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Financial Assistance from the National Trust

The National Trust for Historic Preservation plays many roles—the leading advocate and educator on behalf of historic preservation, a clearinghouse for information on preservation practice, curator of one of the finest collections of historic American homes, and a proponent of federal, state, and local legislation protecting our architectural, cultural, and maritime heritage.

The National Trust, through its financial assistance programs, plays yet another role. We demonstrate that preserving our heritage improves the quality of life in American communities. The National Trust's grant and loan programs—the National Preservation Loan Fund, Inner-City Ventures Fund, Preservation Services Fund, Johanna Favrot Fund and the Cynthia Woods Mitchell Fund for Historic Interiors—have assisted thousands of innovative preservation projects that protect the continuity, diversity, and beauty of our communities.

NATIONAL PRESERVATION LOAN FUND (NPLF)

The National Preservation Loan Fund is the National Trust's most flexible lending program. It offers financial assistance to nonprofit organizations and public agencies working to preserve historic resources and revitalize commercial and industrial centers, residential neighborhoods and rural communities. NPLF's mission is to provide needed loans to help local entities preserve their historic resources in a variety of contexts and in a number of ways. All NPLF projects must benefit historic resources and demonstrate a community revitalization aspect that ensures the project's impact will be far-reaching. More information at www.nationaltrust.org/loan_funds.

INNER-CITY VENTURES FUND (ICVF)

The Inner-City Ventures Fund finances rehabilitation of historic buildings that serve the economic and community development needs of low-, moderate-, or mixed-income neighborhoods. ICVF was launched in 1981 to spur neighborhood-based housing and economic development in urban historic districts. Its creation formally launched the National Trust's efforts to battle displacement caused by inner-city revitalization by helping to meet the needs of existing residents. Preferred projects are those that are consistent with Community Partners' preservation-based community development approach and that have a mixed-income focus. More at www.nationaltrust.org/loan_funds.

NATIONAL PRESERVATION FUND

The National Preservation Fund, formerly known as the Preservation Services Fund, provides matching grants ranging from \$500 to \$5,000 to nonprofit organizations and public agencies to initiate preservation projects. Funds may be used to support consultants with professional expertise in areas such as architecture, law, planning, economics, and graphic design; conferences that address subjects of particular importance to historic preservation; and curriculum development in preservation directed toward select audiences. Applications are accepted up to three times yearly, depending on how much money is available to disburse.

**Postmark Deadlines February 1, October 1 and June 1*

JOHANNA FAVROT FUND

The Johanna Favrot Fund offers grants ranging from \$2,500 to \$10,000 to nonprofit organizations and government agencies for projects that save historic environments in order to foster appreciation of our nation's diverse cultural heritage and to preserve and revitalize the livability of the nation's communities. Funds may be used to obtain professional expertise in areas such as architecture, planning, archeology or media relations; sponsoring preservation conferences and workshops; and designing and implementing innovative preservation education programs. Ineligible activities include bricks-and-mortar construction, repair and rehabilitation work or the acquisition of property.

**Postmark Deadline February 1*

CYNTHIA WOODS MITCHELL FUND

Grants made from the Mitchell Fund for Historic Interiors range from \$2,500 to \$10,000 for projects that assist in the preservation, restoration, or interpretation of historic interiors. Applicants eligible to receive grant awards include nonprofit organizations and government agencies. There is one funding round each year.

**Postmark Deadline February 1*

For more on all of the National Trust's financial assistance programs: www.nationaltrust.org/funding/npe05.pdf.

How to Approach a Foundation by Ilene Mack

Though there are over 32,000 foundations in the United States, less than 25% have assets of \$1 million or more, or give \$100,000 in grants annually. What is the best way to approach these grant-making organizations? And how can you get a share of foundation resources in an increasingly competitive environment? While each foundation has a unique way of operating, there are specific steps to take in approaching them all.

