

BEST PRACTICES

Writing Grants for Private Foundations and How the Office of Advancement Can Assist



TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY - SAN ANTONIO

University Advancement

OVERVIEW

**WHAT ARE PRIVATE
FOUNDATION GRANTS**

**BEST PRACTICES IN CULTIVATING
FOUNDATION RELATIONSHIPS**

**BEST PRACTICES IN
MATCHING PROJECTS WITH
FUNDERS**

**BEST PRACTICES IN
DEVELOPING YOUR PROPOSAL**

**HOW THE OFFICE OF
UNIVERSITY ADVANCEMENT
CAN HELP**

Who we are?

Chryssa Delgado
Advancement Officer IV

- Employed with the A&M-SA since January 2014. Over 13 years of professional experience in higher education.
- Professional background in Enrollment Management, institutional, state, and federal policy, higher education research, and state governmental relations.
- Bachelor of Arts in Political Science, minor in English. Master of Public Administration. Ph.D. Candidate in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies.

Lucy Herrera
Advancement Officer III

- Employed with A&M-SA since March 2018. Over 8 years of professional experience in non-profit, family and corporate foundations.
- Professional background in Marketing Communications, secondary and post-secondary teaching, donor and foundation relations, and Philanthropic Outreach to Hispanics.
- Associate of Arts in Journalism, Bachelor of Arts in Public Relations, graduate work in Education.

FUNDING PROCESS

Three Pillars of Effective Foundation Grantseeking

- 1 STRONG PROGRAMS**
You have to do something worth funding.
- 2 GOOD RELATIONSHIPS**
The funder has to trust you.
- 3 COMPELLING PROPOSALS**
You have to provide a convincing roadmap for the work.

If any of these pillars are weak or missing, foundation grantseeking will not succeed

PRIVATE FOUNDATIONS

Characteristics of Private Foundations

FOUNDATION GRANTMAKING

WHAT IS A FOUNDATION?

A foundation is a non-governmental entity that is established as a nonprofit corporation or a charitable trust, with a principal purpose of making grants to unrelated organizations, institutions, or individuals for scientific, educational, cultural, religious, or other charitable purposes.

(SOURCE: [FOUNDATION CENTER](#))

*A private foundation must meet or exceed an annual payout requirement of **five percent** of the average market value of its net investment assets to avoid paying taxes.*

FOUNDATION STATS

86,203

TOTAL NUMBER
OF
FOUNDATIONS

\$62.79 Billion

TOTAL AMOUNT OF GIVING

\$890.061 Billion

TOTAL FOUNDATION ASSETS

(SOURCE: [FOUNDATION CENTER](#), 2015)

HOW PRIVATE FOUNDATIONS HELP

Foundation funding can provide faculty with money for pilot studies, short-term projects, or funding of specific program or operational needs.

- Usually less time and documentation required than federal funding
- Many foundations have increased funding levels, streamlined processes and procedures
- Changes have come with more rigid expectations regarding return on investment, program outcomes, and sustainability of projects.

GOVERNMENT vs. FOUNDATIONS

	GOVERNMENT GRANTS	PRIVATE FOUNDATION GRANTS
SOURCE OF FUNDING	Comes directly from tax revenues. Dependent entirely on the economic and tax systems.	Self-funded with private money and donations.
ANNOUNCEMENTS	www.grants.gov for funding opportunities. States and local jurisdictions have designated sites.	Postings on web sites, shared via newsletters or emails, Facebook pages and blogs .
SUBMISSION	Almost always submitted electronically on dedicated websites.	Electronic or paper submissions. Varies widely.
PROJECT OR PROGRAM FOCUS	Detailed and extensive with clear framework for application requirements.	Based on foundation's program focus. Applications are usually shorter and less prescribed than government grants.
DECISION TO AWARD	Structured review process to assure impartiality. Independent reviewers score applications. Applications with the highest scores advance.	Proposals screened for a match to foundation's criteria. Decisions may be made through negotiations with the agency. Decision-making usually made by the board of directors.
LENGTH OF AWARD	3-5 years in length, but must of re-applying each year to demonstrate adequate progress and sound financial practices.	One year in length, although may be awarded a multi-year grant. Re-application may be required.
OVERSIGHT	High level of oversight, including progress and fiscal reports after six months and annually. Site visits by program officers.	Quarterly to annual reports on how funds were expended. Site visits are usually pre-award.
INTERACTIONS	Considerable interaction with other grantees at annual meetings, phone conference calls, website discussions.	Unusual for recipients to have formal connections with other grantees

DIFFERENCES IN GRANTMAKING

They have very little in common beyond a mandate to give away.

