

Eastern Michigan University

Office of Research Development and Administration (ORDA)

Sponsor Guide for Grants, Cooperative Agreements, and Contracts

There are several types of granting agencies, but in FY2018 approximately 70% of all research and development grant expenditures at U.S. colleges and universities were supported by the federal government. According to the National Science Foundation Higher Education of Research and Development Expenditure Survey (Table 1), in FY2018, the federal government supported nearly \$42 billion of the universities' total research and development spending. Other major sources of sponsored support come from private foundation grants (10%, or \$7.9 billion in FY2018), as well as private industry through sponsored research agreements (\$4.2 billion in FY2018).

This guide provides helpful information about the types of sponsors and their unique characteristics, criteria for selecting a sponsor for your project, and identifying how much funding you may need.

Sponsor Types and Characteristics of Grant Seeking Process of Each

Federal, State, and Local Government Agencies

Government agency guidelines are specific, and their deadlines are exact and nonnegotiable. Lead times vary in length, and the agencies may request concept papers, preliminary proposals, or full proposals. It may be helpful for you to contact the program staff of the particular government agency for advice about guidelines and about the relevance of your proposed idea to the sponsor's interests, in advance to preparing a proposal.

Foundations

Foundations are of five types:

- **National Foundations**, like the Mott Foundation, have large assets and well-defined goals for using their money. They seek proposals with regional or national impact and receive many applications annually.
- **Corporate Foundations**, of which Dow Corning is an example, sponsor projects in line with their corporate interests and usually also intend their funding to have a public-relations impact. Since corporate foundation assets are smaller than those of the national foundations, more grant limitations may apply.
- **Community Foundations** are really public charities. Typically, community foundation grants are smaller and are limited to efforts serving the local region. An example is the Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation, which supports innovative programs and projects of various sorts within the city's service area and surrounding communities.
- **Family Foundations**, for example, the Hartwick Foundation, support endeavors that reflect areas of current family interest or the particular founding person's interests. Family foundation assets normally are limited, guidelines are few, fewer grants are awarded annually, and the geographic area is restricted.

- **Special Interest Foundations** support single fields. The Thompson Foundation, for instance, serves only the frail elderly. Special interest foundations may also specify a geographic limitation, and approach is usually by letter of inquiry.
- **Major corporations**, like General Motors and BASF, may support projects through avenues independent of their foundations. These efforts also aim to enhance public relations as well as benefit the public. The funding interests are typically diverse, and guidelines and restrictions are few. Major corporations add support research through sponsored research agreements.

Other Non-Profit Organizations

While these pots of money are generally modest, it is important to keep the following sponsors in mind as they may provide important seed funds, or funds for important work in the community.

Professional Associations

Professional organizations, like those in the sciences, sometimes sponsor specific projects for which they solicit applications from their members. Notices appear in professional journals and newsletters. Although the awards may be small, there are advantages to this kind of support. The results of the research are disseminated throughout the discipline, gain wide attention, and, as a result, can lay the groundwork for larger investigations through other, more substantial support.

Civic Organizations

Occasionally such civic groups as the Lions offer awards for particular projects. These may be publicized through journals, the media, and letters to people the organization feels might participate or are in positions to locate investigators with the desired expertise. Sometimes letters seeking applicants are sent to agencies like ORDA. As these opportunities become available, the ORDA office publishes notices about them.

How to Select a Sponsor

Regardless of the funding agency to which you apply, keep certain matters firmly in mind:

- Know your sponsoring agency's objectives.
- Determine the sponsoring program's focus.
- Determine whether or not geographic limitations exist.
- Identify the funding limits.
- Find out when the deadline is and meet it; be aware of the length of time for the review and the date when the awards will be announced.
- Determine whether or not there are any other award policies that might have a bearing on your project.

Information about the Sponsor's overall objective can be found on its website, or in reports that it publishes. Information about the other items can be found in the funding opportunity, often referred to as a Program Announcement, Request for Proposal, Notice of Funding, etc.

Your ORDA pre-award officer would be happy to assist you in identifying potential sponsors for your project.

How Much Money do I Need?

It is important to accurately budget out your project and develop a realistic cost for the work. The amount you need for the project will be determined by the scope and project design. Once you have a firm idea of what you will be doing, ORDA will be able to assist you in determining what it will take, and how much it will cost. It is important to also pay attention to any funding limits imposed by the Sponsor. As you put your project plan together, work with your ORDA Project Officer to draft a budget. If the scope will take more than the grant program allows, you will want to scale back what you plan to do. Proposing a work plan that is more ambitious than the funding program allows can hurt you during the review process.