

A Creative Resources & Research
White Paper



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GRANT RESEARCH: SUCCESS MEANS DRILLING DOWN

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Introduction

Grant research is far more complicated than merely skimming along through a series of web sites; it requires that the researcher drill down through multiple layers of information from a variety of sources in order to make a match between your organization's need for funding and the grant maker's desire to give.

Online resources like the Foundation Center offer information about more than 95,000 funding sources which could make you think that grant research is like shooting fish in a barrel. But grant research is more like fishing in a huge pond with tens of thousands of fish, and none of them are exactly the same species. Some of the fish eat in the morning and some at night, some eat worms and others eat minnows, and some fish like deep water and others like the shallows. Grant research can be just as difficult hooking a fish in that pond would be. The trick is hooking a grant maker that likes your cause.

Problem Statement

Non-profit organizations are cause-driven and their giving is commonly highly targeted. Non-profit grant makers often have very specific targets for funding. Even organizations willing to give funding for multiple causes often have specific priorities and these may change from year to year. Often an organization gives grants only to specific types of organizations and not to others. The levels of detail involved in identifying an organization willing to make a gift are complex, detailed, and understanding it requires great effort to dig up all relevant and available information.

These challenges make grant research a difficult, detail-intensive and time consuming task. For these reasons, many grant seeking organizations find that it is more cost effective to employ a professional grant research company than investing in staff time, training, and tools needed to do the job right.

Do It Yourself Option

Before the advent of the Internet and the development of online research tools, finding grant opportunities relied on printed materials and waiting for a Request for Proposals (RFP) to come in the mail. The Internet has enabled grant research to advance to a whole new level of accuracy as well as complexity. The ease of access to online resources may make it appear that research has become simpler, when in fact it has only made it possible to be much more thorough, and therefore, the Internet has raised the level of complexity.

Many non-profits do their own research. If you choose to do it yourself, the first tool that is needed is access to an online system such as that offered by the Foundation Center (<http://foundationcenter.org>). While there are a variety of subscription levels, annual access for a professional user is more than \$1,200, a significant investment. The database is also publicly available at many locations around the country but this is limited by operating hours and access to the computers the system is loaded on. Additionally, the online subscription system is more sophisticated than the disk version available at most libraries.

Other online research tools are available, some cost less and some cost more. The Foundation Center's online search engine is excellent and quite comprehensive and it enables the researcher to conduct searches using a number of screening factors that enable one to drill down and qualify a potential grant maker. Drilling down means looking for evidence that a particular grant maker gives money to the specific cause you're researching.

In order to qualify a grant maker as a good prospect for funding there are a number of important factors that must be considered. First among them is whether they fund the specific cause that your organization promotes. If you are involved in animal welfare for example, then seeking grant makers that give to animal welfare organizations is a start but it's a very shallow level of research.

The next level is to determine if animal welfare is something they *can* fund because it's part of their bylaws, or if it's something they actually *do* fund and *have funded* recently.

Next, drill down into the grants given to animal welfare. Are they only providing grants to preserve wetland environments for wildlife while you may be looking for money to support your animal shelter? Have they ever given a grant to an animal shelter and what was it for? This level of drilling down means looking through their IRS 990 forms over the past five years or so to determine what organizations and causes they have actually provided a grant to. Noza.com provides free access to 990 forms online.

Look in the 990's to see if the grant maker is funding organizations similar to yours and for the specific cause that you want money to support. Animal Welfare is a broad topic, as many cause names are. Literacy, for example, can mean adults or children, it can mean after school or during school, preschool or secondary school.

Of course the cause is only one level of drilling down. It makes no sense to write a grant to an organization that has given grants to animal shelters but only within the state of Florida when you're in Oregon. It might be worth a phone call or a visit to their web site to see if their guidelines restrict them geographically. A review of the grant maker's web site might indicate that they have a priority for giving within a specific state or county or even a city, sometimes even a specific geographic region within a city.

Other important factors to screen for are whether your organization is an eligible applicant. Some grant makers won't fund a public organization like a school, or they won't fund a church or religious organization. Some won't fund organizations with budgets under a certain limit or over a certain limit. Some won't fund organizations that don't have an annual budget audit. Some won't give grants to

organizations that are United Way recipients. These limitations are crucial to locate before making an application for funding.

There are many specific restrictions on funding that must be carefully reviewed before you bother a grant maker with a request for funding. Imagine receiving thousands of applications from organizations which did not take the time to thoroughly research and submitted applications because they didn't know they were not eligible in the first place. It's a big waste of time for your employees and for the employees of the grant making organization, and nobody has the resources to waste these days.

Creative Resources and Research (CRR) Solution

CRR has staff members who are fully trained to conduct careful grant maker research for your organization. We subscribe to online resources that enable us to drill down and find the information you need to ensure that your organization is sending applications only to qualified grant making organizations.

Benefit 1

CRR will save you money because you won't have to invest heavily in online sources for research, spend money on staff training, or pay for staff time to conduct the level of research necessary to locate qualified grant makers.

Benefit 2

CRR will make your grant writing more efficient by screening out grant makers that are certain to turn you down. Our research supports you in two key ways; A) By delivering the highest quality grant maker leads, and B) By implementing a research protocol that is efficient and thorough.

Benefit 3

CRR staff monitors a multitude of online grant research sites, RFP announcement sites, government grant sites, online journals, and online social networking related to grants in order to

collect the most current information and to give our clients the edge in grant seeking.

Implementation

CRR grant research begins with you. We first seek to fully understand your organization including: 1) your vision; 2) your mission; 3) your needs, 4) your internal case documents; 5) your external case, 6) your budget, 7) your priorities, 8) your constituency, 9) your history with grants, and anything else of relevance that enables us to target our research accurately.

Second, we begin with a foundation search that drills through many layers including; 1) Cause, 2) Geography, 3) Grant Size, 4) Funding Priorities, 5) Previous grant recipients, 6) Special conditions, 7) Review of Grant Maker Web Site, 8) Review of grant maker annual reports, 9) Review of grant maker 990 forms, 10) Review of grant maker articles and press releases, 11) Communication with grant maker by phone to explore likelihood of funding, 12) Communication with other recipients of funding to learn more a grant maker's priorities and conditions for grant making, 13) Grant maker's timeline for accepting applications, 14) Application process.

Third, we conduct regular and systematic research on government grant sites where we monitor funding forecasts, RFP announcements and the Federal Register to make sure that no government grant opportunity gets missed. We review RFP's carefully to determine the applicability of each to our client list.

At the completion of our research protocol, we are able to provide a list of qualified grant makers and grant opportunities that your organization can pursue confidently.

 **Summary**

Shallow grant research is an option but it is likely to lead to frustration, expend valuable resources with little hope of return, and waste valuable staff time. This approach is disheartening and it tends to yield very little income for your organization.

CRR provides professional grant research that drills down thoroughly to rule out unlikely grant maker sources and to appropriately qualify grant maker leads. An investment in CRR professional grant research services makes sense because we'll save you money and greatly increase your grant funding percentages.

Our capabilities and resources mean that CRR can conduct grant research more quickly and efficiently to determine the best grant makers for your organization.