

Five Keys to Fundraising Success

Anthropologists' training in observation, critical thinking, and our documentary analysis positions us to be well-prepared to tackle the challenges of fundraising. Use these five keys to find the funds for your work.

1 Research the Funders in Depth

Explore databases, set Google Alerts, and network with your colleagues and with funders to find the optimal mix of grants, individual donors, fiscal sponsors, or others who will be ready to invest in your success. Nearly 25 million grant opportunities are posted on the Foundation Directory Online database. Find your way there and start searching for your perfect match.



2 Request a Brief Conversation or Meeting

Consider contacting the funder prior to writing your proposal. Not only does the interaction allow you to gauge their preliminary reaction to your idea, but it also enables you to gather additional insights that you can incorporate into your submission. You also have succeeded in introducing yourself to the funder, potentially initiating a longer-term relationship.



3 Create a Strong Case for Support

Make a strong case for support. Capture the funder's attention in the first sentence by using a "hook" -- a statistic, a question or an anecdote. Develop a clear and concise statement of your rationale and proposal logic, tying it directly to the funder's mission, interests, and requirements. Explain why you are uniquely qualified to receive the funding and conduct the work. Your perspective, your expertise, and your WOW-factor need to demonstrate your overall commitment to the project.



4 Sweat the Proposal Details

Focus on the details of the requirements and the ways in which you address them in the proposal. Ensure the design, the delivery, the methods, and the potential outcomes or impacts of your work are described in a comprehensive package. Craft your request for funding as you communicate the project's value. The fine print matters here; word and character counts make a difference. Read the instructions and the notice of funding again to be sure you are set up for a win.



5 Build Relationships and Visibility

An important aspect of this process entails building relationships with your funders. Good communication and the demonstration of sincere gratitude for their assistance and support will create trust and visibility for them, for you, and for your work. And, you may find they may be willing to support a different project you propose in the future!

