GRANTSMANSHIP TRAINING

Prepared for Temple University

PRESENTATION OVERVIEW

PART 1

GRANTS 101: INTRODUCTION TO GRANTS AND THE FUNDING LANDSCAPE

PART 2

PROSPECTING: FINDING THE RIGHT FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

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"Funding Search" Exercise

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RELATIONSHIP CULTIVATION AND OUTREACH TO PROGRAM OFFICERS

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"Funder Outreach" Exercise

HIGHER EDUCATION

GRANTS 101: INTRODUCTION TO GRANTS AND THE FUNDING LANDSCAPE

GRANTS: WHAT? WHO? WHY?

WHAT IS A GRANT?

Grants are (generally) non-repayable funds or products disbursed by one party, often a governmental agency, corporation, or foundation/trust, to a recipient, often a nonprofit entity, educational institution, business or (rarely) an individual.

WHO MAKES GRANTS?

- Federal agencies
- State and local government agencies
- National, regional, local, family, community, and corporate foundations
- Public charities
- Professional or industry associations
- Businesses and companies

WHY DO THEY MAKE THEM?

- Local / Regional / National / Global Need
- Promote Change & Improvement
- Philanthropic Investment
- Preferred Tax Status
- Public Recognition

FOUNDATIONS VS. GOVERNMENT GRANTMAKERS

They have very little in common beyond a mandate to give away money with strings attached.

GOVERNMENT GRANTMAKERS

❑ Get their funding from **taxpayers**

❑ Are responsible to **legislators** and administrations

❑ Are required to be **transparent** in their activities

❑ Follow **clearly defined criteria** and processes

FOUNDATION GRANTMAKERS

❑ Get their funding from **donors**

❑ Are responsible to **trustees**

❑ Are **not required to explain** their decisions to the public

❑ Often **lack clear definition** for their criteria and processes, or **choose not to follow** those they adopt

GOVERNMENT GRANTMAKING

Government agencies and organizations fund a variety of projects, programs, research, and product development through grants. Each agency exists to advance a specific agenda. This agenda is typically outlined in a public document called a strategic plan.

KEY FEDERAL GRANTS STATS
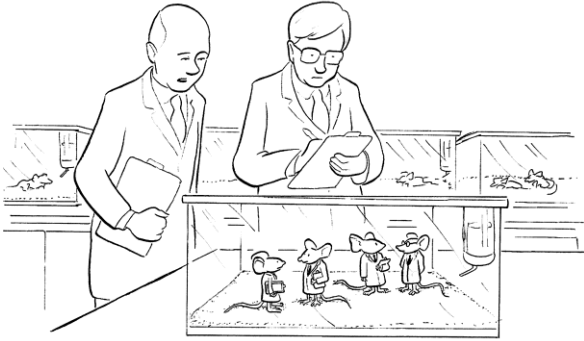
26
TOTAL FEDERAL GRANTMAKING AGENCIES

1,000+
TOTAL GRANT PROGRAMS ACROSS ALL AGENCIES

$662.7 Billion
TOTAL FEDERAL SPENDING FOR GRANTS IN FY 2016

"O.K., let's slowly lower in the grant money."

Grants.gov publishes an overview of all federal grantmaking agencies along with information on key grant programs

- Each federal grant-making agency will define its rating criteria in the Program Solicitation (RFP, RFR, etc.) or in public documents made available on the agency's website.

- Understanding the rating criteria and/or scoring formula, system and procedures, and drafting a narrative that aligns with it is key to winning a federal grant award.

- Technical compliance with required specifications for application format and structure, and submission of grant applications that are inclusive of all required documents and attachments is also imperative to success.

EXAMPLE FEDERAL GRANTS AT TEMPLE

$999,636 from the **National Science Foundation** for the "Emerging STEM Scholars" program, to address STEM retention and success by providing direct academic support for four years academically talented and economically disadvantaged students majoring in biology, biochemistry, or chemistry. (2016)

$1.5M from the **Health Resources and Services Administration** to expand training in pediatric dental care through new and enhanced curricula, new community-based clinical rotations for dental students, and other activities to improve proficiency in providing dental services to children younger than 5 and their families, and in advocating for improved oral health. (2017)

$11.6M from the **National Institute of Health** to explore new possibilities in stem cell-based treatments for heart repair and regeneration. (2017)

$81,974 from the **National Endowment for the Humanities** for *the Humanities Open Book Program with Temple University Press*, supporting the digitization and creation of freely accessible e-books for 25-30 texts, with an emphasis on labor studies. (2017)

FOUNDATION GRANTMAKING

WHAT IS A FOUNDATION?

