

CHECKLIST: Seeking Out Grants

Over \$150 million in grants is given out every year. Grant makers, or "sponsors," generally are concerned about various social problems and inequities. If you have a business goal that reflects the sponsor's priorities, you may be able to fund part of your business through a grant. What goals might your business meet? Is your business opening in an area that businesses have historically turned away from? Is your business minority-owned? Below is a checklist that will help you find appropriate grant opportunities.

- _____ **Identify grant makers who might support your project.** Many directories, on-line and on paper, match goals with grants. The two main grant categories are government grants and private grants. The most complete source for federal grants is through the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance, available from the Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D.C. 20402, or on-line at www.cfda.gov/. There is no single database including the over 43,000 private foundations in the United States, but two fairly complete on-line information sites are fdncenter.org/funders/ and www.cof.org/links.
- _____ **Research possible grant makers.** Sponsors often publish information about their goals and projects, which you can request. You can find articles about them in a variety of newspapers and journals. Their tax returns are also public record, and include information like foundation personnel and past grant recipients.
- _____ **Request grant forms and guidelines from the foundation.** Make a written request for forms and guidelines to the program officer identified in your research. If possible, get a list of past recipients and reviewers.
- _____ **Talk to one or more past grantees.** Past grantees can let you know how difficult or easy it was to work with the sponsor, and what they had to do to get the grant. They may have a good idea of what the sponsor really wants to see in a proposal. If you decide to apply for the grant, you will want to talk to several grantees in some detail. However, if the grant forms and guidelines leave you mystified as to whether you should even seek out this grant, a short conversation with a grantee or two may help you make that decision.
- _____ **Talk to the sponsor's program officer.** It is generally better to wait until you have reviewed the forms and guidelines, are serious about applying for the grant, and have a list of questions about the application process before you talk to a program officer. However, a brief chat with the officer may be helpful to you in deciding whether this is a

grant you should apply for. For example, some foundations solicit organizations to apply for grants, and will not or prefer not to accept grant proposals from other applicants. It is also important to know whether the sponsor is making much, or any, funding available for new awards; many funders make a large portion of their money available only for noncompeting continuation awards to existing grantees.