

# Communicating with Grant-Makers



JUST Write GRANTS  
grant writing for nonprofits

As a busy fundraising professional, it can be so tempting (and much faster and easier) to look up a grant-maker, decide that it's a good fit, print your proposal, and drop it in the mail. But, calling and speaking to a Grant Administrator (sometimes called Program Officer) could mean the difference between receiving a grant award and ending up at the bottom of the proposal stack when it comes time for application reviews.

Many of these conversations have the same flow and content. You can almost count on asking the same types of questions to get the information you need to determine if moving forward with an application has a high likelihood of success for your nonprofit. Using the following script as a guideline for your conversation can help you garner the information you need to move forward confidently with your request.

## Sample Grant Administrator Script

- Ask to speak to the Grant Administrator. Note that person's name (if different from your notes) for future reference.
- Introduce yourself by name and title.
- Tell them why you're calling: You'd like to ask a few questions to make sure you have the correct and current information about their grant submission guidelines.
- If you or someone on your board has a connection to someone on their board or reviewing committee, reference that connection. "John Smith suggested that I reach out to you today." Look at their profile and 990 reports for these contacts, but make sure you have his or her approval before referencing this connection.
- Briefly describe your organization and the funding need. This should absolutely be an elevator speech. Give them enough information to ask more questions, but allow that as a natural part of the conversation.
- Reference the connection between the funding need/your organization's mission and the foundation's funding initiatives. For example: "I wanted to connect today because XYZ Foundation has previously supported nonprofits that help ... (general information about your clients), and I believe that our work is a good fit with your foundation's mission."
- Ask the following questions:
  - Based on what I've shared with you so far, do you think an application would be appropriate?
  - Your guidelines state that the next deadline is [date]. Is that correct?
  - Would you be able to review our proposal for input and suggestions prior to final submission?
  - Can you advise me on the appropriate amount for a grant request?
  - Are there any other foundations that you would suggest we should be talking to about this project?
  - How many copies of our proposal would be helpful?
  - Is there anything else you could share that you feel would be helpful?
- Thank them for their time.

**TAKING 5-10 MINUTES TO CONNECT WITH SOMEONE CAN PROVIDE YOU WITH A WEALTH OF INFORMATION THAT COULD PROVE NOT ONLY RELEVANT TO THAT PARTICULAR REQUEST, BUT TO YOUR ENTIRE GRANT FUNDRAISING STRATEGY.**

**Foundation Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Call Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Contact Name/Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Project/Program for Request:** \_\_\_\_\_

- Based on what I've shared with you so far, do you think an application would be appropriate? If no, ask what specifically didn't match and if they would be open to other requests from your organization. This may be the natural end of the conversation.

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- How many copies of our proposal would be helpful? \_\_\_\_\_

- Is there anything else you could share that you feel would be helpful?

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Thank them for their time.