundations are stepping up to the technology plate and accepting online proposals and, if you regularly apply for corporate funding, you may have noted that many corporate givers will only accept online submissions.

In my region, the FourJay Foundation recently revamped their website - [www.fourjay.org](http://www.fourjay.org) - arriving at a well-designed, easily navigated site with the new option of submitting your proposal, report and grant acceptance online. It only makes sense that Josh Kopelman, entrepreneur and creator of Half.com, now owned by eBay, and founder of the Kopelman Foundation would operate a foundation that only accepts online proposals. Many businesses, banks and corporate foundations, including Office Depot, Radio Shack, and Target, have accepted online submissions for a number of years.

Submitting your first proposal online may take a bit of time and preparation to ensure that your application is as competitive as any other grant requests that you make for your organization. Once you've got that first proposal under your belt, however, you'll find yourself submitting online proposals with ease. The trick is, as with preparing any grant proposal, a thorough review of the guidelines and all information required. Make a point of noting any word limits as well as contact information, if any.

You'll want to prepare the narrative and budget in standard word processing and spreadsheet programs BEFORE you start the online process. Using the cut and paste method will prevent you from losing precious work in the event of an Internet disconnect. Offline preparation will also give you the advantage of using your computer's various tools - particularly word count and spellchecker - and also give it a thorough read prior to submission.

Gather all of your materials together before you sit down to complete the online process. Be sure that you're at a dependable computer with a reliable Internet connection.

Of course you won't want to forget your proposal preparation basics. It's not a bad idea to review good basic guidelines, such as the Common Application Form from your state or region's grantmaking organization. And, if you have any questions about how to send requested attachments, call or e-mail your contact to determine their preference.

Formatting can be an issue. Most online application forms have a "print preview" option, allowing you to print out a final copy prior to submission. If you know any html coding at all, you may be able to give your proposal a more defined appearance. Always, always, *always* print your application out prior to submission **and review it**.

And, as always, do your research to ensure that your organization and program does indeed fit the interests and /or geographical scope of the foundation or corporation. Just as with a traditional funding proposal, make your case succinctly and eloquently.

Submitting an online proposal is, in many ways, not unlike sending a hard copy of your request.

Speaking from the perspective of someone who was once on the "giving" side, the main pet peeve of program officers everywhere is an applicant who neglects to read the instructions and follow them.



GRANT PROPOSAL CHECKLIST

Funding Source, Project		
<b>Foundation Funder:</b>	<b>Website</b>	<b>Phone</b>
<b>Funding Contact/Title:</b>		
<b>General Operating or Project - Name:</b>		<b>New Renewal</b>
<b>Identify Board connection (if any):</b>		
Timeline		
<b>Deadline</b>	<b>Date Application Mailed</b>	
<b>Anticipated Funding Decision</b>		
IF Declined		
<b>Submission entered in database?</b>		<b>Declination Date:</b>
<b>Thank you letter sent:</b>		
<b>Followup phone call (if declined):</b>		
<b><i>Questions to funder:</i></b>		
<b>1. Is there anything we could have done differently in our proposal?</b> <b>2. May we resubmit for your next funding cycle?</b> <b>3. Are you aware of any other foundations that we might approach?</b>		
<b>Resubmission Date:</b>		
Financial		
<b>Amount Requested:</b>	<b>Amount Awarded:</b>	
<b>Date of Award Letter:</b>		
<b>Report Due:</b>		
<b>Thank you letter sent:</b>		
<b>Notes:</b>		

## *Special bonus article*

### **Three Reasons Why Good Grant Proposals Get Rejected**

Sometimes your grant application is perfect - there's just no funding available, or the project is wrong for the foundation, or something else outside of your control goes wrong. There's no shame in losing a grant that way - chalk it up to experience and move on.

More frequently, however, a grant proposal is rejected or ignored because there's something wrong with the proposal itself. Those mistakes are avoidable, and learning to turn in a perfect application every time will definitely boost your success rate.

Let's examine some of the most common reasons for a grant application to fail.