A foundation is a non-governmental entity that is established as a nonprofit corporation or a charitable trust, with a principal purpose of making grants to unrelated organizations, institutions, or individuals for scientific, educational, cultural, religious, or other charitable purposes.

(SOURCE: FOUNDATION CENTER)

87,142

TOTAL NUMBER OF FOUNDATIONS

$55.26 Billion

TOTAL AMOUNT OF GIVING

$798.18 Billion

TOTAL FOUNDATION ASSETS

(SOURCE: FOUNDATION CENTER, 2012)

WILLIAM PENN FOUNDATION

BILL & MELINDA GATES foundation

FORD FOUNDATION

W.K. KELLOGG FOUNDATION

THE PEW CHARITABLE TRUSTS

FOUNDATION DIVERSITY

FOUNDATIONS ARE NOT LIKE ONE ANOTHER

WHAT DO FOUNDATIONS HAVE IN COMMON?

- ✓ They have money.
- ✓ They are required to give some away.

WHAT DO FOUNDATIONS NOT HAVE IN COMMON?

- ✕ How much money they have
- ✕ How much they give
- ✕ To whom they give
- ✕ How they decide to give

Foundations are like people, and therefore must be cultivated like people. They both:

- ▪ Have personalities and quirks
- ▪ Have preferences and opinions
- ▪ May not be logical
- ▪ May say one thing and do another
- ▪ Are liable to change without warning
- ▪ **Are more likely to give money to people and organizations they know**

FOUNDATION TYPE WILL INFLUENCE APPROACH

FAMILY FOUNDATIONS
- *PRIVATE TYPE*
- *PUBLIC TYPE*

CORPORATE FOUNDATIONS
- *COMMUNITY-FOCUSED*
- *IMPACT-FOCUSED*

MISSION-DRIVEN FOUNDATIONS
- *LOCATION-FOCUSED*
- *PROGRAM-FOCUSED*
- *RESEARCH-FOCUSED*
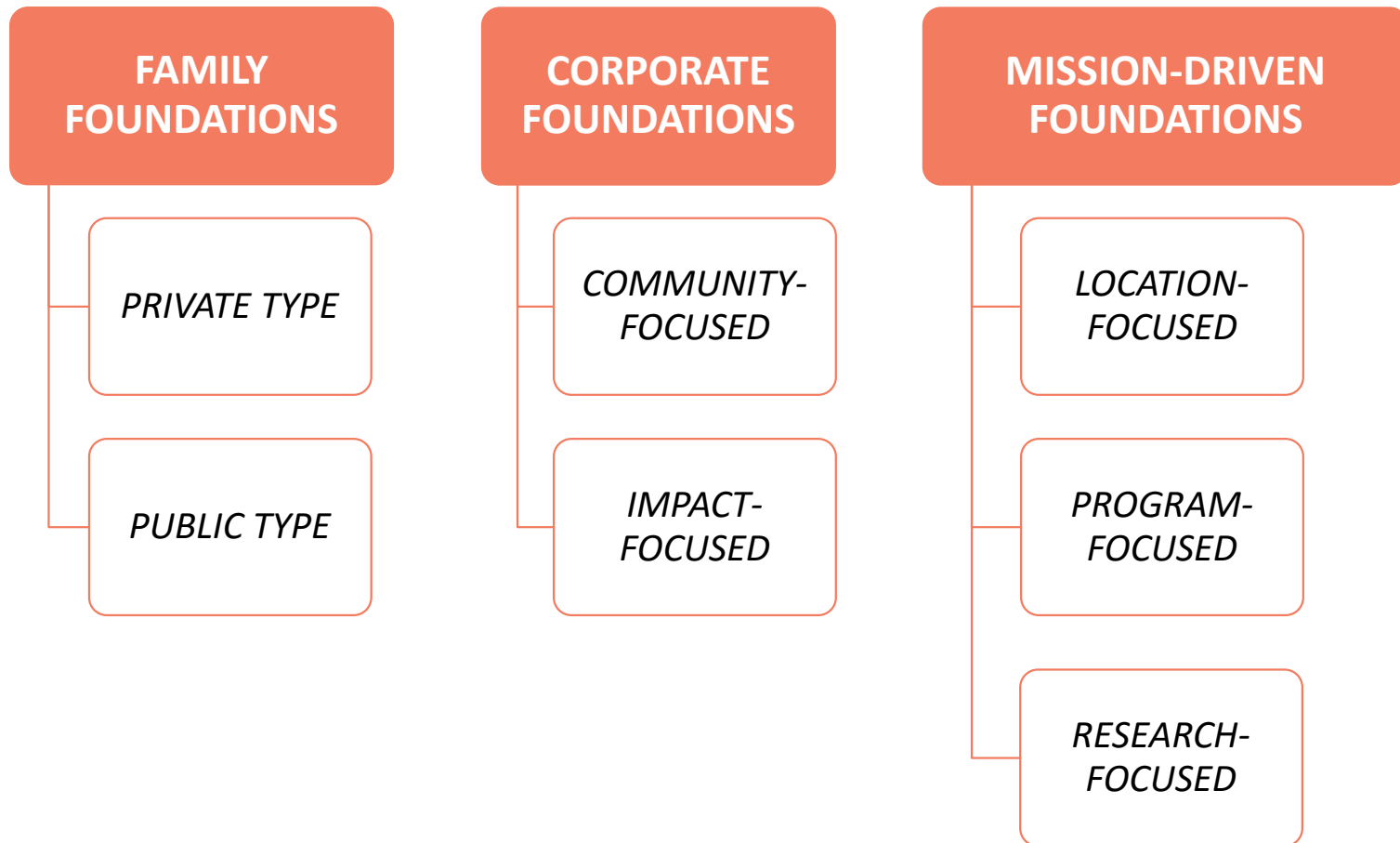
FAMILY FOUNDATIONS

