

Foundation Straight Talk

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- 1) The process to secure foundation support takes a long time.
- 2) Establish a relationship of trust with a foundation staff member
 - Get involved in their review process
 - Will develop your credibility,
 - Be responsive
 - At all stages and all points of contact, be professional
 - Attend their conferences
 - Let your professional network work to your advantage – your colleague X is sponsored by the foundation...
- 3) Do your homework – what is the foundation's interest and what can you do for them?
 - Learn their meeting frequency
 - Find out what is expected in the proposal and follow instructions
- 4) In a short inquiry letter, ask –
 - Does my work fall within your interest?
 - What might the likelihood of Board approval be?
 - Also, reflect on the staff member's perspective and be responsive to it; staff members exert tremendous influence.
- 5) Follow formats exactly.
 - Make it difficult for them to say no.
- 6) See if staff will look at draft proposal.
 - Can get their buy-in.
 - Feedback will help you put in form most acceptable to the Board.
- 7) Address all feedback provided by foundation staff to make their job easier.
 - Foundation staff is the Board's gatekeeper, controlling what the Board sees.
 - If board sees your proposal, it is likely to approve.
- 8) Be tangible about what you are going to do.
 - e.g., Bill Clinton will speak, if we can secure financial support.
 - Avoid vague statements, any uncertainty, or the unknown.
 - *For conferences* – provide a name in every spot: TBN is not acceptable.
 - Make explicit how investment in the project will make a difference to foundation.
- 9) Most individuals don't follow guidelines/instructions.

More tips can be found at <http://giving.syr.edu/offices/foundationrelations.html>. Remember that grant proposals to foundations must be submitted through the Office of Sponsored Programs <http://sumweb.syr.edu/osp/>.