



How to write

FUNDING PROPOSALS

Form/ Approach

- Follow each foundations guidelines. Trustees will generally be unable to make grants outside the parameters of their guiding principles
- Focus on the purpose of the project.
 - What are you trying to do?
 - Why are you doing this documentary?
 - Why is it important?
- The benefit of the work is what is important to the foundation.
- Keep it brief, concise and clear. This is more important than something pretty, glossy or bound. Your focus is your work and its benefit.
- Convince through facts rather than emotion and through the obvious connection between your work and the foundation.
- Your interpretation of audience must apply to community and not just to a television audience and ratings.

What is the project?

- A Synopsis or summary for this purpose includes the story or issue, what you are going to create and what will be the outcome and distribution. Most importantly what will be the impact of the documentary? Have a one line synopsis as well as a hundred word paragraph.
- The Project Outline indicates a problem and presents a solution. What is going to happen if you get the money you are asking for? What is the timeline for the project? What is the budget and how much are you asking for? Are there other funding sources and if so

who are they?

- Most foundations prefer to fund specific projects rather than an organisations operating or overhead costs.
- It is important to develop the project you are seeking funding for as much as developing the treatment, outline or submission.
- A good submission is based on a well-planned project (which should include a plan to reach the audience).

Why now?

- Establish a need. Whom does this issue or film affect? Include where your research comes from: facts, figures and references (this may be written or anecdotal). Indicate what your plan is based on.
- Outline the value of your documentary to your target community.

Who are you?

- One page of information about yourself and your company or organisation including what you do more broadly (including other projects or previous work), key personnel, company members, a history of your organisation or your own work, your philosophy or mission statement, evidence that you are connected to a community of interest.
- Outline the ability of your team to carry out the project. Are there issues of access? If so, highlight how you have been able to gain this access.

Typical questions asked by foundations

- Why is this documentary suitable for philanthropic funding?
- What is its contemporary relevance? Why do you think the subject is important?
- Why make a documentary, rather than utilizing other mediums?
- What outcomes do you hope to achieve by making this film?
- How do the objectives and guidelines of the foundation fit with the objectives of your film?
- How will you measure the impact and success of the film?
Go into detail, without including audience numbers in your answer (eg: raising awareness, education impact, attitudinal shift, policy reform, audience endorsement).
- Who is the intended audience for the film? Be very specific, giving reasons why (eg: local community, educational institutions, a national broadcast audience etc). How will you reach your intended audience?
- Is education and outreach an important element of your project? What is your education and outreach strategy? (eg: study guide, web-site, community screenings)
- What is your marketing and distribution strategy? (eg: DVD, festivals, broadcast, cinema release, educational, community)
- Who are the filmmakers responsible for the project and how qualified are they to undertake and complete the film?
- Which category of funding are you applying for and why?
Development
Work in Progress
Production
Completion
Education & Outreach. How will you service ongoing education needs?
- What is the time-frame of the project?
- What funding have you received to date? How do you plan to fund the project and what is its full budget?
- What level of funding are you requesting?

Upon request, other information and materials may be required. eg: examples of previous work, work in progress or other additional information.

Foundations will require a report on the progress and completion of the project as well as a credit acknowledging their support.

Read more in [Building and maintaining relationships in the private sector](#).

Defining your audience

“Audience” is defined in broad terms, which may include television broadcasts and festival screenings.

It also extends beyond this into the community and outreach to the educational sector.

Government funding agencies look for recoupment strategies, while philanthropists look for return on social capital rather than return on investment.

In the philanthropic sector the audience is the community or subject with whom and for whom you are working.

An audience may be as small as a few hundred people yet can have an impact that is larger than a broadcast transmission to thousands of viewers. A small audience is empowered to reach out to other communities who will relate to what they see and share the experiences you are exploring and presenting.

If your subject tells a universal story, it will reach a broader audience and can be pitched in those terms.

Foundations are looking for long-term social impact and educational outcomes. Your audience should be defined using a long tail approach to the project by defining how it could be distributed throughout communities and the educational sector over time.

This emphasises outreach over ratings or profits and a long life rather than the big hit. Foundations are interested in documentaries that serve as ongoing catalysts for community action, public education and advocacy campaigns.

Define your audience and build a community of interest. Target that community and determine how you will reach them.

Ask yourself: Who is this for? How will I reach this audience?

A television broadcast is an added advantage, but it is not the only interest for a foundation. Distinguish between mass audience and target audience and aim for the target audience.

Pitch your project to a foundation using this sense of your target audience, with the intention of making a sustainable difference over time, across local, national and possibly international audiences.

Building & maintaining relationships in the Private Sector

Foundations seek long-term relationships. They want to back people they can trust - people who are making a difference. Because of this, many foundations back the same people many times over.

There is an increasing trend for recurrent funding which could potentially fund all stages of a documentary and many films over the course of any year.

Be professional in your approaches and responses to the organisation. As with traditional film funding there are many more requests than a foundation is able to support, so rejections are common.

Don't take rejections personally. Many submissions fail. Don't expect an explanation and remain positive and gracious. You may be successful next time. If you do the right thing it can help you in the future. There is a lot of competition in the sector and unlike the public broadcasters and the film financing agencies, there is no quota or obligation for a foundation to donate to documentary. Grantmakers give to many areas and the competition for capital is intense.

Unlike government agencies, this is not taxpayers' money but an individual's, or a collection of individuals' private life savings in many cases, which they choose to give to projects they believe will make a difference. They don't have to give to documentary.

