Sponsors

Before submitting a proposal to a potential sponsor, it is important to understand the characteristics of sponsors in general as well as specifics about the sponsor you are considering. There are three broad categories of external sponsors:

Government

Federal Programs

- **Purpose** – One of the missions of government is to provide for the common welfare. It is within this context that federal agencies and Congress appropriate funds for support of education, engineering,

defense, health, the arts and social services. In most cases, an agency's mission is inherent in its name.

- **Structure** – Because the mission of federal agencies is broad and multifaceted, agencies' work is carried out through a hierarchy of divisions, programs, and offices. It is important to understand not only an agency's mission but also its program structure so that the proposal may be written in the proper context and directed to the appropriate office.

- **Types of projects funded** – Typically, federal agencies sponsor projects of national or universal significance. These range from basic research to service and demonstration projects.

- **Deadlines** – These can vary but are usually cyclical.

- **Review Process** – Usually peer review by panel.

State and Local Programs

- **Purpose** – State agencies exist to fulfill specific legislated missions narrower in scope than that of federal agencies. Local agencies exist to meet local needs.

- **Structure** – The infrastructure of state and local agencies is often complex and difficult to determine. Personal contact is usually the best way to ascertain the existence and nature of programs and to identify key agency personnel.

- **Types of projects funded** – State agencies fund projects promising benefit to the people of the state; local agencies fund projects that help people of a particular locale. Funded projects are usually very specific; the scope of work is often determined by the agency.

- **Deadlines** – These can vary, sometimes cyclical.

- **Review Process** – Agency or program staff, sometimes peer panel, mail review, or both.

Nonprofit Organizations

Foundations

- **Purpose** – The typical nonprofit sponsor is a private foundation. The purpose of individual foundations varies greatly but usually focuses on community or regional needs. Foundations usually support interests that are closely tied to the source of their funds. Larger foundations (e.g., W.K. Kellogg) have a professional staff that publishes annual reports, disseminates program announcements to the general public, and is available for consultation.
- **Structure** – Most are managed by an executive director and board of directors or trustees.
- **Types of projects funded** – Foundations primarily support action and service-oriented projects though some provide funds for basic and applied research. A foundation's annual report and its website are good sources of information on priorities and programs.
- **Deadlines** – Application deadlines vary; some foundations have cyclical deadlines; others have none. Refer to the most recent guidelines from the foundation under consideration.
- **Review Process** – Some use processes similar to that of federal agencies. Typically, the program staff or board of directors makes funding decisions; sometimes the foundation's benefactor makes the decision. Some foundations use consultants.

Other Nonprofit Organizations

- **Purpose** – A wide range of nonprofit public service organizations supports university programs. This category includes associations, societies, institutes, councils and centers. Some emphasize specific subjects, such as the American Council of Learned Societies and the American Cancer Society. Others are discipline-oriented, such as the Center for Applied Linguistics and the American Political Science Association. Most have websites and/or publish newsletters to inform constituents of funding opportunities.
- **Structure** – This varies greatly.
- **Types of projects funded** – Nonprofits typically support research and other activities in their own field only. Many offer awards for past achievement.
- **Deadlines** – These vary. Refer to the most recent guidelines for dates and application forms.
- **Review Process** – This varies. Funding decisions are typically made by a panel of experts. The program guidelines usually describe the review process.

For Profit Organizations – Business & Industry

There has been a growing awareness of the advantages that come with stronger bonds between universities and business and industry. As a result, industry is becoming an increasingly important partner for both basic and applied research. Generally, companies support projects that are reasonably likely to strengthen their competitive position in the marketplace. Funding is typically provided in the form of contracts with specific objectives and fairly short time frames.

The Office of Grants and Contracts Administration (OGCA) and Office of Intellectual Property and Commercialization (OIPC) facilitate working relationships with for-profit sponsors. OGCA/OPIC staff members know the details of state law and university requirements concerning projects with industry and therefore assist faculty members with the development and negotiation of sponsored research agreements that meet the needs of the PI, the university and the sponsor Contact the appropriate OGCA/OIPC very early in your interactions with business and industry sponsors.

For additional Information visit the Office of Grants and Contracts Administration