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*Blue Sky Paper*

# Finding the Needle<sup>SM</sup> : Where are your BFFs?

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## *Who are Your BFFs? What Grant Makers Want*

BFFs are your Best Fit Funders, or grant makers with which your organization is aligned in the following areas.

- Mission
- Vision
- Priorities
- Subject areas
- Target population
- Geographic focus
- Types of grants awarded vs. types of grants needed

BFFs also have sufficient assets to support continued grant making, have made grant awards in the most recent fiscal period, and have funded other organizations or similar projects in your community (town, city, or county).

### *All grant makers want to work with and fund organizations that exhibit:*

- **Credibility** – of both the organization and its leadership
- **Capacity** – infrastructure, technology, facilities, etc.
- **Evidence** – of both the need and your chosen solution (best practice)
- **Sustainability** – diverse revenue streams

## *Where to Find the Needle*

**Drum roll please... the Top 5 Grant Prospecting Sources are:**

1. [Foundation Directory Online](#)
2. [Grants.gov](#)
3. [FoundationSearch](#)
4. [GrantStation](#)
5. [The Chronicle of Philanthropy Deadlines](#)

These grant-prospecting sources differ in total holdings (i.e. the amount of data held in storage), frequency of data updates, cost, and three ways to search the data: filters, indexing, and keyword functionality.

- Foundation Directory Online uses filters, Boolean operators, keyword searches, and multiple databases.
- Grants.gov relies heavily on filters and uses some Boolean operators.
- GrantStation relies heavily on filters and can conduct smaller, more targeted searches.
- FoundationSearch functions like Foundation Directory Online.
- The Chronicle of Philanthropy Deadlines uses keywords, one filer, and some Boolean operators.

**For the best results, search at least two sources, and do the search more than once over the space of a week.**



## *How to Prospect*

A database is a storage tool full of millions (if not billions) of pieces of data. How do you find the right results for your organization?

First, some definitions.

- **Filters:** help you remove unwanted values from your results by selecting only specific records based on your defined criteria.
- **Subject Headings & Indexes:** a way to manage files by putting them in a certain order or describing the content of each item, making data easier to retrieve in the future.
- **Keywords:** words and phrases you type in to get results (like searching Google)

Using these methods individually and in combination will help you expand or narrow your search results.

These are the most commonly used search fields across all sources. You start prospecting by first writing down your keywords for each bullet point below:

- Subject area
- Type of support
- Funder's geographic interests
- Foundation type
- Nonprofit type

You may want to narrow your search. Select “foundation type” (or similar term) to eliminate operating foundations (those designed to support a single nonprofit), government-related foundations, and others that are not pertinent to your search.

You can further limit your results by specifying your type of nonprofit. If you represent a Tribal government, for instance, your organization may be eligible for opportunities that others are not (and vice versa). In Foundation Directory Online, you can also eliminate from your results any grant maker who is not currently accepting applications.

## Use Boolean Operators

Make AND, NOT, and OR your “go to” tool for prospecting.  
If you’re feeling adventurous, try incorporating some of the other operators detailed below.

*Note: you can use these operators with indexes, too.*

**AND:** Use to retrieve information for both search terms

Example: obesity AND children AND families

**OR:** Use to retrieve records that contain at least one of the search terms

Example: human trafficking OR slavery

**NOT:** Use the word NOT between keywords to eliminate records from the results.

Example: child NOT adolescent

**Parentheses ( )::** Use operators with parentheses to create logical arguments (much like in a Microsoft Excel formula).

Example: (obesity AND (child OR boy OR girl))

**Asterisk \*:** Use an asterisk to retrieve variations on a word

Example: disab\* retrieves disabilities, disability, and disabled

**Quotation Marks “ ”:** Use keywords with quotation marks to find exact phrases that are not indexed.

Examples: “human trafficking”



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