

## **TIPS ON APPLYING FOR CHILD CARE FACILITIES GRANT FUNDING<sup>1</sup>**

1. **Identify a proposal preparation team.** Decide who needs to be involved in researching, writing, and submitting the proposal, and clearly decide who has what responsibilities before you begin the process.
2. **Do your research.** Review foundations' annual reports and any information they have about recent grants they made in order to get a sense of which foundation's mission, interests, and regional focus correlate best with those of your program.
3. **Identify the appropriate contact person.** Find out who is responsible for projects handled in the region and subject area covered by your program. If a friend, colleague, family member, or other acquaintance has referred you to a specific individual within the foundation reach out to that person first.
4. **Identify opportunities.** If early care and education is a particularly hot topic in your community take advantage of the opportunity to approach a funder who may be more receptive to your proposal now than they would be, or will be, at other times.
5. **Stay current.** Always be aware of developments in the child care field, especially those that affect your local area, and incorporate these issues into both your proposal and any meetings you have with the potential funder.
6. **Think about your audience.** Make sure to write the proposal with the reader in mind. Be careful not to use too many acronyms or jargon that he/she might have a hard time following. Also, describe your program's objectives in terms that the funder can relate to by providing specific information about the impact of your program for local families, the community, economic development, etc.
7. **Be concise.** You should be able to describe your program concept, goals, and funding needs in a short but detailed one-page summary as part of the proposal. If you find that you cannot do this you are not ready to submit a grant proposal.
8. **Prepare thoroughly.** Always plan ahead for meetings and phone calls with funders. Create a checklist of materials to bring to a meeting and be prepared to provide specific details about the activities and outcomes of your program, your long-term sustainability plans, and information both about the positive impact your program will have on the community and about the negative consequences that the community will face if the program is not supported.
9. **Be honest.** Always provide truthful figures and information when presenting your needs, especially your projected budgetary needs – funders can tell when the numbers don't make sense.
10. **Follow the funder's guidelines.** For example, adhere to the designated format, answer all the questions asked on the proposal form, use a normal sized font, and return the form by the deadline, and in the manner specified by the funder.
11. **Pay attention to detail.** Ask several different people to proofread the proposal to identify any spelling or grammar mistakes before you submit it, including any errors in the spelling of the funder's name!
12. **Maintain communication.** This is especially important if a funder does give you a grant. Check in with them periodically by phone, and send personal letters and notes with new publications, annual reports, and newspaper or magazine clippings that relate to your program. Also, keep a list of current, past and potential funders in order to maintain and establish new contact with all prospective funding sources.
13. **Try again.** If you aren't funded by the first source you apply to don't let that discourage you from applying for funding elsewhere. When your grant applications are denied, however, it is important to find out as much information as possible about what you can do to improve your proposal for future applications so that you can improve on your proposal each time.

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<sup>1</sup> To compile this list we used advice from *The Grantsmanship Center Magazine* and *Foundation News and Commentary*.