



Cracking the Cold Call:

Best Practices for Making the Initial Approach to a Foundation

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Cracking the Cold Call:

Best Practices for Making the Initial Approach to a Foundation

AGENDA

- *Why are you here today?*
- *Is your organization grant ready?*
- *Best practices in contacting funders*
- *What you need to know about your funder*
- *What funders want to hear*



Why are you here today?

What is your biggest hesitation or fear when contacting a new funder for the first time?

- Unsure who to contact
- Afraid of wasting the funders time
- Don't want to make a bad first impression
- Have had a bad experience cold calling in the past
- Don't have the time to do individual funder research
- Funder won't take my call
- Not sure if we are a good fit for the funder
- Other reasons...?



Why are you here today?

When contacting a funder for the first time,
what has typically been your reason or
motivation?

- Not sure if we are a good fit for the funder
- Making an introduction
- Question about funders guidelines, priorities or deadlines?
- Responding to an RFP
- Funder only contributes to pre-selected organizations
- Inquire about any underlying trends, preferences, or priorities that do not appear in published materials.
- Other reasons...?



Overarching Themes

1. Do your homework
2. You know one foundation, and that means, you know one foundation.
3. Stay true to your mission
4. Shifting focus to 'mission partners'



Are you grant ready?

- Financial Stability and Diversity
- Program Success and Achievements
 - Defined Goals and Needs
 - Unique Proposition



What do you need to know about the funder?

- Grantmaker Name
 - *As simple as it sounds!*



What do you need to know about the funder?

- Contact Information
 - Website
 - Mailing Address
 - Primary Contact
 - Phone Number



What do you need to know about the funder?

- **Geographic Focus**
 - *Where a funder has a giving priority*
 - *Not necessarily where the funder is located*
 - *If different from location – why?*



What do you need to know about the funder?

- Field of Interest
 - *The most important qualifier*
 - *Leave no stone unturned*
 - *BUT don't stretch to fit a funder's giving area*



What do you need to know about the funder?

- Organization Type

- *Private Foundation*
- *Corporate Giving*
- *Public Foundation or Grantmaking
Public Charities*



What do you need to know about the funder?

- Organization Type

- *Private Foundation: Generally supported by one or a handful of sources*
 - *Independent*
 - » *Family Foundation*
 - » *Bank Charitable Trust*
 - *Company Sponsored or Corporate Foundation*
 - *Operating Foundation*



What do you need to know about the funder?

- Organization Type

- Corporate Giving

- » *Are not separate legal entities, so they are not subject to laws governing exempt organizations, including public disclosure requirements.*

- » *Supported by the corporate entity*



What do you need to know about the funder?

- Organization Type

- *Public Foundation or Grantmaking Public Charities: Receive contributions from many different sources*
 - *Community Foundation*
 - » *Foundations that build their endowments through contributions from many donors and distribute funds within a given geographic region, typically focusing on local needs*



What do you need to know about the funder?

- Types of Support

- The majority of grants will be General Operating or Program Support, but please reference your materials for the definitions of different types of funding you may come across.



What do you need to know about the funder?

- Total Assets / Annual Giving
 - *Their assets will determines the amount of annual giving.*
 - *Helpful to “Right-Size” your ask.*
 - *Form 990 or Grants Lists*



- **Application Information**
 - *Requested Materials*
 - *Application Process*
 - *Deadlines*
 - *Board Meeting Dates*
 - *Final Notice*
 - *Unsolicited Requests Accepted*



What do you need to know about the funder?

- Unsolicited Requests Accepted
 - Ability to filter out organizations that do not have an open application process.



Best Practices for Outreach

- Create a 'Funder Outreach Guide'
- Contact the funder by their preferred method
- Set up a time for an introductory phone call or meeting
- Each funder will have their own preferences, availability and willingness to meet/talk.



Introductory Call or E-mail

1. Introduce yourself, and your organization
2. Explain how you discovered the funder
3. State specific guidelines that indicate a potential partnership.
4. Recognize any stated barriers included in guidelines
5. Ask to set up a time an appointment to discuss the potential for mission alignment between your organizations. (Have your availability at the ready)
6. Offer to provide any additional information in advance of the meeting.



Sample Questions

- *Does our project match the current funding priorities?*
- *What can be done to improve the chances of a successful grant proposal?*
- *What are the most common reasons a proposal is denied?*
- *Is there anything not included in the guidelines that we should be aware of?*



What do funders want to hear?

- Clear, mission driven goals & needs
- Confidence in programming & operations
 - Prepared, researched inquiries
 - Financial literacy
 - Genuine conversation



What don't funders want to hear?

- Overeager, impatient requests
- Name-dropping or back channels
- Questions that are easily answered on their website or guidelines
- 'Parroting' or 'mission drift' to fit funder guidelines



Sample Exercise

- *Break into groups of two or three*
- Discuss which of the foundations are the most appropriate for the sample nonprofit to apply to
- What are the best next steps for contacting the foundation

Sample talking points for conversation?



Questions?



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