



Five Tips for Funder Research

1. Access Funder Databases

Below are some of the most well-known resources for grant seekers:

- **Foundation Directory Online** by Candid available as a monthly subscription but also for free through public library access.
- **Philanthropy News Digest**, also by Candid offers free daily e-alerts including Requests for Proposals (RFPs)
- **Grants.gov** allows organizations to search and apply for federal funding opportunities.
- **Grantmakers.io** is a great free online resource that allows you to search over 4.8 million grants. You can filter by recipients, donors, geographic location, and keywords.
- **Grant Spy**, **GrantWatch**, and **Grant Gopher** are all subscription services, but Grant Gopher does offer one free plan with a limited selection of opportunities.
- **GrantStation** is a membership platform but offers a free weekly newsletter called the *GrantStation Insider* that publicizes some upcoming grant deadlines.
- **GrantAlerts.com**- focuses on education related grants. Lists a few opportunities for free, but you must subscribe to see all listings.
- **Society for Nonprofits** allows visitors to the *Funding Alert* page to view some grant opportunities by category and issue for free.
- **Council on Foundations** lists community foundations by state.

2. Investigate Additional Resources

- Explore **Financial Institutions** (e.g., Bank of America Philanthropic Solutions, J.P. Morgan Solutions, etc.) that serve as a trustee for different charitable foundations.
- Consider **Donor Advised Funds**, which are often housed at community or other foundations or investment and financial firms (e.g., Fidelity, Schwab). Donor advised fund giving is typically directed by the donors who set the fund up, and as such, many give to pre-selected organizations, but it is worth investigating donor advised funds that may be held in your community.
- Check out **GrantAdvisor.org**. It's like Yelp for funders. Grant seekers can write and read reviews on hundreds of foundations. The reviews of a specific foundation may help you determine if it is worth the time to apply to that foundation.
- Don't forget **Corporate Giving Programs**. Many companies, even those with corporate foundations, support non-profit organizations directly through specific divisions or departments (e.g. Marketing or Communications), especially in their geographic area and for sponsorship opportunities that are mission related. Peruse their website and look for terms such as "community relations" or "corporate social responsibility" as examples.

3. Think Outside the Box

- Look for **fund**ers that support organizations that are like yours. **Grantmakers.io** is a great free online resource you can utilize to do this. You can also look online for similar organization's annual reports, event journals, 990s and other printed materials to see who their sponsors, donors and advertisers are. A lot of information is available online!
- Seek out **local** (especially new ones) **businesses**, especially those that sponsor events.
- Explore **Service Clubs** (e.g., Junior Leagues, Lions, Rotary, etc.), **Fraternal Associations** (e.g., Masons, Shriners, etc.), **Student Associations** (e.g., Future Business Leaders of America, Honor Societies, Key Clubs, etc.).
- Search for **Trade or Professional Associations** that may relate to your organization (e.g., an organization focusing of affordable housing may consider reaching out to the Mortgage Bankers Association).
- Consider **Faith-Based, Heritage** (e.g., Daughters of the Revolution, etc.) and **Special Interest Organizations** (e.g., National Audubon Society, etc.).

4. Narrow Your Search

- **Be strategic.** Identify the specific project or program you need funding for and target funders with an interest (e.g., hunger relief, STEM education, etc.) in that area. Focus on how you can meet funders' charitable goals.
- **Define your parameters** by geographic location, population (e.g., Seniors, Children, etc.) type of funding (e.g., capital or project).
- **Determine the amount of funding you will need** to help you further pinpoint the appropriate funders.

5. Research your Targeted Funders

- **Read the funder's website.** Only about 10% of all U.S. Foundations and Corporate grant makers have websites, but if a funder does have one, **READ it.** Look for which other agencies they've funded, for what programs and projects and for how much.
- **If the funder is a foundation, review their 990.** The 990 is the Internal Revenue Service's required tax form for tax-exempt organizations. You can access 990s on Guidestar.org. The 990 may have valuable information such as the Foundation's officers, a potential phone number and a list of organizations funded by project and amount.
- **Follow funders via social media if they have accounts.**
- If you can find a phone number, **call the funder** before sending any information. Confirm the address, contact information and the funder's funding interests. Ask if they have funding guidelines and if they are accepting funding requests.
- **Make connections.** Do any of your organization's board members, staff or dedicated volunteers have a relationship with any of the funder's staff or leadership? Existing relationships can help you get your foot in the door!