Pre-Proposal Research and Relationship Building

Making Connections: Seeking a Grant

Funders vary in how they wish to be approached; some prefer that grantseekers begin by picking up the phone to talk about an idea. Some prefer a formal proposal or less elaborate letter of inquiry. Know that in many cases, especially with local corporations and foundations, your request is part of a rich, long-term, and multi-faceted relationship already existing between the grantmaker and the UA. These multiple connections make clearing your approach in advance especially imperative, as others on campus may be impacted.

As diverse as grantmakers are in their processes, these common factors indicate a strong connection between a grantseeker and prospective funder:

**Shared mission and goals**—a close fit between the grantmaker's mission and the goals of the proposed project.

**Planning**—a well-thought-out project plan described in clear terms, showing high impact in the community or sphere that the grantmaker funds.

**Geography**—close geographic proximity often means shared interests and goals, and in the case of some funders, is a requirement for a proposal to be considered.

**Trust and Performance**—a good reputation and/or positive past experience with the organization or people involved.

**Enlightened self-interest**—for many corporate grantmakers, philanthropy is commonly aligned with business goals.

**People**—people connected to a potential funder are often the best resources for making connections, such as staff, volunteers, board members, and other friends of the organization.

To take full advantage of these connections, as a grantseeker, you should:

**Know Yourself**—Understand and clearly articulate, in writing, your mission, goals, program plan, and the potential community impact of your work.

**Know Your Potential Funders**—Thoroughly research the mission, history, past grantmaking, guidelines, and grantmaking strategy of potential funders. Understand the institutional history with the funder, meaning not only the history with your own program but other partnerships across the University. Past grantmaking often indicates current interests. The GIFT Center can help familiarize you with potential funders and strategize your initial approach.

**Uncover Connections**—Ask those who are engaged with your work to self-identify connections to potential funders. The GIFT Center can help facilitate a search for connections.