



Funder Fit Scorecard

Qualify a funder before you spend forty hours on the application

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Why this exists

The most expensive mistake in grant seeking is a well written application to a funder who was never going to fund you. Score a prospect before you write. A low score is not a reason to give up on a funder, it is a reason to build the relationship first rather than applying cold.

Score each dimension from 0 to 3

Dimension	What a 3 looks like
Mission alignment	They fund your exact issue area and population, in their own words, not by generous interpretation
Geography	Your service area is explicitly named in their guidelines
Size fit	Your budget and their typical grant are in proportion. Their median grant is meaningful to you and you are not too small or too large for their portfolio
Funding type	They fund what you actually need, whether general operating, program, capacity, or capital
Relationship	Someone at your organization has a real connection to someone there, or you have been in contact before
Timing	The deadline gives you enough time to write something strong, and it fits your fiscal calendar
Requirement burden	The application and reporting requirements are proportionate to the money. A \$10,000 grant with federal grade reporting is a poor trade
Evidence of similar giving	Their 990 or grants list shows recent gifts to organizations like yours

Interpreting the total, out of 24

Score	What to do
19 to 24	Strong fit. Apply, and invest real effort in the narrative.
14 to 18	Worth pursuing. Try to make contact before applying so the proposal is not the first thing they see from you.
9 to 13	Build the relationship first. Do not apply cold. Attend something, ask for a conversation, get on their radar this year and apply next.
Under 9	Skip it. Spend those hours on a better fit. Revisit if their priorities change.

Where to find the information

- Their own guidelines page, which is the only authoritative source for what they say they fund
- Their Form 990 or 990-PF, free at ProPublica Nonprofit Explorer, which shows what they actually funded and at what amounts
- Candid Foundation Directory, free in basic form and free in full at Funding Information Network partner locations
- For federal opportunities, USASpending.gov shows who received awards under the same program and how much

Score a prospect

Funder name and program

Scores: mission, geography, size, type, relationship, timing, burden, evidence

Total and decision

If not now, what has to change and by when

Luminary Impact researches funders and writes the proposals for funded human services nonprofits.

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