

Welcome back to beginning grant writing lesson 9. By this stage you should have your attachments ready and your three basic documents prepared. You've got a solid foundation to begin a grant program.

The obvious next question is where do I send them? This lesson and the next will be devoted to finding funders and understanding how best to approach them.

First, remember, this is not an exact science and the rules are flexible. A great deal depends on where your organization is based. There are many differing theories on how to approach funders and which funders are more likely write the check. Should you phone first or not? Should you send an inquiry letter, if no specific approach is listed?

At a minimum, try to follow whatever guidelines you can find, but sometimes you have to use your best judgment.

I read a grant writing book recently that said the grant seeker should attempt to establish personal relationships with a small group of funders, this author suggested ten. His advice was to phone them often, and take them out to lunch. That's fine if you live anywhere near Los Angeles, Chicago or New York, but if your organization is in tiny Milltown, Indiana, lunch out is not an option.

If you have a local community foundation, or United Way it might be an option to take them out to lunch—it's possible anyway. The idea is to "build-up" a relationship over time. So even if they won't fund you this year, next year it might happen, especially if their board changes and you get on a first-name basis.

Establishing relationships with funders is a good idea, but how to go about that is different for every group.

The "Holy Grail" for non-profits is to find a funder you can count on each and every year. If you get a check from the ABC Family Foundation in June of 08, use the money the way you promised and stay in touch, when you send another request in May of 09, you'll have a good chance of a repeat.

After the first check arrives, you want to send a thank you (within two weeks) and a follow-up packet (roughly 3-6 months later) and then another

request to them at the one year anniversary of your first check. Thus you are establishing a relationship, without going out to lunch.

Where are the funders? There are lists and lists and more lists. Some lists require a subscription fee and others don't. Some have different price levels, the more money you spend the better and more comprehensive the list.

Even if everyone can't agree on all aspects of grant writing, they do agree the [www.foundationcenter.org](http://www.foundationcenter.org), has just about the best list and best search options available. They have information on over 90,000 foundations in the U.S.

Their top-of-the-line subscription level is expensive and not many small non-profits could afford it. On the plus side, my town has a subscription at the local public library and at the United Way office. Be sure to check around your vicinity to see who might offer it. They might require an appointment.

Anyone with the internet can check their database of 990 forms. A 990 form is the tax forms required annually for each foundation. We'll talk more on that in lesson 10.

Points to consider:

Lists of funders and their guidelines will overlap and you'll eventually start to recognize names.

You'll no doubt see DJ & T Foundation for spay and neuter on many lists, as with Petsmart, Petco, Maddie's Fund and Summerlee.

On the other hand, you won't see the Schuyler & Yvonne Moore Family Foundation show up very often. Animal welfare can be found listed on their "fields of interest" section, but so can athletics/sports, school programs, higher education, medical school/education. This foundation is not entirely focused on animals, but has given to animals somewhere, sometime.

What does that mean? It could indicate they donate \$5000 every year to their local zoo or they give out half a million to animal shelters nation wide.

This particular family might love penguins and only give to groups who study and work to preserve penguins. The phrase animal-welfare covers a wide range of activities and can even change from one year to the next. That means your search does not end, when you see the words “animal-welfare” on a funders guidelines. We all wish it were that easy!

If the funder is on many lists, (especially free lists found online) you can assume many animal-welfare groups are aware of them and writing to them. The Helen Brach Foundation is an example.

You’re not limited to approaching foundations that are **only** animal-welfare. If your project includes seniors or kids, for example, that opens up an entire new batch of funders.

Some grant-makers lists can still be found in print at the public library.

The search for grant-makers is on-going, and I’ll repeat **on-going!**

In lesson ten, we’ll “fine tune” the search and the approach, especially as it pertains to the Foundation Directory and 990 forms.

If you have questions regarding this lesson, write to [klemmon@bloomington.in.us](mailto:klemmon@bloomington.in.us).