I would suggest that the very first step and one that is important prior to writing anything, is doing your research on the foundation you wish to approach. The buzzword is HOMEWORK. Do it well and thoroughly. It is more efficient and in the end more beneficial to send appropriate requests to fewer organizations than to send a shower of appeals in the hopes that one may land in the right place. While you may not receive an approval or even a hearing on the first attempt, if the appeal has been well thought out and is indeed within the guidelines of the foundation the impression left is a positive one and the next time you try you may be more successful. Obviously, there are no guarantees, and since there are always many more appeals than resources to fill the need, a majority are turned down.

Once you have determined that you are sending your appeal to an interested party, make sure that the form of your approach is correct. Many foundations prefer a phone call or a letter of inquiry as the first step. Others want a full proposal with all the required documentation. However, all proposals should be accompanied by a COVER LETTER. The letter should be addressed to an appropriate person. If for some reason in doing your research you are unable to find a contact name, call and ask.

The COVER LETTER should be just that—a brief, to the point, summary of what we can expect to read in the proposal. For instance it might read:

*Dear Appropriate Person,
Our organization does such and such.
We are in need of \$ (amount of dollars)
for (name of project or general
support) We are attaching (and then*

list the documents appended).

Again, if you have researched the foundation thoroughly, you will know what is required.

I believe there are three important qualities that are vital to all well written proposals: **Clarity, Brevity, if possible, and Specificity of Purpose** (even if you are requesting general support.)

The factual information should include: *WHO YOU ARE*—a small, liberal arts coeducational college with an enrollment of 700 students from around the country. *WHAT YOU DO*—in the case of a school, it is implicit in the nature of the organization. However, you may have a heavy emphasis on preparing teachers, or computer programmers. Let us know. The *NATURE OF THE NEED*, including a budget. This information should be stated up front. Within the nature of the need, the reader should learn the goals of the project: what is expected to be accomplished and how long will it take to accomplish it? Who is the population being served and how will your program affect that population? If it is an ongoing project, what are the results to date? What are the other sources of funding? If the request is being submitted to more than one foundation, how will our funding be used to avoid duplication of effort? Explain clearly the specific uses of funds already received as well as those anticipated.

Your appeal does not necessarily have to present a unique idea. New ideas are hard to come by and probably harder to bring to fruition. What is important is a clear statement of *HOW THE PROJECT IS TO BE CARRIED OUT*. If it is based on already successful results done elsewhere, let us know. If it is a new project—are there any previously-tested techniques that are similar to what you are planning? If you are being innovative, what kind of evaluation piece is built into the project? If you are asking for funds to purchase a specific piece of equipment, the same thoroughness of purpose, use and evaluation should be stated.

A listing of personnel involved with the program should be included indicating their qualifications. A detailed budget showing overall cost is vital. If it is an ongoing program, indicate monies received, monies anticipated, and the sources of these funds. And once

again, depending upon the recipient of the appeal, make sure you send the correct IRS information, audited financials, and most of us want a listing of board members.

Your HOMEWORK will tell you if there is anything else required: letters of endorsement, newspaper clippings or other publicity given to your program. My feeling is that if such supplementary material is not specifically asked for, don't send it. If the project is expected to run over a period of years, a projected budget for each year should be submitted. Many foundations provide funding on a yearly basis only. Others will provide funding for multiple years. Your research will tell you on what basis to make the approach.

Now having said all of this, it is more than likely that most of your appeals will be turned down. There are many fine programs and projects being declined. The choices grant makers must make are difficult. We are usually presented with a plate of delectable items, all looking appetizing and appealing. We cannot choose them all.

At the risk of repeating myself: homework, groundwork, research. Whatever you wish to call it, do it. It saves time and paperwork and ultimately will produce more positive than negative results. Remember the proposal is the first impression the foundation gets of your organization. Make it a good one.

The relationship between grantee and grantor is mutual. It should be and I hope is, more often than not, a relationship of respect and responsibility. It is our responsibility to read and review requests with an open mind, making fair judgments without being judgmental. On your part, the responsibility is to have done the research and presented a thoughtfully written appeal.

