Grant Library

Resource

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Powerhouse

In days of old, around the same time that folks were walking to school barefoot in the snow, uphill both ways, they'd also walk barefoot to their local library where wondrous collections of books on an assortment of subjects were amassed. Professionals might even have gone so far as to curate their own personal library of titles related to their field. Grant writers of the time would have accumulated a fine collection of books filled with the very wisest of wisdom on how to write grants, secure funding, and the like.

Nowadays, we've come to reimagine what our libraries look like—and while brick-and-mortar libraries filled with books written on actual paper are still magical places to visit, we also have many more tools than just books at our disposal. We highlight some of those tools of value to grant writers below.

Online Directories and Databases

Trying to find a concise listing of people and places likely to financially support the great work your nonprofit is doing can very easily become an overwhelming task. Online directories of funders make it possible for you to customize your search. You can be as general or specific as you choose with your search criteria (e.g., geographic area, funding areas, population served, etc.) and save yourself countless hours doing random keyword searches, hoping to hit upon the right combination of words to yield good results.

We highlight a few of the well-regarded directories here. Some of these require a paid membership, while others offer some content for free but more robust information for a fee. If you're grant writing for an organization, check first to see if you have a subscription or membership to an online directory. If not, it's worth your time to familiarize yourself with the free versions of a directory before committing to what can be a significant (although, in our opinion, very smart) investment.

- **Candid** – Two well-known and respected entities—GuideStar and the Foundation Center (with its Foundation Directory Online)—operate under the umbrella of Candid. The Foundation Directory Online provides information on over 150,000 funders and 16+ million grants. And GuideStar is the "go-to" place for those seeking insights on nonprofit organizations. The Candid platform has also recently added a new free global database of community philanthropy organizations to its offerings.

  Bonus Tip: GuideStar rewards transparency in nonprofits. The more information you share about your organization, the higher the "seal" yours is awarded—and that seal can make you more appealing to a prospective funder researching *you*!

- **Community Foundation Locator** – Want to find out what community foundations are operating in your area? The mission of the Council on Foundations is "to foster an environment where philanthropy can thrive and cultivate a community of diverse and skilled philanthropic professionals and organizations who lead with integrity, serve as ethical stewards, and advocate for progress." Their mission is great—and so is this free resource they provide!

- **Grants.gov** – Interested in federal grants? This resource even has a mobile app!

- **GrantStation** – This membership-based directory offers resources not just to find opportunities, but also to locate strategic planning tools, proposal step-by-step tutorials, and more. If you visit the site, make sure to sign up for GrantStation Insider for free grant notices by email. And while most of their online education offerings require membership, they do offer the occasional free webinar that's worth attending too.

- **Google** (or your browser of choice) – Yes, really. If you're just starting out on your own or working for a tiny nonprofit that's bootstrapping it right now, don't let that stop you from using this free resource to your advantage. You'll spend more time sorting through long results lists that may or may not be an instant fit. But there's information to be found this way, too, if you're search-term savvy.

  Bonus Tip: If your Google search yields results that look like they're aligned with your organization's work, but the submission window has passed, it's worth your time to further investigate what the opportunity was anyway. Maybe you missed your chance for funding from them this year, but you can still make note of the funding source and their typical funding cycle and be ahead of the game for next year!

Publications about Foundations and the Nonprofit World

- **The Chronicle of Philanthropy** – Want all the news about foundations and nonprofits? This is a great source. You can access a limited number of articles for free, but there is a subscription option. The Chronicle of Philanthropy also offers a grants database via a partnership with GrantStation (referenced above).

- **The Grantsmanship Center** – This resource offers trainings and publications to help nonprofits "make an enduring contribution to society" by using grants as a tool for doing meaningful work. While a subscription is required for many of their offerings, they provide archived evergreen content via their Grantsmanship Center News Article Archive for free.

  Bonus Tip: You can find state-specific grant resources using this map!

Miscellaneous

We'd be remiss if we didn't recommend you also take advantage of these additional sources of information:

- **Your colleagues** – Talk to the people within your organization and learn how they've told your story to funders in the past. Talk to other grant writers you may know who have more time and experience than you.

- **Your competition** – Research them online (via their websites, social media channels, etc.). How do they talk about what they do? Who funds them? This will give you vital information about funders in the same space as you.

- **Your rejections** – Sure, these sting even though you know that nobody gets all the grants all the time. Use them to your advantage. Reach out to funders who've passed on your proposals. Ask for their feedback about what you might have done differently. They're not obligated to respond, but it's still a mistake not to ask. You might even find yourself developing a relationship with those folks who said "no" that may lead them to open the door when you both know each other better and the next funding cycle comes around!

We've only just begun to scratch the surface here with a small sampling of resources available to tap into. You'll find spillover from one category of tools to another. An online directory resource may include publications and classes, a publication may link to open calls for funding, etc. If this is new territory to you, pick one tool/resource to start and explore all that it has to offer before diving more deeply into the abyss!

Armed with this starter "grant library," you're now better equipped to grant write your way to giving more to those who need it most.