

Fundraising Frenzy: Tips to Get the Grant

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For a non-profit organization, finding the money to implement a project can be frustrating. Knowing where to start is sometimes the hardest part. It can be difficult because non-profits are often competing with each other for a share in a shrinking pool of funds. Below are a few tips and resources for raising funds, taken from a presentation by Jerolyn Barbee of the Ohio History Connection.

Know Your Markets:

In 2012, for the third consecutive year, total giving in the United States increased. Foundations, corporations, and private individuals all stepped up their donations to non-profits, reaching nearly \$1.5 trillion that year. When examining philanthropic trends, it is interesting to note that 72% of gifts came from individuals, rather than foundations or corporations, and that lower income families actually gave a higher percentage of their annual income than either the wealthy or middle-classes. These facts are important to keep in mind because they indicate a significant market for fundraising that should not be overlooked.

Know Your Project:

Develop your project by considering some of the following questions:

- What is the problem or issue at hand, and how will your organization address that need?
- Which audiences will your project serve?
- What unique experiences and quali-



Knowing your markets, your project, and your grantmaker can lead to the perfect match of your idea and a funder. Image courtesy of the Library of Congress.

fications does your organization bring to the table?

- Are there opportunities to collaborate with other organizations?
- What is your project's budget, and how will the funds be divided between direct service and program operations?
- How much money can your organization contribute?
- What is the timetable for the project?
- Can the project be sustained after the grant?
- How will you evaluate and report the progress of your program?

Understanding how these questions

relate to and affect the development of your project can help the clarity and focus of your fundraising proposals, as well as in the implementation of your program.

Know Your Grantmaker:

If you are applying for a grant, it is okay to use a template or an old proposal to start, but remember to customize your new proposal to meet each grant's unique criteria. Not every grant will be a good match for your project, so it is useful to do some research ahead of time. The Foundation Center (<http://foundationcenter.org>) is a leading source of information on philanthropic organizations worldwide and provides the most comprehensive database of grant-making foundations in the United States. There is even a Foundation Center learning center in Cleveland (<http://foundationcenter.org/cleveland>) that offers a library of resources and various workshops for grant research.

Other great resources for grant opportunities and workshops include the Grantsmanship Center (www.tgci.com), Philanthropy Ohio (www.philanthropyohio.org), Grants.gov (<http://grants.gov>), and GrantSpace (<http://grantspace.org>).

When researching a grantmaker, you can use websites like those listed above to determine whether a funder would be a good match for your proposal. 990-PF forms show how foundations spend their money. Look over the forms to see which types of groups the organization supports and how much money they typically give. If possible, look for grantmakers that have connections to your non-profit, whether through past projects or a current employee.

Chances are, your organization is sitting on an awesome project waiting for funding. These tips cover only the beginning of the process, but a solid start leads to a successful finish. **Happy fundraising!**