

Guide to Foundation Funding for K- 12 education



Pearson's Grants and Funding Team developed this Guide to Foundation Funding to help K-12 school districts seek alternative means of funding for education projects.



Introduction to Foundations

Have you donated money recently? Chances are you entrusted your money with an agency that you know and whose mission you believe in. Most people are skeptical about giving handouts to unknown organizations.

Foundations are the same; they *want* to give money, but only to deserving, trustworthy applicants with a project idea that meets a targeted need. Often they choose to fund projects that will support the local community in their areas of operation.

You will be most successful in foundation funding when the proposed project aligns with the foundation's interests.

STEP 1: GATHER INFORMATION/ CONDUCT A NEEDS ASSESSMENT

What do you want funded and why?

Some foundations give money for general operating expenses, but most want to give towards a specific, special project. Establish a planning committee with a variety of stakeholders such as teachers, principals, parents, students, and community members to conduct a needs assessment and create a project plan. You should be able to closely link your intended project with identified needs of students and staff. Gather information on project costs, possible matching funds, other donor funds, etc.

Is a grant really the best way to fund our project?

Foundations are no less competitive than federal competitive grants. They require a significant investment of time with no guarantee of award. The grant process can take 6 to 18 months and includes identifying funders, writing letters of inquiry or proposals, and waiting for proposals to be reviewed, awards to be made, and funds to be disbursed. If you are seeking funding for a small implementation or inexpensive solution, you may not want to compete for foundation funds. Consider some alternatives:

- Build relationships with local agencies that may already have grant funding, including public school districts, local colleges, or community organizations. They may be able to include your students in existing programs. In addition, grantors will often award competitive priority points to applicants who develop partnerships.
- Contact your chamber of commerce for a listing of local Fortune 500 companies. They might be willing to make donations.
- Ask local businesses to donate a portion of their profits to your school. (For example, car dealerships might donate \$100 for every new car purchased as an incentive to buyers.)

What needs would be addressed?

Foundations are attracted to innovative projects that meet the needs of disadvantaged populations. So you will need to be armed with data that illustrates the unique needs of your students. While a broad range of statistics can help the reviewer better understand your community, focus on needs that will be *specifically* addressed within your project plan.

In K-12 education, three populations are almost always affected: students, teachers and parents. If your project is successfully funded,

Tip

Research the same statistics for neighboring districts or statewide averages to demonstrate your school's need.

what needs would be met in these three groups? Gather statistics, anecdotal information, quotes from the school board, etc.

For a project focused on acquiring technology, you might consider gathering data on the needs below:

- Current computer: student ratio
- Computer or Internet accessibility in students' homes
- Age of existing hardware
- Age of existing software
- Minutes per day students currently have access to technology
- Accessibility to individualized instruction by grade level
- Results of a professional development needs assessment concerning teachers' ability to integrate technology into curriculum

Helpful websites for gathering statistics

- **Ed Week State Map.** To access information on statewide and national averages, such as percent of ELL students, NAEP scores, or children eligible for free and reduced lunch, visit *Ed Week* for an interactive map: <http://www.edweek.org/rc/states/>.
- **National Center for Education Statistics.** This site provides statistics by state regarding teacher educational levels and teaching experience. Use this data to compare your profile against state averages: <https://nces.ed.gov/>.
- **Federal Education Budget Project.** This site is helpful to find state-level information on PreK-12 funding, demographics and achievement information. <http://febp.newamerica.net/k12>
- **U.S. Census Bureau.** Use this site to find information such as population, housing, economic, and geographic information: <http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>.
- **SurveyMonkey.** Gather informal data through teacher, student, or parent surveys. This free site allows you to create, distribute, and view the results of surveys online. Use their educational templates or create your own survey: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/education-surveys/>.

Searching for Foundations

Foundations come in all shapes and sizes. There are family endowments, community foundations supported by donations, corporate-giving programs, and company-sponsored foundations. With so many foundations out there, do not waste your time or theirs by proposing a project that does not match their objectives.

Thoroughly analyze the funding source before you submit a proposal.

STEP 2: FIND A FUNDING SOURCE

Foundations are most likely to invest in organizations with similar philosophies and missions. The more your project has in common with the foundation, the better. For example, a Christian education foundation located in Minneapolis is most likely to fund Christian schools in Minnesota. Think of each similarity as a point. The more “points,” the more likely the foundation will be interested in your proposed project. Look for foundations with ties to your school’s geographical area or that have an interest in the content area you wish to fund.

