

How to Get Corporate Grants & Funding for Nonprofits

By Barbara Floersch

When it comes to grants, federal agencies and private foundations aren't the only game in town. Corporations also provide funding to nonprofits. Many corporations have a foundation that makes grants to nonprofits, and almost all corporations have a corporate giving program created to spread good will in the community and boost the corporation's image by supporting local events and projects.

When a corporation has a foundation (i.e. the Kellogg Foundation or the Walmart Foundation), the grants made by that foundation are public information. Funds given out through an internal corporate giving program are not public information, and are likely to show up in the corporation's public relations budget.

Because corporate [foundation grant](#) awards are public information, you can find out what grants the foundation has made, to what nonprofits, in what amounts, and for what purposes. You can find this information through a good foundation research database and also through accessing the foundation's 990 tax returns which are public information. Like private foundations, each corporate foundation also has distinct interests and directs its funding toward those specific types of projects. Because of that, learning as much as you can about the mission and vision of the corporate foundation, and about what it has funded in the past, is critical to your ability to get corporate funding for your nonprofit.

Other advice for working with private foundations is also true when working with corporate foundations. Try to establish an open, professional relationship with foundation staff. Follow all instructions to the letter. Be sure your letter of interest or corporate grant application are high-quality documents that present a logical, thorough, and compelling argument for grant funds. Present your proposal as an opportunity for the corporate foundation to advance its own mission by supporting the work of your nonprofit.

But there is one way in which working with corporate foundations is distinctly different than working with private foundations. The money a corporate foundations uses to make grants comes from the profits of the parent corporation. This means that you must take great care to work with corporate partners that are in sync with your nonprofit's mission. If your nonprofit focuses on preventing the consumption of alcohol by youths, is it a good idea to take funding from a corporate foundation that gets its money from a beer manufacturer? If your nonprofit focuses on healthy eating and decreasing obesity, is it wise to form a partnership with the foundation funded by a company that manufactures, distributes, and advertises junk-food?

A corporate foundation usually requires nonprofits to broadly inform the public of the grants they have been awarded by the foundation. So while getting a grant from a corporate foundation may help your work financially, if the corporation that funds the foundation is not in alignment with your organization's values, the grant award could hurt your work in other ways. If your nonprofit needs a grant to help prevent deforestation of a plot of land, taking grant money from the foundation of a paper manufacturer that cuts down trees could mar your image and call your organization's commitment to its mission into question.

Grants from corporate foundations are a great resource for nonprofits. The corporate foundations and their parent corporations can both be strong and appropriate partners in your work. Just don't let the possibility of corporate grant funding blind you to other considerations. When you form honest partnerships with corporate foundations that are aligned with your organization's mission you'll know how to get corporate foundation grants that strengthen and promote your work.

Learn more about how to research corporate grant makers and write effective proposals by taking The Grantsmanship Center's comprehensive, 5-day [Grantsmanship Training Program](#) or [Essential Grant Skills](#) training which is available in cities across the United States.