

Funding Toolkit for Nonprofit Agencies Serving Kinship/Grandfamilies

Contents

- I. [Introduction](#)
- II. [Funding Sources](#)
 - A. [Government \(Federal, State, and Local\)](#)
 - B. [Foundations](#)
 - C. [Corporations](#)
- III. [Individual Giving Fund Development Tips](#)
- IV. [Proposal Development](#)
 - A. [Three Types of Proposals](#)
 - B. [Reading a Funding Opportunity for Fit and Feasibility](#)
 - C. [Basic Proposal Elements](#)
- V. [Fund Development Resources](#)
- VI. [Conclusion: The Importance of Fund Development for Kinship Service Providers](#)

Terminology

The terms “grandfamily,” “kinship family,” and “kinship/grandfamily” can be used interchangeably to refer to all families in which grandparents, other relatives, or close family friends are raising children whose parents are unable to do so.

For definitions related to funding, see the [Glossary of Nonprofit & Community Foundation Terms](#) from the Foundation for Enhancing Communities.

A [kinship proposal template](#) and [guide to creating a memorandum of understanding](#) serve as companions to this resource.

I. Introduction

To be competitive in the large nonprofit field, it is important to identify potential sources of income, strategies to secure funds, and tools to solicit such funding. As defined by [Third Sector New England](#), fund development is “the ongoing strategic positioning of an organization to sustain and grow its resources by building relationships with those who understand and care about the organization’s relevance to the community.”

This toolkit is designed primarily for nonprofit agencies and organizations (collectively referred to throughout as agencies) that provide tailored services to kinship families,

whether as the sole mission of the organization or through one specific program. In this resource, you will find tips and tools to identify and secure funding for your kinship services.

To begin or continue a fundraising journey to seek support for this important work, consider the following tips.

- ▶ **Create a diversified fundraising plan** in which grant-awarded money constitutes at most 20% of your fundraising goals. This recommendation holds for any part of your fundraising plan, whether for a specific project or the agency.
- ▶ **Research foundations and grant opportunities** for your agency. Subscribe to newsletters and alerts that identify funding opportunities on an ongoing basis.
- ▶ **Identify a qualified writer** with experience writing grants **or invest in grant-writing training for an existing staff member.**
- ▶ **Understand that most first-time grant applications are rejected.** It's rare to be accepted for a grant without an existing relationship with the foundation, and, like all fundraising, "no" might mean "no for now." You must play the long game.
- ▶ **Establish funder relationships.** Any grantseeker can research a foundation, the funding opportunity, and the application guidelines. Building a relationship with a funder is essential in this competitive grant world. Try to connect with funders personally outside of a grant announcement. For example, set up a one-on-one meeting to introduce your organization to the funder, meet them at their grant information sessions, and/or invite them to speak at a community event. Consider inviting a kin caregiver who has informed your services to an initial meeting with the funder. In doing so, you'll be able to show your passion for the work, respect for the kinship families you serve, and the results of your services. **If possible, find out if any donor staff were raised in kinship families or are currently kin caregivers; they can be your first contact with the funder.**
- ▶ **Think outside of traditional kinship funding.** Think broadly about where you can secure funding. While a funding opportunity may not say "kinship," the human service needs that touch these families are tremendous. Kinship-serving agencies may be able to secure funding from opportunities that focus on aging populations, behavioral health, bereavement, education, juvenile justice, mentoring, minority health, physical health, positive youth development, substance use prevention, workforce development, etc.

II. Funding Sources

Finding grants typically begins with "prospect research" – finding out who will most likely give you money. It may also include registering with funding websites to receive

ongoing notifications of potential opportunities. Funders generally care about the following:

- ▶ **Agency Focus:** Are your kinship services compatible with the funder's goals? Does your program help solve a problem that the funder is passionate about?
- ▶ **Target Population:** Do you help people the funder cares about?
- ▶ **Geographic Region:** Even if the funder isn't located near you, have they given grants to other agencies in your area?