Large corporations use foundation funding to create public awareness, promote goodwill in the community, or assist employees and their families. Endowments typically fund projects that were close to the heart of a person in memoriam. Some foundations expect to be closely involved in the project and determine exactly how the funds will be spent. Understanding the intentions of the foundation will help you determine how to approach them for funding.

One way to find foundation information is to visit your local library’s reference section and ask for the *Foundation Directory*. Some libraries offer free online access to the database. It lists thousands of American foundations by state, including all the initial information you need to know, such as contact information, how to submit an inquiry, areas of geographic or curriculum focus, etc. For a fee, you may also access the *Foundation Directory* online.

Tip

Find out up-front if the foundation accepts unsolicited proposals. Some foundations only fund pre-selected organizations.

Many foundations have a website, so use your favorite Internet search engine to search for “foundation grants.” You can narrow down the search by including your state or city name. There are also numerous subscription-based grant search sites. Here are some examples:

The Foundation Center: www.fdncenter.org

The Grantsmanship Center: <http://www.tgci.com/funding.shtml>

Grant Wrangler: <http://www.grantwrangler.com/>

Do your homework. To fully understand a funder’s previous giving history and priorities, look at several years of 990 forms to see previous grants. These forms can be accessed by setting up a free account at www.guidestar.org. Look for foundations that have previously given to organizations similar to yours. Note previous award sizes, so that your request is reasonable.

When you find a potential match, work through the chart on the next page to analyze the foundation thoroughly. Before deciding whether or not to apply, be sure that your institution can fulfill its obligations (matching funds, reporting process, etc).

Analysis of Foundation	
Name of foundation:	
Website or contact information:	
Do they accept unsolicited proposals?	
Do they prefer to fund in certain geographic locations?	
What is their stated mission/purpose?	
What are their fields of interest?	
Are prior giving activities similar to our request? <i>Look at several years of 990 forms to see previous giving activities. (990s can be accessed by setting up a free account at www.guidestar.org)</i>	
What size is the average award?	
Does anyone associated with our school have a relationship with someone from the foundation or the board of directors?	
What are the application guidelines? Is there a formal application process?	
Are there any limitations or restrictions?	
Is there a deadline?	

Potential foundations to investigate

Here are a few foundations to investigate for a potential match to your project plans.

Be sure to note any regional preferences and read the website carefully to determine whether to contact a foundation.

General K-12 Education

Foundation	Regional preference	Average awards	Website
Build a Bear Workshop Foundation	National	\$1500	Click here
Hearst Foundation	National	\$127,000	Click here
American Savings Foundation	Connecticut, especially New Britain or Waterbury, CT	\$250 to \$202,000	Click here
Abell-Hanger Foundation	West Texas	\$5000 to \$175,000	Click here
BJ's Charitable Foundation	CT, DE, FL, GA, MA, ME, MD, NH, NJ, NY, NC, OH, PA, RI, VA	\$10,000 to \$290,000	Click here

Early Childhood

Foundation	Regional preference	Average awards	Website
W.K. Kellogg Foundation	Nationally, with emphases on Michigan, Mississippi, New Mexico and New Orleans	Highest award has been \$16 million	Click here
Harry W. Bass Foundation	Dallas, Texas	\$1000 to \$15,000	Click here
Bella Vista Foundation	San Francisco, Marin, San Mateo, and Santa Clara counties.	\$30,000 to \$150,000	Click here
Mary Black Foundation	Spartanburg County, SC	\$25,000 to \$150,000	Click here
Temple Hoyne Buell Foundation	Colorado	\$20,000 to \$428,000	Click here

Personalized learning environments

Foundation	Regional preference	Average awards	Website
Cabot Corporation Foundation	giving primarily in Alpharetta, GA, Tuscola, IL, Franklin, and Ville Platte, LA, Billerica, Boston, and Haverhill, MA, Midland, MI, Boyertown, PA, Pampa, and The Woodlands, TX	Up to \$350,000	Click here
Dell Foundation	Nationally	\$500 to several million dollars	Click here
Ford Foundation	Nationally	\$300,000 to \$2 million	Click here
JP Morgan Foundation	AZ, CA, CO, DC, DE, GA, ID, IL, IN, KY, LA, MN, MO, NJ, NV, OH, OK, OR, PA, TX, UT, WA, WI, and WV, with emphasis on NY	Up to \$5 million	Click here

Foundation	Regional preference	Average awards	Website
Verizon Foundation	National, with some emphasis on CA, NY, and DC	\$4,000 to \$3 million	Click here
Next Generation Learning Challenge	National, focused on blended learning in secondary schools	Varies by grant program	Click here

