

# How to Identify Donors

Before you ask for a donation, you need a solid list of prospects to approach. The key is to target those prospects who have the highest probability to contribute to your project in the most efficient manner. By learning how to quickly and effectively determine the alignment of a prospect, you'll save yourself a ton of time. More importantly, you'll generate a higher rate of positive responses when it comes to reaching out and connecting with those potential donors.

**This guide will answer two specific questions on how to identify a well-aligned donor and where to find them.**

## 1. How Can I Determine If a Donor Is a Match For My Project?

Every market is unique. Maybe your region has many corporations or medium-sized businesses? Perhaps there are a couple of large foundations or a well-known philanthropist in the area.

By examining each donor pool (individuals, corporations, foundations, and government), you'll be able to identify all prospects who are more closely aligned with your project.

You can evaluate the alignment of each prospect across these three categories:

1. **Geography:** Where are they located? Where do they like to give?
2. **Giving Interests:** Do their giving interests align with my project? What similar projects have they supported in the past?
3. **Capacity to give:** How much money do they have? What is their average gift?

The more matches you can make across these variables, the stronger the connection with that potential donor. For example:

1. **Geography:** There's an iron-clad rule in fundraising that all giving is local. Ideally, you'll want that prospect to be located as close to your playground as possible.
2. **Giving Interests:** Look for donors who give to community development or inclusiveness. They might also be interested in creating healthy communities or promoting youth physical fitness. Note: Some foundations and corporations don't like giving to capital campaigns (e.g. anything to do with construction, or the purchase of a large piece of equipment). So be sure to confirm that before you connect.
3. **Capacity to Give:** Asking for too much money can be an instant deal-killer. Keep your requests as close to your estimate of what that donor can afford as possible. Remember: most donors will want to know that others are contributing to your project at similar levels.



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## 2. What Resources Can I Use to Help Me Identify Donors?

There are a number of public and private resources you can utilize to identify donors. Below are four methods you can employ to cover each donor pool.

1. **Community Lists:** Who donated to the last big playground, or recreational project, in your community? What other organizations in your area are devoted to community development, inclusiveness, or healthy communities? Now go to their website, annual report, or social media feed to see what information they've published about their donors. Try taking a picture of the donor recognition wall at your local facilities (public pool, community center, arts facility, etc.). Many of your best prospects will have contributed to one, or more, of those projects.
2. **Top 10 Lists:** The internet is full of lists about the top companies and business leaders in your region. Make sure you're not just focusing on the big-name corporations. Small- to medium-sized enterprises can be potent sources of funding. Be sure to pull some names off the local business park down the road and look at the "Top 40, Under 40" or "Top 15 Up-And-Coming Businesses" in your area.
3. **Private/Paid Databases:** There are many fee-based donor prospect research databases on the market. They range in price and capability. If you have the time and commitment, you can use one to unlock a lot of great foundation and corporate opportunities. Try finding out if there are any charities in your region who may provide free access to their database under certain conditions.
4. **Free Databases:** This category is really for government. Many states have a database, or list-based resource, that you can use to identify potential funding programs. All federal grant opportunities can be identified on the [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) website. When it comes to government opportunities, start at your local city website to find any grant programs or announcements that relate to your project.

### Action Steps

1. Identify your 10 best prospects (either foundation, corporate, individual, or government).
1. Rank them in order in terms of their overall alignment with your project.
2. Review their application requirements (if any) and devise a strategy for connecting with their key contact(s).



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