



Funding Tip: Obtaining Foundation and Corporate Funding to Support LifeSkills Training Program Implementation
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By Laura Martinez

This funding tip is part two of a three-part series of resources developed by The Finance Project to help LifeSkills Training (LST) grantees build capacity and sustain LST program implementation at their sites. Most LST programs are implemented in schools; however, the series presents strategies to help a variety of LST grantees, including program leaders, site coordinators, teachers and school administrators, obtain additional funding through foundation, corporation and government grants, and by building and establishing community partnerships. This funding tip presents strategies on how to obtain foundation and corporate funding to enhance and sustain LST programming.

Why Obtain Foundation and Corporate Funding?

Obtaining foundation and corporate funding is one part of a strategic financing approach to support long-term program sustainability and capacity. Foundation and corporate funding, typically in the form of grants, will vary by funding area (e.g. education, youth development, etc.), size and accessibility. Grant funding also provides grantees greater flexibility to cover program and operational costs. Written proposals are often required to obtain funding from foundations and corporate grants so targeting and searching for these funding opportunities are a critical step in securing additional LST dollars. To successfully obtain grant funding from these funders it is important to be familiar with the grant making process.

Strategies for Obtaining Public and Private Grant Dollars

There are three steps to searching for and obtaining grant dollars from foundations and corporations. These are:

- (1) Finding grant opportunities.
- (2) Establishing relationships with grant officers.
- (3) Writing successful proposals.

To be successful in finding grant dollars to support LifeSkills Training activities, the first step is to locate and identify relevant funding opportunities. Also, it is important to determine who will be doing the grant writing—the LST site coordinator, the school district development personnel, or a contracted grant writer. Below is a brief overview of the fundamentals of the grant process.

• **Finding private grant opportunities**

- *Internet* – Many grant opportunities can be found online. Some online search engines are available for free while others require a subscription. Places to look include:
 - Botvin LifeSkills Training website:
<http://www.lifeskillstraining.com/grants.php>

- Internet Search using key words (e.g. “youth development grants”)
 - Foundation Directory Online: <http://fconline.foundationcenter.org/>
 - Youth Today: <http://www.youthtoday.org/grants.cfm>
- *Local Resource Centers and Business Offices* – Community-area resource centers, businesses and corporate headquarters may also carry additional grant information or provide access to a host of print and online materials. Examples of the type of places to look include:
 - Foundation Center – Headquartered in NYC, with four field offices in: Washington, DC, San Francisco, Atlanta, and Cleveland
 - Local library, businesses, United Way and corporate headquarters
 - Other resource centers - Center for Nonprofit Management (Southern California, Dallas, Nashville); Nonprofit Management Center (Midland, TX); Nonprofit Center (Kansas)
- **Establishing a relationship with grant officers**
 - *Think of the funder as a resource* – The most successful grant requests are those that a grant officer is familiar with; in other words the grant officer knows and respects the work of the organization or individual or has a keen interest in the topic area. Identify a grant officer at the foundation or corporation who oversees the program area you are interested in obtaining funding and review guidelines on how grant funds can be solicited. See if you can identify a program officer to make contact with and who may be available to address your questions. Ask how proposals are reviewed, how decisions are made and if there are any budgetary requirements. If possible, take the time to introduce the LST program and, better yet, request a meeting to discuss your work. At the minimum, call to introduce yourself and let the funder know a proposal is forthcoming. After the grant process is over, if the LST program is not funded, request feedback on your proposal. If the LST program is aligned with the funder’s priorities and goals, ask if you can apply again.
- **Writing successful grant proposals**
 - *Know the proposal requirements and deadline* – When researching new grant opportunities, make sure that the LST program activities fit within the funder’s giving guidelines. Read the guidelines very carefully; follow the suggested or required format and always submit your application before the deadline. Also, be sure to collect all of the required addenda such as the budget or a letter of support.
 - *Be clear and to the point* – Almost all funders’ applications will have a specific objective in mind and it is important to tailor your proposal accordingly. It is very important that the request for funding is aligned with the funder’s goals. The proposal should include detailed information to answer each required application question, followed by a clear conclusion and convincing rationale that conveys the importance of the project. Do not assume the reviewers know the problem or program; avoid unsupported assumptions, be direct and stay away from jargon.
 - *Use data and real numbers* – When possible, use specific numbers, program statistics, and measurable outcomes to show that the LST program is an

evidence-based program. Using specific numbers that are tied to measurable outcomes shows funders exactly what funding you are requesting and why. Include a clear and realistic project timeline, with clear, measurable results. A staff flow chart can help detail the program administration, supervision and monitoring of the program. Funders like to see exactly where their money is going.

- *Proofread your proposal* – Carefully examine and edit the grant proposal with the support of the grantwriter or school district staff. The proposal should be easy to read by any reader, especially one not familiar with the LST program. It may also be helpful to have someone unfamiliar with the project, such as a district-level staff person or parent organization member, proofread the proposal and offer feedback. Questions to consider include: Does the proposal answer all of the questions required by the funder? Do the responses make sense and tell a compelling story about the funding request? And most importantly, make sure your proposal does not have any formatting or grammatical mistakes.

Best Bet Funding Sources

Not all LifeSkills Training program leaders have the time or resources to search and apply for grants, and develop relationships with grantmaking organizations. However, local/regional and small grant opportunities are often less time consuming and may offer smaller, more attainable funding options. Organizations such as the Dreyer's Foundation, Office Depot Foundation and The Clorox Company Foundation, all of which have grantmaking programs for youth development programs and activities, are good examples of "best bet" funding sources, which can serve as a guide for LST grantees as they search for other opportunities. Tips to guide the decision-making process are listed in detail below.