#### *Misunderstanding the grantmaker's priorities*

Grantmakers have their own agenda - they have things that they want to see happen. Grants that ignore that agenda are unlikely to fit into the grantmaker's plan. Usually, the information about what the grantmaker wants can be found or figured out, from the Web site, promotional materials, or data found in grant directories - take the time to direct your proposal to the foundation that wants to see that kind of project. For example, the Lilly Endowment gives enormous sums of money for education projects - but only in Indiana. Sending them your \$1 million school project in Alaska is a waste of your time and theirs.

#### *Ignoring the Rules*

"Well, they say 10 pages, but 13 pages should be OK." Nope.

"The application form says to include three letters of recommendation. That's going to take me a while to put together - I'll send in the application now and get the letters later. They won't mind." Wrong.

"It says here to send the application to the grants reviewer, but I bet if I send it to the executive director, it'll get higher priority." Sorry - it doesn't work that way.

Foundations get a lot of applications. To deal with that deluge, they establish rules and procedures to make things easy on them. You can make things easier on yourself by accepting and following the rules that each grantmaker lays out. Don't try to squeeze 15 pages of copy into 10 pages - ruthlessly cut 5 pages. Don't ignore directions on where or how to submit - follow them faithfully. It seems very simple, but many foundations report that the majority of their applicants don't follow the basic rules - and the vast majority of those incorrect applications will never be seriously reviewed for that very reason. You can make your application stand out simply by following the application guidelines to a "T" - because plenty of others won't.

### *"This Doesn't Add Up"*

Most applications involve math - at the very least, adding up the total budget figure being asked for. Getting that math correct is crucial to presenting a professional impression. Nobody wants to give \$250,000 to an organization that can't add \$50 and \$50 and come up with \$100. Math mistakes take time and energy for the foundation to iron out - and with every additional increment of time and energy your proposal takes up, the odds increase that the grantmaker will just throw up his/her hands and find a proposal that doesn't waste time and energy.

Double-check your calculations, have your organization's financial officer look over budgets before they go out the door, and make sure that your numerical assumptions are reasonable and understandable to an outside grantmaker.

*Special bonus article*

## After The Proposal: Follow-up For Downstream Success

One area of grant writing that is often missed or overlooked by new writers is follow-up. After your proposal or inquiry is received by the foundation, it decides whether to fund you or not - and then it sends you a letter. (Some organizations call, others send electronic mail - but they do generally let you know your proposal's ultimate fate.) Many grantwriters file and forget these responses - and this is a huge mistake!

Foundations generally are in business on a permanent basis. They take the long view. And when you come back next year asking for money again, they are going to remember how you treated them the first time around. Whether you were polite or not isn't likely to be the determining factor - but they *will* review their correspondence file with your organization, and they *will* notice whether you sent a follow-up letter or not.

You should send a follow-up letter to every funder to whom you apply. Your letters should be warm, personalized and appreciative - you are writing to thank the funder for their time and consideration, not to ask for money, so you should feel free to be more informal and "chatty" than you would be under normal circumstances. Your letter can be generated from a template, but be sure to make it clear that you actually read their letter to you.

Here is a sample follow-up letter that you are welcome to adapt and use in your own correspondence.

**Today's Date**

**Contact Person**  
**Foundation**  
**Address Address**  
**City, State ZIP**

Dear **Contact Person**:

Thank you for your letter of **Date** indicating that **Foundation** will not be able to assist us with our project. We greatly appreciate your time and consideration in looking at our proposal, and we understand that you receive many worthy requests that simply cannot be addressed by the resources at your disposal. [Alternative: "we understand that our project does not exactly align with the goals of your organization," or "we understand that our application was not received by your group's deadline," or whatever reason was offered by the grantmaker for declining your request.]

Our organization is relatively new to seeking grants, and we would be most grateful if you have any suggestions or guidelines on how our proposal could be more successfully reviewed by your organization in the future. Any information you could provide would be given the most thoughtful consideration.

In the meantime, if you would like to see more information about our organization and our mission to \_\_\_\_\_, please visit our website ([www.website.org](http://www.website.org)). Please don't hesitate to contact me personally if you have any questions about our work.

Thank you again for your consideration of our request. I wish you the greatest success in your foundation's ongoing work.

Sincerely yours,

Organizational Leader  
Title  
Organization Name