GOVERNMENT GRANTMAKERS

- Get their funding from **taxpayers**
- Are responsible to **legislators** and administrations
- Are required to be **transparent** in their activities
- Follow **clearly defined criteria** and processes

FOUNDATION GRANTMAKERS

- Get their funding from **donors**
- Are responsible to **trustees**
- Are **not required** to explain their decisions to the public
- Often **lack clear definition** for their criteria and processes, or **choose not to follow** those they adopt

FOUNDATIONS ARE NOT ALIKE

WHAT DO FOUNDATIONS HAVE IN COMMON?

- √ They have money.
- √ They are required to give some away.

WHAT DO FOUNDATIONS NOT HAVE IN COMMON?

- × How much money they have
- × How much they give
- × To whom they give
- × How they decide to give

Foundations are **like people**, and therefore **must be cultivated like people**. They both:

- Have personalities and quirks
- Have preferences and opinions
- May change policies without warning
- **Are more likely to give money to people and organizations they know**

FAMILY FOUNDATIONS

Family foundations are founded and managed by a family, to advance the family's charitable interests. They:

- Are often managed by a group of family members, which may include the original donors and/or their descendants.
- May or may not have a well-defined focus or mission.
- May be varied or inconsistent in their giving, depending on the interests of family members involved.

**CONNECTIONS ARE
ESSENTIAL FOR FAMILY
FOUNDATION GRANTSEEKING
AT ANY LEVEL**

TYPES OF FAMILY FOUNDATIONS

	<p>"Private type" family foundations support organizations and causes that are well known to family members.</p>	<p>"Public type" family foundations support causes they believe will have an important impact on their field of interest.</p>
<i>HOW TO IDENTIFY THEM</i>	<p>They are introverted—they say very little about themselves publicly, and they do not seek attention.</p>	<p>They are extraverts—active in their community or field.</p>
<i>WHAT THEY WANT</i>	<p>To support their friends.</p>	<p>To be leaders in their community or field.</p>
<i>HOW TO CULTIVATE THEM</i>	<p>Get to know them—become friends.</p>	<p>Get introduced through mutual connections or current grantees. Involve them in your work.</p>
<i>KEY TIPS</i>	<p>Be very careful about approaching a private-type family foundation "cold."</p> <p>If you must send a note without a prior relationship or introduction, make it a soft opening, without a specific ask.</p>	<p>Emphasize connections to other important work known to the funder. Name drop.</p> <p>Express your understanding of their leadership role and importance of their work. Show them how working with you would enhance the scope and impact of their work.</p>

CORPORATE FOUNDATIONS

Corporate foundations are founded and managed by a business, to advance the business's charitable interests. They:

- Focused on advancing the business' image and presence.
- May focus on communities in which they work, or give nationally (or internationally) according to their priorities.
- May make direct donations to charitable causes as well as making formal grants through associated foundations.

PUBLICITY OPPORTUNITIES ARE AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT OF ANY CORPORATE GRANT

TYPES OF CORPORATE FOUNDATIONS

	Community-focused corporate foundations support organizations and causes in the communities in which they work.	Impact-focused corporate foundations support work that advances a specific selected agenda.
<i>HOW TO IDENTIFY THEM</i>	Focus on specific geographies near operations.	Focus on specific agenda, regardless of location.
<i>WHAT THEY WANT</i>	Strong reputations in their local communities.	To build their brand by advancing a specific agenda.
<i>HOW TO CULTIVATE THEM</i>	Get to know the local office or branch. Get introduced through an employee or business associate.	Slowly and patiently. Get to know staff if possible. Use the application process.
<i>KEY TIPS</i>	<p>Show your impact on the community.</p> <p>Show that your work is of value to employees and their families.</p> <p>Offer opportunities for the corporation's contribution to be publicly recognized in the community.</p>	<p>Show impact in the short and long term. Innovation and scalability are key: how will your work have an impact beyond the immediate project?</p> <p>Present a clear and effective implementation and evaluation plan.</p> <p>Present appropriate opportunities for branding and publicity.</p>

COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS

Community foundations are independent organizations charged with distributing funding to support specific kinds of work. They:

- Have prescribed structures within which staff and trustees work to advance the mission.
- May focus on specific locations, specific fields, specific kinds of organizations, or specific kinds of projects.
- Are more professional and staff-driven than other types of foundations.