Funding Considerations

When searching for new funding sources, it is important that program leaders determine whether a specific funding source is worth pursuing. Consider the following questions to assess if a specific funding source meets the program's goals and resource needs.

- 1. Does this funding source support the goals and priorities of the organization?** What types of investments can the funding source support? Does it align with your organization's priorities and needs?
- 2. How can these funds be accessed?** What types of programs or organizations can apply for funds? Can youth programs apply directly for the funds or do funds flow through the State or Local government?
- 3. Should I apply?** How many grants are given out each year? What is the average grant size? What are the reporting requirements? Is it worth the time and effort to apply?

1. Does this funding source support the goals and priorities of the organization?

LifeSkills Training grantees should consider accessing foundation and corporate foundation funding when their goals and priorities align with the funder's program goals. The primary goal of a funding source varies by funder so it is imperative to look for funding sources that specifically support youth and youth development activities. For example, the Dreyer's Foundation states that its goal is to provide funding to programs/activities that promote family, school and community environments that build skills and foster talents in young people. The Office Depot Foundation's grant giving focuses on activities

that serve, teach and inspire children, youth and families, and civic activities that serve the needs of a community. When reviewing the organization's goals, be sure that the LST program is justified in applying for funding.

2. How can these funds be accessed?

Tax-exempt 501(c)(3) (non-profit) organizations such as afterschool programs, family health clinics and a small number of incorporated PTAs are eligible to access most foundation and corporate foundation funds. Some applications require that a written proposal be sent through the mail while other applications are submitted through online systems. If possible, find and carefully review the funder's website—it should provide all of the application details. For example, the full applications, deadlines, and other requirements for the grants mentioned above can be found at:

- Dreyer's Foundation (http://www.dreyersinc.com/dreyersfoundation/small_grants.asp)
- Office Depot Foundation (<http://www.officedepotfoundation.com/funding.asp>)
- The Clorox Company Foundation (<http://www.cloroxcsr.com/ccf-grantguides/>)

3. Should I apply?

- *The grant size is manageable.* Large grant awards can be cumbersome to manage. Smaller grants usually have easier applications and fewer reporting requirements. Look for grants like those offered by the Dreyer's Foundation, which makes small grants of \$1,000 or less. Another option to receive a smaller donation is through volunteer programs like the one also offered by Dreyer's. Dreyer's employee volunteers, who volunteer at least eight hours per month, can request a \$200 donation for the organization directly from the foundation. The Office Depot Foundation also makes small grants between \$50 and \$3000, with the average grant size at \$1,000. It also supports in-kind donation requests if the inventory is available.
- *The grantmaker is national or within my region.* Many small foundations, community foundations, and other corporate foundations prefer to make donations within their geographic region. For example, The Clorox Company Foundation offers grants primarily in its headquarters community of Oakland, California; however, Clorox Manufacturing plants (the Field Grant Program) operate small giving programs in their local communities. These programs are administered independently and serve a three- to five-mile radius of the facility. A number of grantmakers serve non-profits throughout the United States including the Office Depot Foundation. When searching for grant opportunities, be sure to check if there are any geographic requirements or if it is a nation-wide funder.

Summary

Foundation and corporate funding is just one part of a strategic financing approach that considers what to fund, the costs, current resources and gaps, and employs a range of financing strategies. Foundation and corporate funding helps build a diverse portfolio because it usually allows for more flexibility for LST grantees to build and support program sustainability and capacity; and sometimes to pilot or expand activities to a new population or implement an innovative new strategy. Successfully obtaining funding begins with the careful identification and review of grant opportunities. Next it is important to build a relationship with the appropriate grant contact and write a strong proposal. Tips and strategies to support your efforts are outlined here; and as you gain

success with obtaining corporate and foundation funding the process will become more straightforward.

Other Resources

The Finance Project has an extensive body of information and resources to help leaders finance and sustain effective *programs* that support the positive development of youth, and develop *systems* that provide an infrastructure to help coordinate and guide investments in youth. Visit The Finance Project's [Youth Programs Resource Center](#) for tools and resources on financing and sustaining youth programs and the [Find Federal Funding](#) database, an online catalogue of more than 400 federal programs.

Suggested publications produced by The Finance Project:

- ▶ [Building Capacity for Better Results: Strategies for Financing and Sustaining the Organizational Capacity of Youth-Serving Programs \(September 2010\)](#)
- ▶ [Cutting Costs, Keeping Quality: Financing Strategies for Youth-Serving Organizations in a Difficult Economy](#) (March 2010)
- ▶ [Sustaining Youth Engagement Initiatives: Challenges and Opportunities](#) (November 2009)

This funding tip is part of a three-part series of resources developed by The Finance Project to help LifeSkills Training (LST) grantees build capacity and sustain LST program implementation at their sites. Please see additional resources in this series:

- ▶ Building and Establishing Community Partnerships to Support LifeSkills Training Program Implementation
- ▶ Obtaining Foundation and Corporate Funding to Support LifeSkills Training Program Implementation
- ▶ Obtaining Government Funding to Support LifeSkills Training Program Implementation

The Botvin LifeSkills Training website offers a useful LST Grant Writing Tool that provides information, resources, and suggestions to sites that are applying for funding for the LST program.

<http://www.lifeskillstraining.com/uploads/files/LST%20Grant%20Writing%20Tool.pdf>

Foundation Center's *Proposal Writing Short Course* is a free online tutorial that will give you the basics of proposal writing and lead you to other resources to help you continue your work. <http://fdncenter.org/learn/shortcourse/prop1.html>

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