Pet Peeves of Funders
• Based on 19 years of talking with foundation directors and attending Meet the Funders panel events, and hearing about the things that executive directors, development directors, and grant writers do that make them crazy.
INTRODUCTION

• Results of a survey done with dozens of funders around the country who were willing to share their experiences and insights on the grant-giving process.
• From each “pet peeve,” there are key lessons to learn.
RELATIONSHIP BUILDING
“NEVER make a phone call that reflects that you have not done good research.”
“NEVER be pushy the first time we meet.”
“NEVER pester funders to attend your organization’s fundraising events.”
“NEVER be disrespectful of my call (e.g., tell me when I call you are hiking and continue walking and huffing/puffing).”
“NEVER do other things when talking to a funder (e.g., heat up coffee in microwave).”
“NEVER expect that because you are a nonprofit and seeking money that it is our obligation to support you.”
“NEVER forget to listen - Don’t monopolize our meeting.”
“NEVER overstay your welcome.”
“NEVER bring swag to a meeting.”
GUIDELINES

Follow the Guidelines
“NEVER try to make your agency and program fit into our guidelines.”
“NEVER ignore the eligibility guidelines.”
“NEVER ignore submission guidelines.”
“NEVER ask for a multi-year grant when we only give one-year grants.”
THE ASK

GIVE ME MONEY
“NEVER chase the money.”
“NEVER ignore funding restrictions (e.g., no political causes, no sponsorships, no capital / equipment).”
ASK AMOUNT
“NEVER present an ask for 100% of project costs - typically 10%.”
“NEVER ask for an amount outside of our giving range.”
“NEVER ask the maximum of our funding range.”
“NEVER ask for a large amount if you serve a small number of people.”
“NEVER submit a proposal with another funder’s name in the copy.”
“NEVER write to the wrong person.”
“NEVER be wordy.”
“NEVER cut and paste the same answer into numerous questions.”
“NEVER answer a question with an answer that is not what we are asking for.”
“NEVER label your attachment with the funder’s name only.”
“NEVER use an old application.”
“NEVER ignore addendum guidelines.”
“NEVER overuse confusing abbreviations (e.g. For a program called Brighter Futures Mentoring Program, use Brighter Futures vs BFMP).”
“NEVER overuse organizational or industry jargon and abbreviations.”
“NEVER accidently leave copy placeholders (e.g., _____ children served, XXX children served).”
“NEVER use the word funder.”
“NEVER lie about other secured funders.”
“NEVER submit on the last day.”
Planning the Budget
“NEVER submit a budget that doesn’t match the proposal or a budget that doesn’t balance.”
“NEVER ask for budget items that are not eligible.”
“NEVER disguise an operating ask as a project ask (e.g., staff member salary).”
“NEVER include things in your budget that are not referenced in the narrative.”
“NEVER answer the sustainability question with ‘We will submit more grant proposals.’”
FOLLOW UP TO REQUESTED INFORMATION
“NEVER dawdle when asked to supply follow-up information.”
GRANT
FULFILLMENT
“NEVER take the money and don’t run program or project.”
“NEVER forget to communicate with the foundation if your program is experiencing challenges.”
“NEVER use the money for something else - another budget line item.”
“NEVER forget to fulfill a grant obligation (e.g., journal ad, gala tickets).”
“NEVER submit your mid or final reports late.”
“NEVER fudge outcomes / result numbers.”
“NEVER apply for new funding if you haven’t used up the funds / fulfilled the last grant.”
“NEVER forget common business courtesy (e.g., thank you note).”
“NEVER ignore the funder the rest of the year.”
REJECTION
“NEVER argue with the decision.”
“NEVER be angry.”
“NEVER attempt to talk a grant maker out of the decision made.”
“NEVER go over the program officer’s head.”
“NEVER call a board member / trustee to ask for reconsideration.”
“NEVER file a formal complaint.”
“NEVER submit if you have been turned down several times.”
“NEVER pull the customer card.”
“NEVER pull the race card.”
GENERAL TIPS
“NEVER call with questions that are already answered on our website.”
“NEVER call on the last day.”
“NEVER call for feedback within a month of submission.”
“NEVER call to see if we got your application.”
“NEVER forget to tell us about major agency changes.”
“NEVER tell a funder they don’t care about a certain issue (e.g., racial justice).”
“NEVER hold on to the check.”
“NEVER complain that it wasn’t the right amount.”
“NEVER tell a funder they don’t understand what it is like out here.”
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