Family foundations are founded and managed by a family, to advance the family's charitable interests. They:

- Are often managed by a group of family members, which may include the original donors and/or their descendants.

- May or may not have a well-defined focus or mission.

- May be varied or inconsistent in their giving, depending on the interests of family members involved.

"Private type" family foundations support organizations and causes that are well known to family members.

"Public type" family foundations support causes they believe will have an important impact on their field of interest.

CONNECTIONS ARE ESSENTIAL FOR FAMILY FOUNDATION GRANTSEEKING AT ANY LEVEL

CORPORATE FOUNDATIONS

Corporate foundations are founded and managed by a business, to advance the business's charitable interests. They:

- Always have a focus on advancing the business's reputation, whether or not that motivation is prominent.

- May focus on communities in which they work, or give nationally (or internationally) according to select priorities.

- May make direct donations to charitable causes as well as making formal grants through associated foundations.

Community-focused corporate foundations support organizations and causes in the communities in which they work.

Impact-focused corporate foundations support work that advances a specific selected agenda.

PUBLICITY OPPORTUNITIES ARE AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT OF ANY CORPORATE GRANT

MISSION-DRIVEN FOUNDATIONS

Mission-driven foundations are independent organizations charged with distributing funding to support specific kinds of work. They:

- Have prescribed structures within which staff and trustees work to advance the mission.
- May focus on specific locations, specific fields, specific kinds of organizations, or specific kinds of projects.
- Are more professional and staff-driven than other types of foundations.

Location-focused foundations, usually called community foundations, support work in a specific location or community.

Program-focused foundations work to advance a specific societal mission by funding programs or services.

Research-focused foundations work to advance knowledge or solve problems by funding research work.

MISSION-DRIVEN FOUNDATIONS WANT TO FUND THE BEST WORK IN THE FIELD

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PROSPECTING: FINDING THE RIGHT FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Prospecting is the art of matching projects with likely funders.

"His coffee's always crap for about a week after the MacArthur genius-grant winners are announced."

GOOD PROSPECTIVE FUNDERS HAVE:

- ✓ A mission that aligns with your mission
- ✓ A history of funding similar or related projects
- ✓ Stated priorities that encompass your project area
- ✓ No restrictions that would preclude funding your project

HOWEVER, NOTE THAT:

- ▪ Funding history is not always a good predictor of future funding.
- ▪ Stated priorities are not always current (especially for foundations).
- ▪ Finding good prospects sometimes requires reading between the lines.

PROSPECTING: WHO IS FUNDING SIMILAR WORK?

To identify prospective funders, start by finding out who is doing similar work:

- Use industry/discipline publications, as well as online searches.
- Find similar or thematically aligned projects.
- Include projects in your local area and around the country, as appropriate.

Find out who is funding the identified projects.

- Look for acknowledgements and statements of thanks.
- Contact project staff if appropriate.

Funders' stated priorities provide a means for identifying prospects.

