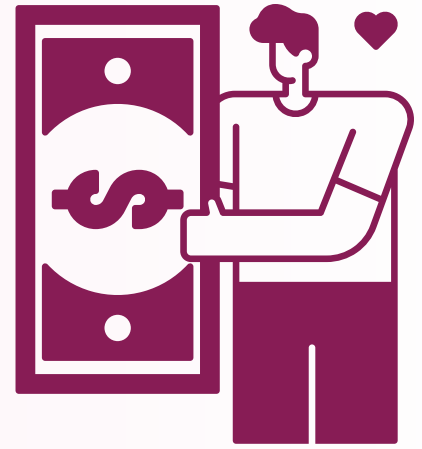


# GRANTS



For the growing nonprofit, being well-funded is key to doing good work—and essential for expenditures such as hiring staff, securing office space, and carrying out the programming to support your mission. It is also a great way to diversify your revenue streams, in the event that individual donors, fundraising events, and corporate sponsorships don't bring in what you need.

Grant writing can be daunting—some applications are very time consuming and require a lot of detailed information. But never fear, Women Unite! will help break down the basics needed for your organization to change the world.

# WHO'S GIVING THE MONEY OUT?!

**There are three primary types of Grantors—meaning those who are giving out money to organizations.**

## 1 PRIVATE FOUNDATIONS

**Small family foundations:** A family foundation is a vehicle for mission-driven charitable giving that is founded on family assets; they often employ family members and act to preserve family wealth over generations and, often, as beneficial tax shelters.

- Focus more on heart strings; staff are usually people who are not professionally connected to the nonprofit world or the issues nonprofits seek to solve
- Avoid jargon and overly technical language
- Focus more on impact stories and connecting folks to your work in emotional ways
- Generally give more than the federally required 5% minimum each year (foundations are required to give at least 5% of their assets each year to qualify as a foundation); family foundations give closer to 9%
- Very opaque—often unclear who is on the board, who is making the decisions, how those decisions are made, etc.

**Large national (or even global!) foundations:** These have a much larger footprint and often cast a wider geographic net—think The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

- Opposite of family foundations—generally have a professional staff full of experts in the field of

philanthropy and whatever particular subject area the grant is for

- Likely much more focused on measurable impact (think SMART goals and logic models)
- Very competitive (could be hundreds or even thousands of other applicants)

## 2 CORPORATE FOUNDATIONS

Foundations created by a for-profit company to help further their Corporate Social Responsibility goals through investment in charitable work. Examples include: The Wal-Mart Foundation, Lucasfilm Foundation, The Goldman Sachs Foundation, and Bank of America Foundation.

- Least generous and most likely to scale back funding during hard times
- Focused on brandwashing and how your cause will make them look

## 3 THE GOVERNMENT

Government grants fund ideas and projects to provide public services and stimulate the economy. Grants support critical recovery initiatives, innovative research, and many other programs. Look for them at the city, state, and federal levels.

- Most government grants, but especially federal grants and some state grants, are very labor intensive
- Sometimes they have a very quick turnaround time for when you need to introduce and implement programs
- Managing government grants, tracking outcomes, and financial reporting is also very complicated

# BUT WU!, HOW DO WE FIND THESE OPPORTUNITIES?

**Great question! We have a lot of suggestions for tools to add to your belt to help you with grant prospecting.**

## NETWORKS AND EXISTING RELATIONSHIPS

Start with who you know. Ask your board members if they have connections to staff or board members at granting foundations (check out our [Grants Memo template](#) to help with identifying connections). Search for networking opportunities and events where you can connect and give your pitch.

While there are plenty of opportunities you can apply for without any connection to the granting organization, there are many that are invite only. Finding a way to get your foot in the door can make all the difference.

## DATABASE MEMBERSHIPS

There are a lot of great paid databases that allow you to do a search of funders and opportunities available. You can be really specific (“Show me funders located in Chicago who support environmental justice initiatives benefiting low-income populations”) or really broad (“Show me funders who support the environment”). Three we recommend are:

- [Forefront](#)
- [Grant Watch](#)
- [Candid’s Foundation Directory](#)

## FOUNDATION EMAIL LISTS

Once you get going, you might start noticing some Foundations that have some current opportunities that are not quite the right fit. Doesn’t mean they won’t have a better one in a few months—sign up for that newsletter, and let the information come straight to you.

## GOVERNMENT AGENCY EMAIL LISTS

If you are interested in Government funding, consider agencies that are most closely aligned with your work. Does your work involve an urban farm, or even food insecurity? Sign up for updates from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Do you use art as a vehicle to drive your mission? Follow Chicago’s Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events.

## GENERAL INTERNET STALKING

- Step 1: Find groups that do similar work to yours.
- Step 2: Stalk their websites for event pages that include sponsors, or look for impact/annual reports that include donor lists. This will give you an idea on funders that may be interested in your mission.

**TIP:**  
Keep track of all your prospective opportunities in a pipeline spreadsheet, like the one we’re giving you [here](#).



# WILL I KNOW WHEN AN OPPORTUNITY IS RIGHT FOR OUR ORGANIZATION?

You're going to have to do a little research on the granting organization and their opportunity. Read available information on their website, check out their profile in one of the previously mentioned databases, or even have a look at any available information [from the IRS](#).