MISSION-DRIVEN FOUNDATIONS WANT TO FUND THE BEST WORK

	Location-focused foundations, usually called community foundations, support work in a specific location or community.	Program-focused foundations work to advance a specific societal mission by funding programs or services,	Research-focused foundations work to advance knowledge or solve problems by funding research work.
<i>HOW TO IDENTIFY THEM</i>	The location is usually prominent in the name.	The mission, or social benefit, is front and center.	They specify research as a central focus.
<i>WHAT THEY WANT</i>	To solve problems and build institutions in a specific place.	To solve a specific problem or accomplish a specific goal.	To solve a specific problem or advance a specific field.
<i>HOW TO CULTIVATE THEM</i>	Meet staff members in person. Attend their events, invite them to your events, and create opportunities for site visits.	Get to know leaders in the field. Publicize your work. Attend national conferences. Network on social media.	Get to know leaders in the field. Publicize your work. Use the application process.
<i>KEY TIPS</i>	<p>Show your impact on the people and institutions in the target community.</p> <p>Many community foundations manage donor-advised funds, which are very small family foundations. Building connections with community foundations can lead to other relationships as well.</p>	<p>Be an expert or leader in your field, with experience implementing projects on the proposed scale.</p> <p>Be innovative and propose replicable programs with far-reaching impact.</p> <p>Provide strong evidence that your project will have the intended effect.</p>	<p>Clearly show the impact of your work on the field and/or specific problem.</p> <p>Give clear justification for project structure, including preliminary data if possible.</p> <p>Show that you have the necessary skill and experience to carry out the project.</p>

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Best Practices in Cultivating Relationships with Foundations

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING STAGES

- 
- **Stage 0:** No connection currently exists between grantmaker and grant seeker.
 - **Stage 1:** Grantmaker and grantseeker are aware of each other's work.
 - **Stage 2:** Grantmaker and grantseeker exchange information directly.
 - **Stage 3:** Grantmaker and grantseeker are actively engaged in work together.
 - **Stage 4:** Grantmaker and grantseeker work in partnership to accomplish their missions.

LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIPS

CONNECT

- Target prospect
- Assess internal connections
- Leverage connections

CULTIVATE

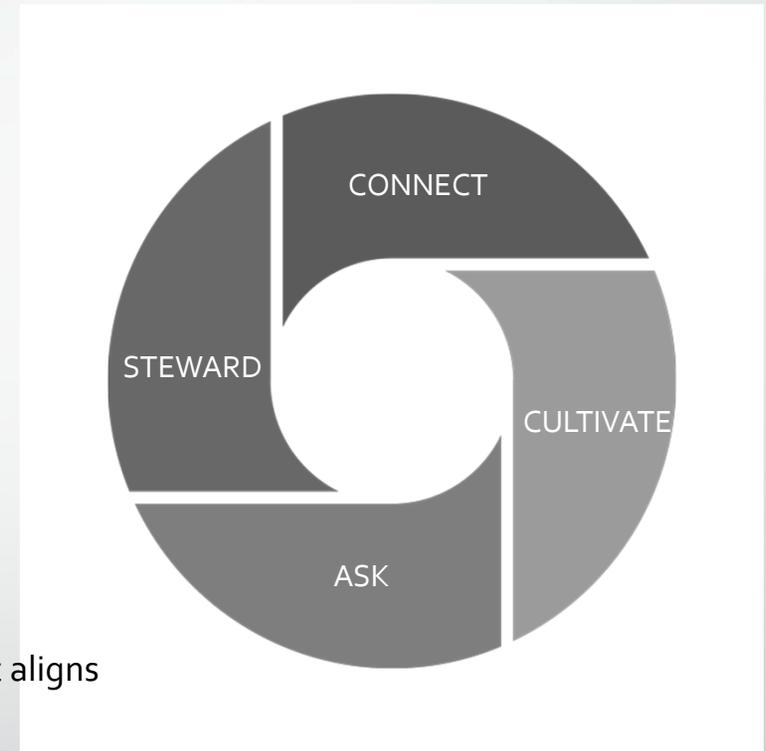
- Develop a communication strategy to increase awareness of your organization or program
- Include publicity, social media outreach, and direct communication

ASK

- Read between the lines to develop a proposal that aligns with grant maker priorities

STEWARD

- Continue careful cultivation whether or not you receive an award



CONNECTING

To prepare for funder cultivation, assess and analyze your connections and potential connections to the target foundation and its personnel, as well as opportunities for building additional connections.