- Use multiple databases and search tools.
- Search for keywords that relate to your mission and project.
- Search by funder type, funding type, and funding region.
- Note funding restrictions.
- Note typical funding amounts.
- Note key deadlines and other timing constraints.

Identify promising prospects—or types of prospects—for your work.

HIGHER EDUCATION

- Institutional Grant Office and libraries
  - Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPR)
    - Subscription services and grant opportunity databases (PIVOT, Egrants, Foundation Center, etc.)
  - Office of Corporate and Foundation Relations (CFR)
    - Current Funding Opportunities (updated weekly)
- Grants.gov
- Federal Agency Websites – National Science Foundation, etc.
- Professional Associations – Philanthropy Network Greater Philadelphia, Association for Biology Laboratory Education, etc.
- Acknowledgements in relevant papers, reports, presentations
- Ask – collaborators, conference presenters
- National websites of large industries or retailers in your state/region
- Search engines!

Foundation Directory Online has a flexible and powerful search interface.

Demonstration: Foundation Directory Online

PROSPECTING RESOURCES: FOUNDATION DATABASES

Foundation grant databases catalog the grants awarded by foundations and collect background info on funders. Data is broken down to help users discover grants in line with certain project types, geographic scopes, recipient types, areas of interest, funding amounts, etc.

TIPS

- Focusing on a funder's **grantmaking history** is the recommend first step.

- Look for **as many indicators as you can find** of a good fit. Has a foundation supported applicants like you, in your region, doing similar work?

- Foundation databases source their information primarily from 990 tax filings. Therefore "recent" award data is not always reflective of current funder priorities.

PROSPECTING RESOURCES: GRANTS.GOV

Grants.gov is a key resource for learning about grant competitions

Demonstration: Grants.gov

USASpending.gov houses a massive database with information on US-funded grants

Demonstration:
USAspending.gov

PROSPECTING: FEDERAL DATABASE TIPS

Be patient! **Government grants databases deal with large amounts of data and are not very user-friendly. It can be a challenge to easily find what you are looking for right away. Decide what key data points you're seeking and make sure to leverage companion resources for greater depth.**

GRANTS.GOV

▪ Put search terms **in "quotes."**

▪ Check off **closed and/or expired opportunities** in your search.

USASPENDING.GOV

▪ **Export the raw data** and reduce it to key data points.

PROSPECTING RESOURCES: FUNDER AWARD DATABASES

Demonstration: NSF Award Database

PROSPECTING RESOURCES: FUNDER DATABASE TIPS

Funder-maintained grant databases are almost always more detailed and current than external sources tracking grants. Giving history is also often presented within the context of funding priorities, which allows grantseekers to understand the best pathways for different types of projects.

TIPS

- **Not all federal agencies maintain their own award databases**, and there is variation in the breadth/depth of information about funded projects.

- **Large national foundations are more likely to maintain their own giving databases** than small local foundations.

- Use keywords, but also **look for examples of peer investigators** – what projects are they getting funded?

Demonstration: NEH Website

PROSPECTING RESOURCES: FUNDER WEBSITE TIPS

Most funders maintain a website with details on their programs, priorities, and giving history. Outside of direct contact with funders, their websites are the best resources for up-to-date information.

TIPS

- **Look for the most recent grant examples on funder websites**.

- **Get a feel for the mission of the funder.** If you're only seeking funding for an individual program or RFP, consider how it fits into a larger context.

- **Learn the character and quirks of the funder.** How do they present their guidelines? How does their presentation communicate how they operate?

- **Find the FAQ page!**

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RESEARCH, EVALUATE, AND PRIORITIZE OPPORTUNITIES

GATHER PROSPECT INFORMATION

- ✓ Funder type and mission
- ✓ Relevant grantmaking history
- ✓ Key Contacts, Staff and Trustee names and profiles
- ✓ Funding process (e.g., eligibility, timing, amounts, requirements)
- ✓ Indicators of competitiveness
- ✓ Opportunities for connection and communication

Keep notes in a list, spreadsheet, or database for further analysis.

EVALUATE PROSPECT ALIGNMENT

Government:

- ❑ Does the program align with the goals of your project?
- ❑ Does the program support activities you plan to pursue in your project?
- ❑ Is there evidence of support to projects similar to yours?

Foundation:

- ❑ Are your mission and the funder's mission well aligned?
- ❑ What is the long-term potential of the relationship?
- ❑ How challenging will it be to develop a relationship with the funder?

