



We need funding for our Early Learning Spaces project. Where do we go?

1. Put your research skills to work. Who would fund a project like yours?

The following are good places to start:

Foundation Center (<http://foundationcenter.org>): “Established in 1956, Foundation Center is the leading source of information about philanthropy worldwide. Foundation Center maintains the most comprehensive database on U.S. and, increasingly, global grant makers and their grants — a robust, accessible knowledge bank for the sector.”



- Begin by searching the Free Directory at <http://foundationcenter.org/findfunders/foundfinder>. Note that deeper access to the site’s resources requires subscription (some libraries, such as the New York State Library, are subscribers: <http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/grantres.htm>).
- You may also visit the Foundation Center’s Grant Space for Children and Youth at <http://grantspace.org/Subjects/children-and-youth>.

Library Grants Blog (<http://librarygrants.blogspot.com>): Created by Stephanie Gerding and Pam MacKellar, authors of *Winning Grants: A How-To-Do-It Manual for Librarians with Multimedia Tutorials and Grant Development Tools*, this blog lists grant opportunities for libraries.

New York State Library – State Aid for Library Construction (<http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/libdev/construc>): “Funds from an appropriation of \$14 million in capital funds for public library construction in the 2015 State Budget can provide up to 75 percent of approved costs of acquisition, construction, renovation, or rehabilitation of public libraries or public library system headquarters.” Talk to your library system for more information.

Other resources:

- **American Library Association – Grants** (<http://www.ala.org/awardsgrants/awards>)
- **The Annie E. Casey Foundation – Grants** (<http://www.aecf.org/about/grant-making>)
- **Association for Library Service to Children – Grants** (<http://www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants>)
- **Grants.gov** (<http://www.grants.gov>)
- **Institute of Museum and Library Services – Grants** (<https://www.imls.gov/grants>)
- **Scholastic – Grants** (<http://www.scholastic.com/librarians/programs/grants.htm>)
- **W.K. Kellogg Foundation – Educated Kids** (<http://www.wkkf.org/what-we-do/educated-kids>)

1. Look within your community.

Don’t forget to think local, too. Who in your community could provide funding and/or other resources, such as staff and materials? Who might be interested in partnering on your grant proposal? Consider local organizations, schools, businesses, and foundations.

Keep in mind that many corporations fund projects in the communities where they operate. Some examples:

- **Barnes and Noble** (http://www.barnesandnobleinc.com/our_company/sponsorship/Sponsorship_main.html)
- **Costco Wholesale** (<http://www.costco.com/charitable-giving.html>)
- **First Niagara** (https://www.firstniagara.com/About_Us/Community_Commitment/How_We_Give/How_We_Give.aspx)
- **Lowes** (<http://responsibility.lowes.com/apply-for-a-grant>)
- **Panera Bread** (https://www.panerabread.com/en-us/en_us/community/community-giving.html)
- **Target** (<https://corporate.target.com/corporate-responsibility/grants>)
- **Walmart** (<http://giving.walmart.com/apply-for-grants/local-giving>)

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We've identified potential funders for our project. Now how do we make our case?

1. Consider your audience (the potential funder).

First, think about your audience. Is the funder a national foundation that requires a formal grant application? Or are they a local organization that would welcome a 15-minute presentation at their monthly meeting? Consider the funder's mission and priorities, and why they would want to fund your project.

2. Clearly articulate your community need.

Whether you are developing a grant proposal or a presentation, you want to be clear about the need for your project. Remember to revisit your *Early Literacy Community Asset Analysis*. Doing your research and going beyond assumptions is important here. Be sure to include relevant demographic data, such as population, poverty, literacy, and education stats. If available, include community survey or focus group results. Talk about the lack of early learning services in your community (and the benefits of these services in other communities). Consider sharing a couple of local families' stories. These personal accounts can often complement the hard data, making your case stronger.



*Early Literacy
Community
Asset Analysis*

3. Highlight support beyond the library.

Show that the community is on board, not just library administration and staff. Which local organizations, schools, and businesses support this project? Are there organizations interested in being project partners? Refer to your *Early Literacy Partnership and Outreach Plan*. Obtain letters of support to include with your grant application. Consider bringing a partner or two with you if you are planning a presentation.



*Early Literacy
Partnership and
Outreach Plan*

4. Explain your project's positive impact.

While you will need to spend time spelling out your project activities (using your *Early Learning Spaces Plan*), be sure to talk about what this will mean for end users. In other words, discuss what it is you are going to do, but also what impact these services will have on families with young children in your community. Funders want to know that their money will make a difference. How will families and children benefit? Research has been done supporting early literacy services that you can easily reference and explain to funders (see resources at <http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/libdev/earlylit/resources.htm>).



*Early Learning
Spaces Plan*

5. Polish your materials, and practice your message.

Make sure the project materials you plan to share with funders are polished and ready to go. Have a colleague review them. Find someone with grant writing experience to look over your application and offer feedback. If you plan to conduct a presentation, do a couple of run-throughs in advance, and anticipate the questions you may be asked. Practicing can significantly improve your delivery and effectiveness.

6. Finally, try and try again!

The reality is that you may have to try multiple times before you achieve funding success. Don't let a rejection slow you down. Be sure to follow up and ask questions. Grant makers will often share reviewers' comments with you and provide suggestions for improving your proposal that will help when resubmitting or for submission to other funding organizations. Good luck!