Funding for Digital Oral History Projects

Before pursuing funding opportunities, it is critical to define the goals and purposes of your project.

These twenty questions will help:

1. Why is the project needed?
2. What are the goals and objectives for the project?
3. What approaches will serve the objectives best?
4. Who will direct the project?
5. What organization or institution will administer the project?
6. Who purchases, owns, and maintains the equipment of the project?
7. Where will the generated oral history material be deposited, and under what terms and conditions?
8. What is to be the legal status of the interviews of the project?
9. Who owns the audio recordings and controls access to them?
10. Who may access the audio recordings and for what purpose?
11. Who are to be interviewers and interviewees?
12. What steps are needed to lend the project the necessary prestige and authority required to gain access to interviewees?
13. What kind of staff is needed?
14. What will be the length of the project?
15. What types of equipment will best serve the goals of the project?
16. What processing procedures will be used for the recorded interviews?
17. How will the project and resulting collection be publicized?
18. How will the generated oral history materials be used?
19. How much will the project cost?
20. What will be the in-kind contributions to our funding proposal?

Finding funding for oral history work is always a challenge, but there are many potential funders for oral history initiatives:

- International funding agencies
- Federal funding agencies

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- State funding agencies
- National organizations
- Local organizations
- Foundations
- Commercial sources (industry)

Steps to developing a compelling (and fundable) oral history project:

- Identify the niche area or contribution of the research.
- Collect and critically analyze background information related to that area or what has been done.
- Develop a preliminary idea.
- Assess the idea's potential for success and modify it, if necessary.
- Seek constructive criticism from knowledgeable colleagues.
- Refine the idea to maximize its potential impact.
- Find the agency or program that fits your idea.
- Familiarize yourself with the areas in which they want to fund work.
- Contact the program officer for the agency or program and listen carefully.
- Use successfully funded applications as guides.
- Break the project down into fundable units: equipment, travel, publicity, printing, interviewing, transcribing, etc. If they won't fund the entire request, they may fund a portion.
- Pursue opportunities for presubmission review of your application.
- Include an educational component or public outcome that carries your project to a broad audience.

"The key to success in proposal writing is to engender enthusiasm in the reviewer—who then becomes an advocate for funding the applicant's proposal."[i]

Community of Science

Although misleadingly named, Community of Science is an essential resource for finding funding in the humanities. This free service aggregates valuable information so you spend less precious time and money searching for the information you need, leaving you more time and money for your projects. COS offers a searchable database with:

- more than 25,000 records representing nearly 400,000 opportunities, worth over $33 billion.

- 500,000 profiles of researchers from 1,600 institutions throughout the world. Discover who is doing what–current research activity, funding received, publications, patents, new positions and more.
- the capacity to showcase your research and expertise among researchers and scholars from universities, corporations and nonprofits in more than 170 countries. Use convenient tools to keep your CV updated and accessible.

You can create a profile of research interests and receive e-mail alerts when related funding opportunities become available—it is really a great tool!

Source: http://www.cos.com/

Foundation Finder

There are thousands of foundations out there, both local and national, and all are different. It is good to familiarize yourself with their work and the type of projects that they want to fund.

Foundation Finder offers basic information on grant-makers in the U.S., including private foundations, community foundations, grant-making public charities, and corporate giving programs. It is searchable by foundation or geographic location.

The Web site includes a valuable resource, a database of Form 990s. These Internal Revenue Service forms are filed annually by public charities and private foundations. The form lists assets, receipts, expenditures and compensation of officers. Most Form 990-PFs include a list of grants (grantees and amounts) made during the year by private foundations.

Source: http://foundationcenter.org/findfunders/foundfinder/

Grants.gov

Grants.gov is your source to FIND and APPLY for federal government grants. Grants.gov was established as a governmental resource named the E-Grants Initiative, part of the President's 2002 Fiscal Year Management Agenda to improve government services to the public.

Today, Grants.gov is a central storehouse for information on over 1,000 grant programs and provides access to approximately $500 billion in annual awards. This Web site also offers e-mail alerts to bring new funding opportunities to your attention.

Source: http://grants.gov/

Humanities Texas

Working in partnership with the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), Humanities Texas provides financial support to nonprofit organizations and institutions for programs that bring humanities scholars and scholarship to general public audiences.

Though funded projects take many different forms, all are firmly grounded in the humanities and are directed to the general public, both adults and young people, outside of the regular school or

college classroom. Programs targeting special audiences such as K-12 teachers, ethnic and community groups, or professional groups are also welcome.

Grant formats include mini-grants (up to $1,500) and major grants for community and media projects ($1,500 and up).

Source: http://www.humanitiestexas.org/grants/

IMLS

The Institute of Museum and Library Services is the primary source of federal support for the nation's 122,000 libraries and 17,500 museums. The Institute's mission is to create strong libraries and museums that connect people to information and ideas. The Institute works at the national level and in coordination with state and local organizations to sustain heritage, culture, and knowledge; enhance learning and innovation; and support professional development.

Oral history projects could be developed under several of the grant areas of IMLS, including community engagement, digital collections, public programs, and research.

Source: http://www.imls.gov/applicants/name.shtm

NEH

Grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities are quite competitive, but offer possibilities for oral history work in several of their grant programs. They include funding for digital humanities, education programs, preservation and access, and public programs.

NEH grants typically go to cultural institutions, such as museums, archives, libraries, colleges, universities, public television, and radio stations, and to individual scholars. The grants:

- strengthen teaching and learning in the humanities in schools and colleges across the nation
- facilitate research and original scholarship
- provide opportunities for lifelong learning
- preserve and provide access to cultural and educational resources
- strengthen the institutional base of the humanities

Source: http://neh.gov/grants/index.html

TexTreasures

Increase accessibility to library treasures with these grants from TexShare. TexTreasures is an annual grant program designed to help member libraries make their special collections more accessible to researchers across Texas and beyond. Projects may include such activities as cataloging, indexing, and digitizing materials. The Texas Collections working group is the peer review panel for the grant.

Funding is available for projects that involve organizing, cataloging, indexing, and digitizing local materials. The TexTreasures grant program helps Texas public and academic libraries provide

access to their special or unique local collection holdings by making information about these holdings available to library users across the state.

Up to $100,000 total is available for FY2010, with a maximum award of $20,000 for a single institution and $25,000 for collaborative grant projects. The deadline for applications is February 27, 2009. Funded projects will begin September 1, 2009.

Source: http://www.texshare.edu/programs/textreasures/

- In 2001, The University of Texas at Arlington Libraries received of a $20,000 grant from the Texas State Library and Archives' TexTreasures to partially fund a project called Tejano Voices. This initiative provided improved access to 77 oral history interviews conducted during the 1990s by U.T. Arlington political science professor, José Angel Gutiérrez. The interviews emphasize the personal stories and struggles of Tejano leaders, many of whom are the first individuals of Mexican descent in their communities elected or appointed to government office. The interviews uniquely reflect the history of the Tejano community as it pressed for an end to racial segregation in the state and access to political power in the post-WWII period.

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[i] Grant Writers' Seminars and Workshops, http://www.grantcentral.com/index.html