



Guide to Raising Additional Funds for Your Park Agency

Identifying Funders

As a key first step grant seekers should prospect for potential funders. This will not only allow you to identify potential key partners, but will allow you to understand the funding environment in your community around your program. Using the sources below will give you an in-depth understanding of where funders are interested in investing their money (program area), their intended audience, and their expectations throughout a grant period. It is important to make sure there is strong alignment with the funders priorities before connecting with them for an introductory/exploratory call.

Sources

- i. Foundations
 - a. Inside Philanthropy Grantfinder
 - i. Direct link: <https://www.insidephilanthropy.com/find-a-grant/>
 - ii. Features: Can search by city, state, issue and/or funding area.
 - b. Guidestar
 - i. Direct link: <https://www.guidestar.org/>
 - ii. Features: Search specific foundations 990 tax forms to find details on who they have funded in the past.
 - c. NRPA Grant Opportunities Resources
 - i. Direct link: <http://www.nrpa.org/our-work/Grant-Fundraising-Resources/>
 - ii. Features: Maintains a current listing of NRPA's grants and other funding opportunities available for park and recreation agencies.
 - d. Similar Organizations Annual Report
 - i. Identify an organization or program similar to the one you are seeking funding for. From there go to the organizations website, search for the annual report, and go to the page where they list their donors. This is a good place to find funders that would potentially be interested in what you are seeking funds for.
- ii. Corporations
 - a. Internally brainstorm corporations with large presence in your city/state
 - i. From there go to the corporation's website and look for "Corporate Responsibility" or "Community Impact" typically under the "About" section.
 - ii. There you will find the corporations priorities, if they have a separate Foundation, and who to contact to learn more.
- iii. Federal, state, and local government grants
 - a. Direct link: www.grantwatch.com
 - b. Features: Can search for national, state, or local grants by funding area.
- iv. Complete funder brief (template attached) to determine whether the funder is a fit for your organization and intended program.

Top Questions to Ask During Introductory Call/Meeting

Attempting to set up an introductory/exploratory call or meeting with a potential funder is an important step to ensure there is interest and alignment between your organization and the funder. It is always best, if possible, to connect personally to begin the relationship development with the program officer overseeing the funding opportunity. Here are some key questions to ask during that conversation:

1. Can you tell me a bit more about the foundation/corporation's current strategic priorities?



2. What projects have you seen that have best achieved these priorities in the past?
 - a. Only ask this if they have funded in this area in the past
3. What are the most important factors you look for when determining whether or not to fund a project?
4. What is the average size and length of your grants?
5. Do you think there is alignment in what we are seeking funding for with your organization?

Key Elements to Remember When Writing Your Proposal

Give context for your request

Many proposals dive straight into nuts and bolts—what you’re going to do and when—without first answering the critical questions, “Why are we doing this? Why should you care?”

You need to make sure you’re giving adequate background for your request. Take a step back and set the scene. What’s the problem you’re addressing? Why is it important? How is your organization well-suited to address said problem? Are there other organizations involved in similar work? If so, how is your work different?

Customize the request to the funder’s requirements

This starts with your research process. Have you looked at the foundation’s giving history, website, and other resources to see if your organization’s work falls within the foundation’s giving areas? Have you had an introductory conversation with the program officer? What language and tone do they use to describe their funding priorities and is that mirrored in your request? Let your application reflect the fact that you’ve done your homework by mentioning specifics about the foundation’s strategic priorities and how you might fit into that picture.

Pay attention to detail

It is vital to invest in good writing, as it can greatly help or hinder your cause. If writing isn’t your strong suit and/or you don’t have the time and resources to invest in writing a proposal, it’s worth finding someone who can—even if you have to outsource this task to capture your vision in a clear, concise, compelling way.

Be sure to proofread your materials thoroughly before sending to ensure that the text is free of typos and formatting gaffes, and that key information is accurate.

Pay attention to the visual, too. The design of your proposals should convey a sense of competence and professionalism, highlighting the content and making it easy to skim and digest. That said, don’t go overboard with your design. It should look polished, but not slick. Use headers, bullets, and other visual cues to differentiate sections and make navigation clear. Use legible, grown-up font (tip: not comic sans in 8 pt.).

Useful Definitions and Key Terms Used

990 Form	Required nonprofit tax form. Here you can find information about who that 501(c)3 has funded during the specified tax year.
Budget Narrative	A document included with the application package which, in narrative form, describes the budgeted expenditures and activities in greater detail. For example, a line item for travel may include \$1,500. In the budget narrative will include a breakdown of those costs (i.e. \$500 for rental of three school buses to transport transferring student to local college/university tours).



Direct Costs	<p>Direct costs charged to the sponsored project must be allowable, allocable and reasonable. Direct costs examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salaries, wages and/or fringe benefits for employees performing work for the project • Costs of materials and supplies used in the performance of work • Other items of expense incurred for the project provided the costs are consistently treated in like circumstances
Evaluation Plan	An evaluation plan serves as a bridge between evaluation and program planning by highlighting program goals, clarifying measurable program objectives, and linking the different program activities to your intended outcomes. An evaluation plan should clearly define the measures and tools used to conduct evaluation, and the proposed results of the program.
Indirect Costs	Expenses of doing business that are not readily identified with a grant, contract, project function or activity, but are necessary for the general operation of the organization and the conduct of activities it performs. Some funders will specify a limitation on the allowable indirect cost rate.
Letter of Inquiry	A letter of inquiry is initiated by an applicant to determine if a proposed project is within an agency's fundable program areas and to request agency policy and program information including application instructions and forms.
Letter of Intent	A letter of intent notifies a funding agency that an application will be submitted in response to their solicitation. The letter may contain general program information, unofficial cost estimates and a request for application guidelines, instructions and forms.
Project Goal	General statement of your program's purpose. See example below.
Project Objectives	Concrete and specific ways in how the goal will be achieved. See example below.
Project Outcomes	Expected results at the end of your proposal's project period. See example below.

Goals and Objectives Example

For example, a park and recreation agency targets older adults at risk for food insecurity due to income limitations. Here is a suggested goal, objective and outcome to be stated in the application.

Goal: The park and recreation agency will assist 1,000 older adults in improving access to healthy, nutritious foods that they would otherwise lack.

Objective 1: Three hundred older adults that cannot afford round-trip transportation to the park and recreation site where healthy food is served will be issued gasoline vouchers.

Outcome 1: Ninety-five percent of older adults participating in the transportation program will report improved access to healthy, nutritious foods.

*The evaluation plan should thoroughly describe how you will effectively measure meeting your goals, objectives and outcomes.