The following provides an overview of key funding sources for agencies serving kinship families.

A. Government (Federal, State, and Local)

Plenty of local, state, and federal government grants are available. Government grants often provide larger sums of money than foundation grants, and they are good sources of overhead support for your agency. The challenges associated with responding to government solicitations and receiving government support may include the following.

- ▶ Government grants and cooperative agreements may have a limited funding period.
- ▶ Securing government funding may require the development of some relationships with officials without lobbying.
- ▶ Government funding applications are typically more complicated than foundation funding applications.
- ▶ There may be a requirement to establish a line of credit before funds flow to your agency.

The following are key government entities that may fund kinship family supports.

Federal Government Sources

Many funding announcements and a list of [federal grant-making agencies](#) can be found at [grants.gov](#). Some sources to consider for kinship funding include the following.

- ▶ U.S. Department of Education
- ▶ U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
 - Administration for Children and Families (ACF)
 - Administration for Community Living (ACL)

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- National Institutes of Health (NIH)
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
- ▶ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
- ▶ U.S. Department of the Interior
 - Bureau of Indian Affairs
- ▶ U.S. Department of Labor

State Sources

- ▶ Children's Trust Fund
- ▶ Department of Aging
- ▶ Department of Economic Development
- ▶ Department of Education
- ▶ Department(s) of Health and/or Human/Social Services
- ▶ Developmental Disabilities Council

Local Sources

- ▶ Area Agency on Aging
- ▶ Community Behavioral Health
- ▶ School District or School Board
- ▶ Department(s) of Health and/or Human/Social Services
- ▶ Job Training & Preparation

For all government grants, exploring and determining if you meet eligibility requirements is essential before preparing a proposal.

B. Foundations

The [Council on Foundations](#) defines a foundation as an “entity that supports charitable activities by making grants to unrelated organizations or institutions or individuals for scientific, educational, cultural, religious, or other charitable purposes.” Private foundations can be independent, family-run, or corporate. Community foundations, which generally consist of many separate grantmaking funds, are also an important type

of foundation to consider. Foundation funding can often be used as seed money for pilot projects and can provide significant sums over a limited period. Foundations also typically note their specific goals, so you can see if your program fits, and they may be willing to take risks. Unlike government funding, foundation funding is often grounded in relationships, so agencies can and should contact foundation personnel to establish a relationship prior to seeking funding. Some of the challenges associated with foundation funding are listed below.

- ▶ Foundations give less when investments are down.
- ▶ Usually, foundations provide only two to three years of funding.
- ▶ Areas of focus in funding may be trendy, meaning that they may depend on what is happening in the news or the political environment.
- ▶ Foundations rarely fund operating costs. (However, some will provide start-up costs and general operating support.)

To keep track of foundations, set up a database that tracks the following:

- ▶ Name of Foundation
- ▶ Contact
- ▶ Address
- ▶ Foundation Type
- ▶ Total Assets
- ▶ Total Grants
- ▶ Grant Ranges
- ▶ Periods of Funding
- ▶ Subject Focus
- ▶ Geographic Limits
- ▶ Populations Targeted
- ▶ Types of Support
- ▶ Sample Recipients
- ▶ Application Guidelines
- ▶ Deadlines

An [extensive list](#) of national and international foundations is available through Miami-Dade County's Grants Coordination Division.

C. Corporations

Like governments and foundations, corporations can also give big money. As noted in the previous section, some corporations have a separate corporate foundation for grantmaking, but corporations themselves may also engage in philanthropy and/or grantmaking. Corporate giving has some unique advantages, as corporations can provide in-kind donations (e.g., free printing for those with in-house presses), volunteers from their staff, and use of their advertising budget to underwrite their contribution to

your agency. Be ready to share a story about your agency or a family you've helped, which they may want to include in their newsletter. Corporations may have a department in-house with a dedicated community outreach goal to support local causes. These internal departments often have the ability to give funds without a proposal process. Some of the challenges to the receipt of corporate giving are listed below.

