

Strategic Funding Prospecting: Tools and Techniques

Pre-Application Strategy

Learning Objectives

- Overview of strategic funding prospecting
- Importance of identifying multiple funding streams
- Emphasis on efficient, targeted search methods
- Connecting with funders that align with your mission
- Strengthen grant-seeking strategies through focused research
- Differentiate between aggregator-based searches and reverse funding methods
- Learn to assess the pros and cons of various tools and techniques
- Develop a roadmap for sustainable prospecting

Fundamentals of Grant Aggregators

- Aggregates multiple sources into a single platform
- Offers advanced search filters and up-to-date listings
- Often require subscriptions or institutional access
- Saves time by centralizing grant information (by funder type)

Letter of inquiry due	Mar 29, 2026	Applications due	Nov 22, 2025	Rolling deadline
Thriving Communities: National & International... The New York Community ... Sustainability Urban Planning Energy		AAUW: Community Action Grants - Project Support American Association of U... Women & Girl Services Women's Rights & Equality Educational Access & Equity		Leighty Foundation Grants Leighty Foundation Renewable / Sustainable Energy Volunteerism & Philanthropy
Unspecified amount		Up to US \$10,000		Unspecified amount
Program goal To mitigate climate change, make communities more resilient to climate change, protect public health from the hazards of toxic chemicals and pollutants, and...		Community Action Grants - Project Support Community Action Grants fund projects that promote education and equity for women and girls in grades K-12 and that are...		The Leighty Foundation (TLF) is a small family foundation incorporated under Iowa law. Directors and advisors live in Colorado, Alaska, and California. Mission...
Learn more		Learn more		Learn more

GrantForward and Instrumentl

- GrantForward
 - Data-crawling technology with personalized recommendations
 - Large sponsor database maintained by specialists
- Instrumentl
 - Integrates grant discovery with workflow management
 - Automates search processes and sends alerts
- Both require paid subscriptions, potentially a barrier for small organizations

Foundation Directory Online (FDO)

- One of the most extensive databases for private and corporate foundations
- Provides 990 forms, board lists, and historical grant data
- Requires a paid subscription for full functionality
- Some public libraries offer free on-site access
- Very informative, but can be overwhelming

Candid.

Foundation Directory

Other Key Aggregators

- GrantWatch
 - Specializes in currently active grants, frequent updates, SMART search tools
- Grants.gov
 - Free database of federal funding opportunities, includes a mobile app
- Pivot-RP & SPIN
 - Focus on academic/research grants, often institutional subscriptions

Pros and Cons of Online Prospecting

- Advantages

- Robust search and filtering tools
- Automated notifications and saved searches
- Quick identification of mission-aligned grants

- Drawbacks

- Subscription costs can be prohibitive, especially if paying for multiple
- Platforms may have steep learning curves



Reverse Funding Searches

- Examine funders supporting organizations with similar missions
- Review Form 990s, annual reports, and press releases for donor information
- Use databases like FDO, Candid, or GuideStar to see detailed funding histories
- Identify potential partners or collaborative opportunities

Methods for Reverse Funding Research

- Search public records, news articles, and social media for recent funding announcements
- Attend conferences or nonprofit gatherings to discuss shared funders
- Contact similar nonprofits to inquire about funder interests
- Verify donor alignment before initiating outreach
- Corporate Social Responsibility reports and announcements

Choosing the Right Approach

- Balance aggregator-based strategies with reverse searches
- Factor in organizational capacity, budget, and timeline
- Determine whether free resources (*Grants.gov*, *library FDO access*) suffice
- Consider combining paid platforms for deeper, more specialized searches



Reflection Slide #1

- How might your nonprofit prioritize aggregator subscriptions vs. reverse funding methods? Why?
- Which challenges do you anticipate in using paid tools?
- How can collaboration with peer organizations strengthen your grant-search strategy?

Best Practices for Sustainable Prospecting

- Keep organizational profiles updated on all grant platforms
- Schedule periodic reviews to catch newly posted opportunities
- Document search findings and share them in a central repository
- Encourage staff training to maximize each platform's capabilities



Preparing for Successful Searches

- Clearly define your funding needs and target budget ranges
- Gather critical documents (501(c)(3) status, financials) for quick reference
- Maintain a concise, compelling story for support to share with potential funders
- Identify staff roles in the grant-seeking process (*research, writing, financial reporting*)

Maximizing Grant Search Tools

- Evaluate free vs. paid platforms based on your nonprofit's budget, goals, and needs
- Use advanced search filters and keywords that align with your mission and programs
- Maintain a grant calendar to organize deadlines, eligibility criteria, and sponsor requirements
- Leverage local resources like library access to premium databases for expanded search capabilities

Ongoing Strategies and Relationship Building

- Track all prospective and applied-for grants in a centralized system for status updates
- Network with other nonprofits, attend conferences, and join professional groups (e.g., *Grant Professionals Association*)
- Regularly update and refine your search criteria based on application feedback
- Establish and nurture relationships with program officers through outreach and timely reporting

Reflection Slide #2

- Which aggregator or database seems most suitable for your current needs?
- How can reverse funding insights influence your long-term grant priorities?
- What strategies can you employ to maintain funding prospecting momentum?

Key Takeaways & Next Steps

- Leverage both aggregator tools and reverse funding research for a comprehensive search
- Match your approach to organizational size, budget, and strategic goals
- Regularly revisit and refine your prospecting plan to keep pace with funding trends
- Stay open to collaboration and continuous learning to optimize grant success