

Building Sustainable Relationships with Foundations and other Funders

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9 suggestions that will improve your batting average and strengthen your ability to tell your story to anyone who might give you money.



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A Couple of Opening Thoughts

No easy answers
The sustainability equation is real
Top 2 Reasons people and institutions give



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▶ Suggestion #1

There is no substitute to a clearly articulated and well constructed case for support

- ▶ Dreams are important- Specifics are critical
- ▶ Don't communicate in code
- ▶ Budgets and financials are important



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▶ Suggestion #2

Be realistic in your requests and expectations

- ▶ Understand each potential funder, its interests, its process and its expectations - act or ask accordingly
- ▶ One of the first tests of “fit” for any foundation or funder is how well your requests align with their interests and capabilities



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▶ Suggestion #3

Do your research...but remember that most grants and grant makers are human

- ▶ Use the telephone and the computer
- ▶ Tools like Foundation Search and GuideStar.org can be very helpful



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▶ Suggestion #4

Connect Donors to Results, Not Process

- ▶ All fundraising is a “benefits” exchange
- ▶ This can be different for every donor and prospect
- ▶ Don’t be afraid to ask what “rings their bell”



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▶ Suggestion #5

Be patient and appropriately persistent

- ▶ Not Now doesn't usually mean No or Never
- ▶ The time between grant cycles is a good time to build rapport
- ▶ Create opportunities for meaningful interaction



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▶ Suggestion #6

Cultivate Champions and make their support visible

- ▶ Leadership matters



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▶ Suggestion #7

Communicate Results and Gratitude

- ▶ Grant Completion Reports matter
- ▶ Thank You letters matter
- ▶ Understand the public recognition equation



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▶ Suggestion #8

Most foundations love to partner with other funders, but you must bring them to the table

- ▶ There is safety in numbers - diversity spreads risk
- ▶ Diversity of support contributes to sustainability
- ▶ Demonstrated ability to collaborate is a MAJOR plus



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▶ Suggestion #9

Be gracious in victory and defeat

- ▶ This is a marathon, not a sprint
- ▶ Demonstrate your commitment to the issues - it shows
- ▶ You must be present to win - stay engaged, stay visible



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▶ **Bonus Suggestion(s)**

- ▶ Think like a funder...not an advocate
- ▶ Build friendships (foundation leaders are colleagues)



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- ▶ Thank you for your time and thank you for all you do to make our world a better place!