PRIORITIZE PROSPECTS

Pursue prospects with:

- ▪ Good mission alignment
- ▪ Good potential ROI

Do not pursue if:

- ▪ Mission alignment is not good.
- ▪ ROI is not good.

Prioritize prospects based on alignment, potential benefit, ease of pursuit, and timeline urgency

Use your prospecting tools to answer any of the following questions:

1. Which two foundations awarded the highest number of grants to Temple in 2016 (according to Foundation Center)?

1b. EXTRA CREDIT: Which foundation awarded the largest grant to Temple in 2016 (also according to FC)?

2. What federal grant program is designed to encourage STEM majors to become K-12 science and math teachers for high-need local schools?

2b. EXTRA CREDIT: Who was the Principal Investigator for the project funded at Temple under this program in 2009?

EXERCISE: FUNDING SEARCH

Use your prospecting tools to answer any of the following questions:

1. Which two foundations awarded the highest number of grants to Temple in 2016 (according to Foundation Center)?

Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund (6) and The William Penn Foundation (5)

1b. EXTRA CREDIT: Which foundation awarded the largest grant to Temple in 2016 (also according to FC)?

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation ($1,172,028)

2. What federal grant program is designed to encourage STEM majors to become K-12 science and math teachers for high-need local schools?

The Robert Noyce Teacher Scholarship Program

2b. EXTRA CREDIT: Who was the Principal Investigator for the project funded at Temple under this program in 2009?

James Earl Davis, PhD (College of Education)

GRANT SOLICITATIONS:
HOW TO READ REQUESTS FOR PROPOSALS (RFPs)

WHAT IS AN RFP?

An RFP is a detailed set of guidelines and requirements issued by a funder to their prospective applicants. The RFP traditionally accomplishes the following:

- Announces the availability of funds
- Communicates the purpose of these funds
- Describes who should apply
- Describes the kind of projects that will be supported
- Details any existing restrictions on applicants or project activities
- Describes the process and criteria for evaluating and selecting grantees
- Outlines the application process and required proposal content
- Communicates key dates and deadlines
- Tells applicants who to contact with questions

Other terms used instead of RFP include…

- Request for Applications (RFA)
- Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA)
- Notice of Funding Availability (NFA)
- Program Announcement (PA)
- Call for Proposals
- Solicitation
- Others…

*"**Read** the RFP. Then read it again."*

- EVERY SUCCESSFUL GRANT WRITER

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SAMPLE RFP COMPONENTS

NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

I. Introduction
II. Program Description
III. Award Information
IV. Eligibility Information
V. Proposal Preparation and Submission Instructions
VI. NSF Proposal Processing and Review Procedures
VII. Award Administration Information
VIII. Agency Contacts
IX. Other Information

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES

I. Program Description
II. Preparing and Organizing your Application
III. Submitting your Application
IV. What Happens After the Submission of an Application
V. Additional Information

NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH

I. Funding Opportunity Description
II. Award Information
III. Eligibility Information
IV. Application and Submission Information
V. Application Review Information
VI. Award Administration Information
VII. Agency Contacts
VIII. Other Information

ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON FOUNDATION

I. Background and Purpose
II. Program Fit
III. Approaches & Outcomes
IV. What We're Funding
V. Total Awards
VI. Eligibility Criteria
VII. Diversity Statement
VIII. Selection Criteria
IX. Evaluation and Monitoring
X. Use of Grant Funds
XI. Application Timeline
XII. Program Direction

READING AN RFP: PURPOSE & OVERVIEW

RFPs devote considerable space to providing background on the purpose of a solicitation and the problems it is trying to address. You should quickly gain a sense of what the program is all about, what projects it seeks to fund, and what the funder hopes the outcomes of those projects will be.

TIP! *Program descriptions can include broad language around program goals that can lead some prospective applicants to see strong alignment with their work where it does not exist.*

KEY QUESTIONS

- What is the funder trying to accomplish with the program?
- What types of projects will it support?

WHERE TO LOOK

- Introduction, Program Description, Background headings
- "Program Description" (NSF); "Funding Opportunity Description" (NIH)
- Keywords: purpose, overview, program description

READING AN RFP: PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND BUDGET

What activities and costs will the funder allow grantees to include within the scope of the grant? The RFP should outline in detail which activities and budget items are permitted and which must be excluded from the application.

TIP! *Maybe a single grant program won't cover all the costs or proposed activities of your project as originally envisioned. However, sometimes other funders can be considered to support certain project elements or different phases of your work.*

KEY QUESTIONS

- What activities does this program support?
- What budget items are allowed and disallowed?

