



Your Quick Start Guide to Philanthropic Funding

6 Essential Tips for Grant Success

1. Be Specific with the Problem You Need to Solve

Before you identify possible philanthropic funders and grant opportunities, make sure you know the specifics of the problem you're seeking to solve, the solution you've identified, and what role the funder can play.

Consider:

- ☐ What population is this problem affecting?
- ☐ Why is this problem a problem?
- ☐ What is the solution, and why is that the best solution? (*It's LENA Grow—more on that below!*)
- ☐ When do I need to solve this problem?
- ☐ Why is my organization poised to implement this solution?
- ☐ How can the funder help?

2. Master LENA's Theory of Change to Describe the Solution

LENA Grow is the solution to the problem you've identified in your early childhood community. Use LENA's Theory of Change to tell a clear story about how their investment creates lasting impact.

Here's how it works:

The Problem: Not every child gets the interactions they need for healthy brain development.

The Solution: LENA Grow gives teachers data and coaching to increase conversational turns.

The Results:

- ☐ **Immediate:** Teachers feel more confident and engage more with children.
- ☐ **Short-term:** Children experience richer language environments and stronger relationships.
- ☐ **Long-term:** Better school readiness, literacy skills, and life outcomes.

What funders will see:

- ☐ Increased kindergarten readiness rates
- ☐ Improved classroom quality scores
- ☐ Higher teacher recommendation and retention rates
- ☐ Enhanced teacher job satisfaction and confidence
- ☐ Stronger early childhood education systems
- ☐ More equitable language environments for all children

Your next step: Customize this story using the specific problem you identified in step 1.

3. Find Your Perfect Funder Match

Use your problem statement and theory of change to guide your search for funders and grant opportunities that match your efforts. Use Google, Candid.org, ChatGPT, or your state non-profit association website to find funders interested in education or early childhood. On funder websites, look for keywords including:

- ☐ Early childhood education
- ☐ School readiness/kindergarten readiness
- ☐ Professional development for teachers
- ☐ Evidence-based programs
- ☐ Language and literacy development
- ☐ Teacher retention

Pro tip: Focus on funders whose geographic focus and population priorities align with your community. A funder interested in rural education won't fund urban programs, no matter how great your proposal is.

4. Build Relationships

You have the solution, the problem, and how the funder can help. You've identified a few that seem like they might be interested in your story. Now it's time to engage the funder!

Your approach:

1. Request a brief meeting to learn about their goals.
2. Share how your problem — and LENA Grow as a solution — aligns with their mission.
3. Ask about their grant process and any upcoming opportunities for funding.

Remember: Funders want to invest in organizations they trust. Building that trust takes time.

5. Craft a Compelling Case

Your proposal should answer:

- ☐ **The Problem:** Why is this work urgent in your community?
- ☐ **The Solution:** How does LENA Grow specifically address this need?
- ☐ **The Problem-Solver:** Why is your organization the one to take this on?
- ☐ **The Impact:** What will change because of their investment?
- ☐ **The Evidence:** What proof do you have this works?

Free resources LENA provides:

- ☐ Program description templates
- ☐ Impact statements with research citations
- ☐ Alignment talking points for different funder priorities
- ☐ Sample budget templates

6. Use Data That Tells a Story

Data should drive your entire funding process — from defining the problem to celebrating success with funders.

What funders want to see:

- **Before funding:** Community needs data, teacher retention rates, current kindergarten readiness levels
- **During your proposal:** LENA Grow's proven effectiveness, your organization's track record of success
- **After funding:** Number of children served, increases in conversational turns, teacher satisfaction improvements, participant testimonials
- **Long-term impact:** School readiness gains, improved teacher retention, policy changes

***Pro tip:** LENA technology provides built-in measurement tools, making grant reporting easier than most programs.*

Quick Start Checklist

- ☐ Complete community mapping to identify potential funders
- ☐ Research 5-10 target funders and their giving priorities
- ☐ Request LENA's funding guide and template materials
- ☐ Schedule informational meetings with 2-3 top prospects
- ☐ Draft your case statement using LENA's theory of change
- ☐ Develop your measurement plan using LENA's built-in tools
- ☐ Create a stewardship plan for ongoing funder engagement

Need More Support?

[Click your state on the map here](#) and contact your state's LENA Grow representative (found at the bottom of your state page)!

Remember: Successful LENA Grow programs across 40+ states have secured funding using these exact strategies. You can too.

LENA[®]

For more information, contact:

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