Still not completely sure based on your findings? Ask for a time to chat with someone! We've found that many organizations are happy to answer any questions, even if it's via email.

Always remember:  
**DO NOT CHASE FUNDING.**

If your organization is not a fit for a particular funding opportunity, don't force it! Doing so only sets you up for unsustainable programming and burnout as you'll be spending energy and resources on work and projects that don't align with your vision, values, or expertise.

## HERE'S SOME QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT WANT TO ASK:

- What are the foundation's funding priorities?
- How many awards do they typically give out? To how many applicants?
- Do they often fund new applicants or do they generally renew with existing awardees?
- What do they look for in an application?
- Any suggestions on how to best frame our work to align with strategic priorities?

## IF YOU FIND YOURSELF WANTING TO SWIPE RIGHT ON A FUNDER, DO A QUICK COST BENEFIT ANALYSIS.

- How much time will it take to apply?
- Is there alignment?
- Will this fund projects that are a strategic fit or priority?
- Is this funding advancing our organization's goals or are we shifting our goals to fit this funding opportunity?
- What is the probability of getting funded?
- What else could or should I be spending this time on?



## TYPES OF FUNDING: PROGRAM (RESTRICTED) VS. GENOPS (UNRESTRICTED)

There are two common types of grants: program (or project) and general operating (also called general support or unrestricted grants).

### PROGRAM GRANTS

Support a specific project or activity of the grantee, and are tied to a specific, project-based outcomes; general operating grants support an organization's overall activities, including operating expenses and overhead.

### GENERAL OPERATING GRANTS

Support an organization's overall activities, including operating expenses and overhead. WU! loves the flexibility of a GenOps grant.

# OKAY WU!, TELL US THE 7 MAGICAL STEPS TO SECURING GRANT FUNDING

**We'd love to! However, there isn't any magic involved. And honestly, it's more of an ongoing cycle. You get the idea.**

## 1. RESEARCH

## 2. PLAN (YOU ARE HERE)

Take a moment to outline the application. Do you have all the documents they want you to attach? Can you answer all of the questions? Will this require a new budget? Identify any information you'll need to get from other staff and/or external parties and request that early.

## 3. LETTER OF INTENT

Some (but not all) funding opportunities begin with a letter of intent (or LOI) to apply for funding that highlights the big picture of your organization. This is used as a screening tool to weed out orgs that may not be a fit before asking them to spend time filling out an

entire application. It may be a formal letter from you outlining your organization, or it may be some high level questions on a form in an online portal.

## 4. APPLICATION OR PROPOSAL

This is it, the part you've been waiting for. This is your chance to go into detail about your mission, your programming, and WHY YOU NEED THE FUNDS. Dive deeper into your work, showcase the impact it has, highlight the intended outcomes, talk about your evaluation tools—cover everything you need to thoughtfully demonstrate how great your work is (and could be, with the funders help!).

## 5. SITE VISIT

Occasionally an application will include a site visit for finalists, which allows the granting organization to see a program in action (if possible), get to know the leadership of an organization, and ask questions that weren't answered in a proposal or prior conversations. This is a very formal step that doesn't always happen—and when they do, many are now virtual.

## 6. FINAL DECISION

YAAAAS you did it! (Alternatively—Bummer! It didn't happen this time.)

Should you apply again if you're declined?

General rule of thumb: if it's a relatively low-lift application apply up to three times—and then give up. If it's labor intensive, see if you can get any feedback on why you were declined and whether or not it makes sense to try again. If you don't get any feedback, you'll need to decide if it's worth putting the effort in.

## 7. REPORTING AND STEWARDSHIP

Some granting organizations require a report updating them on how the money was used. This is your opportunity to showcase the impact of their investment while sharing meaningful data and stories to connect them to the work.

It is also important to steward your funders—say thank you where possible, add their logo to your annual report, give them a shout out in a newsletter, and invite them to your events. Celebrate the work of your partnership.

# WHAT WILL THEY WANT TO KNOW IN MY APPLICATION/PROPOSAL?

The narrative of most grant applications will include some, if not most, of the items below. Have these ready—maybe even create a Boilerplate ([we have a template!](#)) of standard language to pull from to make the grant writing process more streamlined going forward.



### MISSION

### HISTORY OF ORGANIZATION

How did your organization get its start? What work have you done, and how has it evolved up until now?

### OVERVIEW

Summarize who you serve and what you do.

### NEED

Dive into some research and statistics—what is the problem you are trying to solve?

### PROGRAMS/SERVICES OFFERED

### OUTCOMES/EVALUATION

- How do you track and measure success?
- Outcomes for previous, current, and next year

## SUSTAINABILITY

- What's your plan?
- How are you funded?



## ATTACHMENTS TO HAVE READY TO GO

- Leadership staff bios
- Budget (both overall organizational and specific program budgets)
- Most recent 990s or audits
- Tax exempt letter
- Board list (name, title, employer, board term)
- Demographics of staff, board, and those you serve
- Most recent impact or annual report

# TEMPLATES

## WU! GRANTS PIPELINE—MASTER

How to use the pipeline document

## WU! BOILERPLATE

## WU! GRANTS MEMO