WHERE TO LOOK

- "Budget" heading
- Keywords: budget, activities, allowable

The RFP will let you know who can apply. Some competitions are wide open, while others are designed for specific types of organizations. However, in many cases, eligibility is just an initial filter to truly understanding what types of grantees are most likely to win funding.

TIP! *Look at the funders' grantees. What resources, partnerships, and experience do they have? What kind of projects did they propose? This will help you understand the funder's ideal grantee.*

KEY QUESTIONS

- Can I apply?
- Am I well-positioned to fulfill the goals of the RFP?
- What types of organizations/ investigators are actually being supported by this funder/program?

WHERE TO LOOK

- "Eligibility" section
- Keyword: eligibility

READING AN RFP: FUNDING LEVEL

RFPs almost always detail the total amount for which applicants can apply. They also frequently communicate the amount of total funding available for a competition and how many individual grants will be awarded.

T I P ! *Sometimes the funding thresholds for a certain opportunity force investigators to expand or reduce the scope of the project they are developing.*

KEY QUESTIONS

- How much funding is being offered for this competition?

- How much will be awarded to each project and for different types of projects?

WHERE TO LOOK

- Award Information heading.

- Keywords: award(s), $

READING AN RFP: TIMELINES

RFPs communicate when applications are due. They may also indicate when applicants will hear back, in addition to the expected timeframes around which projects should be initiated, evaluated, and completed.

TIP! *Develop and maintain a project development calendar with key dates from the RFP and key project milestones.*

KEY QUESTIONS

- When is the proposal deadline?
- What is the earliest start date?
- When will funding decisions be made and communicated?
- How long can projects last?

WHERE TO LOOK

- Cover page, Introduction, Award Information
- Keywords: deadline, due, year, month, week.

RFPs outline what materials applicants need to submit for consideration and the process that must be followed for submission. These requirements and processes will vary widely across different funders.

TIP 1! *Build in time before a deadline to ensure you have addressed* *all* *required components and that you have allowed time for internal approval and processing.*

TIP 2! *Use the required project narrative components to begin outlining your proposal.*

KEY QUESTIONS

- What are the funder's guidelines for writing different sections of the narrative?
- What is the expected length and format?
- What are the components of a complete application?
- How should I submit my application?

WHERE TO LOOK

- Headings for Narrative, Application Process, Application Elements, etc.
- Keywords: application, process, requirements, or narrative

READING AN RFP: EVALUATION CRITERIA & REVIEW

RFPs outline the criteria that will be used to evaluate applications received by the funder, in addition to the process undertaken to complete this evaluation and communicate decisions.

TIP! *Private foundations often deliver decisions with no feedback at all. Review guidelines around a funder's processes to avoid misaligned expectations around feedback.*

KEY QUESTIONS

- How will be my proposal be evaluated and scored?
- What elements of the proposal are weighed the most heavily by the funder in its decision?

WHERE TO LOOK

- Headers addressing the application and review process.
- Keywords: evaluation, review, criteria, applications, notify, selection, process

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READING AN RFP: CONTACT

RFPs list a designated contact or series of contacts for applicants to reach via phone or email. In many cases, different contacts may be offered for different types of inquiries or different focus areas within a program.

TIP 1! *Look for the subtext in how the funder frames its guidelines relating to making contact.*

TIP 2! *Respect funders' explicit guidelines about if and how it should be contacted.*

KEY QUESTIONS

- To whom should I send my application?

- Whom can I contact if I have questions about the RFP?

- Whom can I contact if I have technical questions submission system?

- What are the funder's preferences when it comes to receiving contact?

WHERE TO LOOK

- "Contact" or "Contacts" header
- Keyword: Contact

*Answer the following questions about the NEH New Directions for Digital Scholarship in Cultural Institutions program from **the solicitation***

1. What is the program's primary goal?

2. Can grants be used for the development of curricula?

3. Are there any eligibility restrictions preventing faculty at Temple from applying?

4. What is the page limit and spacing requirements for the narrative?

5. Is there a designated individual to contact for this program?

6. Where must applications be submitted?

"Thank God! A panel of experts!"

RELATIONSHIP CULTIVATION AND OUTREACH TO PROGRAM OFFICERS

CORPORATE AND FOUNDATION RELATIONS

CFR manages relationships between the University and corporate and foundation partners. CFR can assist faculty by:

- Identifying funding opportunities
- Advising faculty and administration on how to make a strong case for support
- Reviewing, revising, and editing proposals prior to submission
- Contacting CFR partners on behalf of faculty and staff

WHY SHOULD I COMMUNICATE WITH FUNDERS?

