

Funding Tips

The following fundraising suggestions are from the experiences of *City Lore: The New York Center for Urban Folk Culture*.

1. Make sure that your mission is broad enough to keep your organization flexible.
2. If there are no categories in the agencies that should be funding you for your organization and its work, consider banding together with like-minded groups to lobby legislators to create the funding streams that you can then apply for.
3. Work closely with specialists from various cultural disciplines to give you the expertise you need to apply for funding from specialized disciplines within funding agencies such as literature, folk arts, archiving, etc. Each discipline has its own language that must be mastered.
4. Both individual funders, foundations, and government agencies respond to emotional causes. Find ways to frame what you do as a crucial public need that people feel in their gut.
5. Individual funders, foundations, and government agencies are inspired by great rhetorical and poetic prose. If you can't create that yourself, find someone who can.
6. People give to people. Always talk to funders in person, if possible, if not, on the phone.
7. Don't be intimidated by forms or regulations or proposals that seem daunting at first.
8. If your application doesn't quite fit the guidelines of an agency or foundation – if it's "a stretch" – don't waste your time with it. There will be too many other applicants who fit perfectly.
9. Don't rely exclusively on material from the Foundation Center or on guidelines from foundations or government agencies themselves. You need to have a conversation with a program officer to understand what those guidelines mean *to them* and how *they* interpret them.
10. Try to get funders to invest their time talking with you or visiting you. The more time they invest in you, the more likely they are to fund you. You must strike the right balance between being an effective nudge and being an insufferable pest.
11. Don't take no for an answer. If you're rejected, call the program officer to ask why. Consider reframing your proposal if it can be done within the framework of your mission, and re-applying for the next cycle. Invest time, money, and effort in sample tapes and other documentation that dramatically illustrates the quality of your work and can emotionally move your funders.