

CORPORATE GRANT SEEKING 101

Dr. Beverly Browning



Did you know that major corporations have created community reinvestment or social responsibility programs for grant-making purposes? These corporate grant makers are mandated to allocate at least 5 percent of their annual profits toward their corporate foundations. For big-name corporations, this can be a hefty amount. So what does this mean for your organization or agency? It means that you can expand your realm of potential funders to meet some of those smaller line item needs.



Who are the top corporate grant makers?

Each year, the Foundation Center compiles a list of the top 50 corporate grant makers, many of which are currently soliciting and are in the eCivis Grants Network database. Some of the major grant makers are:

- The Wal-Mart Foundation
- The Bank of America Charitable Foundation
- The JPMorgan Chase Foundation
- Nationwide Foundation
- The Allstate Foundation



How do you approach potential corporate grant makers?

Once you start perusing potential corporate grant makers, it's important that you read and understand their grant-making guidelines. Here are some questions to ask yourself in order to determine whether the potential grant maker is an appropriate funding match for your needs:

Will this grant maker fund in my state, county, city?

If yes, keep researching. If no, be sure to call to double-check that the grant maker's website is up to date and determine that

the grant maker will not fund in your locale. Before hanging up, ask if the representative can recommend any other corporate foundations that might be interested in making an investment in your community.

Does this grant maker have a current funding priority or past history of awarding grants for projects like mine?

If yes, continue your research. If no, call the potential funder anyway. Making contact with any funder will help you open up a conversation about ideas that they have not considered or else will lead to them giving you the names of other potential funders.

Are the grants that this grant maker has awarded within the funding range of the funds we need to implement, expand, or evaluate our project or program?

If yes, you're ready to determine how the grant maker wants to be contacted initially. If no, take a thorough look at your project's individual line item expenses. Ask yourself if any one line item can be funded as a stand-alone component of the entire project. If it can be, then prepare your letter of inquiry based on the one line item need that fits the grant maker's funding priority and range of grant awards.

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What is the outline of your telephone call to a potential corporate funder?

1. Ask for the program officer who reviews grant proposals in your specific area of funding. Remember, you reviewed the grant maker's funding priorities in advance of this call and you are able to quickly name an area of funding that allows you to be transferred to the appropriate corporate foundation program officer.
2. Once you have the program officer on the telephone line, introduce yourself by name, title, and organization.
3. Next, state why you are calling. You want to determine their level of interest in receiving a letter of inquiry or grant proposal from your organization.
4. The program officer will likely query you for more information on the project in need of grant funding. He or she may also ask questions about your organization (history, mission, other grant awards received, and so on).
5. Be prepared to answer any/all questions. Stating that you'll need to call them back when you get the information is considered an act of grantseeking suicide!
6. Wait for the program officer to take the lead in inviting you to submit the initial document of entry. This document is typically a letter of inquiry and you might be required to submit it electronically via the foundation's website or else email or mail it before deadline.
7. Thank the program officer for his/her time and possible interest in becoming a financial stakeholder with your organization.
8. Let the program officer end the call.
9. Follow up on whatever you promised and be timely!

“ Stating that you'll need to call them back when you get the information is considered an act of grantseeking suicide! ”



What is the outline of your letter of inquiry to a potential corporate funder?

Letter of Inquiry for Grant Proposal: Type this heading at the top of your letter flush left.

Date

Inside Address: Double-check the correct salutation, name spelling, job title, and mailing address for the program officer during the telephone call.

Salutation: Introduce your nonprofit organization to the funder. State your organization's full legal name, where your organization is located, and its most recent client service numbers. It is also important to provide the funder with demographics about your target population. Briefly describe the project or program you are seeking funding for and the amount requested, and state why you are approaching this particular funder. Show that you have done your homework by making inquiries only to grant makers that are currently interested in projects like yours. Research funding sources on the Internet or call them directly for copies of their annual reports. Write a closing paragraph thanking the funder for their time and consideration.

Signature: Include the signature of the individual legally authorized to represent your organization with grant makers.

Attachments: Attach the full project budget with detailed line items and a copy of your organization's 501(c)(3) letter of nonprofit determination (if applicable).

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About the author

Dr. Beverly A. Browning (Dr. Bev) joined the eCivis family in 2010 and writes monthly online articles available exclusively to our subscribers. She has been consulting in the areas of grant writing, contract bid responses, and organizational development for nearly four decades. Dr. Bev's clients have included chambers of commerce, faith-based organizations, units of local and county municipal governments, state and federal government agencies, school districts and colleges, social and human service agencies, hospitals, fire departments, service associations, and Fortune 500 corporations. She has assisted clients and workshop participants throughout the United States in receiving awards of more than \$200 million.



eCivis is the leading cloud-based grants management system in the nation for state, local, and tribal governments. Our innovative solutions address both programmatic and fiscal grant funding requirements throughout the grant lifecycle, helping clients easily overcome the challenges and heavy workload that come with finding and managing grants.

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