Funding Basics

Techniques for identifying funding sources

Networking: Ask colleagues, mentors, speakers, fellow students, and others about their funding experiences and knowledge.

Scholarly literature: Check acknowledgements in professional literature to identify funders interested in your discipline or research topic.

Electronic databases: Search electronic databases for relevant opportunities.

Types of funding available

Grants: funding for research, travel, projects, or creative activities. Usually, no repayment is required.

Fellowships: support for studies and related activities at the graduate or post-graduate level. Usually, no repayment is required.

Prizes or Awards: Competitions, prizes, honoraria in recognition of personal accomplishments, research results, professional or creative writing, or artistic activities.

Traineeships: Internships, research training, and other work experience programs.

Agencies that provide funding

Government: Federal agencies such as the National Institutes of Health, National Science Foundation, and Department of Education provide nearly 80 percent of the sponsored research funds at universities. Other state and local government agencies may provide funding to residents.

Foundations: Private foundations are another source of funding in fields relevant to their missions.

Corporations: Both national corporations and local companies sometimes provide funding for research, academic study, and other educational projects, either directly or through foundations created to manage their giving.

Professional/Scholarly Organizations: These groups often provide small awards for members, students, and/or young scholars in related fields.

UNC-Chapel Hill Graduate School: The Graduate School administers a number of internal fellowships, dissertation completion grants, travel awards, and other funding opportunities for Carolina graduate students in all disciplines: http://gradschool.unc.edu/funding/

Start Early

Give yourself plenty of time to research sponsors and to plan and write your proposals. Don't get closed out of good opportunities by waiting too late. Funding deadlines generally fall between October and March.

Plan Ahead

Think about your funding needs for the long-term— not just for next year, but also for future activities.

Take advantage of resources available

The Graduate Funding Information Center provides services to UNC-Chapel Hill graduate students for locating funding opportunities. We offer web-based access to funding databases, a collection of reference materials, and individualized instruction and consultation on the best use of our resources.

Use your network of colleagues to stay aware of trends

Experienced researchers often have advance knowledge of upcoming funding opportunities. Federal government requests for applications (RFAs) are frequently announced with very short turn-around times, and having advance knowledge of them would allow you extra time to prepare your proposal. Stay connected with people who know what is coming up.

Be aware of the motivations of grant-makers

All grant-makers want to fund proposals that are relevant to their interests, and have varied reasons why they want to give away money. Some are issue-oriented and want to fund projects that advance their issue. Some will fund only those projects that impact the community they serve or relate to their core business. Others want to support the development of junior people in their field. As you research funding opportunities, pay attention to information about the motivations of the grant-maker and use it when contacting the agency and preparing your proposal.

Funding Basics

Try different search terms and combinations of search terms

Don't settle for just one search. The terms you use to describe an idea may not be the same ones chosen by the person who wrote the abstract or the person who indexed the announcement. So, to find grants on the history of jazz performances, try a variety of search terms (music, jazz, history, performing arts, arts and humanities, and other relevant terms).

Broaden your search

Your research area may be very specific, but grant-makers' funding interests are often described in very broad terms, such as humanities or health care. This is especially true of foundation and corporate giving programs. So, if your research area is breast cancer, you will need to search broadly under cancer, health care, women's health, or multidisciplinary biomedical research. Your search will not be comprehensive, and you will miss potential funders, if you search only for the specific topic of breast cancer.

Be creative in your approach

There are multiple sources of funding information and different ways to use the information. You can do a straightforward search for funding announcements, or you can look through grants previously awarded in your area of interest to identify target agencies, or you can find other researchers working on similar projects and ask them about their funding sources. Ask for advice on creative approaches from the staff at the Graduate Funding Information Center.

Major sources of funding information

Online funding databases such as the *Carolina Internal Funding Database* and *InfoEd Global SPIN* allow you to conduct customized searches of the many funding opportunities for advanced study and research.

Print reference materials can be a useful source of information about funding.
- **Student resources***: The Graduate School Funding Handbook, Money for Graduate Students* series, books on funding for minorities, international students, women, people with disabilities, veterans, nursing and education graduate students, and more.
- **Proposal writing guides:** *Grant Application Writer's Handbook, Proposal Planning and Writing,* and many more books with proposal development advice and samples of different proposal elements.

Funding agency resources such as web sites, guidelines, and annual reports are primary sources of funding information.

Tips and tools to learn what has been funded
- View samples of successful graduate proposals in the *Successful Proposals Collection*.
- Talk to past winners.
- Search awards made databases.
- Look at sponsors' online lists of fellowships and grants funded.

How to start your funding search
- Use the Graduate Funding Information Center's website (http://gradfunding.web.unc.edu) to search funding databases, set up funding alerts, view specialized funding guides, and use other resources.
- Attend a training session on identifying funding.
- Contact the Graduate Funding Information Center if you have questions.