



Strengthening Oklahoma's Safety Net, One Community At A Time

Board Bulletin

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Leveraging Foundation Support

As the number of uninsured Oklahomans continues to grow, community health centers (CHCs) must recognize and act on opportunities to leverage dollars. This includes pursuing and securing funds from philanthropic foundations. "Leveraging resources" has been a Bureau of Primary Health Care (BPHC) buzz phrase for the past few years. BPHC expects health center grantees to partner with community organizations in achieving access and reducing health disparities. In Oklahoma, evidence of foundation support to communities abounds. CHC boards should lead the effort in positioning the health center to successfully pursue foundation funding. However, the following should be noted before approaching a foundation for support.

Key Considerations

- ◆ **Demand Exceeds Supply** - Foundations receive countless requests for funding support. In most cases, only a small percentage of the requests are actually funded. Since the economic downturn in late 2001, most foundations experienced shrinking funding pools due to the faltering stock market. Even so, there are still great opportunities for organizations who offer solid funding proposals to foundations.
- ◆ **Board Ownership** - One of the first requirements of many foundations is a listing of the contributions made to the organization by the board members. They want to know that health center board members take full ownership in the organization and its projects to reach into their pockets and give money to the cause. With consumer boards, that is sometimes quite difficult. However, health centers should be able to demonstrate that board members who might be financially unable to contribute dollars have willingly devoted time to fundraising efforts as 'in kind' contributions.
- ◆ **Building Relationships** - Establish a relationship with the funder. Let them know what your health center does for the community - in a positive, forthright manner. If possible, have an ambassador who is highly regarded in the community to help you successfully approach foundations. Having other groups willing to lend financial support to the project strengthens your cause (leveraging dollars).
- ◆ **Need Alone Isn't Enough** - Do not expect a foundation to give you money 'just because' - there are many worthy causes competing for a limited amount of dollars. While it may be helpful to have testimonies from community members regarding the need for the project, health center officials must be able to present an appropriate response backed by sound data. Foundation board members have been entrusted with the responsibility of selecting projects that give the most "bang for the buck" to those organizations having the highest probability of success based on a proven track record of wisely safeguarding resources to get things done. Be prepared to show financial records from the previous three to five years.
- ◆ **Come Prepared** - Foundation board members are extremely busy people. They were selected for the job because they are successful in the business world and know what works. They have vast knowledge and a 'pulse' on everything that is happening within their community. It is insulting to waste their time by coming to a meeting unprepared. Health centers must have their act together and have done the proper research of the respective funding requirements before meeting with the foundation board.
- ◆ **Respect & Honesty** - Foundations expect organizations to respect their requests for complete honesty - not only regarding details of the project but also truth about health center operations. It is quite damaging to say, "We are not at liberty to divulge that information" when asked for specific details critical to the success of the project for which the request is made. Foundations require organizations to be transparent with their information. If you expect funding from them, respect their expectation for full disclosure from you.

With the increased attention given the 330 CHC program from legislators, policy makers and community leaders, Oklahoma health centers are in a favorable position to approach foundations. Board members should make sure the proper 'homework' has been done before meeting with a foundation board.

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