How to Approach a Foundation
From Initial Contact to Getting Funded
Friday, June 8, 2018

HANDOUTS AND EXERCISES

1) NPCC Outline of Foundation Proposal Types

2) Sample Record from Foundation Directory Online

3) Exercise #1: Introductory Phone Call

4) Sample Guidelines from Frances L. and Edwin L. Cummings Fund and Westchester Community Foundation

5) Exercise #2: When the Answer is Yes

6) Exercise #3: When the Answer is No
FULL PROPOSAL:

This can be written in the third person ("The Nonprofit Coordinating Committee requests..."), or the first person (We request support for... "). Ordinarily, for foundations and corporations, entire proposal should be no more than 10 double-spaced pages (5 single-spaced), ideally around 6 pages double-spaced (3 single-spaced). Less is better!

1. Cover page – with proposal name, who it is being submitted to, and date.

2. Executive Summary - This sells the proposal. Generally written last. 1 page

3. Problem or Background – Need(s) or problem description. "What's the problem?" Can include short description of NPCC experience with problem, brief description of agency capacity, and prior attempts (of others) to solve problem, but these are not always appropriate. - 1-2 pages

4. Proposed program - One paragraph summarizing proposed program, then:
   
   Objectives (subsection). Well-stated objectives must say what is to be done, to/for whom (if appropriate), by when, and with what outcomes (impact)? Number the objectives. 1-2 pages

5. Approach – This is the "How?" section. It should have subsections on planned activities (community outreach, training, technical assistance, small grants, publications, advisory committees, etc.); staffing plans; plans for replication or institutionalization of the project when the proposed funding runs out; evaluation strategy and a timeline or workplan (if needed). 2-5 pages

6. Cost section – Brief description of what we need and what it will pay for and/or enable us to do. 1-2 paragraphs

7. You can add an agency capacity statement to the back of the proposal, if appropriate. 1 page

8. Budget – Line item accounting for proposed expenditures. Seek help from Marcia and/or Michael in preparing the budget. Both Michael and Marcia will need to approve the budget before it goes out. Sometimes, you should also explain if any, and how much, of needed funds have already been raised. 1 page
Concept Paper

Also written in third or first person. Same format as for proposal, but much shorter (3-5 pages, double-spaced)

1. Cover page is optional.

2. Problem or background: 2-3 paragraphs

3. Proposed program and objectives: 1 page

4. Approach (including staffing, activities, replication, evaluation, etc.): 1-2 pages

5. Cost – 1 paragraph

6. Budget – should be drafted (so you know how much and why), but do not attach.

Inquiry Letter

Always written in first person and often used to solicit a meeting or conversation with funder in advance. A meeting is ideal prior to preparing a full proposal, since it allows for input from the funder and can help shape a proposal much likelier to actually get funded. Contains same basic elements as concept paper, but should be conversational in tone.

1. First paragraph should briefly describe proposed project, impact and full dollar request or “ask” (including hope for meeting to discuss)

2. Next 2-4 paragraphs summarize needs/problem/background and our history with problem

3. Next 2-4 paragraphs summarize how we plan to achieve the impact, a bit about staffing and major (only) activities entailed, and the time frame in which this will all occur.

4. At end, (or, sometimes, for someone wholly unfamiliar with us, at the beginning, right after opening paragraph), maximum 1 paragraph on capacity of agency.

5. Closing 1-3 sentences make final pitch for project and state time when you (or president) will follow up via phone (usually in 2-3 weeks).

“Cover Letter”

Accompanies full proposal or concept paper. Since the enclosure contains the main “pitch,” the cover letter:

1. In the case of a full proposal, should very briefly summarize what we are proposing (maximum 1 paragraph), for how long, and for how much. Maximum 1 paragraph.

2. In the case of a concept paper, should be conversational and use only
How to Approach a Foundation

Sample Record from Foundation Directory Online

The William G. Gilmore Foundation
120 Montgomery St., Ste. 1401
San Francisco, CA 94104-4317
Telephone: (415) 546-1400
Contact: Faye Wilson, Exec. Dir.
Fax: (415) 391-8732

Type of Grantmaker: Independent foundation

IRS Exemption Status: 501(c)(3)
EIN: 946074943

Donor(s): William G. Gilmore; Mrs. William G. Gilmore.

