Foundation Funding Requests

Proposals to be submitted to foundations need to be coordinated in advance with University Advancement—either our college's Development team and/or the University's Corporate & Foundation Relations team. They have relationships with many of those funders and can provide invaluable insights, guidance, and connections. And, in some cases, those funders only accept U-affiliated applications through special calls.

Be advised that foundations generally only support organizations and projects that align with their mission, values, goals, and funding priorities. So, before approaching a foundation for funding, ensure that what you are proposing is a great fit for them, and vice versa. Look for foundations with whom you can create a mutually impactful partnership. Building a relationship with them prior to submitting an unsolicited funding request can significantly improve the chances of a successful application. This is especially true for foundations that often re-fund existing grantees and that have limited funding for unsolicited requests.

Letter of Inquiry / Letter of Intent Outline

A Letter of Inquiry (or Letter Intent) (LOI) is typically a concise document that provides an overview of the project for which you are seeking funding from a foundation. The purpose is to offer preliminary information, enabling the foundation to decide whether to invite a full application for potential funding.

Below is a general outline to help you structure your LOI (if the funder does not provide instructions). When drafting your LOI, keep it concise and to the point. Foundations receive numerous inquiries, so clarity and brevity are essential. Ensure your passion for the project shines through, and always follow any specific guidelines or formats the foundation might have provided.

- **Heading:** List your organization's name, address, phone number, email address, and the date.

- **Address to the Foundation:** List the foundation's name and address.

- **Salutation:** Start with a salutation such as "Dear [Foundation's Name/Specific Contact Person]".

- **Introduction:** Briefly introduce your organization and its mission. Also state the purpose of the LOI (e.g., to express interest in seeking funding for a specific project).

- **Project Overview:** Introduce the name of the project and provide a concise summary of the project, including its main objectives and expected outcomes.

- **Need Statement:** Describe the problem or need your project addresses and explain why it's timely or crucial.

- **Project Details:** Brief description of activities or strategies you plan to implement. Also highlight any partnerships or collaborations.

- **Funding Request:** Specify the amount you are requesting and provide a brief overview of how the funds will be used (e.g., personnel, activities, supplies, outreach).

- **Expected Impact:** Describe the short-term and potential long-term impact of the project. Also mention any key performance indicators or metrics you'll use to measure the project's success.

- **Closing Statement:** Express gratitude for their consideration and indicate your enthusiasm to provide further details, if needed.

- **Signature:** End with a closing phrase like "Sincerely" or "With gratitude" along with your name and title.

General Foundation Grant Proposal Outline

The following is a basic outline for drafting a proposal for a foundation funding request (if the funder does not provide instructions). Familiarize yourself with – and customize your proposal for – the foundation's funding mission, programs, interests, limitations, and guidelines. Also, remember, clarity and conciseness are key. Many foundations receive numerous proposals, so being able to convey your message in a clear and compelling manner can make your proposal stand out.

- **Title of the Project:** Start with a clear, concise title that captures the essence of the project. It helps the foundation quickly understand the nature of the project.

- **Introduction:** Provie a bit about the history and accomplishments of your organization. Briefly state your organization's mission and vision to give context.

- **Project Summary:** Introduce the name of the project and provide a concise summary of the project. Be specific about the main objectives and expected outcomes you aim to achieve.

- **Significance/Need:** Discuss the potential impact or difference the project could make. If applicable, highlight any current events or recent developments that make this project timely or urgent.

- **Goals:** Note the goals for the project. Apart from the major goals during the funding period, also mention the anticipated long-term impact. Indicate how you will measure the success or progress towards each goal.

- **Activities:** Briefly explain the methods or approaches you will employ to achieve the goals. Highlight any resources you already have and those you'll need (apart from funding). Mention any other stakeholders or beneficiaries involved, apart from collaborators.

- **Budget Overview:** Provide a concise overview of the budget, indicating where the funds will be allocated. You don't have to give a detailed budget, but a general idea can be beneficial.

- **Dissemination & Sustainability:** Specify any media or outreach activities to spread awareness about the project. Describe how you plan to gather feedback and use it for improvements.

- **Evaluation:** Indicate how you'll assess the project's success. This could be through specific metrics, qualitative reviews, or external evaluations.

- **Conclusion:** Summarize the proposal, emphasizing the value proposition and appealing once again for support.

- **Supporting Documents:** If permitted, consider attaching or referencing any relevant data, studies, or additional materials that support your proposal but are too lengthy to include in the main text.