Grant Writing Toolkit: Researching Grantmakers

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Toolkits are designed to provide you with easy to access information on key subject areas that can strengthen your organization.

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Researching Grantmakers

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Overview:
In addition to securing funding, grant writing provides a vehicle for your organization to educate funders about key community needs. A grant application can inform funders of how your organization meets those community needs. Funders and nonprofits that deliver community programs have a symbiotic relationship; both entities can benefit from that relationship. Grantmakers receive requests that far exceed the amount of funds they have available to distribute making the grant process extremely competitive.

The United Way of Central New Mexico’s Center for Nonprofit Excellence has created toolkits to assist with grant research and grant proposal writing. **It is important to read all grant guidelines carefully** and follow the application instructions. Each grant application or request for proposal uses its own terminology and has its own specific requirements. Below are some common grant application components.

Grant Research
- Although not part of a grant application, grant research is a critical part of the process. Research funders to ensure that your proposal fits within the grantmaker’s priorities.

Cover Letter
- Briefly identify your organization, describe the program plan (one or two sentences) and state the dollar amount of the request. Include the name and contact information of the person in your organization who will be the contact for the grant.
Needs Assessment / Problem Statement / Needs Statement
- Delineate the problem or issue within the community to be addressed, provide data to substantiate the need and a human interest story or example to make it personal. See Needs Statement Toolkit

Goals and Objectives
- Generally, one section of the application requests information about what you will accomplish and the steps to do so.
- Goals can be broad, used to define the overall purpose of the program.
- Objectives can be the measurable changes expected as a result of the program. Make the objectives specific: who will benefit from the program, how many and in what time frame.
- If there are several goals, relate objectives to the appropriate goal.

Program Plan / Proposed Project / Project Design
- Detailed information about your organization’s plans to address the community need, including who or what will benefit from the program, who will carry out the program and how. See Program Plan Toolkit

Program Budget
- Consider all the expenses to implement the program: salaries and benefits, supplies, transportation, technology, and administrative expenses.

Evaluation
- Describe plans to assess the program and measure impact.
- Measurement tools may be data collection, client satisfaction surveys, or other tools. Include what is being measured and how often each tool is used.
- With ongoing measurement and periodic evaluation, adjustments and changes can be made to the program to improve the results.
- Measurement and evaluation should relate to the objectives of the program plan and funding request.

Collaboration Information
- Describe how your organization will work with other organizations to leverage resources.

Other Funding / Sustainability
- Identify other funding sources, including fee for service, and recent grants awarded, pending and declined.

Qualifications / History / Organizational Background
- In a brief history of the organization emphasize the accomplishments and expertise; describe your organization’s ability to do the work proposed; information requested may include: mission statement; organizational goals; EIN number; summary of key personnel qualifications

Attachments / Appendices
- May include: IRS letter of determination; letter from the New Mexico Attorney General; letter from Registrar of Charitable Organizations; most recent IRS 990; list of Board Members and affiliations; current Financial Statements; audited financial statements; Anti-Discrimination Policy; Letters of Support.

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Introduction
The Researching Grantmakers Toolkit provides information for nonprofit personnel and volunteers about a number of tools that are available for grant research. The toolkit provides an overview of various resources included and how best to use them. The toolkit also provides instructions about how to learn more about particular grantmakers and suggestions of how to evaluate whether to pursue a particular funding opportunity.

Things to Consider When Researching Grantmakers
It is important to be selective about which grantmakers to pursue for funding. Sending letters of inquiry (LOIs) or proposals to grantmakers without having done careful research prior to submission is a practice to avoid. To help determine which grantmakers to pursue, we have provided a number of research tools in this Toolkit. Before exploring these in more depth, it is important to consider the following tips:

