



Lesson 9A1: Tips & Tricks for Foundation Fundraising

Here are a few key points to keep in mind when considering raising funds from a foundation:

- Just like individuals, foundations are all very different from each other. Make no assumptions.
- Many foundations have their own funding cycles — familiarize yourself with them, so that you can determine the best time for your organization to apply.
- Whenever possible, try to learn who the decision-makers are. Are funding decisions made by members of a family, or by a group of volunteer community members who are appointed by foundation staff, or by the board of the organization? These are just a few examples.
- Know your audience. Read up on the foundation and its board members, and try to learn what drives them. Get a deep understanding of the foundation's priorities, and the language that the foundation uses to talk about their priorities (e.g., do they use the term, "low-income" (banks) or "low-wealth" (some foundations)?).
- Look up past grant recipients, and consider what the list of past recipients says about the foundation, and what it may mean for you. For example, are the past recipients all big anchor institutions, e.g., hospitals and universities? Does your organization fit that profile?
- When available, examine the amounts awarded to past recipients. Do the awards cover a wide range, e.g., some \$15K and others \$150K? Or are they all around the same amount? This will help you figure out an appropriate amount for which to ask.
- You may not want to go for the maximum grant award the first time you apply to a given foundation. Some foundations seem to have an unspoken rule (in most cases, you won't want to ask about it!) that you need to apply for low amounts for one or two rounds before asking for bigger money. In other cases, it may be fine to go for the maximum amount in your very first application.
- When you cannot communicate with a foundation directly, go with your instinct based on what you have read about them, especially what you learned about their past funding recipients and the amount of those awards.
- Foundations have their own rules for their application process, and they often vary widely. **FOLLOW THE RULES TO THE LETTER.**