- Research organization's history with the funder.
- Identify organization's connections to the funder, funder Board members/personnel, or people and organizations connected to the funder.
- Gather intelligence and/or request introductions from connections.
- Identify online and in-person connection opportunities.
- Analyze connection opportunities: What is the best way to build a relationship with this foundation?

CULTIVATING

Develop and implement a cultivation strategy tailored to the funder, based on information uncovered in the research and analysis stage.

The goal of the cultivation process is to build the relationship from Stage 0 (mutual ignorance) through Stage 1 (mutual awareness), and, preferably, Stage 2 (conversation) before proceeding to a grant request.

- Reach out to the funder.
- Introduce yourself and your work.
- Gather information on funder priorities and preferences.
- Ask how you might work together.
- Continue the conversation.

Funders with heavy communication barriers may require proceeding to a "cold" LOI as a first step in the relationship development process. The LOI is intended to open the conversation with the funder. It will likely be declined, but this decline provides an opportunity for connection and builds awareness.

THE ASK

Moving from *Cultivation* to *Ask* means moving from general to specific.

- **Based on conversations with funder, identify specific project(s) for funding.**
 - Return to your project concept(s).
 - Tailor the project(s) to the funder.
- **Confirm project scope and fit with the funder, if possible.**
 - Run the overall project by your contact at the foundation.
 - Ask for feedback.
 - How much of the project might they prefer to fund?
 - Over what time period?

After confirming fit, begin project design in earnest.

AFTER THE ASK

Stewarding a Grant Decline

If you receive a grant decline, regroup, assess the relationship, and determine next steps.

- Read between the lines: Why was the grant declined?
 - Check the basics: Good relationship, Strong program, Impeccable proposal
 - Ask the funder for feedback?
- Is this funder still a good prospect?
 - If so, use the decline as a learning experience and cultivation tool:

Stewarding a Grant Award

If you receive a grant, keep in mind that this grant is just **one step in the process of developing a partnership** with this funder.

- Implement the grant as specified in the proposal.
- Keep communication lines open with the funder.
- Communicate early in case of challenges.
- Continue cultivation throughout the project.
- Make sure you submit any required grant progress reports.

FINDING A MATCH

Best Practices in Matching Projects with Funders

FUNDER REQUIREMENTS

What does the funder require?

- **Structure:** How must the project be organized?
- **Products:** What must the project produce?
- **Evaluation:** How will project success be determined?
- **Timeline:** When must the project be implemented and completed?

What does the funder provide?

- **Funding:** When and how will grantees receive funding?
- **Technical Assistance:** How involved will the funder be in project implementation?

Identify and resolve potential issues

- Is anything unclear?
- Will some requirements be difficult to meet?

Verify you align with the funder's interests and can deliver on program requirements before you begin.

PROSPECTING

Prospecting is the art of matching projects with likely funders.

GOOD PROSPECTIVE FUNDERS HAVE:

- ✓ A mission that aligns with your mission
- ✓ A history of funding similar or related projects
- ✓ Stated priorities that encompass your project area
- ✓ No restrictions that would preclude funding your project

HOWEVER, NOTE THAT:

- Funding history is not always a good predictor of future funding.
- Stated priorities are not always current.
- Finding good prospects sometimes requires reading between the lines.

FINDING PROSPECTIVE FUNDERS

To identify prospective funders, start by finding out who is doing similar work:

- Use industry/discipline publications, as well as online searches.
- Find similar or thematically aligned projects.
- Include projects in your local area and around the country, as appropriate.

Find out who is funding the identified projects.

- Look for acknowledgements and statements of thanks.
- Contact project staff if appropriate.

Funders' priorities provide a means for identifying prospects.

- Use various databases/search tools.
- Search for keywords that relate to your mission and project.
- Search by funding type and location
- Note funding restrictions
- Note average gift
- Note key deadlines and other qualifying requirements

Identify promising prospects—or types of prospect—for your work.

RESEARCH, EVALUATE, PRIORITIZE

GATHER PROSPECT INFORMATION

- ✓ Foundation type and mission
- ✓ Relevant grantmaking history
- ✓ Staff and trustee names and profiles
- ✓ Funding process (e.g., eligibility, timing, amounts, requirements)
- ✓ Indicators of competitiveness
- ✓ Opportunities for connection and communication

Keep notes in a list, spreadsheet, or database for further analysis.

EVALUATE PROSPECT ALIGNMENT

Are your mission and the funder's mission well aligned?