- ▶ Funds may be restricted to a particular project, not provided for general use.
- ▶ Corporations rarely give operating funds.
- ▶ Many corporations already give through their local United Way.
- ▶ Corporations tend to be more cautious than individual givers.

Agencies should contact corporations to establish a relationship, just as they would with foundations. It is also important to create a database of potential corporate donors with the following information:

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| ▶ Corporation Name | ▶ Types of Support |
| ▶ Contact | ▶ Total Grants Made |
| ▶ Address | ▶ Grant Ranges |
| ▶ Number of Employees | ▶ Sample Recipients |
| ▶ Products/Services | ▶ Key Persons (CEO, Chair, Giving Officer) |
| ▶ Total Assets | ▶ Is There a Special Corporate Giving Program? |
| ▶ Subject Focus of Grants | ▶ Application Requirements |
| ▶ Geographic Limits | ▶ Deadlines |
| ▶ Populations Targeted | |

Categories of corporations that often fund human service interests include:

- | | | |
|---|------------------------|--------------------------|
| ▶ Banks | ▶ Insurance Companies | ▶ Media Stations/Outlets |
| ▶ Healthcare companies (insurance, hospitals, etc.) | ▶ Large Area Employers | ▶ Phone Companies |
| | | ▶ Utility Companies |

Employee unions may also provide human services grants.

For ideas of specific corporations, see *Newsweek* magazine's 2023 list of 500 of [America's Most Responsible Companies](#). Another resource that may help is

[Independent Sector](#), which provides opportunities for nonprofits to connect with corporate giving programs to exchange ideas, collaborate, and act on issues of common concern. To learn more about developing corporate partnerships, read the blog post “[The Ultimate Guide to Corporate Sponsorships](#),” from Qgiv.

III. Individual Giving Fund Development Tips

Of all non-governmental funding sources, individual donors give the most money to charities. You won't get it if you don't ask. Besides agency leadership, volunteer leadership is vital to mounting fundraising efforts. Many agencies serving kinship families are not large nonprofits, so being strategic in donor outreach is essential. **The best thing about individual donations is that they can usually be used for general operating funds.** The following are a few strategies that you can pursue.

- ▶ **Develop and update your donor prospect list regularly.** Start with your kin caregivers. Do not underestimate their capacity to give, no matter how small. Add your staff to the list and ask each member to identify others. Include your vendors on the list. Of course, local businesses, small and large, should also be included. Often forgotten sources are civic, social, and service clubs, which usually have a community service component.
- ▶ **Identify funding champions.** Find champions (besides the director of your agency) who can tell your story. These people may have been raised in kinship families and/or may be current or former kin caregivers. They may be individuals who have financial resources to donate and/or have access to a pool of donors. They can help you create your prospects list and serve as a primary contact for donations through phone calls and solicitation letters. Be sure to give your champions the tools they need to tell your story through simple promotional materials highlighting your mission, history, and outcomes.
- ▶ **Hold an annual giving event.** Creating an annual signature event that occurs around the same time each year allows small businesses and individual donors to include your agency as a yearly line item for donation. Consider what event would highlight your work as a kinship agency and draw contributors.

For more guidance on individual giving, read the blog post “[How to Create an Individual Giving Campaign for Nonprofits](#),” from Instrumentl.

IV. Proposal Development

Proposal writing is a multistep process. There is a wealth of information regarding proposal writing. This toolkit intends to provide the most relevant information and links to other websites that provide information, resources, and tips.

