

Finding appropriate funding sources is an ongoing process that takes time and patience. No method is guaranteed for identifying funding sources, but you can maximize the benefits of your efforts and improve your proposal-writing by following a few simple steps.

- **Have a clear idea of your project before you begin a search.** As competition for extra mural funds continues to increase, so does the need to be focused and organized. Ask yourself a few questions before you begin looking for funding:
 - What exactly are you looking to accomplish? List goals and outcomes.
 - What kind of project are you considering: research, outreach, service, other?
 - Is it a multi-year project? Can the project be broken up into separate stages?
 - What needs and wants do you have to see the project to an end?

- **Determine the benefits of the project.** This includes who will benefit as well as when the benefits will take effect. Ask yourself a few additional questions, possibly using an objective third party to help you conduct as honest an assessment as possible.
 - Is it a local/regional project with national/international implications?
 - Will there be any immediate benefits or long-term implications?
 - What are some broad impacts of the project?
 - Will any particular disadvantaged group be served?
 - How does the project fit into and/or further your field of study?
 - How does the project fit into your academic career?
 - Is there an educational opportunity with regards to the project?

- **Conduct a general search initially.** At this stage do not spend too much time trying to determine whether or not a program is the perfect fit. Simply get a general sense of a variety of programs that might benefit from your project. Conduct multiple searches for a given project looking at it from various perspectives and making sure to track how you conduct your search. This is especially important when using a funding search engine so you can repeat effective searches and/or avoid repetitive searches when looking for entirely new funding sources. Be sure to note promising funding programs, recording enough information to be able to re-access the source. When conducting Internet searches you can save search results as web archives and easily access them later when you have time to conduct more in-depth studies.

- **Take the time to review the results of a search.** On a regular basis, review one or two promising sources at a time. Often it is difficult setting aside half a day to conduct lengthy funding research, so conducting shorter, more frequent investigations can help you stay more focused and break up what can be a tedious job. If possible and if something looks especially promising, get a sense of what types of projects an organization funds by reviewing abstracts of recently funded proposals. You may also want to call or email the program officer to briefly discuss your project and get a clear sense of whether or not it is worth preparing a proposal. This one simple step can save you a lot of time and frustration.

- **Make note of funding programs even if submission deadlines have passed.** Again, finding appropriate funding sources takes time and patience. You also have to be organized. Many programs are funded annually, and if they are a good fit for the project you have in mind, you will need to have some sort of tracking system to review programs regularly. A simple but effective

tracking system is making a note on your calendar two to four months in advance of when you suspect a program will be open for submissions. If you have no idea, you may want to conduct monthly follow-ups so as to be sure not to miss an upcoming deadline. Speaking to a program officer may also give you a better idea of when a program will be open for new proposal submissions.

- **Make note of potential problems when looking through program guidelines.** Sometimes obtaining funding depends on factors entirely out of your hands. For example, some programs require matching funds, particular types of institutional support, or letters of commitment. If not obtained properly, such requirements can cause funding to be denied. If a program is especially promising, immediately look into the possibility of whether or not such requirements can be met. You can save yourself from many headaches by looking ahead.
- **Connect with colleagues.** No one person can expect to be aware of every available funding source. By conversing with colleagues regularly, you can use others' expertise to assist you in finding the best possible funding sources. You may also find that a colleague has submitted and/or received funding from a source you find promising. Your colleague's experience may prove very valuable in writing your proposal. In addition, more programs are interested in funding collaborative proposals, so working regularly with colleagues both inside and outside your field can facilitate more effective collaborations. It is very difficult to start to get to know someone and their work while in the process of writing a proposal.

If you have any questions or would like more information or assistance with a funding search, contact the appropriate [Research Development staff member](#) for your college.