Evidence suggests that most funded proposals involve contact with the program officers at the funding agency

WHOM SHOULD I CONTACT?
- Search foundation websites or tax filings for the appropriate contact
- Look at program websites and/or published solicitations for a designated contact

- **Program staff influence funding decisions.**
  - In the business of making investments
  - Can guide applicants to more suitable funding opportunity or agency
  - Can be incredible resources both in terms of information but also proposal review and award management

- **Pre-proposal communication helps to establish a relationship with the sponsor.**

- **The program officer's immediate response to a project is a good predictor (although not a guarantee) of success/denial.**
  - Confirming if a proposed idea fits with the program's objective is especially important.
  - Many proposals are rejected because they don't align with program objectives.

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Successful foundation grantseekers play a "long game," strategically moving each prospect from initial identification to long-term partnership over time. They cultivate important relationships before, during, and after the formal grant process.

Foundation grantseeking is a cyclical process:

- Make **connections** and build **relationships** to set the stage for a formal grant development process

- Design **strong programs** that are responsive to grantmaker needs

- Develop and submit **clear and persuasive grant proposals**

- **Cultivate** and **steward key relationships** while completing formal reporting and evaluation processes, positioning you for the next "ask"

BUILDING FOUNDATION RELATIONSHIPS

Hanover Research measures relationships with foundations along a continuum of stages.

> **Stage 0:** No connection currently exists between grantmaker and grantseeker.

> **Stage 1:** Grantmaker and grantseeker are aware of each other's work.

> **Stage 2:** Grantmaker and grantseeker exchange information directly.

> **Stage 3:** Grantmaker and grantseeker are actively engaged in work together.

> **Stage 4:** Grantmaker and grantseeker work in partnership to accomplish their missions.

FOUNDATION DEVELOPMENT

Starting with carefully targeted prospects, Hanover recommends a four-step model of foundation grant development to help you solicit grants in the context of a long-term relationship-building strategy.

CONNECT

– Assess internal connections
– Leverage connections

CULTIVATE

– Use a careful, targeted communication strategy
– Include publicity, social media outreach, and direct communication

ASK

– Read between the lines to develop a proposal that aligns with grantmaker priorities, *stated and unstated*

STEWARD

– Continue careful cultivation whether or not you receive an award
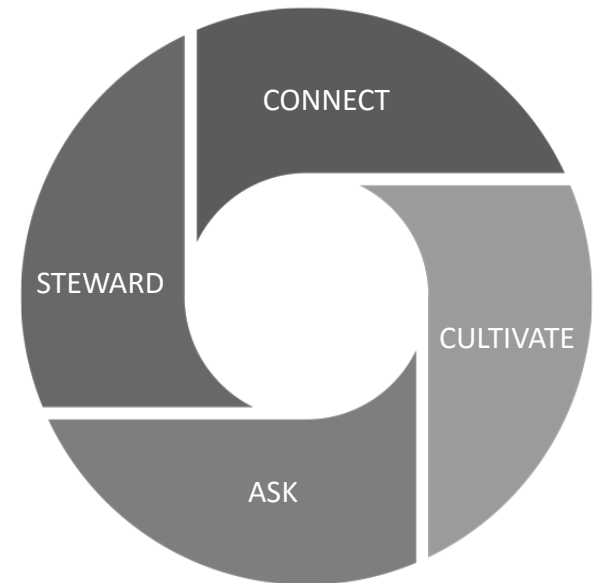
To prepare for funder cultivation, assess and analyze your connections and potential connections to the target foundation and its personnel, as well as opportunities for building additional connections.

- Research organization and PI history with the funder.

- Identify organization or PI connections to the funder, funder personnel, or people and organizations connected to the funder.

- Gather intelligence and/or request introductions from connections.

- Identify online and in-person connection opportunities.

- Analyze connection opportunities: What is the best way to build a relationship with this foundation?

Develop and implement a cultivation strategy tailored to the funder, based on information uncovered in the research and analysis stage.

The goal of the cultivation process is to build the relationship from Stage 0 (mutual ignorance) through Stage 1 (mutual awareness), and, preferably, Stage 2 (conversation) before proceeding to a grant request.

- Reach out to the funder.

- Introduce yourself and your work.