Background: Incorporated in 1953 in CA.
Limitations: Giving primarily in the San Francisco Bay Area, CA; some funding also in Pueblo, CO and Portland, OR. No grants to individuals.
Purpose and Activities: Giving primarily for the arts, health, and children, youth, and social services.
Fields of Interest: Subjects: Boys & girls clubs; Boy scouts; Children/youth, services; Foundations (community); Foundations (private grantmaking); Health organizations, association; Hospitals (general); Human services; Museums (art); Performing arts; YM/YWCAs & YM/YWHAs.
Geographic Focus: California; Colorado; Oregon.
Types of Support: Annual campaigns; Building/renovation; Capital campaigns; Continuing support; Emergency funds; Equipment; General/supporting fund; Scholarship funds.
Publications: Application guidelines.
Application Information: Application form not required. Applicants should submit the following:
1. Descriptive literature about organization

Initial approach: Letter or request
Copies of proposal: 1
Board meeting date(s): June and Dec.
Deadline(s): Contact foundation for current deadlines

Officers and Trustees: Robert C. Harris, President; C.L. Emerson, Vice President and Treasurer; Faye C. Wilson, Executive Director; Thomas B. Boklund; V. Neil Fulton.

Number of Staff: 1 part-time support.

Financial Data: Year ended 12/31/07: Assets: $29,322,727 (market value); Expenditures: $1,761,432; Total giving: $1,411,000; Qualifying distributions: $1,631,315; Giving activities include: $1,411,000 for 142 grants (high: $50,000; low: $500).

Additional Location Information: County: San Francisco; Metropolitan area: San Francisco-Oakland-Fremont, CA; Congressional district: California District 8.

Selected Grants: The following grants were reported in 2006:
$50,000 to Queen of the Valley Hospital Foundation, Napa, CA, payable over 1 year.
$50,000 to San Francisco Conservatory of Music, San Francisco, CA, payable over 1 year.
$50,000 to YMCA of Pueblo, Pueblo, CO, payable over 1 year.
$35,000 to Project Open Hand, San Francisco, CA, payable over 1 year.
$25,000 to Boy Scouts of America, San Diego, CA, payable over 1 year.
$25,000 to Oregon Public Broadcasting, Portland, OR, payable over 1 year.
$10,000 to Hearing and Speech Institute, Portland, OR, payable over 1 year.
$5,000 to Pueblo Child Advocacy Center, Pueblo, CO, payable over 1 year.
$5,000 to Oakland Public Library, Oakland, CA, payable over 1 year.
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Introductory phone call

Sample Text

“I’m Jane Doe from the Local Children’s Agency. Because of your interest in children’s health, I wanted to let you know about a new project we’re developing that will provide low-cost immunizations to 5,000 children in our public schools next year. Would it be possible for us to meet so I could tell you more about it?”

Write Your Own

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What a Foundation Wants to Know About Your Organization and Your Project

Guidelines for Meetings with Grantees from the Frances L. and Edwin L. Cummings Fund

- Is the Executive Director an effective leader with a capable and well-trained staff?
- Does the organization have a proven track record in general? Specifically as to this program?
- Does this organization have the capability of expanding to meet the community's increasing needs?
- Is this organization offering innovative programs or is it replicating other's efforts?
- What is the overall present financial situation of this organization?
- Is the Board of Directors an "active" or a "paper" Board?
- Does the Board financially support the organization commensurate with their means?
- Do they also solicit support from their personal/business contacts?
- Does the organization have a written long range plan and mission statement developed with the full participation of the Board?

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Letter of Intent Form

Instructions

Applicants should begin by reading the guidelines for each category and Frequently Asked Questions in the “Grant Seekers” section on our website: www.wcf-ny.org.

If, after reading these materials, you believe that one of your proposed projects meets our criteria, please submit a Letter of Intent by email to the program officer.

We will acknowledge receipt of your emailed letter within two weeks. If you do not hear from us, or if you have questions, please contact the program officer. Please do not hand deliver or fax your Letter of Intent.

Narrative

In no more than five paragraphs, provide a brief description of the:

- Organization mission and major programs;
- Specific need, problem, or opportunity that the proposed project is addressing;
- Activities of the project;
- Amount you are requesting and total project budget;
- Revenues for the project and your plans for project sustainability;
- Whether your most recent 990 form is available on Guidestar. If it is not, please indicate the date of your most recent audited financial statements.
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Result When the Answer is “Yes”

Think about your own organization and write down some ideas on the steps you will take if the answer is “yes.” How will you be a responsive grantee? For example, do you host any key events, such as a graduation ceremony, where you can showcase your organization’s programs?
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Result When the Answer is “No”

Think about your own organization and write down some ideas on the steps you will take if the answer is “no.” How will you keep the conversation going? For example, does your organization publish any key reports or updates such as an annual report?