

Tip Sheets

Office of Corporate and Foundation Relations (<http://umass.edu/cfr/>)
University of Massachusetts Amherst

We help faculty and staff get funding from corporate and private foundation sources. Our goal is to increase grants for research, academic, and outreach projects.

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Finding Foundations

The Office of Corporate and Foundation Relations has access to databases which can assist you in determining the most appropriate foundations for your research. This information can shorten the time it takes for you to find credible prospects for funding and can assist in creating a funding strategy designed particularly for you. We look forward to working with you. For more information, contact Susan Worgaftik via email (<mailto:sworgaftik@admin.umass.edu>) or by phone at 413-577-2956.

The Office of Grant and Contract Administration also provides a list of funding opportunities and search tools (<http://www.umass.edu/research/ogca/funding/>) .

What are foundations looking for?

Here are some general common attributes of "fundable" projects:

- They have a beginning, middle and end (or a credible plan for sustainability after the grant.)
- They have a clearly defined goal directly tied to one of the foundation's expressed interests.
- They commit to providing measurable results. For example, training 100 farmers in Central Africa in sustainable agriculture practices, resulting in 500 acres under sustainable cultivation, as opposed to holding a conference at which experts discuss world hunger solutions.

It is important to create answers to these questions about your project:

- What social, educational or research question will you address?
- What will change as a result of your proposed work?
- How much will it change? (a standard of measurement that makes sense given the problem addressed)
- How will you know? (how will your work be evaluated?)

Foundations do not often fund ongoing budget needs, endowments, conferences, and the production of videos or media. There are exceptions to every rule. If you know of one, let our office know.

Getting started with grant seeking

1. Prepare some background information. Include the following:
 - Who you are: name, position, department/unit and phone number. Include information on collaborators or partners in the project if applicable, even if they are off-campus.
 - Project description (in 50 words or less). Include answers to the following questions:
 - What social, educational or research question will you address?
 - What will change as a result of your proposed work?
 - How much will it change? (a standard of measurement that makes sense given the problem addressed)
 - How will you know? (how will your work be evaluated?)
 - Estimated budget or request.
 - A timeline for the project and project funding (note: a typical foundation funding cycle can take 9–12 months from inception to a response on your proposal).
 - Relevant background, such as previous grant writing experience or foundation contacts.
 - Times you are available to talk by phone or in person.
2. E-mail your synopsis to Susan Worgaftik (<mailto:sworgaftik@admin.umass.edu>) , Senior Associate Director.

Basic components of a proposal

Usually, the foundation will indicate what questions it wants answered, and that should be your first point of reference. If there are no precise requirements, the following is a good guide to structuring your proposal.

1. Abstract/Summary

- Try to keep to one page
- Use highlights or a topic sentence from each section of the proposal
- What will be done, by whom, for what purpose, for how long, at what cost, what are the outcomes, and who will benefit?

2. Statement of Need

- What is the issue you are addressing?
- Why does this matter?
- Why is what you propose necessary?
- Who benefits? Make sure you can indicate the public good achieved.
- Why hasn't this issue been addressed sufficiently in the past? Who else is working in this field, what have they done, and why wasn't that enough? Demonstrate your knowledge of the field.
- Assure that there is no duplication of other work. Replication of someone else's work in a new environment is legitimate.

3. Project Activity and Outcomes

- Why did you choose to address the issue in the manner that you have? Are there other approaches? If so, why aren't they appropriate to the situation you are seeking to ameliorate?
- What will be the specific outcomes achieved?
- What are the specific activities involved? Who will do them? How?
- Present a timeline of activities.
- Why is your organization the best one to do what you propose to do?

4. Evaluation

- The Office of Assessment (<http://www.umass.edu/provost/initiatives/assessment.html>) and the Center for Teaching (<http://www.umass.edu/cft/>) help programs (existing or proposed) develop evaluative tools.

5. Dissemination

- Dissemination should be linked to your project goals and objectives. For

example, if you are trying to affect policy, your dissemination plan should target policy-makers, media, and affected populations.