STEM

Foundation	Regional preference	Average awards	Website
American Honda Foundation	Nationally, with some emphasis on CA	\$20,000 to \$75,000	Click here
Bayer USA	Berkeley and Northern CA, Shawnee KS, Sheffield MA, Kansas City MO, Raleigh-Durham NC, northern NJ, Tarrytown NY, Newark OH, Greater Pittsburgh PA, Baytown TX, Houston TX, Institute WV, New Martinsville WV, and South Charleston WV	\$50 to \$1.5 million	Click here
Carnegie Corporation	Nationally	Up to \$3 million	Click here
Kinder Morgan	AL, CO, TX	Up to \$44,000	Click here
Motorola	Emphasis on CA, Washington, DC, FL, GA, IL, MA, MD, NJ, NY, TX	\$15,000 to \$250,000	Click here
Northrop Grumman Foundation	Nationally	Up to \$200,000	Click here
Piedmont Natural Gas	NC, SC, and TN	Requests over \$10,000 must be board approved	Click here
3M Foundation	Emphasis on St Paul, MN and Austin, TX	Varies by grant program	Click here
Anderson Corporate Foundation	Washington County, MN and portions of Western WI. Secondarily, the East Metro area of St. Paul. Also, Menomonie, WI; Des Moines, IA; Dubuque, IA; Page County, VA; Marion, OH and North Brunswick, NJ	\$1500 to \$100,000	Click here

Catholic schools

Foundation	Regional preference	Average awards	Website
Big Shoulders Fund	Catholic schools in inner city Chicago	Not available	Click here
Connelly Foundation	Catholic schools in/near Philadelphia and Camden, NJ	\$100 to \$750,000	Click here
Lynch Foundation	Massachusetts	\$90,000 to \$100,000	Click here
Hannon Foundation	Los Angeles	\$100 to \$625,000	Click here
Westerman Foundation	National	\$50,000 maximum	Click here
E.L. Wiegand Foundation	AZ, ID, NV, OR, UT and WA	\$50,000 to \$500,000	None

Protestant schools

Foundation	Regional preference	Average awards	Website
CDV Foundation	Western Michigan, especially Grand Rapids	\$500 to \$2 million	Click here
Clark and Nancy Bonner Foundation	CA and OR	\$1000 to \$15,000	None
The Ryrie Foundation	National	\$3000 to \$20,000	None
A.T. & Mary H. Blades Foundation	Eastern Maryland	\$10,000 to \$90,000	None

Jewish schools

Foundation	Regional preference	Average awards	Website
Covenant Foundation	Jewish schools in North America	\$20,000 to \$50,000	Click here
Charles H. Revson Foundation	Focus on New York City	Not available	Click here
Ahavas Yisroel Charitable Foundation	Miami Beach, FL and Brooklyn and New Square, NY	\$2500 to \$250,000	None
Aufzien Foundation, Inc	New York City, Washington DC, NJ, and PA	\$500 to \$200,000	None
The Rockwern Charitable Foundation	Cincinnati, Ohio	\$10,000 to \$230,000	None
Jewish Education Innovation Challenge via Mayberg Foundation	Middle/high schools	Up to \$50,000	Click here

Contacting the Foundation

Foundations have different approach methods. Be sure to follow each foundation's stated guidelines.

Keep in mind: relationships are *critical* when it comes to receiving foundation funding. Some foundations may request a list of your board of directors as part of the submittal process. You want the foundation staff to become your allies in the funding process. For example, if you are invited to submit a full proposal, you might offer to meet with the foundation official at their offices or invite the official to a site visit with your organization. But don't be pushy. One polite offer is adequate.

STEP 3: APPROACH FUNDING SOURCE

Letter of Intent

Most applicants' first contact with a foundation is through a short letter of intent or inquiry (LOI), usually about 3 pages long.

Since foundations must read many proposals, your LOI should be brief, but interesting and compelling. Be sure to take the time to customize your LOI for every foundation you approach. The letter should demonstrate how your project aligns to that *particular* foundation's mission and values.

Always follow any stated LOI requirements from a foundation, but in general, here is an easy way to structure your LOI:

- Compelling summary of project, 1–2 sentences long
- Explanation of needs that will be addressed
- Summary of how needs will be addressed
- Overview of organization
- Budget (inclusion will vary by foundation)

Tip

Give your project a name to make it more memorable to the reader.

Engage. The goal of an LOI is to keep the reviewer reading and intrigued so you will be invited to submit a full application. Your letter doesn't need to describe every aspect of your project. Whet their appetite with an interesting, innovative idea that fulfills the foundation's mission.

