

FUNDING GUIDE

Securing Additional Resources for Community Health Improvement

Every community has a unique way of bringing people together to work on health issues, ranging from informal groups of leaders to voluntary coalitions to formal alliances. For the purpose of this guide, we will refer to any such group as a “partnership.”

A common barrier many communities face is how to get financial support for new community health policies, programs, or systems changes that are identified during community discussions or planning efforts. The purpose of this guide is to provide tools and resources for identifying and accessing funding resources for your community health initiative.

That said, it’s important to be strategic before launching into fundraising.

Consider first:

- ☐ Are you clear about what you are striving to achieve?
- ☐ Do you have data and evidence to support your approach?
- ☐ Have you fully engaged those who will benefit from the strategies in the initiative? Do community members “own” these strategies? Are they advocating for them and leading their implementation?
- ☐ Have you assessed whether the funds you seek are in alignment with your strategic focus?
- ☐ Have you identified and leveraged the resources that already exist in your community, both financial and human capital?
- ☐ If you and other groups are considering a collective fundraising request, how might it impact individual fundraising? Have you evaluated the potential trade-offs?

Answering these questions creates a win-win for you and your potential funder. It will give your partnership solid footing for developing a fundraising pitch and provide the foundation for a sustainable approach to funding and implementing your strategy. In addition, the answers will be necessary for foundations considering financial support.

To explore whether seeking *outside funding* is a good idea for your situation, see Tom Wolff’s [Money and Coalitions: Delights and Dilemmas](#). To explore how to make the most of your *available resources*, see [Guide to Maximizing Resources](#).

If you are sure that outside funds are needed for your initiative, this guide will provide tools and resources that build your capacity to successfully obtain them.

This guide has two sections:

- I. **Developing a Fundraising Plan** – This section describes the essential elements for fundraising success and the necessary steps involved in formulating the partnership’s fundraising plan.

- II. **Identifying and Accessing Funding Opportunities** – This section covers where to look for funding opportunities and provides tips for applying for funds.

As you identify additional ways to fund community health improvement efforts, please share your ideas by emailing us at info@countyhealthrankings.org.

Section I: Developing a Fundraising Plan

Fundraising Principles

Fundraising takes energy and time. It also requires strategy. Before diving into fundraising efforts, there are fundamental principles to keep in mind throughout your journey so you can stay on-track.

- [Essentials of Fundraising](#) (from Solid Ground Consulting) shares seven key principles of fundraising, which cover topics such as the advantage of garnering unrestricted funds to the integral nature of a strong donor base.
- Key Principles of Fundraising (p. 3 in [Meeting the Match: RWJF Guide to Fundraising for Tobacco Policy Change](#)) identifies 12 key principles, including the importance of listening to your potential donors and not being afraid to make the “ask.”

Assessing Readiness

Before you develop a plan, there are several tools available to help you get ready to seek funds.

- [Assessing Fundraising Readiness](#) (from Solid Ground Consulting) is a ten-item checklist to address before entering into any grassroots fundraising project.
- [Assessing Organizational Readiness for Fundraising From Non-Grant Sources](#) (from M+R’s Power Prism®) outlines how to conduct an internal “gut check” of your organization, delineates the steps to build a fundraising and development plan, and features exercises where you can take note of your current (and prospective) donors.
- [Before You Seek a Grant: A Checklist for New Nonprofits](#) (from Candid, a service of the Foundation Center previously known as GrantSpace) is a free webinar designed for nonprofits or community groups with little experience in grantseeking. It includes a detailed checklist listeners can use to assess their own readiness for fundraising efforts.

Planning

Just as it’s necessary to carefully plan for your community health initiative, it’s helpful to have a fundraising roadmap with steps to guide you through the basic components for success.

- [How to Build a Fundraising and Development Plan](#) (from M+R’s Power Prism®) uses a detailed, step-by-step process to guide you through developing a realistic fundraising plan.
- [Introduction to Fundraising Planning](#) (from Candid, a service of the Foundation Center previously known as GrantSpace) is a free webinar that teaches you how to identify strengths and assets in a partnership, develop a case statement, set fundraising goals, select funding partners, and construct a fundraising plan and calendar.

