

Guide for Developing a Project Idea for Potential Foundation Support

Most foundations are mission-driven entities that seek to make a lasting difference in society. They generally seek to address a specific set of issues or unmet needs and may support projects ranging from basic research and discovery, to development of innovative models for direct service or education, to analysis of policies at the state and national levels. When presenting your project idea, it is important that it be framed in alignment with the Foundation's mission, drawing on their language and connecting outcomes to their goals.

One of the first critical steps in pursuing funding from foundations is to define the specific project for which you seek support. Foundations typically fund programs or projects with a specific beginning and ending date. There should be measurable goals articulated at the outset.

These questions may help guide the process of developing the idea into a discreet project:

- What is the problem or unmet need?
- What are the goals of the project and how will this address the problem or unmet need?
- What is the population that will most benefit?
- Why are you or your team in the best position to take on this project? ("Why Duke?")
- What happens if this project is not undertaken? ("Why now?")
- How long will the project take?
- How will you know when you have met your goal?

Additionally, the following aspects will give a project even greater impact:

- Institutional support: Have you discussed this project with department or school leaders?
- Community involvement and partnerships: Are there community partners or collaborators who may bring expertise or first-hand insights to the project?
- Novel approach: Who else is working on this issue and how is this project different?
- Ability to scale or replicate the results: How will the impact be sustained or the learnings from the project shared?

Once you have answered the above questions, you are ready to explore the foundation funding landscape. Duke University's research funding website, <https://researchfunding.duke.edu/> has a wealth of tools to aid in identification of foundation funding opportunities and the Duke Health Foundation Relations & Strategic Partnerships team can help you determine the best strategy to approach specific foundations.

About Us | Duke Health Foundation Relations & Strategic Partnerships (FRASP)

A unit of Duke Health Development and Alumni Affairs, our team supports faculty- and staff-led efforts to build and maintain fruitful partnerships with foundations.

Contact us to learn more: DukeHealth.FRASP@duke.edu

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