A. Three Types of Proposals

The requirements for the following proposal formats vary. **In all cases, abide by the funder guidelines for content, page length, and attachments.**

- ▶ A **letter of inquiry (LOI)** is a short, two-to-three-page document allowing your agency to summarize the project or initiative for which you are seeking a grant. The LOI is often a screening tool for funders to determine whom they will invite to submit a full proposal.
- ▶ A **grant letter** is a short proposal that succinctly explains your project, your agency's mission, and the funds requested. The grant letter can be a three-to-four-page document. Some funders provide a grant letter template for completion with strict word or character limits.
- ▶ A **formal grant proposal** is a comprehensive document that requires responses to multiple questions.

B. Reading a Funding Opportunity for Fit and Feasibility

Before investing significant time and effort, read the request for proposals (RFP) to help determine whether this opportunity is a good fit for your agency. Consider whether your agency should be the lead applicant or a subcontractor.

▶ Eligibility Criteria

- Is your organization eligible to apply?
- Is this open to nonprofits, government, and/or for-profit businesses?
- Are there some unique parameters that must be met?
- What is the geographic focus?
- Who is the target population?

▶ Grant Match Considerations

- What, if any, is the match requirement?
 - Can the match be cash or in-kind?
 - Can your organization meet the match requirement?

▶ Total Award Amount

- Is the potential award amount sufficient to make it worth the effort?

- If you are a small agency, does the award amount dwarf your organizational budget?
- Does your agency have the capacity to manage an award of the anticipated size? Will you need a line of credit to implement the grant, especially if the money is not immediately available?

▶ **Competition and Collaboration**

- How competitive is the grant program and will you be competitive?
- Who are your potential competitors?
 - Assume that geographic distribution will factor into award decisions, so who may be your local competitors?
- What is the potential for collaborating with other local partners?

▶ **Priorities**

- Can you meet stated absolute or competitive priorities to secure the extra points that will give you an edge?
- If you don't or can't meet the priorities, how competitive will you be?

▶ **Past Grantees**

- If applicable, consider past grant recipients (agency size, type, location, scope of work). Do you have similarities?

▶ **Time**

- Do you have sufficient staff expertise and time to prepare the proposal and its attachments?
 - If it is a federal grant, note that this is a significant undertaking.
- What other deadlines, staff vacations, or other issues might deter the completion of the proposal?
- Is an Intent to Apply form or application required before submitting the full proposal? If so, when is the deadline?
- Must you register by email or other designated portal by a specific date?
- Can you submit the grant a day or two in advance to cover any unforeseen complications in submission?

C. Basic Proposal Elements

This section briefly describes the core elements of a complete formal proposal. A boilerplate [template](#) with additional suggested kinship-related content/resources is available as a companion to this resource. The following are the primary sections of a full proposal.

Needs Statement: The first element of a project proposal is a description of the problem your project aims to solve. It is critical to explain your project's goals and why it's essential to the communities you serve. Who will benefit from your project? How will you help? How was the target community (kin caregivers and other stakeholders) involved in identifying needs and solutions? What statistics and current research do you have to back up your claim? Show that there is a clear and urgent need for your proposed interventions and that you understand the situation's context and challenges for diverse kinship families.

Goals and Measurable Objectives: This section describes the desired outcomes consistent with the funder's goals. These goals and objectives should be tied back to your Needs Statement. Using the SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-Bound) goal method can help you write clear goals. For more information about how to develop SMART goals, read the blog post "[How to Write a SMART Goal](#)," from HubSpot.

Program Design: An explanation of your project plans should be connected to your stated goals and objectives. Describe what your project will do, how it will do it, and why it will work. Show that your solution is feasible, sustainable, and aligned with your organization's mission and values. This is the heart of your proposal.

- ▶ Whether you are designing a new program or applying for funding to support an existing program, a **logic model** and **theory of change** might help you think through and articulate your plans and assumptions.
 - A logic model is usually a one-page chart summarizing all the components of your proposed effort. Nonprofit Works provides a [free template](#) that may be useful.
 - A theory of change (TOC) is a comprehensive description of how and why you expect a desired change to happen. "[How to Develop a Theory of Change and Logic Model for Your Kinship Navigator Program](#)," written by Sarah Prendergast of the Urban Institute and Karin Malm of Child Trends, details the benefits of developing a TOC and logic model for kinship navigator programs, and the principles are applicable to other kinship-serving programs as well. The authors lay out the steps in writing a TOC,

creating a logic model, and testing both the theory and model through program evaluation.

