



Researching & Getting Grants

It's great to educate your community about farmers' markets and local agriculture, but how do you fund the programs to do this? One answer is through grants. To finance the ambitious and far-reaching educational projects of the Friends of the Farmers' Markets, executive director Pam Roy spends an appreciable amount of time writing grant proposals, developing business sponsorships, and spearheading an annual fund-raising campaign. FFM is set up as a nonprofit 501(c)(3) and acts as an umbrella for several organizations to help fund and develop their educational outreach programs.

"You really need to research who you are applying to, what they want, and what their purposes are," Roy says. To find out who's giving grants, go to a library and look for a CD-ROM from the National Foundation Center; this listing is also available on their website at fdncenter.org. "On their website you can find all kinds of information about foundations that may be interested in your organization's mission and programs," Roy says. On both the CD and the website you can do searches under specific

key words such as "sustainable agriculture," "organic," "local agriculture" or "farmers' markets." Try to let your initial search be as broad as possible. Then you might narrow your search by state or by more specific categories.

Also consider what the foundations' major interests are. Sometimes you may think they are not interested in your proposed projects when in fact they may be, and sometimes the opposite may be true. "Simply calling them will let you know for sure," Roy says. Usually their phone numbers and e-mail addresses are listed as well as their mailing addresses. Often the listings will give information about what kinds of projects they have funded in the last year and of course this is a good tip-off about their interests and potential for funding your project.

Did they fund large projects or small, locally oriented agricultural projects? How much have they given in the past and how much do they now have available to give? Be realistic about their potential to fund your project. Look at how much money they gave last year. Often they will list both the total

and a minimum and maximum range of money per project. Also take a look at which regions they target. They may only donate to a city or state that doesn't include your area, so don't waste your time applying where there's no possibility.

Take a look at who their executive directors are and consider if you know anyone in that community. Check with them to see if you know any of the board members. "This research often takes a lot of time and can be grueling," Roy says. "In order to maximize your efforts, you need to be realistic not only about who to go to, but in how much you can do as an individual or an organization."

Local community foundations often provide either workshops or services on how to write grant proposals — look under "Foundations" in the yellow pages. Often City Hall will have directories of local nonprofit community foundations and services. Community colleges, farm conferences and Co-operative Extension often have courses or workshops on how to write grant proposals. ✨