

FAQs for Faculty Researchers Seeking Private Foundation Funding

By University Advancement | November 15, 2016

Q: What is the best way to begin researching private foundations?

A: A great resource is to use the Alkek Library's portal to *Foundation Directory Online*

Professional:

<http://catalog.library.txstate.edu/search/j?Databases=f&searchoptions=1&sortdropdown=t&sort=D&extended=0>

Here you can search by funding interests and regions, and view a summary of each foundation's profile plus links to their websites and copies of every foundation's recent IRS 990 forms (tax returns) that list past grant recipients and amounts. You can also use resources at our area's Regional Foundation Library at UT-Austin, Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Community Engagement Center: 1009 East 11th street, Austin, TX 78702

<http://diversity.utexas.edu/foundationlibrary/>

Q: How can I apply to a foundation requiring that applicants be a 501(c)3 organization?

A: In such cases, a request cannot be issued from Texas State University, which is a government entity. Instead, PIs may seek to issue an application from the Texas State University Research Foundation or the Texas State University Development Foundation. Consult your college's Research Coordinator.

Q: How does a Principal Investigator (PI) obtain permission to apply for funding from a foundation?

A: (1) Obtain clear, written approval from both your Chair and your Dean. (2) Register your proposal in PropStart—the proposal notification system managed by the Office of Sponsored Projects (OSP). (3) University Advancement will review your request, considering the dollar amount, alignment with foundation interests, and university fundraising priorities. If there are no conflicts, your request may be authorized within 3 business days.

Q: How do I get help creating a budget?

A: Consult your college's assigned Research Coordinator, who is skilled in budget creation including "pre-award" and "post-award" cost allocation procedures.

Q: Can I request to apply to, say, a dozen foundations at a time?

A: No. Faculty are advised to carefully consider the most appropriate funders for a project and request approval for a reasonable subset. University Advancement places a 3-month window on applications to keep opportunities open for other faculty members across the university to apply, so as a courtesy to them, please select your funding requests carefully.

Q: How do I determine how large a grant to request?

A: Review a foundation's most recent giving history. If there is no past relationship with Texas State, your request should probably be at the median level or lower. Investigate what our peer universities have succeeded in receiving, and whether those relationships have been built up over time to their present level.

Q: What does it mean when a foundation stipulates "no unsolicited requests" or "by invitation only"?

A: In such cases, a PI cannot just send in a letter of intent or a proposal. These foundations may give only to preselected donees, or their program officers may be charged with identifying donees that align their giving interests. For such foundations, relationships are key; consult University Advancement as to the preferred route to establish the relationship.

Q: Can I call the foundation to ask questions?

A: It is preferable to check in first with University Advancement, whose major gift officers may already have a relationship with the foundation and can assist in making the most productive contact possible.

Q: I want to seek an endowed gift. What is the required minimum?

A: Undergraduate Scholarships: \$25,000; Endowed Presidential Scholarships: \$50,000; Graduate Fellowships: \$100,000; Faculty Fellowships: \$200,000; Professorships: \$600,000; Chairs: \$2,000,000.

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Q: What if I discover that the foundation I want to apply to has a policy of “limited submission”?

A: If a PI discovers that the foundation limits the number of proposals that a single institution can submit, s/he must inform the Office of Research and Development (ORD), which may then disseminate a call for notices of intent to the university community, optimally 12 weeks or more before the sponsor’s deadline. In instances where the solicitation is less than 6 weeks prior to sponsor deadline, ORD may conduct an expedited internal competition. In either case, the interested PI must send a notice of intent to apply. Whichever PI is ultimately authorized to apply will be determined by the appropriate unit authority (Dean, Chair, Associate Vice President for Research, Vice President University Advancement, etc.), and all applicants will be notified about the decision.

Q: What is the difference between a gift and a grant?

A: Many private foundations don’t distinguish between these terms and may use them interchangeably. The distinction is more important internally at Texas State. Generally, a gift may be a donation with the expectation of nothing significant of value in return; unrestricted gifts may be spent at our discretion, while restricted gifts are designated for a specific purpose (e.g., endowment, program expense, or research). By contrast, grants may require specific budgets, and outputs may be reviewed by the sponsor who may retain proprietary rights; unexpended funds may be returnable, and specific deliverables are required.

Q: My project was funded, but now my budget has changed more than 10%. What should I do?

A: The foundation should be contacted to communicate your budget variances; have the revised budget ready to share with them, and a concise narrative explaining the changes. Demonstrating transparency with foundations can engender goodwill and trust.

Q: I received a foundation grant. Who is responsible for issuing followup reporting?

A: The PI is responsible. Be sure to check with the foundation on their required format, and involve your college’s Research Coordinator.

Q: How do I apply for TRIP matching funds?

A: University Advancement must pre-approve all TRIP-eligible proposals before researchers issue them to private funders. To be eligible, your proposal must have been funded by a private donor via a single check of between \$100,000 and \$10,000,000, and to have clearly been designated for research, including for endowed chairs and professorships, facilities, equipment, programs, graduate research stipends, or fellowships. University Advancement is the sole submitter of all of Texas State University’s requests to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in a process which takes up to 2 years. Gifts of between \$100,000-\$999,999 may be eligible for 50% match; gifts of \$1,000,000-\$1,999,999 may be matched at 75%; and gifts of \$2,000,000-\$10,000,000 may be matched at 100%. When a match is successful, 90% goes to the originating department and 10% to the general University Research Fund.

Q: After I submit a proposal, what happens next?

A: You may or may not be notified of a rejection. If your proposal is accepted, they may issue a check, or the donor may first mail you a grant agreement to be signed (in either case, take it to your Research Coordinator). Or you may need to develop a Texas State University MOU (memo of understanding) clearly defining roles and responsibilities; consult University Advancement or your college’s Research Coordinator.

Q: Whom can I contact with other questions about fundseeking from private sources?

A: University Advancement staff:
Charles Vestal, Associate Director of Foundations, cvestal@txstate.edu
(512) 245-2043

Dr. Barbara Breier, Vice President for University Advancement, bbreier@txstate.edu
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