

Here's advice from The Whelan Group for clients approaching corporate funders for support:

Begin with a clear and succinct summary of your proposal up front – the kind of paragraph that the program officer can reuse when preparing a docket for review.

Be brief on boilerplate – organizational history, et.al.

Make sure there is a distinguishing factor to your request, and state it at the top. Lots of organizations may provide a similar service, but only yours does...what?

Don't cut and paste without CAREFULLY screening your text to make sure it is specific to the funder you are approaching.

Get it right! Make sure the name, title, address of the person to whom you are writing is current and accurate.

Highlight ways that your potential corporate funder can engage employees as volunteers.

For corporations with a public image focus: pledge to shower visibility, and then deliver!

For corporations with a consumer focus, such as a credit card: think of ways to provide special access that they can pass along to their customers.

Partnerships are the zeitgeist; see if your proposal can highlight a partnership with another recipient of the corporation's funding.

Also a zeitgeist issue: Stress your own efforts to promote diversity (and your commitment to persons with disabilities) within your own organization, your board, and among constituents.

Align your funding expectations (and the size of your request) with relevant precedents; and don't ask for too much first time in!

Do your homework so you recognize issues in the business, political, environmental or social environments that affect their work. If they're in a hot spot, reach out to show your support.

Keep your funders updated, even when you're off cycle; send an update letter or email periodically with good press and good news.

Don't be shy; call to ask questions!
