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Grant Research Tools

Have you found it challenging to navigate the many grant research tool options? Unless your nonprofit has a multi-person development shop with dedicated staff members doing research and writing proposals, grant research will always pose a challenge. How can you make sure you're finding all the grants you're eligible for, and exclude the grants you have little chance of winning?

There are several different grant research tools with different strengths and weaknesses and dramatically different costs. To help nonprofits navigate the confusing world of grant research databases, we explored some of the available tools.

In the chart below, we compare a few of them to help readers hone in on which one might be the best match for their organization. We don't assess the quality of support, "extra" features (such as calendars or grant tracking), or educational resources offered by each organization. However, this chart does take a look at the databases themselves, and in some cases notes our opinion of their strengths and weaknesses. We try to keep the lists of features and pricing up to date; feel free to share any updated information with our staff.

This resource also does not address how to write grant proposals, read foundation 990s, or qualify, cultivate, approach, or steward funder prospects; if you need that kind of education, you could tap into educational programs offered by state

associations of nonprofits, the Foundation Center, or GrantStation, among others. Make sure you check out the resources on our Fundraising page as well.

There are other reasons to make sure you connect with your state association of nonprofits before you tackle the chart. In addition to offering educational programs, many state associations provide links to state-specific grant databases and member discounts on grant research tools. Some send regular grant alerts to their members. The benefits to your organization – in capacity-building, in connecting with others in your sector, and in amplifying your voice to advocate for the sector in your state – are tremendous.

One other way to locate prospective funders is to check the member list of your regional association of grantmakers. Membership lists published by these organizations often include links to foundation websites – or, you can search on the internet for specific funders and/or their IRS Form 990s.

This chart is a work in progress. We welcome your feedback about the chart. (Note that the National Council of Nonprofits does not provide assistance with grant research itself.) Click here to download the chart.

Additional Resources

- Article from Idealware via TechSoup (slightly dated but very good)
- Article from Nonprofit Quarterly's "Nonprofit Whisperer" on building a culture of philanthropy
- Cause IQ
- Foundation Directory Online (FDO)
- Funding Information Network locations
- GrantAdvisor, an anonymous review site of foundations
- GrantScape
- GrantStation
- InstrumentI
- Regional Associations of Grantmakers
- Submit feedback, suggestions, or questions about the chart

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