

Foundation Grants¹
Current as of April 26, 2020

Because every organization's situation is unique, it is important that readers seek appropriate advice before taking or refraining from taking any action as a result of this document.

There are several reasons that your organization may want to seek grant funds from a public or private foundation:

- 1) Non-profits and other grant eligible organizations must engage in a variety of strategies to solicit and secure funds to support operations;
- 2) Foundation grants tend to be easier to apply for and access;
- 3) Many public and private foundations may exist in your local community or region;
- 4) The timeframe from application to award tends to be shorter than applying for government grant funds; and
- 5) Local proximity may make it easier to develop a relationship and communicate with your local program officer who can provide insight into their application process and guidelines.

There are several strategies you can use when seeking to identify foundation grant opportunities for your organization. They include:

- Researching and identify foundations whose focus areas and priorities match your organization's mission and programs;
- Researching grant opportunities using searchable databases like The Foundation Directory Online;
- Reviewing a Foundation's website to make sure you have the most current information;
- Reviewing and following the application guidelines posted by the Foundation; and
- Following the application instructions listed on the funder's website.

It is essential to ensure you are asking for the right support. There are several steps you must take to ensure that your request is in line with the Foundation's giving standards. They include:

- Reviewing the Foundation's funding priorities and confirming that your organization's request fits within their guidelines;
- Reviewing any strategic plans, reports or other publications posted by the Foundation to better understand their priorities;
- Reaching out to the program officer (if not prohibited) to discuss your program idea; and
- Reviewing the Foundation's past grant awards to get a sense of the types of programs they support.

It is very important that you request the right amount. Strategies for making the right ask, include:

- Reviewing grant guidelines to identify any information provided regarding the allowable range of grant awards;
- Reviewing past grants awards to get a sense of the size of grants awarded;

¹ This document was drafted by Kim Richardson of Kimberly Richardson Consulting, LLC in Birmingham, Alabama.

- Reviewing the Foundation's most recently completed 990 Forms which list the grants they award each year; and
- Being relatively conservative in your initial approach and working to build a relationship with the Foundation over time.

Strategies you can use to increase your likelihood of success in securing foundation grant funds include:

- Following the Foundation's social media platforms and sign-up for newsletters to gain additional insight;
- Identifying compatible organizations with which you can partner to apply for funding;
- Participating in any webinars or technical assistance sessions foundations offer providing an overview of their application process and organizational priorities;
- Confirming that your organization meets their eligibility guidelines;
- Confirming the Foundation's application deadlines and submission requirements and planning your submission in accordance with your program needs;
- Simplifying the process by having standard components of your grant applications already written (e.g., organization background, program descriptions, sustainability plan, and qualifications of key staff members, etc.);
- Purchasing software that will allow you to easily convert documents to PDF; and
- Setting-up a folder of commonly requested attachments in PDF form, such as your Board of Directors List, your IRS Non-profit Determination Letter, resumes and bio for key staff, and your annual financial audit.

Important websites to know as you conduct research and complete the application process are:

- [GuideStar.com](http://www.guidestar.com) where you can access 990 Forms for all nonprofit organizations, including foundations;
- The [Foundation Directory Online](http://www.foundationdirectory.com) which offers a searchable database for conducting grants research;
- The [National Council of Non-Profits](http://www.nationalcouncilofnonprofits.org) which offers extensive information, data, and resources that benefit nonprofit organizations; and
- The [Chronicle of Philanthropy](http://www.philanthropy.com) which provides articles, data, and trending information that all nonprofit executives should know.