- If not, what are the differences and how might they affect the relationship?

What is the long-term potential of the relationship?

- What is the funder's grant making capacity and record of ongoing support?

How challenging will it be to develop a relationship with the funder?

- How open is the funder to communication?
- How competitive is this funder?

PRIORITIZE PROSPECTS

Pursue prospects with:

- Good mission alignment
- Good potential ROI: relationship development will be worth the effort.

Do not pursue if:

- Mission alignment is not good: Don't force it!
- ROI is not good: too much effort is required for too little potential return.

Prioritize prospects based on mission alignment, potential benefit, and ease of cultivation.

PROPOSAL WRITING

Best Practices in Developing Your Proposal

GRANT APPLICATION CONTENT

- History and Mission
- Major Accomplishments
- Current Programs and Activities
- Target Population Served
- Partnerships
- Needs Statement
- Program Design
- Management Plan
- Evaluation and Sustainability Plan
- Budget

TELLING YOUR STORY

STRONG NARRATIVES ANSWER CORE QUESTIONS CLEARLY AND SUCCINCTLY:

Strong narratives answer the questions grant reviewers have.

What questions can you answer to make sure you are telling your story well?

- What do you want to do, how much will it cost, and how much time will it take?
- How does the proposed project relate to the funder's interests?
- What difference will the project make to your institution, your students, your discipline, the state, the nation, and other stakeholders?
- What has already been done, and how will your project advance that work?
- How do you plan to implement and accomplish project goals and outcomes?
- How will the results be evaluated?
- Why should you, rather than someone else, be selected to do this project?

PROJECT EVALUATION

Which of your project ideas will be most interesting to funders?

Ask yourself:

- Does the project help accomplish your mission?
- Can you demonstrate the need for the project?
- Is the need timely? Is it likely to be on funders' minds?
- Do you have evidence that the project will have the intended impact?
- Will you be able to measure the impact?
- Can you show experience and expertise with this work?
- Will you collaborate with others and/or build on previous work?
- Is the project innovative?
- Is the project's intended impact a priority for funders?

The strongest projects will allow you to answer "yes" to each question.

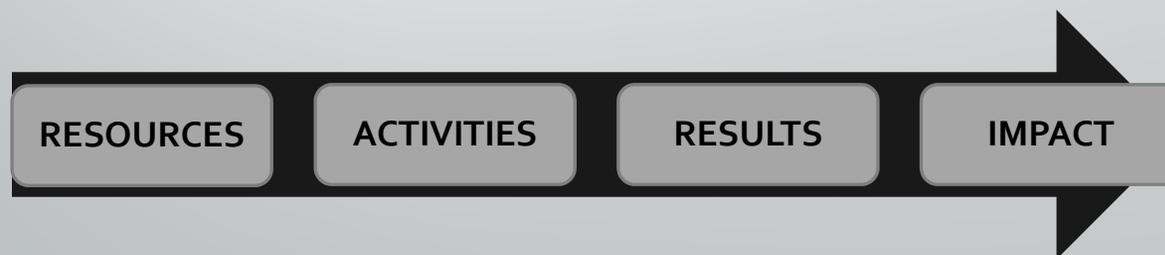
STRUCTURING YOUR PROPOSAL

How does your idea work? Good structure makes a project competitive.

Answer the following questions, in general terms:

- What will you need to accomplish the project?
- Who will work on the project?
- What will you do?
- What results do you expect?
- What impact do you hope to have?

*Put the answers in a table or chart to show how the project logically flows. A **logic model** is a visual demonstration of project structure.*



CONCEPT PAPERS

Develop a short concept paper to sell you project to the funder. The concept paper can be used as the basis for a Letter of Inquiry (LOI) or as a starting point for conversation with foundation staff.

A concept paper is a flexible document (1-3 pages) that may include:

- Summary (1-2 sentences)
- Needs (1-2 paragraphs)
- Goals and Objectives (list)
- Activities (1-2 paragraphs)
- Impact (1-2 paragraphs)

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL CONCEPT PAPER

- Highlight key areas that are likely to capture a funder's attention.
- Focus on need and impact.
- Include just enough detail that the funder knows you are serious.
- Balance selling and telling: the ratio of selling to telling will be higher in a concept paper than in a final grant proposal.
- Use emphasis (**bold**, underline, *italic*) judiciously to bring the reader's attention to key elements—funders often scan concept papers and letters of inquiry quickly!

A good concept paper makes the reader think "Let's make this happen!"

