

Get Foundation Grants & Funding for Nonprofits

By Barbara Floersch

One of the questions most frequently asked by nonprofit staff members is “how can I get the funding I need to do my work?” Nonprofits need money to pursue their missions—to help children and families, to help the homeless, to prevent drug addiction, to help addicts recover, to protect clean air and water, and much more! Foundation grant funding for nonprofits is certainly one part of the answer to that question.

Private foundations are established to pursue charitable purposes, and their missions and interests are as varied as the interests of nonprofit organizations. Perhaps the most critical step in winning foundation grants for your nonprofit is to identify funders who share your interests and who will be committed to your organization’s mission. Foundations don’t award grants to just any nonprofit. They award grants to nonprofits that will support their own mission.

To work effectively with foundations, there’s lots you need to know. Here are a few tips to get you started.

1. Before you apply to a foundation for nonprofit funding, make sure you understand the interests of the funder. Research what grants that funder has made to other nonprofits, in what amounts, and for what purposes. If your organization is not a good fit with a foundation’s interests, do not apply to that foundation. It’s a waste of everyone’s time and energy.
2. Follow the foundation’s instructions for contacting its staff members, and for submitting a letter of interest or a full funding application. Dot every “i” and cross every “t.” If you don’t follow instructions, your nonprofit is unlikely to get a grant.
3. Once you are sure a foundation is a good fit with the work of your organization, reach out to staff members when possible and work to establish a relationship of openness and trust. Remember, you are working to build a partnership with a foundation that will benefit your organization’s constituents while also helping the foundation carry out its own mission. Always be honest and professional, and always keep your beneficiaries at the forefront of all discussions.
4. Before submitting an application to a foundation, be sure you know what you’re talking about. Have your facts and figures in order. Make sure your argument is logical, that you propose measurable results, that your program approach is explained in detail, and that your budget is reasonable and accurate.

When considering how to write a winning grant proposal to a foundation, remember that one grant template or sample grant proposal will not work for every funder. You may be able to find a sample proposal or [grant proposal template](#) about the issue you'll be tackling, but using a template for writing a grant proposal can be dangerous. First, many foundations have specific formats you must follow. Second, the varied interests and approaches of different foundations dictate that you write a grant proposal that is specific to each foundation. One size does not fit all.

The best model for writing a foundation grant proposal is The Grantsmanship Center's format. That model defines the various types of information that every foundation grant application should contain and is the standard in the field of grant proposal writing. By defining the types of information a grant proposal must contain, The Grantsmanship Center Model will guide you through writing a grant proposal for each foundation funder, and help you win foundation funding by ensuring that your request is logical and thorough.

To win grants for community projects, grants to support your nonprofit's work, and grants to solve pressing problems or seize important opportunities, it's important to educate yourself before reaching out to foundations. The best way to start is by participating in one of [The Grantsmanship Center's workshops on writing grant proposals](#). The Center offers both a 2-day grant proposal writing seminar called [Essential Grant Skills](#) and a 5-day grant proposal writing class, the [Grantsmanship Training Program](#), to help nonprofits win foundation funding.

A bonus is that both of these two courses also [cover corporate grants](#) and government funding. So they both work well for all experience ranges—from beginners to more seasoned professionals.

