

# Strategic Funder Communication & Outreach

## Introduction

This JFF resource offers a guide for nonprofits on strategic communication and outreach with new funders. Effective communication enhances long-term relationships, funding success, and organizational visibility. This JFF guide discusses strategies for informing new funders about your mission and programs, as well as best practices, logistical tips, and effective ways for engaging new philanthropic funders.

## Develop a Communications Plan

Once you have identified the potential philanthropic funders you want to target, ensure you have the right collateral and strategy in place for effective communication.

## Prospect Research Work Plan

### Getting Started

#### **Step 1: Collect or develop boilerplate materials for outreach to prospective funders**

Begin by developing boilerplate language, or standardized text that can be adapted for various fundraising purposes. Compiling this information ahead of time will not only support your organization with funder outreach and communication but will also be helpful when drafting grant proposals.

A checklist of boilerplate collateral to have on hand includes:

- Your organization's mission
- Impact
- Key programs/services your organization leads
- How your organization aligns with the funder's priorities
- Current partners/funders
- Case statement for your organization

### Resources:

- ["Make Grant Writing Easier by Using Boilerplate Text"](#)
- ["What is a Case Statement?"](#)

## **Step 2: Initial Outreach**

Contacting new funders before submitting a proposal can be crucial. Use this opportunity to introduce your organization, share your mission, and learn about their interests. Early engagement can make your future proposal stand out and improve your chances of success.

### ***Path 1: Cold Outreach***

#### **1. Research and Identify the Right Contact**

- a. Before sending an email, ensure you've identified the most appropriate contact person at the funder organization, such as a grant administrator or program officer. (If you don't have funder profiles readily available, see *How to Identify Philanthropic Funding Resources* to get started on funder profiles.)
- b. Use LinkedIn, the funder's website, or other professional networks to confirm the correct recipient.

#### **2. Craft a Compelling Email**

- a. Introduction: Briefly introduce yourself and your organization. Mention any mutual connections or how you came across their work.
- b. Key Information: Include essential details from your boilerplate materials, such as your organization's mission, core programs, and alignment with the funder's priorities.
- c. Call to Action: Clearly state your intention to schedule a meeting or phone call to discuss potential collaboration.
- d. Alignment with Funder Priorities: Emphasize how your program goals and vision align with the funder's mission. Reference any specific initiatives or focus areas that resonate with their objectives. (See *Making the Case That Your Organization is Aligned With a Funder's Priorities*).

### ***Path 2: In-Network Introduction***

#### **1. Request an Introduction**

- a. Ask the individual to facilitate an introduction. Clearly communicate the purpose and potential value of the connection for both parties.

#### **2. Provide Key Materials**

- a. Supply the connector with any relevant materials that they can use to introduce your organization effectively. This might include a one-pager, your website link, or specific talking points.

#### **3. Follow Up After the Introduction**

- a. Once the introduction is made, follow up promptly with the funder, reiterating your interest in discussing potential collaboration and aligning your mission with their priorities.

**Resource:** ["A Comprehensive Guide for Cold Email Fundraising \[+Templates\]"](#)

### **Step 3: Ongoing Communications**

When planning the cadence of communication with new funders, it's essential to strike a balance between staying top of mind and not overwhelming them with information. Here are some recommendations:

#### ***Regular Updates***

- **Midyear Progress Reports:** If it's not already part of your grant's reporting requirements, consider sending a midyear progress email blast to keep funders informed and engaged throughout the year. This doesn't need to be lengthy! Think about including language on your organization's progress towards goals, a participant success story if applicable, and early learnings. If you have an organization newsletter, ensuring they are on the distribution list may suffice.
- **Prompt Responses to Inquiries:** Ensure that any questions or requests for additional information from potential funders are answered promptly.

#### ***Personalized Touchpoints***

- **Anniversary or Milestone Acknowledgments:** Recognize anniversaries or important milestones in your relationship with potential or existing funder.
- **Holiday Greetings:** Send personalized holiday greetings that reflect your appreciation for the funder's support throughout the year.

#### ***Responsive Communication***

- **Invitation to Site Visits:** If possible, invite potential funders to visit your site or attend an event where they can see the impact of their funding firsthand.
- **Post-Event Follow-Ups:** After any major events, such as fundraisers, conferences, or significant project completions, send a follow-up email to potential funders. Be sure to personalize the email with relevant takeaways from the event that pertain to that funder. The email should come from the person with the actual relationship with the funder.

#### ***Engaging Content***

- **Storytelling in Communications:** Incorporate storytelling into your updates to make them more engaging. Share personal stories of individuals or communities who have benefited from your programs—include testimonials, statistics, and quotes where possible. Also consider sharing quotes and feedback from other funders as well!
- **Use of Multimedia:** Consider including videos, infographics, or photos in your communications to make them more visually appealing and engaging.

**Resource:** ["Why Grant Writers Should Master Stewardship With Funders"](#)