How to Write to Foundation Funders
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Outline

- An introduction to grant proposals
- How to get to know funders
- Elements of project planning
An Introduction To Grant Proposals (Foundations)

- What does a foundation fund?
  - Projects or programs
  - General operating support
  - One year vs. multi-year funding
An Introduction To Grant Proposals (Foundations)

- What does a foundation look for?
  - Alignment with eligibility criteria and funding priorities
  - Reputable organization
  - History of carefully stewarding funds and reporting on outcomes
  - Clear and realistic project/program plan
  - Ability to have an impact with relatively small investments
    - Meeting a local need (community foundations)
    - Adapting an innovative model at the regional level (regional/state level foundations)
    - Innovating and testing a new, replicable service model (national foundations)
  - Recognition opportunity
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An Introduction To Grant Proposals (Foundations)

- Understanding the funding timeline
  - 6-12 months from initial contact to award
  - Not a “quick solution” for funding needs, but an important part of a diversified fundraising strategy
  - Strategic and proactive, rather than reactive, approach
Grant writing is just one step in the process towards grant success

Equally important are planning, research, and communication with funders
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How To Get to Know Funders (Foundations)

- Research first!
  - Carefully review guidelines on the website, if available
  - Cross-check with guidelines on 990s
  - Prepare your questions / Concept Paper in advance
- If necessary, contact to verify guidelines
- Follow-up communication
  - Call to confirm receipt and review process
  - Update communication if a significant event happens:
    - New financial information (i.e., grants for the project have been awarded)
    - Leadership changes in the organization
- Board communication
  - If you have a personal contact, it can help to use it
  - Be careful not to bypass paid foundation staff or established processes
How To Get to Know Funders (Foundations)

- If awarded: stewarding the partnership
  - Be sure to thank the foundation if a grant is awarded!
  - Meet all progress reports!
  - Invite to major events
  - Anticipate renewal opportunity

- If declined:
  - Most foundations fund only 5-10% of proposals received
  - Most foundations will be open to reviewing a resubmission in the future
  - Contact them to ask for feedback and next steps
Elements of Project Planning (Foundations)

- Incentives for foundations
  - Return on Investment (ROI)
  - Model replication
  - Opportunities for volunteer engagement and/or recognition

- Prepare a concept paper or outline

- Include a detailed project budget
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Elements of Project Planning (Foundations)

- Preparing your project concept
  - Providing Context: What is your organization and why is it best suited to implement this project?
  - Demonstrating Need: Why does your project matter and whom will it serve?
- Project Design: What will you do to meet the need?
  - How will the project/program be structured and implemented?
  - Have stakeholders been involved in planning the design?
  - How will it be staffed?
  - With whom will you collaborate? Do you have partners in the community? Will they offer concrete support (funds or in kind resources)
- Demonstrating Impact: What will your project accomplish?
  - SMART goals
  - Diversified evaluation strategy
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Elements of Project Planning (Foundations)

- Project budget
  - Prepare as detailed a budget as possible
    - Make sure you have included everything!
    - Consider staff time, marketing, materials, costs associated with evaluation and reporting, etc.
  - Include:
    - Direct costs (personnel and non-personnel)
    - Indirect costs (overhead)
    - Income
  - Consider fundraising phases
  - Consider current or pending funding
  - Consider ways to cut or share costs
  - Develop a diversified sustainability plan