1. Carefully review the grantmakers’ mission and funding priorities.
2. Evaluate whether the grantmakers’ mission and funding priorities align with your organization’s purpose and programs.
3. Review any extra materials a grantmaker provides via a website (if they have one), to get a sense of what they are hoping to achieve with their grants. Again, do the grantmakers’ interests align with the purpose and programs of your organization?
4. Look at who the grantmaker has previously funded (via website or 990), to get a sense of whether your organization is similar to other organizations it funds.
5. Carefully review any grantmaking guidelines provided by the grantmaker. It is important to meet submission deadlines, follow guidelines and answer the specific questions asked in a Request for Proposals (RFP).
6. Attend a Proposal Writing Workshop sponsored by the grantmaker (if provided).
7. Call or email a grantmaker to ask if they might be interested in receiving a submission from your organization. But make sure to review the grantmaker’s guidelines. Some grantmakers will not respond to email, others provide names, phone numbers and email addresses to answer any questions.
8. Grant research also includes relationship building. Do you know anyone who works for any of the funded organizations? Could you contact them for any advice about the particular funder?
Do you know anyone on the grantmaker’s board of directors? Do any of your nonprofit organization’s board members know any of the grantmaker’s board members? These relationships can help you learn more about a grantmaker and its grantmaking processes. Building a relationship with the grants program officer is also important. While this person usually does not have a direct vote in the funding decision she or he can provide you with valuable insight about the grantmaker.
New Mexico Grantmakers Directory
Overview
The New Mexico Grantmakers Directory is an online searchable database of funders who provide grants to New Mexico nonprofit organizations. The grantmakers included in the directory are either located in New Mexico, fund in New Mexico or provide national opportunities for which New Mexico nonprofits may be eligible to apply. The purpose of the directory is to assist nonprofit organizations to be more efficient in their initial research of grantmakers, providing grantmaker profiles that are simple and concise and help nonprofit organizations decide whether it is worth their investment of time to pursue a particular funder further.

The New Mexico Grantmakers Directory was created by the Center for Nonprofit Excellence in partnership with the New Mexico Association of Grantmakers. The directory is maintained and updated by the Center for Nonprofit Excellence, a program of the United Way of Central New Mexico.

How to Access and Navigate the Directory
2. The Directory has 3 Navigational Tabs at the top of the page:
   - Search
   - Browse by Name
   - Help
3. The Search Tab has 5 search field options:

    Keyword Search,  
    Program Funding Area,  
    Geographic Funding Focus,  
    Populations Served and  
    Accepts LOI’s/Proposals.

    *This will be discussed in more detail further along in the toolkit.*

4. The Browse by Name Tab provides a way to search Grantmaker names in alphabetical order.

5. The Help Menu is a brief reference tool for how to use the directory.

What’s Included in a Grantmaker Profile
The New Mexico Grantmakers Directory is made up of hundreds of grantmaker profiles. Each grantmaker profile provides contact information, funding priorities, and information about whether a funder accepts Letters of Interest or Proposals. The profile information is a summary of information provided by grantmakers or researched from websites and/or 990s. The profile should provide enough information to help nonprofit personnel or volunteers decide whether to further pursue additional information about a specific grantmaker, their grantmaking program areas and their application requirements.

Many grantmaker profiles are extensive, however, many grantmakers included in this directory have brief profiles. Many small family foundations or corporations with locations in New Mexico do provide grants, however they may not accept solicitations or offer funding for which nonprofits in New Mexico are eligible. We have included these funders in the Directory to help nonprofits weed through and eliminate grantmakers that may not be a fit for further research.
Here is a sample grantmaker profile:

The following fields are in New Mexico Grantmakers Directory profiles, however, not all grantmakers provide information for all fields. Each profile is divided into two sections: Grant Details and Contact Information.

**Grant Details** includes the following information if available:

Does the grantmaker accept LOI’s/proposals? Grantmakers who accept and do NOT accept LOIs/proposals are included in this Directory. Please do not send LOIs/proposals to grantmakers that answer “NO” in this field. LOI stands for Letter of Inquiry/Interest/Intent and is usually a 1-3 page summary of a funding request. See grantmaker profile for specific LOI or proposal instructions.

Web Address and Link: The web address and a square picture web link of the grantmaker website are provided when available. Click on the webpage image to connect to the grantmaker website. It is a good idea to get familiar with a grantmaker’s website, review their About Us section, their Grantmaking areas and their guidelines.
Average NM Grant Size:  When available this field includes information directly provided from the grantmaker. The average grant size is often the average amount of their grantmaking range; i.e. If they fund projects between $5,000 and $10,000, this field will say $7,500.

Program Funding Area:  The categories listed are based on the National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities Classification System (NTEE codes). For more information about what specifically falls within each code, go to [http://nccs.urban.org/classification/NTEE.cfm](http://nccs.urban.org/classification/NTEE.cfm) and view the “Full list of NTEE codes.” This classification system broadly defines areas of interest. For more specific information, the Grantmaking Program Areas and Descriptions within each Grantmaker Profile need to be reviewed.

Geographic Funding Focus:  Includes “National” for grantmakers that provide national opportunities for which New Mexico nonprofits are eligible. Includes “Statewide” for grantmakers that fund organizations throughout New Mexico and also lists specific New Mexico counties for those grantmakers who only fund in given counties.