- [Ten Nonprofit Funding Models](#) (from Stanford Social Innovation Review) provides a framework for nonprofit leaders to think through their business model for how they operate so they can be more effective in finding the right funders for their work.
- [Strengthening Nonprofits: A Capacity Builder's Resource Library](#) is a resource manual to help you manage public funding.
- Assessing Funding Needs and Opportunities (pp. 4-8 in [Meeting the Match: RWJF Guide to Fundraising for Tobacco Policy Change](#)) emphasizes the importance of understanding what resources your organization has to offer in order to strategize for successful networking opportunities.
- [Goals and Strategies for Fundraising from Individual Donors](#) (from M&R's Power Prism®) is a tool to help you develop partnerships at different levels, including individuals, foundations, corporations, and government.

Section II: Identifying and Accessing Funding Opportunities

With a good understanding of your partnership's fundraising capacity, an appreciation for core fundraising principles, and a comprehensive fundraising plan, now is the time to begin seeking support! This section provides an overview of the types of funding resources available, tips on how to identify and access resources, and information on funders of community health initiatives.

Types of Funders

There are several types of funders throughout the nation, state, and in your community, including government grants, foundation funds, corporate sponsorships, and service organization grants. Some organizations award grants on a national or state level, whereas others give to particular projects within specific communities. Here's an overview with some key links; additional links to funding sources follow.

Federal and State Governments. Federal or state governmental agencies often put out calls for proposals on specific topic areas. They usually have a timeframe during which they accept proposals and make funding decisions. It is important to be aware of the timing for different grant opportunities. You may want to sign up for email alerts to receive notices about new calls for proposals. [Grants.gov](#) includes grant opportunities from 26 federal grantmaking agencies. [State and Local Government on the Net](#) includes links to many grant programs available by state.

Foundations. Foundations can be a great source for funding projects. Finding the right foundation for your project is a critical first step in the application process. There are community, family, and public foundations. Some are small and serve a specific community, while others may give millions of dollars to fund projects all over the country. There are several websites that can help you find a foundation that matches your initiative. Your local chamber of commerce, United Way, and county council of governments are also great resources when looking for foundations that fund projects in your community. [Candid](#), formerly known as The Foundation Center, maintains an online database of the more than 100,000 foundations, corporate donors, and grantmaking public charities.

Corporations. Many corporations offer grants through a foundation or philanthropic division. The company's website will indicate the types of programs and initiatives it typically funds. Companies tend

to invest in the communities where they are located, so investigating which corporations have headquarters or other corporate facilities in or near your community is a good place to start. The Foundation Center lists the [top 50 largest corporate foundations by total giving](#).

Service Organizations. Civic and service clubs, such as Kiwanis, the Lions Club, the Junior League, or the Rotary, fraternal groups and social clubs like Delta Sigma Theta and The Links, may also have monetary or in-kind resources available. Members of service organizations come from many different parts of the community (e.g., business, education, government, human services, or health). Engaging with service organizations can help you build important relationships that can lead to support for your initiative.

The following resource provides some insights into trends in funding:

- [The Future of Fundraising](#) (from Stanford Social Innovation Review) – This article highlights four trends in the nonprofit fundraising landscape, including the burgeoning of robust, publicly accessible donor data that can help leverage relationships with funders, as well as the move from reactive to proactive fundraising campaigns.

Identifying Funding Opportunities

Identifying funding is fundamentally a matter of staying abreast of and responding to upcoming opportunities. Stay connected with your key partners to learn about available funding. Here are a number of helpful resources for learning more about funding opportunities:

- [The Grantsmanship Center](#) provides state-specific information about the top grantmaking foundations, community foundations, and corporate giving programs, as well as links to state government homepages.
- [Candid](#), formerly known as The Foundation Center, is a leading source on philanthropy worldwide and is supported by more than 550 foundations. There are five regional library/learning centers: New York, Washington DC, Atlanta, Cleveland, and San Francisco. The center also maintains an online database of the more than 100,000 foundations, corporate donors, and grantmaking public charities. (Note that searching the directory requires a monthly subscription.) Candid also provides free webinars and learning opportunities including:
 - [Introduction to Finding Grants](#)
 - [Introduction to Proposal Writing](#)
- [Local Initiatives Support Corporation](#) (LISC) connects local organizations and community leaders with resources to revitalize neighborhoods and improve quality of life. They offer a useful toolkit including loans, grants, equity investments and on-the-ground experience in some of the most vulnerable communities.
- [United Way](#) is another great resource in your search for funding. In 2008, United Way Worldwide initiated a 10-year plan with goals to improve education, help people achieve financial stability, and promote healthy lives, which many local United Ways have adopted. These [goals](#) align with both the socioeconomic factors and health behavior factors that are a significant part of the County Health Rankings model. Your local United Way provides funding and connections to other agencies and initiatives in your community addressing these issues.