Formatting recommendation. Foundations receive mountains of mail. Consider adding "Letter of Inquiry" as a header to your letter to quickly identify its purpose. Address the LOI to the appropriate contact person at a foundation or to its CEO, not "To whom it may concern."

Some people think cute fonts, colored paper, or interesting binding will make their proposal stand out. Do not be tempted to do so! Keep your format simple, straight-forward, and easy to read quickly. Precisely follow all submission requirements to demonstrate your organization is able to follow instructions. Also, be aware that most foundations do not want to review additional media such as videos, brochures, or binders.

Helpful Resources for Proposal Writing

Tutorial: The Foundation Center has a helpful tutorial on writing proposals. It can be viewed at:
<http://foundationcenter.org/getstarted/tutorials/shortcourse/index.html>

Research citations: It is always good to include research citations in support of your project plan. This website provides research summaries for today's major themes in education.
<http://researchmap.digitalpromise.org/>

Proposal

Most funders provide a specific format or outline for the final proposal. Structure your response to parallel the requirements and be sure to follow all instructions precisely. In general, proposals will need to include the following sections:

- Executive Summary
- Statement of Need
- Program Plan (objectives, work plan/timeline, qualifications, etc.)
- Evaluation
- Budget
- Organization Overview (mission, vision, activities, etc.)
- Attachments (audited financial statements, tax-exempt status, board of directors list, etc.)

Connect the dots for the reader. The project request needs to make sense. Every component should logically flow to the next. In strong grant applications, the needs identified set the stage for the project goals. Activities should flow from those project goals. Likewise, the budget should be a direct reflection of the planned activities. Read the sample below and see how each section is closely tied together:

Needs:

1. Eighty percent of 7th graders are not proficient in reading.
2. Half of teachers do not feel comfortable using technology.

Objectives:

1. Increase reading proficiency of 7th graders by 5% by end of year.
2. By end of year, 80% of teachers will report feeling comfortable integrating technology.

Activities:

1. Provide 20 minutes of individualized reading intervention to 7th graders daily.
2. Provide professional development quarterly and weekly coaching on technology integration topics.

Evaluation:

1. To what extent has reading proficiency of 7th graders increased?
2. To what extent do teachers report feeling comfortable integrating technology?

Statement of Need

This section explains why your project is necessary. It is your chance to grab the reader's attention. You might shock the reader with a startling statistic. You could tug their heart-strings with a brief story that demonstrates your students' needs. This is the most critical part of your proposal because it provides the "why" and helps your reviewer feel invested in your students.

Focus on the problems of the population to be served. You do not want to write about weak school leadership, difficult teachers, low teacher salaries, a recent negative audit, or lack of administrative or community support. That will hurt your credibility. Instead, focus on your students' needs and specific staff training needs. At the end of the statement of need, the reader should think "If only someone could help these needy students who attend such a great school."

Avoid assumptions. The needs you present should directly relate to your project's purpose and should be supported by documentation and evidence. If you are writing a grant to buy computers, it's not enough to say "we believe our students need more computers." Compare that statement to the following:

According to our 2017-2018 technology survey, St. James Elementary is far below the level of most Oklahoma schools in terms of access to technology. Our student:computer ratio is 30:1, while the state's average ratio is 15:1.

Goals versus Objectives

Goals are broad, overall statements, while objectives give specific targets.

Goals. Goals typically start with the following phrases: "to provide," "to establish," "to create," "to eliminate," or "to prevent." Here is an example:

"To improve academic achievement in mathematics in grades 3–6."

Objectives. Objectives should be program-focused, not focused on the budget or activity. Never mention buying in an objective. (Don't include, "Buy reading software for 100 students.") A good objective will include an end date, population served, and program outcome. Here are some examples:

"By February 2020, Student Success Academy teachers will demonstrate increased mathematics content knowledge and confidence in integrating mathematics technology into their daily instructional program."

"By July 2020, our third- through sixth-grade mathematics achievement will increase by at least 7% as measured by our state assessments."

Work Plan

In this section, tell the foundation how your project will work. Be clear, detailed, and specific. Don't assume the reviewer is familiar with educational terms or practices, even if it seems obvious to you. Don't try to impress with technical jargon, because the foundation reviewer may not be an expert in your field. Include details such as a timeline, management plan, and a description of how other funds will be coordinated. Establish your credibility by mentioning previous grant awards or notable ongoing programs.

Tip

Charts and tables are a grant-writer's best friend. Visual models make it easier for the reviewer to read and understand your meaning quickly.

Below is an example of an action plan for implementing a digitally delivered core math program for student in grades 3–6 and providing professional development. Notice how three target populations are represented: student, teacher, and parent.