We are all concerned with the well-being of society and its citizens. The more we share our thoughts, ideas and dreams, the more hopeful we can be about the future.

How to Approach a Foundation was written by Ilene Mack, Senior Program Officer for The William Randolph Hearst Foundation. Mack has been with the Hearst Foundation since 1974, and both her experience and her good sense about the grant-making process are highly regarded by all.

Research Tips

In the search for foundation support, a researcher will find a maze of informational resources, publications, databases, seminars and services. A basic three-step research strategy follows:

- Create a broad list of foundations, local or national, that have funded projects or programs similar to yours,
- Eliminate those foundations which have policies or restrictions that would rule out your organization as an eligible grantee, and
- Learn as much as possible about the foundations remaining on the prospects list so that a proposal can be developed to match their particular preferences or interests.

So, You Want A Grant Do You?

With the constantly increasing competitiveness of the National Preservation Fund (NPF) awards, applicants are well-advised to pay attention to details. We encourage you to focus on the nuts and bolts of the application process. Though written with NPFs in mind, the following tips are good general rules-of-thumb for all funding applications.

Keep your application simple and succinct. Especially the project summary.

The staff has to look at a lot of applications and needs to be able to compare apples to apples. If there are too many extra sheets and attachments, the project and its intent can become confused or lost. The application form was designed to be convenient for both the applicant and the reviewer. If you spend a lot of money and time creating an application that is big, flashy, confusing and not user-friendly, you're leaving the impression that your project just might have a real good chance of turning out in the same fashion.

Fill in ALL the blanks.

If you don't know the answers, find out. If the answer is "Not Applicable" just say so, but make sure first.

Use the application form provided. Remember—apples to apples and all that!

Make it legible.

Typing is required, and the MS Word format makes it easy to type into the application on a computer, save your changes, print it out and mail it in. Handwritten and faxed applications are not acceptable.

Provide a clear budget.

If you can't get the math right in theory, how's the hard cash going to be handled?

Demonstrate a good match.

Don't give the impression that if we don't save you, no one will. What have you done to develop local support? If you haven't demonstrated local support, we're going to wonder why it's not there. There are many equally worthy project applicants out there who *have* cultivated local support. Who do you think is going to get the money?

Be realistic.

Although we'd love to fund each application to the full \$5000 limit, the reality is that we do not have the ability to do so. The average NPF award is a seed grant of around \$500 - \$1000.

Get letters of support from the SHPO, your statewide organizations, local groups and elected or appointed officials.

These letters demonstrate that your organization has done its homework and is operating within the established community and preservation networks. This assures that the project is off to a steady start and has good footing. It also demonstrates that you have availed yourself of the other support and technical assistance that is out there.

Provide good visuals.

You love your project and know it's the best thing since sliced bread. You think that if everyone in the world could see it they'd love it too. So, let us see it—send in the required prints and electronic images on a disc if your project involves a specific site or building. If you don't have a camera or know how to use one, find someone who does and can.

Additional Resources

The **Foundation Center** is the nation's leading authority on philanthropy, connecting nonprofits and the grantmakers supporting them to tolls they can use and information they can trust.
<http://foundationcenter.org>

BoardSource increases the effectiveness of nonprofit organizations by strengthening boards of directors through a highly acclaimed consulting practice, publications, tools, and membership program.
www.boardsource.org

The **Grantsmanship Center** offers grantsmanship training to nonprofit and government organizations. They help organizations to create programs that get funded and stay funded.
www.tgci.com

The **Association of Fundraising Professionals** works to advance philanthropy through advocacy, research, education and certification programs. The association fosters development and growth of fundraising professionals and promotes high ethical standards in the fundraising profession.
www.afpnet.org

Chronicle of Philanthropy
<http://philanthropy.com>

Council on Foundations
www.cof.org

Donordigital
www.donordigital.com

Grant Seeker's Guide to the Internet: Revised and Revisited
www.mindspring.com/~ajgrant/guide.htm

Philanthropy News Network Online
<http://pnnonline.org>

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