

THE TOP QUESTIONS

TO ASK YOUR FOUNDATON REPRESENTATIVE

(... TO HELP YOU GET THE GRANT)

By Marcia Whitney



Why is making the call so important??

Making an initial, *brief* call to a foundation representative before writing your grant makes you FAR more likely to get the grant. It's a critical step to take *before* you start writing any grant... and it can also save you TONS of time.

Besides making them aware of your organization and funding needs, it can also help you avoid writing grants to a foundation that isn't interested in your project or organization, has changed their guidelines, or doesn't currently have grant dollars to distribute.

This easy-to-adapt list of simple questions can help you start building a critical relationship with your potential funder. You can easily adapt these questions as you see fit for any call.

This step will help you confirm that your research is both accurate and current – including deadlines and process for submitting grants.

We've simplified this process based on years of knowing what works... and we've created a list of our top questions to make this important step even easier (and more effective) for you.

So you're ready to pick up the phone... now what?

The key to making your grant more likely to get funded isn't in the exact questions you ask, but in ***the fact that you're picking up the phone to make the connection in the first place*** (and, of course, being respectful of the time of the person on the other end of the phone).

The success of this call is not judged by its length, but by ***the impression you make*** on the other person, your ability to convey to them that ***you know what you're doing*** and that you ***represent a competent and well-run organization***.

You're not making this call just to make the call – but to get *key information* you need to write a grant (*or not waste your time writing a grant that won't get funded!*)

The goal is not to tell the foundation rep why your organization is awesome, but to show them that you're respectful of their time and appreciate their insights on how you can craft *the strongest grant proposal for their foundation*.

WHAT TO SAY ON THE CALL...

Simply choose 3 of these questions and adapt accordingly*:

* *Important note: Short and sweet is the key. You want to make the foundation contact enjoy speaking with you, and not feel "trapped" on the call with you.*

HOW TO BEGIN THE CALL >

- 1 - Introduce yourself (your name and the organization you represent).
- 2 - Tell them why you're calling (e.g., to ask a few quick questions to make sure you have all the current information about their grant application guidelines).
- 3 - Reference any internal contacts you have (e.g., "your board member, [John Smith], suggested that I call" (if relevant)).
- 4 - Give a couple of *brief* sentences about organization/project (your "elevator speech").
- 5 - Frame your interest in the grant (e.g., "It appears from my review of your website that our project is a very good fit with your guidelines..."
(and, if relevant:)

"...because of your previous support for [cause], particularly the _____ project."

OR

"...because of your foundation's interest in helping [beneficiaries] and your willingness to think nationally, not just locally."

WHAT TO ASK (PICK 3) >

Based on what I've told you so far, do you think an application would be appropriate?

Why it's important:

If you don't ask, you won't find out exactly what the funder or program director truly thinks about your viability as a nonprofit. By asking you are getting a pretty straight answer about whether your nonprofit has a chance of being considered for funding – an important step before you write the grant proposal. If you are told that an application has a slim or no chance of being considered, you have just saved yourself hours of unnecessary work.

Your guidelines state that the next deadline is [date]. Is that correct?

Why it's important:

This one is *critical*. Not confirming deadlines can be a costly mistake. Occasionally grant review boards have extenuating circumstances that cause them to change deadlines, or the information you are reviewing could be out of date. By confirming the next deadline, you are ensuring that you can get the grant submitted in plenty of time to be reviewed by the funder.

Would you be able to review our proposal for input before final submission?

Why it's important:

By not asking this question you could miss out an excellent opportunity to get feedback on your grant before it is formally reviewed. You might receive valuable advice from the funder that you would not otherwise have, and this could significantly impact the success of your grant. However, if you do ask for input, you are giving your grant the best opportunity for success because the funder might have insight for you that could make a big difference in whether you are funded or not.

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Can you advise me on the appropriate amount for a grant request?

Why it's important:

If you don't ask funders this question, you run the risk of asking for too much money, or too little. If you ask for too much, you risk having your grant dismissed right off the bat, and if you ask for too little, you are leaving money on the table – money that your nonprofit urgently needs. However, by asking this question you are able to get some honest guidance on the range of funding that this funder is willing to provide, giving you the best chance at the amount of funding that you need.

What other foundations should we be talking to about this project?

Why it's important:

If you don't ask about other funders, you could miss out on valuable tips about other sources of grant money that could make a big impact for your nonprofit. Funders often know of other opportunities that could be available and are often willing to share that information. However, by asking the question when speaking to the program officer, you will ensure that you have gotten input on other funding sources from one of the best authorities on opportunities: a program officer themselves. Plus, foundations like to know that you don't see them as your *only* source of funding.

How many copies of our proposal would be helpful (if not stated on website)?

Why it's important:

(Nothing terrible happens if you don't.) By asking the funder how many copies they would like, you're potentially making their lives easier by allowing them to have access to more than one copy, which they can then pass along to another grant reviewer. It's a professional courtesy that will typically be appreciated and cause you to be viewed favorably by the funder.

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HOW TO END THE CALL >

1 - Thank them for their time.

2 - If you plan to submit an application, tell them when they can expect it (hint: the farther in advance of the deadline, the better) – then *submit it on that date!*

If you follow these steps, you're guaranteed to be more likely to get the grant...

Then, your job is to submit a great application!

Our book, ***Get the Grant, Change the World*** will help you do just that. You can get the book at www.grantdivas.com.

If you still have questions, or would like to inquire about getting a professional review of your grant – or help researching and writing it,

CONTACT US at:

grantdivasllc@gmail.com

We've helped both raise and fund millions of grant dollars for organizations of various sizes and missions – and we can help you, too, ***Get the Grant and Change the World.***