- [Grants.gov](#) includes grant opportunities from 26 federal grantmaking agencies, including the departments of Health and Human Services, Education, Housing and Urban Development, Agriculture, and Transportation, as well as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. You can sign up to receive [email alerts](#) about new grant opportunities.
- [The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#) issues announcements for Requests for Application (RFAs) for specific topics with designated timelines. Read the RFA carefully to be sure your project qualifies. You can [sign up](#) to receive email updates on the latest news and information from SAMHSA.
- [Administration for Children & Families: A Guide to Resources and Funding for Community and Faith-based Organizations](#) (also available in [Spanish](#)) includes: an overview of the range of ACF programs and resources, basic information about finding and applying for federal funds, specific information about ACF's grant opportunities, and numerous resources and toolkits available for any community or faith-based organization.
- [Robert Wood Johnson Foundation](#), which funds the County Health Rankings & Roadmaps program, awards grants in several program areas, including childhood obesity, health care coverage, human capital, public health, quality/equity, and vulnerable populations. RWJF awards most of its grants through calls for proposals. You can review current funding opportunities and sign up for RWJF news and updates [here](#).
- **State government and universities** are another potential grant source. States may offer competitive grants to work on specific issue areas. University researchers may be willing to work with you to apply for research funds to implement and evaluate your new initiative, or

Tips for Working with Philanthropy Partners

- Ask your funder who else they are funding to work on similar issues. If accessible, look at their list of grantees and ask for an introduction.
- Ask them to connect you to state, regional, and national groups, individuals, and other funders.
- Don't forget that your funder is a part of the community. They or someone in their family may directly benefit from your services or intervention. If you're considering inviting a funder to your board or as an advisory member, first find out the funder's policy about board/advisory participation. Consider the potential hurdles and possible loss of a direct advocate.
- Heart is not enough. Organizations seeking funding should determine their internal competence: conduct an honest assessment of your financials, operations, leadership, readiness, and outcomes. Funders are looking for organizations with a strong strategy and an emphasis on results and outcomes vs. outputs.
- Consider how your organization and request appear to the funder. Funders want to see a long-term vision that includes partnerships.
- Be thoughtful about how you frame your request. Will the funding serve as a catalyst, add to the evidence base, or support scalability?
- Keep in mind that foundations are focused on improving the life of residents through the work of nonprofits not on keeping nonprofits in business.

you may be able to tap into an existing research project in your area of interest.

Applying for Funding

Different funders focus on different health factors; it's important to know which funders are most likely to support your particular areas of focus so that you can be strategic in your applications. Most funders will be very transparent on their websites about their focus areas and which grants they've approved. Here are some tips on applying for funds for your community health initiative:

- ☐ **Plan ahead and know your specific needs** – Define the resources you need to accomplish your initiative.
- ☐ **Get inside the potential funder's head** – Necole Irvin, former Program Officer for the Houston Endowment, shared [in this webinar](#) that funders generally think about a grant as having *impact*, as a *short- or long-term investment*, or as a *leveraging tool*. Frame your request to the funder from one of these three perspectives.
- ☐ **Understand funding goals and guidelines** – Customize your proposal to meet the funder's goals and objectives. Follow all technical guidelines as requested by the specific funder.
- ☐ **Clearly envision success** – What are the funders purchasing with their money? How will you deliver your product? How will you measure your progress toward reaching your goals?
- ☐ **Have measurable outcomes** – Who will benefit and how? How will your initiative be evaluated?
- ☐ **Plan for sustainability** – Funders want projects that will continue once the grant period ends. How will you sustain the program?

This guide provides an overview of tools and resources helpful to running an effective fundraising campaign, but we recognize that every community has unique challenges and opportunities. If you have questions about this guide, [contact us](#) to connect with a community coach from the *Roadmaps to Health* Action Center.