- Be creative. Sending an article to a professional journal is only one of many options. Consider op-ed pieces to newspapers or articles to more popular periodicals, conference presentations, community outreach activities, a web site, convening work groups of your peers, presentations to policy-makers, reports, briefing papers, press releases, videos, an interview on your local radio station; asking the foundation to provide an opportunity to meet with grantees doing similar work, newspaper coverage, presentations to community groups such as the chamber of commerce, listing yourself on speakers bureaus.

6. Budget and Continuation Funding

- Show your budget in table form and use a budget narrative to explain each item.
- Include other sources of funding, both cash and in-kind. Do not overlook the value of all in-kind contributions, including those of your collaborators.
- Indicate how the project will be funded after the grant has run out.
- The Office of Grants and Contract Administration (<http://www.umass.edu/research/ogca/fact.htm>) makes available all university policies covering all legal, fiscal, human resources and intellectual property issues. They can also work with you one to one to assess your project.

Approvals and Budgeting

Approvals

Accepting grant award money under the auspices of the university renders the university liable and responsible for anything you do. Your department head needs to approve the project as well as your dean or top administrator. In some cases, such as projects involving an academic appointment, you'll need approval from the Provost's office.

Budget

There is no fundraising without determining your legitimate costs. It's an ethics thing.

As you develop the scope of work for your project certain considerations arise that require approval and permission. That sounds pretty institutional and bureaucratic, but in real terms here's an example of why it's important:

You're awarded a small foundation grant to bring in more research assistants to tackle a particular problem. Great! Your department and the university are glad to have more funds to support graduate students. As you go through the RA selection process someone asks where the new RAs will sit. There is a little unused cubicle area big enough for one person, but no computer, no lights, no phone line, not even a decent chair. It's going to cost about \$5,000 to bring the cubicle area up to working standard, and you still don't know how to address where the other RA will sit. Congratulations, you have just cost your department at least \$5,000 out of its budget for the year. The RA stipends you brought in won't offset the charges to departmental accounts in any way. There will be no more Friday morning coffee and donuts. Suddenly you are not very popular, but hey, you have research support. In hindsight, the \$5,000+ could have been added to the grant request by consulting on the budget with the right people.

Consider the approval and budgeting processes as a good neighbor move. The process puts you in touch with the people who will support you in the long run, and gives them some voice in the process: department secretary, fiscal administrator, the guy from physical plant who assigns work crews. This kind of collaborative effort will help you build a better budget and justify an increased grant request. In addition, if your project will involve human subjects, animals, or special facilities, better to iron it out up front and include any charges in your grant request.

Why go through this? Because you and your department want the official credit that comes with pulling in money. You want to be seen as money-makers. Plus it builds your personal knowledge and skill-base for larger management tasks in the future.

Most people guesstimate their way through budgets. Your department fiscal administrator can help you assess real costs. Also, the Office of Grants and Contracts Administration (OGCA) (<http://www.umass.edu/research/ogca/fact.htm>) posts helpful guidelines and current rates for personnel charges on its web site.

The Provost's Office (<http://www.umass.edu/provost/contact.html>) approves the addition of new faculty, centers or institutes; oversees campus instructional technology; handles adjunct or guest lecturer appointments and more.

See also: Policies for animals, human subjects, etc (<http://www.umass.edu/research/policies.html>) .

Guidelines for a Letter of Inquiry

(A Letter of Inquiry is also known as a Letter of Intent, a query letter, a pre-proposal, or a concept paper)

Background: Your first contact with a foundation should be to request information about the foundation's missions and goals, specifically an annual report, giving guidelines, and grants list. If, after carefully reviewing this material, you determine that this foundation is an appropriate match for you, your next contact will be a Letter of Inquiry, which is a brief summary of your project.

Important: A Letter of Inquiry is not a vague exploration of an idea. It is assumed that you have already thought through your proposed project (including a budget!) and are just presenting an abbreviated description.

