

# Evaluating Your Prospect List: Questions About Potential Funders

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Excerpted from *Foundation Fundamentals*, Foundation Center, 8<sup>th</sup> ed., 2008

## **Does the funder accept applications**

- Some do not. Determine this early so you don't waste your time.
- Check to see if anyone in your organization knows someone on their board. You could cultivate a relationship with this foundation and become one of their "pre-selected" organizations.

## **Has the grantmaker demonstrated a real commitment to funding in your subject field?**

- Perhaps a grant made to a foundation like yours was a one-time exception

## **Does it seem likely that the funder will make grants to organizations in your geographic location?**

- Prior giving in your geographic area is a good indication
- Check funder's guidelines
- Be on the lookout for local or regional giving patterns

## **What are the financial conditions that may affect the foundation's ability to give?**

- Prior level of giving is a good indication of future giving.
- Has the grantmaker recently received a large contribution?
- What is the current economy like?

## **Does the funder give to the same nonprofit groups every year, or have they committed their resources many years into the future?**

- Refer to a funder's list of grants for the past two or three years to look for patterns
- Check for multi-year commitments which might limit the amount of funds they have available

## **Does the amount of money you are requesting fit within the funder's typical grant range?**

- Again, look for patterns.
- If the largest grant made within the past few years is \$25,000 – don't ask for \$40,000
- First time grantees may be given smaller grants until they have established a relationship with your organization

**Does the funder have a policy prohibiting grants for the type of support you are requesting?**

- Some will not give grants for general support or operating funds
- Some will not provide funds for building projects or equipment

**Does the funder usually make grants to cover the full cost of a project or does it favor projects where other funders will participate?**

- Unless you are seeking funding for a very small project, it is unlikely that a first-time donor will fund an entire project.
- Most funders assume that grantseekers will be approaching multiple funders for their project

**Does the funder put limits on the length of time it is willing to support a project?**

- Some foundations favor one-time grants and some continue support over many years

**What types of organizations does the funder tend to support?**

- Some funders will support a wide range of organizational types. Some do not.
- Lists of past recipients can provide good insight

**Does the funder have application deadlines?**

- Note carefully any information regarding deadlines.
- Some foundations have deadlines while others review proposals on a continuing basis

**Do you or does anyone on your board or staff know someone connected with the funder?**

- Who are the funder's current trustees and staff – are there any connections with your staff?
- Knowing someone affiliated with a prospective funder can facilitate the process