Evaluation: In this section, address how you plan to implement the funder’s evaluation requirements and any data you plan to collect. State whether you plan to hire a consultant, partner with an external organization, or use in-house staff to conduct the evaluation. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has published a [brief overview of evaluation elements](#). The evaluation types they note are listed below.

- ▶ **Formative evaluation** ensures that a program or program activity is feasible, appropriate, and acceptable before it is fully implemented. It is usually conducted when a new program or activity is being developed or when an existing one is being adapted or modified.
- ▶ **Process/implementation evaluation** determines whether program activities have been implemented as intended.
- ▶ **Outcome/effectiveness evaluation** measures program effects on the target population by assessing the progress in the outcomes or outcome objectives that the program is to achieve.
- ▶ **Impact evaluation** assesses program effectiveness in achieving its long-term goals.

Management and Staffing: This section identifies all key personnel (management, frontline staff, and consultants) who will conduct the proposed project and the roles they will play in it. To document the capability of the agency and the expertise of the individuals participating in the project’s operation, most proposal guidelines require a curriculum vitae, bio-sketch, or resume for each key person named in the proposal.

Community Partnerships: Having strategic partnerships is desirable to most funding sources. It is a way of leveraging grant dollars for maximum benefit to targeted constituents, as partners can improve outreach efforts, expand advocacy, and enhance programs and services. Such partnerships can be outlined in proposal support letters, which state how the external partner values your services, or a memorandum of understanding (MOU) detailing what each agency will provide to support project activities. A sample MOU is available as a companion to this resource.

Organizational Capability Statement: How is the proposed project idea consistent with your agency's mission and goals? It is essential to stay on mission! Describe your organization's history, growth, target population, personnel resources, spaces, evaluation results, and accomplishments/awards.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Statement: A growing number of funders are asking agencies to provide their DEI statement. [“Strengthening Your Organization &](#)

[Diversity Statement](#),” from Nonprofit HR, provides brief guidance for writing or revising your statement.

Sustainability Plan: Discuss whether this is an ongoing initiative you hope to integrate into your agency or a one-time project with long-term impact. Cite other funding sources that will enable you to continue the work when this grant ends. If you have some pending grants, be sure to identify them.

Budget: Determine what resources you will need to implement the project. These include salaried personnel, contractual consultants, and daily operating costs. Usually, a budget overview is required, with an attached budget narrative detailing each line item. Government grants typically have designated forms for their proposal submissions.

V. Fund Development Resources

The following is an alphabetical list of websites, newsletters, and other resources that provide notifications and information about funding opportunities. Subscribe to as many of these as possible to receive timely notification of grant opportunities. Unless otherwise noted, these options are free.

- ▶ [Candid](#) provides information and guidance on charities, grantmakers, and fundraising.
 - [Foundation Directory](#) offers a searchable database and tools to tap funding opportunities beyond open requests for proposals (RFPs), which make up less than 1% of total foundation funding. You must pay for a subscription to use this site.
 - [GuideStar by Candid](#)
 - [990 Finder](#)
- ▶ The **Child Welfare Information Gateway** has a [funding section](#) that provides information on financial planning and management, fiscal reform, funding sources, funding for different types of programs, and tools to support grant application efforts.
- ▶ The [Community Foundation Locator](#), from the **Council on Foundations**, allows you to learn about community foundations and search for them by state.
- ▶ With [Facebook Fundraising](#), nonprofit organizations that provide proof of nonprofit status can fundraise and ask others to fundraise on their behalf. Fundraising tools like donation buttons, page fundraisers, fundraiser stickers on Facebook Stories, and Facebook Live video donations allow nonprofits to use Facebook to boost their progress on a campaign.

