

**Seek and Ye Shall Find: Building Foundations for Your Foundation Proposals
Through Good Research
ABA/NLADA Equal Justice Conference April 15, 2004**

Uncover a foundation's unarticulated political orientation

1. From an Annual Report Executive Director's Commentary *Example:* Achelis and Bodman Foundations
2. From a program statement *Example:* Rockefeller Brothers Fund
3. From a grantee list *Example:* Merk Family Fund
4. From a foundation history *Example:* The Coleman Foundation
5. From an executive director's biography *Example:* The Commonwealth Fund
6. From grant programs *Example:* John M. Olin Foundation

Understand stated goals and specific objectives: What do foundations mean when they say "civic engagement/participation," "coalition building," and "devolution?"

Civic engagement/participation

The Community Foundations of Santa Cruz County's (California) Competitive Grants Program uses civic engagement as the guiding principle for all three of its interest areas (see the Foundation's "Grantmaking Priorities"). But it specifically uses the term in its Community Development interest area.

To understand the concept, looking at this Community Development area, explain how civic participation might be used through a program of your own to:

1. Build a sense of community
2. Promote further civic participation
3. Improve economic health
4. Foster the development of new leaders

Coalition building

Read the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation's description of its Community Problem Solving Program. Rank the following programs in order of which would most appeal to the Babcock Foundation, with number one being the most likely to be funded.

1. Persuade community foundations to establish indigent legal defense funding programs and provide them technical assistance
2. Create a task force of social service agencies and legal services groups to make policy recommendations on permanency planning for children in foster care in your county

3. Develop a pro bono legal program to deal with regional consumer complaint issues
4. Publish a manual for legal service groups on drug courts and case management issues in the region

Devolution

After looking at the Soros Foundation's definition of "devolution," determine which of the projects below fall into that category:

1. Provide legal technical assistance to social service providers
2. Contract to do a study for the Department of Health and Human Services on the divorce rate in your State.
3. Develop materials for the staff of your State's human services agency on laws governing foster care placement
4. Publish a bench book on your State's newest drug laws for family court judges
5. Train local business lawyers in family law for pro bono service delivery

Seeming disparities among stated priorities and funded projects. How do foundations apply these priorities to actual funding?

1. The Community Foundations of Santa Cruz County and Civic Participation
2. The Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation and Coalition Building
3. The Soros Foundation and Devolution

A national or local funder? Select the best foundation prospects without sacrificing core program goals

Your program is local, but you see a foundation that appears to fund only regional or national projects in precisely your area of expertise. Do you gloss over the prospect? Maybe not. Most large, national foundations are interested in devolution issues. Because of devolution, larger national foundations are going local, and local foundations are looking for models for regional and national replication.

When you do research for prospects, keep in mind that you may have to change some of your project description to fit the foundation's guidelines. You may have to:

Redefine local: Give your local project regional impact. Expand your concept of community beyond your county or city. Foundations like projects that can be replicated and that can prevent others from reinventing the wheel.

Redefine national: Expand out from local models. Work locally, extending your project's reach beyond your region through replication, conferences, and other means.

Change the process/methodology: Same goal, different means. Adapt research samples, models, services. Fit the donor's perspective by changing how you achieve the same goal.

Rearticulate the project's outcome: Same goal justified in terms of different communities, populations, impact. Here you rearticulate the impact of your project to fit the foundation's priorities.