Sample Action Plan

Activity	Person(s) Responsible	Start/Completion Dates
Purchase/install computer networks and mathematics software in grade 3–6 classrooms.	<i>Insert appropriate name/position</i>	<i>Insert appropriate dates</i>
Conduct on-site training sessions for instructional staff on how to implement the technology-based digital mathematics program.		
Implement the year-long mathematics instructional model so that students receive 75–90 minutes of daily mathematics instruction.		
Implement a mathematics tutorial program during afterschool and summer-school programs.		
Conduct Family Mathematics Evening to encourage parental involvement.		
Use weekly grade-level meetings to monitor and support the implementation of the curriculum redesign plan.		
Continually monitor student achievement through regular assessments.		
Determine professional development needs according to student assessment results.		
Monitor program effectiveness through observations, administrator interviews and surveys, progress reports, and student outcomes.		
<i>Continue listing major activities.</i>		

Budget

The budget is a great opportunity to show your agency’s credibility and program planning skills. Here are a few tips:

Use formulas. Show your math to put the expense into perspective. Describe how that expense relates to your project.

Math Specialist for professional development and math tutoring: $Salary: 3 \text{ hours/day} \times 196 \text{ days} \times \$29/\text{hour} = \$17,052;$
 $benefits = \$4,604$

Tip

The budget should be able to stand alone, so include enough detail and rationale about your project.

Do your homework. Research appropriate costs, so the reader won’t think you are padding the budget. *Make sure all of your numbers add up correctly.*

Never use the word “miscellaneous.” There are no miscellaneous expenses in a grant budget. Plan for contingencies including office supplies, postage, indirect costs and cost-of-living increases for personnel salaries.

Include donated funds and in-kind support. Every funding source likes to know you are not relying solely on them for money. Show community involvement and district support by describing their coordinated funds. This also demonstrates sustainability of your project plan.

Here’s an excerpt from a sample budget for an afterschool program:

Project Strategies	Description of Expenditure	Requested Funds	Donated Funds/ Services	Total
#1 – Provide a supervised, inviting and creative extended learning environment	<p>CLC Facility: Our afterschool program will take place in a safe and easily accessible facility, located within one of our participating schools.</p> <p>The space was donated to our project rent-free.</p>		<i>Describe how a school has donated rent-free space</i>	
#2 – Provide quality afterschool staffing.	<p>Full-time Project Director: This position will manage the day-to-day activities of this project.</p> <p>➤ <i>Salary: enter formula = \$XXXX;</i> <i>Benefits: enter formula = \$XXXX</i></p>		<i>List the amount/ service, as well as the donation source.</i>	
#3 – Implement research-based technology early intervention programs to improve student reading achievement.	<p>Technology-based Tutorial Program: Trained tutors will use research-based tutorial software to provide students additional practice and review, based on a customized sequence of activities focused on each student’s unique needs. This program will provide assessment tools as well as tutorial tools for reading leveled books, oral reading, word work and writing.</p> <p>➤ <i>Enter formula</i></p>			

Before you submit the proposal....

Proofread and then proofread again. Have someone read the proposal who was not involved in the writing process. Their fresh eyes could spot typos or calculation errors that were previously overlooked.

Anticipate reviewers’ questions. Does the proposal answer the following questions?

- Why does this project deserve funding?
- Who will be targeted?
- What will happen and when?
- Why do you think this project will work?
- Who is responsible for each activity?
- How much will the project cost?
- How will you determine effectiveness of the project?
- What will happen after the funding ends?

Free Grant Review

Pearson's Grant Team can provide a free review of your draft application for Pearson programs and assess it against grant requirements. The document will be returned with embedded comments that indicate areas of strength and areas that should be revised.

Email your draft to: Grantexperts@pearson.com at least one week before proposal is due.

Please include:

- Draft application in Word
- Copy of the grant application you are responding to
- Name of Pearson Account Executive you are working with

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Next, you must wait. Some foundation boards meet only twice a year, so six months may go by before you hear an answer. The foundation may request a face-to-face meeting or a site visit before money is exchanged. Be prepared to give a brief summary of your project and answer questions about the selected strategies. Also, rehearse a solid answer to the following question: "What will you do if we only fund a portion of your request?" Often foundations try to maximize the number of sites served by awarding small grants to multiple entities.

If awarded, keep these recommendations in mind:

- Send a "thank you" note. Foundations deserve appreciation for their investment in your project.
- Keep the foundation informed of the project's progress. Submit reports on time.
- If you need to make changes to the budget or project, the funder will generally need to approve changes before they are implemented.