

Resource Guide: Adapting to the Current Funding Landscape

The first few months of the second Trump administration have fundamentally shifted what types of research the U.S. government funds—and how. An AcademyHealth Field in Focus webinar in March 2025, “[Securing Funds – Strategies for Researchers](#),” surfaced useful strategies for understanding this shifting landscape and tailoring proposals to new funders.



1 Monitor the Shifting Landscape:

- Stay informed about changes to the funding environment, including indirect rate adjustments and federal agency reorganizations, through resources like AcademyHealth
- Subscribe to alerts from major funders for timely updates on opportunities. For example: scroll to the bottom of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s [home page](#) for a funding alerts sign-up.
- Utilize institutional resources for access to subscription-based platforms.

2 Network to Proactively Build Relationships with Funders and Potential Partners:

- Network within professional communities (e.g., grantees, alumni groups) to enhance proposal alignment and strengthen relationships with funders and potential collaborators.
- Attend conferences, like AcademyHealth’s Annual Research Meeting, to network and understand funder interests.
- Consider serving as proposal reviewer for grantmakers to build your grantwriting skills and understanding of funders’ aims and priorities.
- Prepare a brief concept aligning your work with a funder’s priorities that can facilitate an introductory conversation with a staff member.



3 Diversify Funding Sources, from National to Local:

- Explore non-governmental and industry funding.
- Engage national funders, local community foundations, and family philanthropies.

Key Strategies for Tailoring Proposals

1. Know Your Audience, Adapt, and Be Flexible:

- Identify relevant funders and invest time in understanding their mission and current priorities.
- Understand the difference between solicited and unsolicited proposals. If you are submitting an unsolicited proposal, conduct thorough research so your proposal directly aligns with the funder’s interests.
- Learn the distinction between the goals for different categories of funders and tailor your approach accordingly. For example:

Funding type	Funding opportunity purpose	Proposal approach	To emphasize in grant writing
National Institutes of Health grants	Advance scientific discovery and produce generalizable knowledge.	Formal, emphasis on importance of the research question and rigor of the methodological approach.	Scientific rigor and innovation, including clearly articulated specific aims, rigorous methodology, and relevant link preliminary data.
Federal contracting opportunities	Carry out agency-defined scope of work and schedule of deliverables in support of the agency’s mission.	Formal, emphasis on fit, value, and feasibility of the technical approach.	Fit and value of proposed methodology with pre-defined scope of work and deliverables, including technical merit, feasibility, quality assurance, risk management, and pricing.
Private foundation grants	Achieve results with the potential to be transformative and impactful in advancing the foundation’s mission, often focused on social issues or specific causes or conditions.	More emphasis on narrative storytelling and the potential for impact and advancing the funder’s mission.	Understanding of the funder’s mission, and demonstration of alignment of the proposed work with this mission and broader social impact outcomes.

- Integrate a focus on sustainability from the beginning: Consider how your work will catalyze change and lead to impacts that endure beyond the conclusion of the project to advance improvements in health and health care.

2. Utilize Program Officers and Feedback Avenues:

- Submit a 1-2 page letter of interest or concept paper to facilitate an initial conversation with a program officer.
- Engage with program officers for insight into proposal framing and language; seek feedback from funders and prior awardees to strengthen proposals.
- Attend engagement opportunities (webinars, office hours) for alignment guidance.
- Utilize workshops and support services for constructive feedback to improve proposal quality—both during proposal writing and after a proposal is turned down.

3. Customize Language and Narrative Accordingly:

- Demonstrate your understanding of the funder’s mission by clearly describing how your work and the intended outcomes will further their goals.

Resources for Identifying Opportunities

1. **Grants.gov:** Federal funding resource, though not comprehensive.
2. **GrantForward:** Funding opportunity search engine.
3. **Community Foundation Locator:** Local funder locator by ZIP code.
4. **Candid Foundation Directory:** Grantmaking organization info; subscription required.
5. **Philanthropy News Digest:** Nonprofit funding repository; also see their **RFP database**.
6. **Grant Watch:** Searchable grants; subscription required.
7. **Pivot RP:** Global funding opportunities; access via university.
8. **University of Illinois Fellowship Finder:** Useful for students and recent graduates.