

# FIELD NOTES



## ARE YOU GRANT-READY?

Any non-profit professional who has been part of a foundation grant proposal knows how much time and effort goes in to the process. While, on average, the majority of an organization's philanthropic gifts will come from individuals (72% according to Giving USA 2017), grants from foundations comprise approximately 15% and are an important part of the funding mix. So it's worth it to know if you are ready before you take the first step in the grantwriting process.

### MORE THAN WORDS

While it's (very) important the grant be well written, it's not the only thing that matters when foundations are considering your application. No matter how perfectly crafted it is, if you don't have the strategy, details and plan behind your words, funding is highly unlikely.

### ASSESSING GRANT READINESS

Before you apply for a grant, consider the following to assess if you are ready:

- **Does the project have a clear case, or is it just an idea?**  
Foundations look for a well-thought out concrete vision and plan, not just a concept.
- **Can the problem be identified? How it will be solved, and who will benefit?**

(See first bullet.) You must be able to illustrate that you are solving an issue and know who will benefit from your work (and ultimately this grant). As you can imagine, this information does not come without careful research and planning, which is why it's nearly impossible to start the grant process just before it's due!

- **Will other funders be supporting this project?**  
Foundations like to see that you have other funding sources, which shows a stronger possibility of a sustainable and healthy project.

#### GRANTS DO:

- Partner worthy organizations with interested funders.
- Provide funding to support well developed projects.

#### GRANTS DON'T:

- Provide funding for unestablished ideas.
- Provide funding for budget shortfalls.
- Give money with no expectations.

- **Is there a detailed budget of the project costs?**  
A strong grasp of what you need and how it will be spent instills a sense of confidence in the funder that you've done your homework and will be responsible with donated dollars.

- **Is the tail wagging the dog? (is the project changing to meet the needs of the funder?)**

While it may be appealing to alter your project with the prospect of obtaining the grant, if it's not true to your mission and work it won't help anyone. Chances are you won't be able to deliver on your promises and your participants and staff (and likely the foundation) will be left frustrated and disappointed.

- **Is the staff prepared to?**
  - Assemble the necessary documents
  - Complete the project as promised
  - Steward the grant

Once you get the grant (hooray!) your work is not over. Foundations expect follow up to ensure their money was put to good use. And, as with any major donor, remember to steward them! Beyond thank you, let them know the impact their grant had on those affected. Stay in touch even after the program/ grant period ends; chances are good if they funded you once and are happy, you have the potential for more funding in the future.

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