- Gather information on funder priorities and preferences.

- Ask how you might work together.

- Continue the conversation.

Note that for funders with heavy communication barriers, it may be necessary to proceed to a "cold" LOI as a first step in the relationship development process. In these cases, the LOI is intended to open the conversation with the funder. It will likely be declined, but this decline provides an opportunity for communication (e.g., a phone call to ask for feedback on the reasons for the decline), and gets the relationship to Stage 1 (awareness).

A STRAIGHTFORWARD CULTIVATION PROCESS

1. A colleague provides an introduction to a foundation staff member via email: "Hello, I'd like to introduce you to Dr. Applicant, who is doing some really interesting work that advances your foundation's mission."

2. The PI follows up on the introduction with an email to the foundation staff member, including a summary of her goals, information on alignment with the funder's mission, and a request for a phone conversation.

3. The staff member agrees to a quick chat, during which the PI presents an overview of her work and funding needs, and the foundation officer provides information about the foundation's current interests. The officer advises the PI to wait to apply for funding until reaching a different stage in her work.

4. The PI keeps in touch, and reaches out again when she reaches the desired stage in her work, to ask about a potential funding application. The foundation officer provides guidance on application strategy and timing.

Valid reasons to contact a program officer

- To confirm if a **project idea fits** with the sponsor's and the program's objectives.

- To obtain **guidance about a project's design**, collaboration, budget, and timeline.

- To **discover** underlying considerations, methodology trends, preferences, dislikes, and shifting priorities that do not appear in published material.

- To ask for **clarification** of stated guidelines or an RFP.

- To discuss ways to **strengthen the project** if a prior application was not successful.

Program Officers are busy! Be prepared when you sit down to make the call.

Subject: Request for call to discuss XXX due on DATE

Dear Dr. X:

I am interested in submitting a proposal for RFA #XXX "RFA Title" and would like to schedule a call with you to discuss whether my project/research is appropriate for this opportunity. [If your request is urgent, indicate that here and explain why.]

Attached please find a brief concept paper for your review that describes my project, its goals, and anticipated outcomes. I believe the project aligns with [list funding agency and relevant goal/priority]. I selected RFA #XXX due to [describe why you think your project is a good fit for this specific funding mechanism/ discuss alignment with RFA] .

[If you have specific questions that you want the PO to consider, include them here.]

[Provide possible days/times *or* indicate that you can be available at the PO's convenience.]

Thank you in advance for your assistance. I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Contact Info

1. Read the agency's and funding program's web pages, **the RFP** (more than once), any FAQs or supporting documentation.

2. Prepare a brief, one-page **concept paper**, or your overview section, or your list of specific aims or research questions.

3. **Do not cold call**. Send an email first.

4. Plan to be **brief and direct**. (Be ready to state the goal of your project and give an elevator pitch).

5. Have questions prepared.

6. Are ready to LISTEN to the program officer (especially for any information that does not appear in the RFP and particularly in regards to objectives or priorities).

7. **Show passion** for your project.

POTENTIAL QUESTIONS FOR THE PROGRAM OFFICER

- Does the proposed project match the sponsor's/program's current priorities?

- What can be done to improve the chances of a favorable review?

- What are the most common reasons a proposal is rejected?

- Are there any emerging interests within the program?

- Is the award amount expected to change compared to the previous year?

- What is the anticipated success ratio for the grant cycle?

Be careful that these questions are not already answered online!

WHAT NOT TO DO

- **Don't** speak disparagingly of your colleagues or competitors.
- **Don't** speak disparagingly of projects previously funded by the sponsor.
- **Don't** try to force-fit your interests to the grant program objectives.
- **Don't** try to tell the program officer what you think they should be funding.

- **Don't** focus overmuch on yourself or your past/future accomplishments.
- **Don't** overwhelm the program officer with papers and materials.
- **Don't** deliver a lengthy monologue/presentation about the project.
- **Don't** ask questions for which they had already published answers in guides or online.

Be sure to follow up with a thank-you email!

HIGHER EDUCATION

Use insights from this section to answer any of the following questions:

1. You are an early career Physics professor working on an NSF CAREER proposal. Find the right contact for your inquiry and draft an email requesting time for a conversation to receive feedback on your project concept.

2. You have identified a local foundation that appears to support projects like the one you are developing. You discover during your research that this foundation has awarded multiple grants to Temple during recent years. What are your initial steps for developing a strategy?

QUESTIONS?

GRANT DEVELOPMENT CENTER

CONTACT

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