

Action for Healthy Kids Tip Sheet: Finding Potential Funders

Each foundation has its own mission and specific funding priorities, and most rarely make grants that do not address those issues. To raise funds, Action for Healthy Kids looks for local grantmakers with funding priorities in areas such as children and youth (including specific areas such as adolescent health or early childhood development), community health, health promotion, education, chronic disease prevention (including specific conditions related to poor nutrition or physical inactivity such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, or obesity), underserved populations, and public health.

Look at all possibilities, including the business community – Large corporations may have corporate foundations or community benefit programs with application procedures similar to those of private and community foundations. Giving by smaller businesses is often less structured, but the relatively modest amounts required to support AFHK may appeal to small business owners.

Researching Funders On-Line

The Internet provides many resources for identifying potential funders. The following organizations and web sites provide access to basic information about foundations and other types of nonprofit grantmakers.

The **Foundation Center** at www.foundationcenter.org provides a wealth of information on foundations, including lists of top funders in each state, and an on-line searchable database of foundations (available by subscription). To access the information on the top 50 funders in your state, go to http://fdncenter.org/fc_stats/gm/financial_state.html. To find out more about the Foundation Center's searchable database, go to <http://fdncenter.org/learn/classroom/fdoguidetour>. Costs for a one-month subscription range from \$19.95 for access to a database of the 10,000 largest foundations in the U.S. to \$149.95 per month for access to a database of 80,000 foundations. National AFHK has a subscription to this service and can work with you to pull up the information you need. Contact Sarah Titzer at sarah@actionforhealthykids.org for more information.

Grantsmart at www.grantsmart.org provides access to the tax forms of over 96,000 foundations and charitable trusts. These tax forms provide a wealth of information, including the names of grantees and the amounts awarded. For a diagram that provides guidance on interpreting the tax forms of private foundations, go to <http://fdncenter.org/funders/990pffly.pdf> (Adobe Acrobat Reader required).

Guidestar at www.guidestar.org provides access to information on thousands of nonprofit organizations nationwide, including foundations. To look up information on a specific funder, including recent IRS findings, go to www.guidestar.org/search. Guidestar's Grant Explorer is a searchable database that provides access (by subscription) to information about 1.9 million grants. A one-month subscription starts at \$49.99 and an annual subscription starts at \$499.99. For more information about Grant Explorer, go to http://commerce.guidestar.org/guidestar/gcategory.aspx?cs_catalog=Products+and+services&cs_category=10_grantExplorer.

The web site of the **Giving Forum** at www.givingforum.org provides access to information about state and regional associations of grantmakers. To find out if there is a grantmaker association for your state or region, go to www.givingforum.org/rlocator.html. In some cases, the web sites of these associations list member foundations.

Print Resources

The following print resources are available in the reference section of many local libraries: Foundation Directly (which lists the top 10,000 foundations); Foundation Directory Part 2 (which lists the next 10,000 foundations); National Directory of Corporate Giving. In addition, some libraries provide access to the Foundation Center's searchable database, either on-line or on CD. To find the library nearest to you that provides access to the database, go to <http://fdncenter.org/collections>.

Action for Healthy Kids Tip Sheet: Approaching Potential Funders

Once you have identified potential funders to approach with your request for funds, you'll need to decide what to ask for and how to make the initial contact with these funders. Here are some things you should know before contacting a funder with your request and some tips for making that important first contact.

Things to Know in Advance

Knowing certain things about a potential funder will help you tailor your request and increase your chances of success. In some cases, you may be able to find this information on funders' web sites; in other cases, you may need to call the funder and ask some questions. Here are some of the things that will be helpful to know in advance.

What is the name of the appropriate person to contact?

In foundations, you will want the name of the appropriate program officer. The title of the appropriate person in other types of funding organizations (e.g., corporate funders) may vary: just ask for the name and contact information of the person who would handle requests similar to yours.

What is the process and timetable for submitting a request like yours? Many foundations have established procedures for receiving requests for funding and process funding requests on a set schedule. But even in these foundations, there may be ways for the funder to consider a request like yours.

Does the funder permit its staff to make discretionary grants? Many foundations give their program officers or their executive directors the ability to make discretionary grants outside of the foundation's formal grant approval process. Ask funders if staff can award discretionary grants. If the answer is yes, find out if there is a dollar limit on these grants and how to submit a request for a discretionary grant.

How to Frame Your Request

You'll want to make different types of pitches to different types of funders. For example, if you are approaching a private foundation, you'll want to make sure that you describe how your request fits in with the foundation's mission and funding priorities. If you are contacting a community foundation, you'll want to discuss how participation in AFHK programs will improve the health and well-being of community residents. If you are approaching a corporate giving program, your request should address how the work of your state team is addressing the interests and concerns of the business community, including such things as building a healthy workforce, reducing future health care costs, or making the community a better place to live and go to school.

Tips for Making the Initial Contact

Starting with a Letter – Many funders ask potential grantees to start with a letter that briefly describes what funds will be used for and why they are needed. This letter is your opportunity to convince a funder that your request is a good investment. In addition to talking about your needs, make sure your letter addresses the funder's needs as well: talk about how the work of your state team and its participation in AFHK will help the funder achieve its goals.

Starting with a Call – If possible, it is preferable to start the process of requesting funds by speaking directly with the person responsible for making decisions about requests like yours. Work with members of your state team to determine if anyone involved with the team or its member organizations knows that person and is willing to contact him/her on your behalf. If you are making a cold call, be prepared to be transferred to voice mail. Have a brief script prepared in advance, so you can leave a concise message that provides information about AFHK, the work of your state team, your request, and how you can help the funder meet its goals.
