

# **A National Perspective on Working with Foundations**

## **Fostering Success Michigan Conference**

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## Overview

Kresge is a \$3 billion private, national foundation that works to expand opportunities for vulnerable people living in America's cities.

Through the work of our programs and partners, residents can improve their life circumstances and join the economic mainstream.



## Our Programs

### **Education**

Promotes postsecondary access and success for low-income, first-generation and underrepresented students.



## Our Programs

### **Human Services**

Seeks to improve the quality of life and economic security of vulnerable people by strengthening human services organizations.



## Types of Foundations

- Community foundations
- Family foundations
- Regional or state-based foundations
- Education conversion foundations
- National foundations

# If You've Seen One Foundation...



## If You've Seen One Foundation...

- Levels and types of funding
- Target populations and areas
- Decision-making processes
- Reporting and relationships

## How Do Foundations Make Decisions?

- Don't need to sell a product.
- Don't need to keep clients or customers happy.
- Fairly insulated from election results.
- Not reliant on shareholders.
- Don't need to report on profits.
- Fairly low levels of accountability.
- Foundations *need you* to accomplish their grantmaking objectives.

## Before the Proposal

- Research funding options
- Align with foundation's interests
- Research the other grantees
- Align \$ request with the giving history

## Writing the Proposal



## Writing the Proposal

- Demonstrate real need for the work.  
Where did the idea come from?
- Who will benefit and how?
- Is what you are proposing unique (really)?
- Are you starting or scaling?

## Writing the Proposal

- Put outcomes front and center
- *Briefly* tell your program's story
- Data-driven decision making
- Basing work on research and best practices

## Writing the Proposal

- Why is your organization in the best position to undertake this work?
- Buy-in from stakeholders
- Who else will fund?
- Who will your partners be?
- Diverse advisory board and/or governing board

## When Writing the Proposal

- For web sites- who will use and maintain the site?
- How will you know you've accomplished what you set out to accomplish?
- How will you share what you are learning?
- How will you continue this work when the grant ends?

## Proposal Writing Logistics

- Have someone else read it
- Follow internal submission processes
- Don't send extra materials
- Follow all instructions
- Wait a bit before following up

If Declined



## If Declined

- Don't take it personally
- Ask for feedback
- Check on re-submission guidelines
- Follow up in a year

If Funded



## If Funded

- Acknowledgment, reporting, budget and communication guidelines
- Set parameters of your relationship
- Engaging your PO
  - Events/site visits
  - Advisory board
  - Publications

## If Funded

- NO SURPRISES.
- Asking for extensions or changes.
- Ask if the foundation can feature you in its publications, e-newsletter, etc.
- If possible, visit the foundation.

## When the Grant Ends

- Submit all reports on time.
- Ask about reporting forms.
- Continuation support opportunities and making the case.
- Drop the PO a note from time-to-time.

## Tools in the Toolbox

- Collaboration and network building
- Communication
- Convening
- Evaluation
- Grantmaking
- Mission-related investments
- Research

# Questions and Discussion



## Expanding opportunities in America's cities

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