- ▶ **Generations This Week (GTW)** is an e-newsletter with the latest news on intergenerational issues that goes out to thousands of **Generations United** members and supporters each week. [Sign up](#) to start receiving GTW. The “Think Intergenerational – Funding Opportunities” section contains many funding opportunities that may be applicable for kinship-serving agencies.
- ▶ [Giving USA](#) is a report on philanthropy with an analysis on charitable giving, giving by sources, giving to major recipients, and the latest giving trends.
- ▶ [Google Alert](#) monitors the web for your chosen content. You can create an alert on any topics of interest, including funding sources with a particular focus. You can set the frequency with which this information is provided to your email.
- ▶ The **Grandfamilies Alert** is a biweekly e-resource for grandfamily advocates and their allies, also from **Generations United**. It highlights resources, policy updates, action opportunities, grandfamilies stories, and programs to inspire and improve services. It provides resources to support grandfamilies across the U.S. [Register](#) to start receiving Grandfamilies Alerts.
- ▶ [Grants.gov](#) is a free resource for electronically finding government funding opportunities from all federal grantmaking agencies. It is the single access point for over 900 grant programs offered by federal grantmaking agencies.
- ▶ [GrantSelect](#) is an online database of funding opportunities such as grants for programs, projects, planning, start-up, endowments, technical assistance, and facilities and equipment.
- ▶ [GrantWatch](#) provides grant opportunities for agencies that fit into one of the following categories: universities, hospitals, government agencies, schools, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, research institutions, and some small businesses and individuals. It allows you to specify areas of interest and geographic location. A paid subscription is required.
- ▶ [The Grantsmanship Center](#) offers training and publications to help agencies plan programs, write grant proposals, and create earned income opportunities.
- ▶ **The Network Connection** newsletter from the **Grandfamilies & Kinship Support Network: A National Technical Assistance Center**, a project of Generations United, shares funding opportunities, information and registration links for upcoming webinars, new resources from the Network, and other information and opportunities from around the field. You can use [this form](#) to get it in your inbox each month.
- ▶ [Nonprofit Works](#) helps nonprofits by providing services, courses, and workshops. Their website includes a “Resources” page with free documents and templates related to grant research and writing.

- ▶ [Philanthropy News Digest](#) publishes RFPs and notices of awards as a free service for U.S.-based nonprofits and grantmaking agencies. The RFPs are listed by topic, with deadlines and links to the funder's website. After you have created an account, you can sign up to get RFP Alerts via email.
- ▶ The [Rural Health Information Hub](#) lists funding programs for child welfare and provides information on each opportunity. The programs can be sorted by type, geography, topic, and whether they are active or inactive.

VI. Conclusion: The Importance of Fund Development for Kinship Service Providers

It is crucial for agencies serving kinship families to engage in ongoing fund development to provide the necessary support and services to caregivers and the children in their care. Funding from diverse sources, including private foundations, corporations, and government agencies, helps create a strong, sustainable foundation for kinship programs. Hopefully, this toolkit will facilitate your journey to raising funds.

The Grandfamilies & Kinship Support Network: A National Technical Assistance Center (Network) helps government agencies and nonprofits in states, tribes, and territories work across jurisdictional and systemic boundaries to improve supports and services for families in which grandparents, other relatives, or close family friends are raising children whose parents are unable to do so. For more information, please visit www.GKSNetwork.org.

The Network is supported by the Administration for Community Living (ACL), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance award totaling \$9,950,000 with 95 percentage funded by ACL/HHS and \$523,684 and 5 percentage funded by non-government sources. The contents are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by ACL/HHS, or the U.S. Government.

© Generations United, 2023

The Network is a project of
Generations United.

**generations
united**

Because we're stronger together®