

Shared Enterprise and Apollo Fundraising Trusts and Foundations – Workshop 2 – Research and Cultivation

Introduction

Trust Solicitation

1. Research
2. Plan
3. Cultivate
4. Ask
5. Steward



In the first workshop we looked at how to write a compelling trust proposal, using a simple structure. We are now going to look at the steps that come before and after writing a proposal.

Fundraising from Trusts can be thought of as a five-step process. First you need to identify the funders most likely to support your work and prioritise which ones to approach. You then need to plan out the steps needed to engage them with your work and

the most suitable message for them. Thirdly, you need to build a relationship with them so that you both have all of the information you need to make the ask. Having made the ask, you then need to thank them and show them the impact of their support. We will look at each of these elements in more detail below.

Research

In the first workshop we talked about your Case for Support. This vital document outlines the different needs your project meets. Before you can identify potential funders (or prospects) you need to consider all of the different ways your work can be framed. For example, your work will have a heritage and cultural need, but is there also an educational need? An environmental need? A health and well-being need?

Having identified the different interests your project might appeal to there are a range of tools you can use to identify trusts giving grants in these areas. This includes:

- ⊗ **Online directories** – TrustFunding.org.uk, run by the Directory of Social change, is the most popular directory, although there is an annual fee. Free directories are available but this is definitely an area where you get what you pay for.
- ⊗ **Comparator organisations** – have a look at the supporter boards, programmes and Annual Reviews of similar organisations. Who is supporting them?
- ⊗ **Own networks** – who do you already know? Who do your board members know? Who do your organisation's partners know?
- ⊗ **Prospect Research** – there are a number of companies that will help you identify your prospects based on a research brief, including Giving Insight and Factory. While a more expensive option it can save you time.

All of these sources will give you a long-list of prospects. However, as we have seen from the first workshop, writing strong applications to all of these will take time. You need to prioritise your best prospects by gathering more information.

There are three key areas you need to research in order to shortlist your best prospects:

- ⊗ **Motivation** – what are the trust’s aims and how closely do they match yours/your projects?
- ⊗ **Capacity to Give** – what size grants are available and how does it match your need?
- ⊗ **Reach** – how easily can you reach the trust to be considered for a grant?

In addition to the sources listed above, the trust’s annual accounts on the Charity Commission website, and their own website (if they have one) are useful sources for information at this stage. However, you have to remember that most information you find is taken from the previous years accounts – which will be at least 10 months out of date by the time you read them.

Motivation

There are a number of things to consider when determining a trust’s motivation:

- ⊗ What is their stated charitable purpose? How closely does it match yours?
- ⊗ Have they funded similar things in the past? A lot of trusts will list their grants on their website and/or in their annual accounts.
- ⊗ Do they prefer capital or core costs? With few trusts providing core funding you want to maximise these opportunities when they come along!
- ⊗ Do they have specific priority areas or strategic programmes? Some funders will run time-limited grant programmes outside of their normal aims in response to an identified need
- ⊗ Is there any sign of flexibility? Some trusts have the power to give grants outside of their normal areas of interest.
- ⊗ What do their future plans say? Trust’s priorities can change. The trust’s annual accounts are a good place to find information about any planned changes to their grant giving and interests.

In addition to wholesale changes in their grant giving, there are other changes which can affect their motivation to give. For example, some trusts will celebrate key milestones or anniversaries by making larger grants than normal. A change in key personnel can also lead to changes in motivations and interests. Similarly, changes in their financial position, or taking the decision to wind down (close) the trust can change the way they make grants.

In shortlisting you need to consider what the trust actually does, not just what they say they do.

Capacity to Give

In assessing a trust’s capacity to give, you need to try and answer the following questions:

- ⊗ How much do they give away each year?
- ⊗ What is their average grant?
- ⊗ What are their smallest and biggest grants?
- ⊗ How much of their grant giving goes to the same organisations each year? How much is available for new organisations/projects?
- ⊗ What is their financial position? Where does their income come from and how is this performing? Are they accruing money or spending out?

In assessing this you need to be realistic about how and where your organisation or project might fit in with the trust’s other grants. Again, you need to remember that some trusts’ grant giving will fluctuate a lot based on changes to their financial position. The annual accounts will usually help you to identify what the future plans are.

Reach

Finally, you need to consider how easily you can reach the trust. You need to consider:

- ⊗ Does the trust have any exclusions? Is your organisation eligible to apply?
- ⊗ Do they accept unsolicited applications? If not, you will need to find a way of getting an invitation to apply.
- ⊗ Who are the key decision makers? Do you know them, or can you reach them?
- ⊗ What timeframe do they work to? How does this fit with your need?
- ⊗ What other rules or processes do they have? What impact will this have on your application?

In shortlisting you need to find trusts that score strongly in all three of these areas.

Plan

Having identified your best prospects you then need to think about how you are going to engage them. While most trusts don't want or need as much initial cultivation as other types of donors there are still advantages in taking the time to try and build the relationship before you apply. These advantages include:

- ⊗ Ensuring you ask for the right thing – taking time to fully understand a trust's interest can help you ensure you ask them for the right amount to support the right proposition
- ⊗ Ensuring you ask in the right way – you need to ensure you are providing the trustees with all of the information they need to successfully consider your proposal
- ⊗ Stacking the odds – if you just submit a proposal you are relying on the power of your words to completely sell your work. However, if you can engage trustees or key people in advance they can act as ambassadors for your project when it comes to the trustee meeting. They might even be able to make a decision before the meeting!

