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FINDING FUNDING FOR RESEARCH

- ▶ TYPES OF FUNDING
- ▶ PUBLIC VERSUS PRIVATE FUNDING
- ▶ FINDING FUNDERS
- ▶ HOW TO SEARCH FOR FUNDING
- ▶ RESEARCHING THE FUNDER
- ▶ AGENCY CONTACT
- ▶ COLLEGE OR DEPARTMENTAL GRANTS ADMINISTRATOR
- ▶ TECHNICAL GRANTS WRITER

Finding funding for research is one of the first steps in grant writing. You may ask why is it necessary to find a specific funding source before writing your grant application. Shouldn't it make more sense to just write one proposal based on your ideas, send it to multiple agencies and get as much funding as you can? It might in theory, but that's not how the system works. Funding agencies have specific requests; applications are usually tailor-made to fit those solicitations and a panel of reviewers will choose the proposals that are most suitable for their agency. Therefore, before you begin your proposal, it's helpful to have an idea of a few things so you can choose the agency that best fits your needs:

- How much funding will you need?
- Which type funder has the resources to fund your research? Private? Public?
- What are your goals and ideas for your research?
- Does the funding agency match your goals and ideas?

TYPES OF FUNDING

Before telling you where you can go to find various funding agencies (because you know you will stop reading, race away to find funding, and never come back), you should know what kind of funding is offered by the various funding entities so you can make an informed decision regarding where to send your grant application. If you only need \$20,000, would you apply for a million dollar federal grant or vice versa? Probably not.

To begin, there are only two types of funders: **Public** and **Private**. These entities are distinguished by the source of funds, reason for giving their funds away, the size of the fund awards they are giving away, who makes decisions, the basis of those decisions, and reporting procedures, to name a few. There are advantages and disadvantages to both types of funders.

PUBLIC VERSUS PRIVATE FUNDING

Advantages of Public Funding:

- Most likely to pay project costs, have greater funds, cover indirect costs
- Wider availability of funds and stricter guidelines for accountability
- Purpose set by legislation
- Easier to contact and research

Disadvantages of Public Funding:

- Proposals required to be much longer and comply with more technical stipulations
- Specialized terms and conditions and potentially more frequent reporting cycles

Advantages of Private Funding:

- Likely to focus on new needs that have not yet evolved into special interest groups
- Will allow funds to be pooled with other funding sources
- Better for smaller firms or agencies, flexibility in terms of time frames and circumstances, and start-up or experimental projects
- Less bureaucratic requirements and can potentially provide forms of help other than just funds

Disadvantages of Private Funding:

- Priorities of funder can change rapidly
- Information on policies and procedures harder to track; more difficult to contact
- Rejection may not always be explained as thoroughly as with larger agencies
- Average size of award is usually smaller

Types of Public Funders: Federal Government, State Government, and Local Government. Local entities include County, Borough, and Municipalities.

Types of Private Funders: Foundations, Corporations, Service Clubs, Professional Associations, Trade Associations, Unions, Special Interest Groups, and Faith Communities.

FINDING FUNDERS

Now that you're equipped with a general understanding of what kind of funding you may be looking for, you're ready to know where to find the funders. There are multiple methods for finding the funder for you (trying saying that five times fast!) Thanks to modern technology, it's relatively easy to find funding sources via the Internet. Online resources are usually your best bet for finding potential funders for your research ideas.

- **Online resources** – There are several ways to find databases that will facilitate finding funding opportunities.
 - The Office of Sponsored Programs Website has searchable [databases](#) including GrantSelect, GrantsNet, and IRIS Search. There are also funding alert services for ED Info, EPA Federal Register listservs, Grants.gov FIND, GrantSelect, IRIS, MyNSF News Service, NASA Office of Space Science, and the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium.
 - [Grants.gov](#) is a database that provides information on over 1,000 grant programs and access to around \$500B in annual awards.
 - The local public library maintains a subscription to The Foundation Center.
 - **Personal contacts** – It's easy to overlook, but faculty with more grant writing experience may have valuable suggestions for where you should look to find funding, or better yet, they may already know of a funder who matches your needs.
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HOW TO SEARCH FOR FUNDING

When searching through databases, a key word search is usually the best strategy to start narrowing down the options with regards to funding

opportunities. Let's say you're interested in researching the potential effects of pre-packaged snack foods on children's cardiovascular health. A key word search on this topic may include the words 'children' and 'cardiovascular'. Searches don't need to be too general nor do they need to be too specific. If your first search doesn't hit, try different words before moving on to a new database. Once you've found what you think you're looking for, it will be necessary for you to research the funder.

RESEARCHING THE FUNDER

By this point, you should know what type of grant best works for you, and you have found a few grants solicitations that appeal to your interests. Take the time to research the funder of those solicitations to see which one you are most compatible with. Check out their guidelines, funded awards, web sites, and any publications to check out their goals, range in award amounts, presentation of information, emphasis, list of grantees, financial details, deadlines and other relevant information.

AGENCY CONTACT

Once you have narrowed your search to a specific funder, the next step is to review the guidelines. For federal agencies, it is best to contact the Program Officer via email for any programmatic or budget questions. The most important question is –does your research idea match the agency guidelines requirements?

COLLEGE OR DEPARTMENTAL GRANTS ADMINISTRATOR

The College or Departmental Grants Administrator will assist you with budget development, forms, electronic proposal submission procedure, guideline reviews, and proposal routing. Please contact them early in the process.

TECHNICAL GRANTS WRITER

The Office of Sponsored Programs provides the services of a technical grant writer to assist faculty throughout the proposal writing process. Amy Brown is available to review proposals for English grammar technicalities, expression, and agency guideline compliance. Ms. Brown is also capable of assisting faculty with the writing process. Those who have applied for funding but were denied are highly encouraged to have Ms. Brown review their proposals before resubmitting. Ms. Brown can be contacted via email at amybrown@usouthal.edu.