

## WHAT DONORS WANT FROM YOU<sup>1</sup>

What follows is a list of desires that are typical of many groups of donors, such as government agencies, foundations, and individual donors. By knowing what members want, you will be able to target your marketing to their desires.

All of these suggestions should be taken as a starting point. Just as different nonprofit organizations want very different things, different donors will have their individual desires as well. It's *your* job to figure out what they are, and how your organization can best fulfill them.

*Government agencies (federal, state, city, or county) want:*

- A carefully defined set of services, provided by a carefully defined set of people, in a set period, often in a set manner, with no audit exceptions, and with all paper work in on time.
- Generally, government representatives want you to know regulations cold.
- You should meet all of their regulatory and bureaucratic wants.
- You might also design specific materials (such as reports or brochures) using needs and keywords of government. They should emphasize outcomes, quality, and certification levels.

*Members want:*

- Clear, tangible benefits that they actually receive.
- Updates on what the organization is doing.

*Foundations want:*

- Innovative projects that meet their criteria.
- A demonstration of strong community support.
- Self-sustainability within approximately three years.
- Usually, they want general information, such as your mission, history, and goals.
- Letters of endorsement from community leaders or collaborators can be helpful.

We should note here that foundations are a slightly different case than other potential donors. Many times, they are located across the country, and each may be unique in its desires and goals. Talk to program officers of foundations if you can, and ask what they like to see most and least in applications. Read the foundation press and consider getting help from an experienced, successful grant writer.

*United Ways* are an excellent source of funding for many small community organizations. They want:

- Guidelines for funding met precisely.

If your United Way does needs assessments, make sure that you participate so that your service area needs are included.

*Donors, both individual and corporate, have wants that vary widely. Some want:*

- To support a program.
- To support an endowment.
- Some want to be visibly thanked for your contribution; many others don't. Ask.
- Organizations should learn who is most likely to donate, and focus energies on these potential donors.

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<sup>1</sup> From Peter Brinckerhoff's *Financial Empowerment: More Money for More Mission*. Used with permission.

*Users who pay fees want:*

- High quality and value for their money. Note that we say value, not low prices. Many people who pay fees won't balk at a high price tag if they feel they are getting a lot out of it. For example, a group of tourists may willingly pay ten or twenty dollars to tour a historical site if they have heard that it is particularly beautiful, or that the guide is exceptionally charming.

While this list gives many of the more common ways for a nonprofit organization to raise money, it isn't meant to be a complete list. Does your group have other potential means of funding? What are they?