**What if Nonprofits Were Brutally Honest with Funders?**

*Thanks to* [*https://nonprofitaf.com*](https://nonprofitaf.com) *for the snarky content.*

1. **What is innovative about your program design?** “Our program is entirely innovative. The design is unproven; the approach is untested; the outcomes are unknown. We also have a tried-and-true service delivery model with outstanding results and a solid evidence base to support it. But you funded that last year and your priority is to fund innovative projects. So we made this one up. Please send money.”
2. **What is your overhead rate?** “It is too low. We systematically under-invest in human resources, financial management, and program management to keep it that way. By doing so, we have a nice, low overhead number to put on grant applications like this one. Please send money.”
3. **How will you sustain this program after this grant runs out?**We will leave you alone and harass other people, continuing to spend half our time trying to convince other foundations that our programs and communities are worth being supported, instead of running and improving the programs that our communities desperately need. Then, after a year or so, when hopefully you forgot that we applied earlier, we’ll reapply to your foundation. Please send money.
4. **How does your organization partner with other organizations in the area?**We have an unwritten agreement to write desperate, last-minute letters of support for one another for grant proposals like this one. Once a while, we go out drinking together, especially when we don’t get grants like this one. Please send money.
5. **How will you use the funds if you receive this grant?**We honestly really need this grant to pay for rent and utilities and for wages so our staff can do important work and feed their families, but since you won’t allow your funds to be used for those things, we will say that your grant is paying for whatever you will actually fund, then get other funders or donors to give and then tell them that their money is paying for the stuff that they want to fund. We will ultimately waste hundreds of hours every year trying to figure out who is paying for what, hours that could be used to deliver services. Please send unrestricted money.
6. **What is the leadership structure at your organization?**Because of understaffing, our ED is trying to handle too many things all at once and is thus not very competent at any of them. Our board actively undermines or micromanages the staff. The person who is actually holding this whole thing together is our Operations Director Lydia, but she’s being laid off because no one wants to fund operations or admin or fundraising. Please send money so we can buy Lydia a cake.
7. **How will your organization align with [so-and-so latest innovative systems-change effort]?** We won’t, because we are doing different stuff and because we barely get enough funding to survive, much less actually attend the billions of meetings and do all the work involved in aligning with this effort that has been sucking up all the funding in the region. Please send additional money so we can align or stop asking us to align.
8. **What are other sources of potential funding for this project?**Here below are a bunch of other foundations we are applying to. We are not very confident in many of them, but we figure that the more names we list, the better it makes us look. Some of the foundations won’t invest until other foundations make a first move. Please be the one to stop this game of “funding-chicken” by sending money first.
9. **If you receive a partial grant, will you still implement this program?** Likely we will, because the needs are so high, but it will not be the awesome program we envisioned, since we’ll have to cut program components, not hire the staff we need, and not be able to serve as many people as we want. But if that’s the only choice, we’ll reluctantly take it. Then, on some nights, we’ll stay awake, staring at the ceiling, crying a single tear that streaks down our worn faces, lit by the moonlight, imagining what could have been. Please send money.
10. **How will you evaluate this program?**Because we have little funding for a formal process with an external evaluator, we will have Edward, our social work practicum student, design a self-report survey. At the beginning and end of the program, we’ll administer the survey. We’ll put in lots of numbers and percentages to make it look impressive. This is not very rigorous or valid, due to selection bias, self-report bias, confounding variables, and a host of other issues, but it should be enough to convince you that we have good evaluation data. Please send money so we can buy Edward a cake.
11. **How will the community be transformed as a result of this grant?**Hahahaha, that’s a good one! This grant is for $5,000! And people say funders don’t have a sense of humor! 5K will allow us to pay for six weeks of rent, which means we can stay open, and who knows what awesome stuff we’ll accomplish during those six weeks, am I right? Please add three zeroes if you really want to see transformation.
12. **Besides sending money, what else can the foundation do to support you?** Please introduce us to other foundations so they can also send money.