

SUGGESTIONS FOR LETTER PROPOSAL WORKSHOP

- Explanation of terms: letter of inquiry and letter proposal as brief (1-2 page) requests to the funder to take a look at the asking organization's work and tie it to the interests of the funder
- Do your homework: find out as much as possible about funder: giving history, priorities, timeline of decision-making, who makes decisions w/i funder's organization
- Call funder, if telephone number is available, to speak with representative who can invite letter proposal or indicate that funder is not a good match with SPSF
- Letter proposal serves as *door-opener*, to be followed quickly by follow-up phone conversation with funder or, in the best of all worlds, a personal visit to discuss organization and project
- Wording of letter must emphasize:
 1. Competence/reputation of asking organization
 2. Clear connection between donor and asking organization
 3. "Do-ability" of project: can be completed with adequate funding
 4. Amount requested
 5. Contact information of letter writer: telephone, e-mail, postal address
- Send letter on current stationery
- Individualize letter so that reader understands that funder knows it has not been "shot gunned" to 100 potential funders
- RESEARCH: SOURCES OF INFORMATION:
 1. General Internet information: Google name of prospective funder
 2. Foundation Directory Online
 3. Chamber of Commerce Listings
 4. Grantstation
 5. Foundation Center Library Collections: Frueauff Foundation in Little Rock, Little Rock Public Library (Main Building) ; collections also at UA-Fort Smith and Fayetteville Public Library
 6. Other sources?
- DISCUSSION: Ask participants to describe their experiences with letter proposals
- Distribute examples of letter proposals for examination and discussion

LETTER OF INQUIRY

SAMPLE

March 4, 2010

Corporate Giving Office
Potential Funder Company
1234 Main Street
Shreveport, Louisiana 71101

Dear Friends,

I am writing this letter of inquiry to ask if the Arkansas Single Parent Scholarship Fund might apply for a statewide grant through your office. Having noted from the website of the Foundation that your company places major emphasis on education, I am wondering if support of our statewide incentive scholarship program might be possible.

In brief, we provide scholarships to low income single mothers and fathers who desire to earn a college degree and obtain skilled, well-paying employment. Established in 1990, our organization has through its county-based affiliated provided over 23,000 scholarships worth more than \$14 million. The current retention and graduation rate among awardees is 86%.

Thanks you in advance for your response to this letter. We would love to have Potential Funder Company and its related Foundation as partners in our efforts.

Yours truly,

Jane Doe, SPSF Board President

REQUEST FOR GUIDANCE LETTER

SAMPLE

October 30, 2009

Ms. Jane Doe
Potential Foundations
1234 Main Street
Suite 1234
San Francisco, California 94105

Dear Ms. Jane Doe,

I would like to request your guidance in our request for funding to the Potential Foundations. We are a nonprofit organization which aims our efforts at empowering low income single mothers and fathers to earn a post-secondary education degree before entering the work force as well-trained professionals. We work at the grassroots level in each Arkansas county to engage local leadership to award scholarships and lend encouragement and support to students.

In reviewing the Potential Foundations' funding priorities, it appears that the education priority aims at directly supporting institutions of higher learning. It also appears that the social service priority, particularly efforts to "enable children, youth and families to lead productive and independent lives, describes the net effect of our organizational mission. Would you recommend that we apply under the social service category?

Thank you very much for any guidance you might provide.

Yours truly,

Mr. Director, SPSF Board

February 25, 2011

Jane and John Doe
Potential Foundation
C/o Foundation Trustee Name
1234 Main St.
Los Angeles, California 90000-1661

Dear Jane and John,

I am addressing this letter to you on behalf of the Arkansas Single Parent Scholarship Fund (ASPSF) with the hope that Potential Foundation might consider a grant request from our organization. It is my understanding that the Foundation has an interest in higher education, specifically within the states of Arkansas and Missouri.

We are directly addressing the issue of the impoverishment of women and children in our state. Arkansas had 116,473 families led by single parents in 2009, at least 47.5% of whom had incomes below the poverty line. A full 61% of all single mothers with children under the age of 18 were considered poor, accounting for 58,656 families. This latter figure represents a 4.5% increase from 2008. The impoverishment of female-led families is now *dramatically* affecting more and more women and their children. Our efforts to encourage single parents to pursue their higher education is one proven, effective way to help families break the cycle of poverty.

As a private nonprofit organization with tax exempt status granted by the IRS, ASPSF enables low income single mothers (and fathers) to complete their higher education in preparation for entering the workforce as skilled and trained professionals. We do this through a network of 63 county-based incentive scholarship funds led by volunteers, which awarded 2,557 scholarships worth \$1.66 million in 2010. Established in 1990 as an expansion of two vanguard Single Parent Scholarship Funds in Northwest Arkansas, our affiliates have disbursed over \$14 million in scholarships to thousands of students. With a current retention and graduation rate of 85% (2009 data), we know that the vast majority of those we help are completing their studies and entering the workforce. The success stories are phenomenal!