Populations Served:  Includes “All” for grantmakers that fund organizations who serve the general population and lists specific populations if a grantmaker specifies populations they serve with their grantmaking. Includes “N/A” for grantmakers whose population served is unknown or does not fit the human populations provided.

Mission/Giving Statement:  A brief description of the grantmaker's purpose.

Grantmaking Program Areas:  These are general names, using the grantmaker’s language, for the type of programs the grantmakers fund.

Grantmaking Program Area Descriptions:  These 1-3 sentence descriptions expand upon the above general names. This field can be very useful to identifying whether a nonprofit’s programs align with the grantmaker’s funding priorities.

Type of Funding/Funding Restrictions:  This field describes in more detail general requirements or specific criteria an applicant organization needs to meet to be eligible for funding. It can also highlight important information about types of funding and types of requests the grantmaker does not consider. See grantmaker websites for complete lists of eligibility criteria and funding restrictions.

Applicant Instructions:  Includes how to apply for funding or recommends viewing instructions online via the grantmaker’s website. Deadlines are not included in the New Mexico Grantmakers Directory. Check with funder before applying to make sure instructions are current and to confirm deadlines.

Notes:  Any additional information that the researcher feels may be relevant to New Mexico nonprofit organizations that does not fit in the fields above.

Best Method of Contact:  This field lists how best to contact the grantmaker. Many grantmakers prefer email, phone calls or LOIs prior to receiving or extending an invitation to submit a full proposal.
Organization Contact Information includes the following, if available:

- **Mailing Address**: Address for parcel post delivery to grantmaker.
- **Phone**: General phone number for grantmaker.
- **Fax**: General fax number for grantmaker.
- **General Email**: General email address for grantmaker.
- **Primary Contact Name**: Who to contact at the grantmaker organization.
- **Title**: The job title of the Primary Contact.
- **Primary Contact Email**: The direct email address for the primary contact, if different than the general email address.
- **Primary Contact Phone**: The direct phone number for the primary contact, if different than the general phone number.

**Verified by Grantmaker**: This field informs the user that the Directory profile was verified by the grantmaker via communication with the Center for Nonprofit Excellence or the information was taken from a current website or both.

**Updated**: Each profile page at the bottom in italics lists when the profile was last updated. This is visible to help the user determine the accuracy of a given grantmaker profile. Grantmakers can make updates to the Directory at any time and are invited to update their profiles on an annual basis.

**How to Search Grantmakers in the New Mexico Grantmakers Directory**

There are 5 Search fields:
- **Keyword Search**
- **Program Funding Area**
- **Geographic Funding Focus**
- **Populations Served**
- **Accepts LOIs/Proposals**

These search fields can be used individually or in a combination to search for grantmakers. It is recommended to begin with broader single field searches and then to refine them by adding additional fields to your search. Additional search criteria will narrow the results returned. *If you do not select an option from a search field, it will search for all entries within this field.*

Each search field is described below with tips that will help a user better understand how to search within the New Mexico Grantmakers Directory.

**Keyword Search**: Searchable by any word or combination of words; i.e., search by the words "economic development" or "development." A search for "economic development" will result in a shorter list of grantmakers as it is a more specific search. However, it will bring up a list of grantmakers that have both of these words in their profile, but it may not mean that the two words are next to each other.
The keyword search does not work with partial words, i.e., it can search for the full word “collaboration” but cannot search for the partial word “collab.” The keyword search is helpful for looking for specific language that is not included in the Program Funding Area Search field. Think of words that define your mission or your programs to help identify useful keywords.

**Program Funding Area Search:** The categories listed are based on the National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities Classification System (NTEE codes). For more information about what specifically falls within each code, go to [http://nccs.urban.org/classification/NTEE.cfm](http://nccs.urban.org/classification/NTEE.cfm) and view the “Full list of NTEE codes.” This classification system broadly defines areas of interest.

For more specific information, the Grantmaking Program Areas and Descriptions within each Grantmaker Profile need to be reviewed.

**Geographic Funding Focus Search:**
Includes:
- “National” for grantmakers that provide national opportunities for which New Mexico nonprofits are eligible to apply.
- “Statewide” for grantmakers that fund organizations throughout New Mexico or only have a focus in several states, New Mexico being one.
- “Individual counties” for specific New Mexico counties listing grantmakers who only fund in given counties.

**Populations Served:** The Directory is searchable by unique populations. If you do not work with a specific population, it is best to not select any option in this search field.

