Foundation Straight Talk
October 4, 2002
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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.

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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/.