ASPSF would like to request a \$25,000 grant from the Foundation, to be used as challenge dollars for affiliates in the most severely impoverished region of Arkansas. We provide challenge dollars for scholarships to 27 Mississippi Delta Region counties at a 160% rate: counties can qualify for up to \$8,000 per year by raising \$5,000 in local support. The \$25,000 grant will draw \$40,000 in match from other sources, resulting in approximately 130 scholarships to deserving students. The money is most often used for such needs as childcare, transportation, utility payments and rent. We encourage students to apply for Pell Grants and other federal and state scholarship support, as available.

ASPSF is supported by a number of philanthropies and entities including the Walton Family Foundation, the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation, the William Randolph

Hearst Foundation, the Arkansas Department of Higher Education and the Wal-Mart Foundation. Our affiliates receive contributions from a wide variety of local businesses, civic organizations, churches, foundations, and individuals. Each dollar of ASPSF challenge support is tripled by local donations.

An extremely important factor in scholarship assistance provided to single parents is the encouragement and support given directly by volunteer Board members to students. Mentoring programs, information and referrals, special trainings in such areas as resume preparation, budgeting and dressing for success... all create a bond between the student and Board members which is critical to the student's success. We are often told that the sense that someone truly cares for the student and her family makes a huge difference for her. It is the commitment of the local community to build the self-confidence and esteem of the student through personal relationships that often keeps the student on course to complete her studies.

I am enclosing a copy of our 20th anniversary pamphlet, an IRS classification letter and two articles about our organization for your review. Should you desire additional information, please feel free to contact me at any time. Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Yours truly,

First and Last Name, Executive Director

Attachments

March 1, 2011

John Doe
Potential Foundation
12345 Main Creek
Dallas, Texas 12345

Dear Mr. John Doe,

I am addressing this letter to you on behalf of the Arkansas Single Parent Scholarship Fund (ASPSF) with the hope that the Potential Foundation might consider a grant request from our organization. It is my understanding that the Foundation has an interest in programs designed to promote economic self-sufficiency, as well as those which provide scholarships for students with income needs for studies in business, finance and growth industries. The goals of our organization are in line with the Foundation's interests and we are located in a state within your giving locations.

SUSTAINABILITY BEYOND GRANTMAKER SUPPORT

We have a dynamic and diverse donor base, allowing our projects and programs to continue through local, regional and national fundraising efforts. The Walton Family Foundation and the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation have invited requests for three year grants aimed at growing our scholarship program in the Mississippi Delta region of Arkansas, beginning in 2012. We feel certain that these anticipated grants, plus others obtained during the current year, will be of sufficient value to sustain the project under consideration by the Potential Foundation.

We are directly addressing the issue of the impoverishment of women and children in our state. Arkansas had 116,473 families led by single parents in 2009, at least 47.5% of whom had incomes below the poverty line. A full 61% of all single mothers with children under the age of 18 were considered poor, accounting for 58,656 families. This latter figure represents a 4.5% increase from 2008. The impoverishment of female-led families is now *dramatically* affecting more and more women and their children. Our efforts to encourage single parents to pursue their higher education is one proven, effective way to help families break the cycle of poverty.

COPY OF IRS DETERMINATION LETTER

As a private nonprofit organization with tax exempt status granted by the IRS, ASPSF enables low income single mothers (and fathers) to complete their higher education in preparation for entering the workforce as skilled and trained professionals. We do this through a network of 63 county-based incentive scholarship funds led by volunteers, which awarded 2,557 scholarships worth \$1.66 million in 2010.

Established in 1990 as an expansion of two vanguard Single Parent Scholarship Funds in Northwest Arkansas, our affiliates have disbursed over \$14 million in scholarships to thousands of students. With a current retention and graduation rate of 85% (2009 data), we know that the vast majority of those we help are completing their studies and entering the workforce. The success stories are phenomenal!

ASPSF would like to request a \$25,000 grant from the Foundation, to be used as challenge dollars for affiliates in the most severely impoverished region of Arkansas. We provide challenge dollars for scholarships to 27 Mississippi Delta Region counties at a 160% rate: counties can qualify for up to \$8,000 per year by raising \$5,000 in local support. The \$25,000 grant will draw \$40,000 in match from other sources, resulting in approximately 130 scholarships to deserving students. The money is most often used for such needs as childcare, transportation, utility payments and rent. We encourage students to apply for Pell Grants and other federal and state scholarship support, as available.

ASPSF is supported by a number of philanthropies and entities including the Walton Family Foundation, the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation, the William Randolph Hearst Foundation, the Arkansas Department of Higher Education and the Wal-Mart Foundation. Our affiliates receive contributions from a wide variety of local businesses, civic organizations, churches, foundations, and individuals. Each dollar of ASPSF challenge support is tripled by local donations.

An extremely important factor in scholarship assistance provided to single parents is the encouragement and support given directly by volunteer Board members to students. Mentoring programs, information and referrals, special trainings in such areas as resume preparation, budgeting and dressing for success... all create a bond between the student and Board members which is critical to the student's success. We are often told that the sense that someone truly cares for the student and her family makes a huge difference for her. It is the commitment of the local community to build the self-confidence and esteem of the student through personal relationships that often keeps the student on course to complete her studies.

I am enclosing a copy of our 20th anniversary pamphlet, an IRS classification letter and two articles about our organization for your review. Should you desire additional information, please feel free to contact me at any time. Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Yours truly,

Jane Doe, Executive Director

Attachments