

Five Rules of Funding

1. Identify Your Goal

Why do you need money? What do you need it for? Asking yourself these sorts of questions will help you determine where to look for funding. Generate a list of keywords that describe 1) who you are; 2) what you are studying; and 3) what you need money for.

2. Identify Your Funder's Goal

If you find a possible source of funding, learn about its goals. Read the mission and vision statement. Does it align with your research goals? Look at past winners or former fellows to see what they received money for. Are there patterns or themes? Think about it: foundations have a purpose. They have something that they want to accomplish. Ask yourself if what you plan to do with their money will help them achieve their mission.

3. Identify Your Resources

You are at a top tier research institution. Your peers and faculty are out there applying for funding all the time—ask them about it! Make sure you are aware of their expertise or relationships with funders so that you can identify how they can help you with your own funding process.

Are you involved in your professional community? If you are considering joining a professional organization when you finish your degree, don't wait! Many organizations offer reduced student memberships and funding opportunities, and are a great way to network.

Don't forget to count yourself as a resource. Think about your academic focus and your demographic characteristics, such as ethnic background or religious affiliation. Even something like civic volunteering could make you eligible for funding you were not aware of.

4. Follow the Rules

This rule isn't hard to follow, so remember to do it. Do you meet eligibility requirements? Does the application specify word limits? Does the funder ask that you send multiple copies? Are transcripts and recommendations to be sent directly to the organization or are they to be gathered by you? Note particular rules and requests and abide by them.

5. Keep in Touch

Keep the lines of communication open and make a good impression. If you have not received a confirmation that your application was received, be polite and ask. If you did receive a confirmation, thank them for it. And, if you do receive funding, be sure to send a thank you note.