**Accepts LOIs/Proposals:** Can be searched by “Yes,” “No,” or “N/A” (Not Available).

**Tip:** A user can select multiple options under one search field by pressing the Ctrl key on the keyboard while selecting multiple options with mouse clicks. So for example you want one list of grantmakers that includes both an individual county and statewide, you select both under “Geographic Focus Area” before clicking on the “Apply” button. However, if you would like two separate lists to clarify which are focused on the individual county and which are focused statewide, then you would do two separate searches.

**Reviewing a Grantmaker’s Website**
It is important to research a grantmaker before contacting them. A grantmaker’s website can be the best tool for gathering more detailed information about the grantmaker and its funding priorities.

The following sections on a website should be reviewed:

**About Us:** Review to learn more about the grantmaker, its mission, vision, etc. This is a good section to get an overview of what is important to a grantmaker.

**Grantmaking Program Areas:** Review all information about the program area that aligns with your organization and programs. Review their other areas of funding too so you can get a
comprehensive picture of what their interests are and whether there are additional intersections between the grantmaker and your program.

**Grantee Stories:** If they highlight organizations they have funded, read some of the stories to get a sense of what information they are sharing, what they care about and how it does or does not relate to the work that your organization does.

**List of Previous Grantees:** If they provide a list, review organizations that have previously been funded. Do any of them do similar work to what your organization does? How might these organizations be different? Does your organization provides a service that is slightly different than what they have funded but may match their interests?

**Grantmaking Guidelines, Q&A, Eligibility Criteria:** Thoroughly review all guidelines. This information can help you understand criteria applicants must meet, eligibility specifications, application requirements, where to direct questions, deadlines, etc. It is important to follow all guidelines exactly.

Reviewing these grantmaker web pages, when provided, can help you ascertain whether it is worth continuing to pursue this grantmaker for funding.

**GuideStar (guidestar.org)**

**Overview**

GuideStar gathers and publicizes information about nonprofit organizations. GuideStar is most well known for making nonprofit organizations’ Form 990, *Return of Organization Exempt From Income Tax*, available on the web. GuideStar has various levels of membership that provide more enhanced features, but access to recent 990s remains a free service.

To view grantmaker information at guidestar.org you will need to register on their website. Registration is free and requires an email, selecting a password and answering some general questions. Once you have registered, you can search by organization name, click on the organization name and click on the tab titled “Forms 990s & Docs.” You will see a list of the most recent 990s; select the most recent 990 to view. You will need a pdf viewer like Adobe Acrobat to view the 990s.
How to Review a Grantmaker’s IRS Form 990

The IRS Form 990 includes information about income, expenses, investments, board members, grantees, and more. There are two types of 990s for researching grantmakers: Form 990 for public charities (that may also do grantmaking like the United Way) and 990-PF for Private Foundations (manages a fund). For grant research purposes, we are interested in knowing:

- where to find general information about the organization
- where to find information about whether they accept funding inquiries
- who their board members/trustees include
- who the grantmaker has previously funded

At the top of the 990, the organization name and basic contact information is provided. For this example we are using the United Way of Central New Mexico.
Part III (in 990)
Includes information about the purpose of the organization.

Part XV 2 a.b.c.d (990-PF)
Provides information about whether the grantmaker (Private Foundation) accepts unsolicited requests for funds. In sections a, b, c, and d, it provides brief information about how it does make gifts, grants, etc.

Part V-A (in 990)

Part VIII (in 990-PF)
Includes Current Officers, Directors, Trustees and Key Employees. This section includes a list of names of people who govern the organization. Sometimes this section will say “See Statement #,” in which case you need to scroll to the end of the 990 to see the attached statements. This information is useful for relationship building. Explore whether your board members or executive director know any of the individuals who serve on the grantmaker’s board and contact them to learn more about the grantmaker, funding strategies and their decision making process. Relationship building plays a key role in funding.
Part III (in 990), usually with a more detailed attachment at the end of the 990.

Part IX-A Summary of Direct Charitable Activities (990-PF)

Part XV 3 (990-PF)
Provides lists of previous grantees, and purpose and amount of each grant. It can be useful to see which organizations the grantmaker has supported. Consider how these organizations may be similar or different from the work your nonprofit organization does. Reviewing previous year 990s, especially of smaller grantmakers, can help you determine if they fund the same few organizations each year, or if their interests change from year to year.

Grants.gov Overview
Grants.gov is a website for all information relating to finding and applying for federal grants. If your organization is interested in applying for federal funds, it is important to become familiar with the site and the following information.
Register for a DUNS Number
If your nonprofit organization expects to apply for federal funding it is a requirement to have a DUNS Number. A DUNS number identifies your specific organization and is used by the federal government to track how federal funds are distributed. Most large organizations already have a DUNS number; check with your finance department. If your organization does not have a DUNS number it is best to apply for one prior to identifying a federal funding opportunity, as obtaining a DUNS Number can take several weeks, and possibly more than a month to receive.