LETTERS OF INQUIRY (LOIs)

Some proposal development processes begin with a Letter of Inquiry/ Interest, usually abbreviated LOI.

- Even if you have had extensive conversations with a funder, you may still be asked to submit an LOI rather than a full proposal.
- LOI format and requirements vary by funder, but an LOI is usually 1-3 pages and includes:
 - Need for project / statement of problem
 - Summary of project goals and activities
 - Summary of PI/institution qualifications to implement project
- If you developed a concept paper during the concept development stage, use it as the basis for the LOI.
- An LOI should always connect the proposed project to the funder's mission and goals.

REVIEWING YOUR PROPOSAL

HERE ARE SOME ELEMENTS TO PAY ATTENTION TO BEFORE A GRANT IS SUBMITTED:

- Content scope: narrative structure, attachments
- Tables, statistical support data
- Budget numbers and narrative
- Formatting: page limits, fonts, margins
- Submission process: online systems, registrations

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

MAP OUT YOUR STRATEGY TO DEVELOP AND SUBMIT THE PROPOSAL ON TIME

CREATE:

- **Timeline** for proposal development, including key dates
 - Note deadline for Letter of Intent or pre-proposal, as well as proposal deadline.
 - Allow time to get internal approval before submission.

- **Narrative Outline** based on the scoring rubric or key section headings
 - Note character-, word-, and page-limits, as well as formatting requirements.

RESOURCES AND SUPPORT

**How the Office of
University
Advancement Can Help**

Office of Advancement Overview

<http://www.tamusa.edu/giving/TAMUSA-Foundation/contact-us.html>

University Funding Priorities

Funding Need	Description
Student scholarships and housing	First gen scholarships, housing, extensive need.
Institute for Emerging Leaders	Multiple funding opportunities.
Cyber Security Program	Program related costs.
Student success and retention efforts	Internships, student preparation, service learning.
Military community support	Additional scholarship support
University House	
Recreation Center	
Strengthening student pipeline	Partnerships with early college high schools, summer programs, demonstration school, STEM programs.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION

- IRS 501(c)3 Letter of Determination
- A&M-SA Foundation Financial Reports (Revenue/Expenses, Profit/Loss, Cash Flow)
- List of Board Members
- W-9 Form
- 990 Form
- Certifications (Accreditation, Insurance,
- Formation Documents (Certificate of Formation, Affiliation Agreement, Bylaws)
- University Organizational Chart

PROSPECTING RESOURCES



A web-based discovery and workflow tool that combines a comprehensive source of global funding opportunities with a large collection of scholar profiles.



A searchable foundation grant database comprising more than 140,000 grant makers.



Leverage all the tools at your disposal, and don't forget to supplement with search engines and foundation websites for the most up-to-date information on new competitions and recent awards.

REVIEWING AND EDITING

FROM A GRANT REVIEWER'S PERSPECTIVE:

UNIVERSITY FOCUS	FOUNDATION FOCUS
16+ Reading Grade Level	10 th Grade Reading Level
Scholarly pursuit	Sponsor goals
Passion for project	Service attitude for impact
Work that has been done (Past)	Work that should be done (Future)
Theory and thesis	Objectives and activities
Expository language	Persuasive language
Explaining to reader	"Selling" the reader
Impersonal tone, objective	Personal tone, conveys excitement
Individualistic	Team-focused, partnerships
Verbose	Succinct
Specialized terminology, jargon	Easily understood, terms explained
Uses academic language	Uses language from foundation's program

Active Foundation Prospects

- Ed Rachal Foundation – Cyber Security
- San Antonio Area Foundation – Women/Girls Development Fund
- Saban Family Foundation – Cisneros Institute
- Ford Foundation – Cisneros Institute
- Eli & Edythe Broad Foundation – Cisneros Institute
- AHMSA International Foundation – Cyber Engineering Technology Program
- USAA – Bridging the Digital Divide

Challenges and Strengths

Strengths

- Student demographics
- Areas of focus
- Geography
- Capacity building
- A&M System Brand

Challenges

- Sustainability and experience
- Meeting some of the documentation standards
- Established record of performance
- Limited staff and resources
- Still building the infrastructure

ANNOUNCEMENTS

WHERE TO FIND GRANT OPPORTUNITIES:

The Advancement Office will announce grant opportunities as received from:

- Office of the President
- San Antonio Area Foundation
- Stem Ecosystem
- From subscribed email lists
- Searches on foundation websites



Thank you!
Q&A