It is vital to follow up with grantmakers at the completion of the project and beyond. A simple thank you, a copy of the finished program, acknowledgement in the credits, invitation to screenings and regular follow up letters advising of festival screenings and

distribution information are basic requirements for building relationships. A foundation may not have a way of tracking the progress of the project once it enters the world and will appreciate being sent updated information on a regular basis. If you don't do these basic things, you are ruining your chances of receiving funding from the same foundation for your next film.

There is a real opportunity to build sustainable working relationships with foundations if your work as a filmmaker is dedicated to the same areas in which they work.

Often foundations are looking for exciting, fresh projects to support.

The expectation of Philanthropists & Foundations

This section provides a summary of things to think about when approaching, building and maintaining relationships in the philanthropic sector.

Foundations receive many applications for funding from a broad cross-section of charities and individuals working directly and indirectly with communities.

It is a competitive field, and to stand out your approach and follow through needs to make an impression, just as your project aims to make an impact.

Keep these points in mind.

- Think through the issues.
- Show drive and initiative.
- Think outside the square.
- Be resourceful and make new connections with like minded people.
- Have a vision for educational outreach and a solid plan.
- Collect endorsements for your project.
- Send clippings for support of your project to provide a proven record of achievement.
- Create a professional application.
- Be modest, you may get more than you ask.
- Send a thank you note after the meeting.
- Send another note after you receive the grant.
- Send invitations to screenings.
- Send copies of the finished film.
- Make proper acknowledgement at every stage and confirm if you need logo in publicity, website, credits etc.
- Write a professional letter to introduce yourself and always personalise it.
- Reply immediately if contacted.
- Make hand written responses rather than group emails.

It's a small world with strong networks and affinity groups. People talk to each other and like following success. It offers security for several foundations to jointly support a project.

Foundations are keen to give to organisations for more than one year. Increasingly foundations, and the charities they support, are working over a three-year plan or more, with the aims of building relationships and supporting all phases of a project. This approach increases the effectiveness of their donations.

Examples of projects that have effectively used partnerships

These examples illustrate a partnership in a project that came together around like-minded ideas working through The Education Foundation as the tax exempt body.

That Was Me **Category: Education**

Synopsis

That Was Me is not just a program about some of Australia's most prominent and successful people going back to school. It is a moving and often untold story about the richness of relationships between teachers and students. It tells the story of a group of every day teachers across Australia who inspired their students to shine and be the best they could be.

These students now live extraordinary lives ranging from becoming Australia's fastest hurdler and Indigenous Ambassador (Kyle

Vander-Kuyp); to Justice of the Australian High Court (Justice Michael Kirby); Australia's most generous philanthropist and esteemed entrepreneur (John Ilhan); professional athlete and Hockeyroos captain (Nikki Hudson), TV personality and veterinarian (Dr Katrina Warren); international entertainer (David Campbell); and renowned international business woman (Qantas Chairman - Margaret Jackson).

They all have one thing in common - a profound respect for their public school roots and the teachers who inspired them.

That Was Me was inspired by the annual national program, Back To School Day, created by the Education Foundation. The Back To School Day program provides public education students with inspirational role models in the form of former students, while establishing vital alumni networks between the former students, their school and the community. More than 500 schools and thousands of past and present students and teachers around the country participated in the 2006 program. It aired nationally on Channel Seven.

Funding

The documentary is the result of an alliance between non-profit, union, philanthropic and corporate organisations and has been funded by the Education Foundation, Australian Education Union, Trust Company of Australia (As Trustee for Trust Foundation), Qantas, Crazy Johns, Paper Mate, The Shark Island Documentary Fund and the Macquarie Bank Foundation.

The next example shows how a community television show grew out of the need to speak about disability and to share views. Philanthropic funding and volunteer involvement supported the series.

No Limits Category: Disability

Synopsis

No Limits is a community television show that looks at living life to the fullest with a disability. It has been on air on C31 in Melbourne since June 2003 and is now also broadcast in Perth, Adelaide and Brisbane. The show is a panel chat show and includes location stories from around Australia. It is presented by people with disabilities for the enjoyment of anyone who wants to know more about disability. There are also many people with disabilities involved in the production of *No Limits* and more are being trained all the time.

Impact Statement

by Sarah Barton, Producer

"In 2003 I began producing a community television show about disability called *No Limits*. Although I am no longer the series producer of this show (after two and a half years I was totally burnt out), it is still on air and more than 80 episodes have been produced funded entirely by the philanthropic sector and Department of Human Services (Victoria) grants.

The show is produced on a shoestring budget (\$5000 an episode) with a combination of paid and volunteer staff. Having secured more than \$200,000 in philanthropic grants for *No Limits* I know my way around the sector pretty well and I know which funds are more likely to be sympathetic. At present they all require DGR (Deductible Gift Recipient) status so the money must be paid into a registered charity.

No Limits affiliated itself with such an organisation and they held our funds for us and paid our bills. The relationship we had with Action for Community Living (the charity that supported us) was very much a two-way relationship and was a valuable resource for the TV show in more ways than just financial management. They brought insight and connection to the community so that the disability community felt a genuine ownership of the show and felt

that it was truly representative of their views. *No Limits* became a project of Action for Community Living and that brought benefits as well as some difficulties in terms of being able to attract funds.

The relationship between the charity and the project (in this case a television production) needs to be more than just a financial one. The charity needs to provide genuine support and involvement in the project and have a genuine connection and interest. This can take time and resources away from other core business that they may have and for this they charge the project an auspice fee, which can range from 3-20% of the projects budget. This fee may be used to pay additional staff to manage the relationship with the project and to provide accounting services. Auspice fees are common language but the term must be avoided at all costs in funding applications (the term project administration fee seems to work well)."