When planning how to engage the trust with your work you need to consider:

- ⊗ What do you need?
- ⊗ What does the trust need?
- ⊗ How can you/they get it?
- ⊗ Who is responsible for delivering it?
- ⊗ When does it need to happen?

Cultivation

The purpose of cultivation is to ensure that you have enough information about the trust's motivations and capacity to give to make the most appropriate ask. However, it is also for the potential funder to build trust and excitement in your work.

Cultivation can take many forms and you will need to decide which methods are most appropriate for each funder:

- ⊗ Personal introductions – can you get a peer or personal contact to introduce you to a trustee or decision maker?
- ⊗ Invitations to events
- ⊗ Formal meetings
- ⊗ Informal meetings
- ⊗ Telephone calls

- 🌀 Email approaches
- 🌀 Annual Review

Remember the purpose of this – you need to ensure they have the information they need, rather than just what you want to tell them. Build trust and credibility by showing your track record. Build an emotional connection to your work by showing the impact on beneficiaries. Plan ahead to make sure you know what you need and get it. Make sure you have planned out the different options so that you can respond to the information you receive from the trust.

All of this will ensure you have the right information when it comes to making the ask.

Ask

We covered the process of writing proposals in the first workshop. However, here is a recap of what a good proposal should include:

A Summary	<p>Unfortunately, a lot of trusts won't review your full proposal at their meeting. There is simply not enough time. Instead, one trustee or the administrator will write a summary of the proposal. If you write the summary you help the trustees but you also ensure that what gets circulated is a true reflection of your proposal.</p> <p>The summary should be 2 to 3 lines long and should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🌀 The name of the Trust you are applying to 🌀 A brief description of how you meet their aims 🌀 The amount you are applying for 🌀 What this will enable you to do
Organisational Background	<p>It is likely that some of the trustees or decision makers will not know anything about your organisation. This is your opportunity to build credibility and show the Trust that you can be trusted with their money.</p> <p>The organisational background should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🌀 Your track record of delivering similar projects 🌀 Any awards or achievements that are relevant to this proposal 🌀 Endorsements 🌀 Information about anyone else that is involved
Critical Challenge	<p>You then need to set out the problem you are looking to solve, or the opportunity you are looking to respond to. This should be framed in line with the Trusts own aims and mission – the challenges they are trying to overcome.</p> <p>As mentioned above, this should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🌀 Any evidence you have that proves the problem or opportunity 🌀 Why it is urgent (with Trusts receiving so many proposals you need to show why your work needs to be funded now, not in the future). 🌀 The people affected by the problem that will benefit from your work

Alternative Approach and Specific Steps	Having set out the challenge you then need to outline the actions you will take to overcome it.
End Results and Evaluation	<p>Trusts provide one of the biggest and most efficient networks to circulate learning within the sector. You need to show how you will know if you have succeeded in solving the problem and how you will make the learning available to them and other organisations. This enables them to evaluate their own impact in achieving their aims and circulate best practice. It can also impact their future grant-making.</p> <p>You should show:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☉ How you will know if you have succeeded ☉ How you will disseminate your findings ☉ How you will respond to challenges within the project
Financial Overview	<p>While many Trusts will ask for a detailed budget, your proposal should include a financial overview of the project.</p> <p>This should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☉ The total cost ☉ The amount raised so far and the funders involved ☉ Who else you have applied to for the shortfall (experienced funders will expect to see that you have applied to a number of other Trusts for the shortfall as they know you will not have a 100% success rate for proposals) ☉ How much you are asking the Trust for
Future Plans/Exit Strategy	Finally, you should outline your plans for the end of the project. Will the project stop? If so, what is your exit strategy? If the project is continuing, how will it be funded? Will it be self-sufficient or will you be reliant on future funding?

Stewardship

Regardless of the outcome, the letter informing you of the trust's decision is not the end of the relationship. If you have been successful you need to:

- ☉ Thank, thank and thank again! Take every opportunity to thank the trust for making your work possible
- ☉ Report promptly. They have given you a grant to change the world for the better. Be sure to show them how their grant has helped do this. This means reporting on the things that matter to them.
- ☉ Update them at key milestones and share successes. You want them to share your excitement and pride in what you have achieved.
- ☉ Share failures and learnings. Be honest with each other. Trusts have a wide network and significant influence. Sharing when things haven't worked and the lessons you have learned benefits everybody.
- ☉ Remember – trusts are people too!



It can be hard to remember to engage those trusts that haven't funded you but there are benefits to doing so. Competition for funding is intense and trusts often have to turn down projects they would like to have funded. Sharing your successes with funders that haven't been able to support builds your credibility and lays the foundations for future applications.

About Apollo Fundraising

Apollo Fundraising provides consultancy, training and support to help arts and culture organisations to improve their fundraising.

Our areas of expertise include developing fundraising strategies, building individual giving and legacy programmes and helping organisations to identify their best prospects.

Our experience includes raising funds for a wide range of arts and culture organisations, including opera houses, historic buildings, theatres, orchestras, music festivals, museums and art galleries.

**Contact David today to find out more about our work and to discuss how
Apollo Fundraising could help you and your organisation:**

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