A Letter of Inquiry is a timesaver for both the foundation reviewer and the proposal writer, as it allows the reviewer to assess quickly whether or not there is a good match between the foundation's interests and the proposer's project. If the reviewer determines that it is a good match, he or she can request a more complete description as would be found in a full proposal. In fact, when you read the words, "proposals not accepted," it does not necessarily mean that a Letter of Inquiry is out of order. If the reviewer likes what she reads, you will be invited to submit a full proposal.

Technique

Consider how concise, yet engaging, you must be to keep someone's attention in conversation when there are many other people around also wanting that person's attention. And so it is with the Letter of Inquiry. Use your words smartly. Avoid jargon, boosterism, flowery subjective statements that can't be supported by facts, or others' statements. Write a logical, persuasive argument.

Contents

Please review the Basic Components of a Proposal () because a Letter of Inquiry is a condensed version of a proposal. You are giving the highlights of the same information in much the same order. For example, where you might use a page of your proposal for an

executive summary, in a Letter of Inquiry you do it in a paragraph. Letters of Inquiry are generally 2–3 pages. If the foundation indicates a page limit, do not exceed it!

Unless otherwise indicated by the foundation, the contents will generally follow this format:

1. Opening Paragraph: Your summary statement.

- It should be able to stand alone. If the reviewer reads nothing else they should know what you want to do from reading this paragraph. Make it clear what you want the reader to do; for example, consider funding the project.
- Answer the following: who wants to do what? how much is being requested? is this a portion of a larger project cost? over what period of time is money being requested?
- Example:

"The School of Nursing at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst (UMass) seeks support for developing an innovative undergraduate and graduate curriculum in psychiatric mental health nursing that will prepare expert nurse clinicians in the delivery of mental health services to at-risk adolescents in the community setting. We are requesting \$87,000 over a two-year period."

[FYI: This proposal got funded!]

- You also may want to say if you are responding to an RFP (Request for Proposals) or make the connection between the foundation's interest and your project.
- Keep this paragraph short! This seems like a lot to address, but you will have room later to explain your rationale for the project, your methodology, and to establish your credibility.

2. Statement of Need: The "why" of the project. (1–2 paragraphs)

- Explain what issue you are addressing.
- Explain why you have chosen to respond to this set of issues in the way that you have.
- State briefly why this matters in the area in which you will be working.
- Note who benefits. Make sure you can indicate the public good achieved.

3. Project Activity: The "what" and "how" of the project. (The bulk of your letter)

- Give an overview of the activities involved. Give details to the degree that space allows.

- Highlight why your approach is novel and deserving of the special attention that funding connotes.
 - Indicate if there will be collaboration with other organizations and what their roles will be. Be specific about who does what.
4. Outcomes (1–2 paragraphs; before or after the Project Activity)
- State the specific outcomes you hope to achieve.
 - Indicate how evaluation is part of the project. How will you know you've achieved these outcomes?
5. Credentials (1–2 paragraphs)
- Demonstrate why your institution or your staff is best equipped to carry out this activity.
 - Put any historic background about the institution here.
 - Brag with substance. Indicate awards, rankings, and tangible measures that set you apart from your peers.
6. Budget (1–2 paragraphs)
- State what the total project cost will be and how much of that you would be requesting from the foundation. Indicate broad categories of activities to be funded.
 - Include other sources of funding, both cash and in-kind. Especially indicate what your institution will contribute. Do not overlook the value of all in-kind contributions, including those of your collaborators.
7. Closing (1 paragraph)
- Offer to give any additional information the foundation might need.
 - Include a contact name and contact information.
 - Express appreciation for the reader's attention, or for the opportunity to submit if it is in response to a Request for Proposals (RFP).
 - Specifically indicate you are interested in discussing the project and will "contact their office" by a certain date (allowing time for them to receive and read the letter).
8. Signature
- Generally it is best to have the highest ranking person available sign the letter even if they are not identified as the "contact" person. This indicates institutional support.

Contact Us

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