In the red, on the left hand side of the Grants.gov website is a link “Get Registered.” Then select “Organization Registration.” Select this to learn more about the registration process for a DUNS Number. The website provides an “Organization Registration User Guide,” “Organization Registration Checklist,” and “Organization Registration Overview Tutorial.” Please read the registration instructions and follow them carefully.

How to Search Requests for Proposals
In the red, on the left hand side of the Grants.gov website is a link “Find Grant Opportunities.” This link takes you to a page where you can search grant opportunities via keyword, category of funding activities, federal agencies, etc. If you click on the Basic Search option, there is also a simple 5 page pdf “Search Grant Opportunities” guide available for download. It quickly explains how to best use their searches and also provides helpful tips.
Advanced Search gives you the most opportunities to select what is applicable to your organization. For example, do you only want to view open opportunities or are you curious about past opportunities so you can contact an agency ahead of time to find out whether they may be posting a similar opportunity in the current year? You can also search by eligibility. For example, you may only want to know opportunities that are open to nonprofit organizations and tribal governments. There are also different types of funding instruments. For example, are you primarily interested in grants? You can also select what funding activity category and agencies you are interested in the Advanced Search.

Once you have done a search and have your search results, then you can select to view any of the opportunities. You then have the option to view a synopsis, the full announcement and the application. The synopsis is the first thing to review. The synopsis includes the date the announcement was posted, the closing date for applications, the number of awards, the award ceilings/floors (the most you can request/the least), matching requirements, eligible applicants and additional eligibility information, description, and a link to the full announcement and application instructions.

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Sign up for Email Announcements
In the blue, on the right hand side of the Grants.gov website is a link “Grant Email Alerts.” There are multiple types of subscriptions you can request. The Federal Government has many opportunities so it can be useful to get only selective emails by choosing, “Notices Based on Advanced Criteria.” Here you can enter your email address and narrow your choices in category of funding activity, funding instrument type (i.e.: grants), eligible applicants (i.e.: 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations), agencies and sub agencies.

Other Resources
Foundation Center Cooperating Collections
The Foundation Center has three Cooperating Collections in New Mexico. These are institutions that have a core collection of Foundation Center publications and tools for grantseekers. The collections include the Foundation Directory Online Professional (a searchable database of thousands of grantmakers) and print resources. For more information on what is included in the Cooperating Collections visit: http://foundationcenter.org/collections/ or contact one of the below New Mexico locations.

New Mexico State Library
1209 Camino Carlos Rey, Santa Fe, NM
(505) 476-9702

Albuquerque/Bernalillo County Library System
501 Copper Avenue, Albuquerque, NM
(505) 768-5141

Thomas Branigan Memorial Library
200 East Picacho Avenue, Las Cruces, NM
(575) 528-4000

Each of the above hosts offer occasional workshops on how to use the Cooperating Collections, write grants, etc. They have resource librarians on staff to assist the public with the Foundation Center publications and tools.

New Mexico Funding Directory for Researchers and Students
University of New Mexico Office of the Vice President for Research website includes a directory of funding sources available to New Mexico researchers and programs. http://research.unm.edu/nmfd/

Email Announcements
The Foundation Center offers a free weekly RFP Bulletin. Got to www.foundationcenter.org, click on “Newsletters” at the top of the website and then choose the “RFP Bulletin.” This is a weekly email with grant opportunities/requests for proposal announcements.
GrantStation (http://grantstation.com) offers a weekly email. The cost varies. Some membership organizations provide it as a free member benefit. Otherwise there are different annual subscription costs. Sometimes reduced cost subscriptions are offered through TechSoup www.techsoup.org

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About the Author:

Margaret Ambler Salamon
Margaret has been the Project Specialist with the Center for Nonprofit Excellence at United Way of Central New Mexico since January of 2007. Her projects with the Center include the New Mexico Grantmakers Directory, the New Mexico Nonprofit Directory, the Center’s database and support for the Emerging Nonprofit Leadership Network. Margaret’s passion for nonprofit organizations began in 2000 with a ten-month Public Allies apprenticeship, an apprenticeship program focused on building young leadership while strengthening communities. Her nonprofit experiences now include a variety of experiences from serving on boards, to volunteering, to interning, to working for both small/large and local/national nonprofit organizations.