

## Community Foundations

Community Foundations (CF) are great resources for animal welfare organizations. The key to them becoming a resource for your organization is building a relationship with a key staff person who can be your champion and guide through the different philanthropic options your local CF provides.

Building a relationship with Community Foundations can be less intimidating than with other foundations because CFs, even if very small, are professionally staffed, and are tasked with the mission of improving their community. It is important for them to know about your organization and your work, as you are also working hard to improve your community. Most CFs have program officers/philanthropic advisors who work with both donors and local nonprofits. Search the CF website to identify the best person to talk to (if you aren't sure just call the main line and ask). Call or email them and introduce yourself and ask for an in-person meeting to talk about your work, your funding needs, and potential partnerships. After you meet with them, always send a thank you email, and continue to build a relationship over time by sending them occasional updates—newsletters, annual reports, invitations to events, or invite them to tour your facility. In terms of funding, CFs tend to disburse funds in two ways—through Donor Advised Funds and through discretionary grant programs.

**Donor Advised Funds** are like “mini foundations” that individuals can set up with their local CF. A program officer or philanthropic advisor manages the fund, vets charities, sends out the donations, and serves as the liaison between the donor and the charity. If you want to make sure that donors know about your organization, make sure the philanthropic advisors know about your organization.

**Discretionary grant programs** at CFs are usually like the typical grants process at any foundation. The CF decides its areas of interest and then establishes a grant seeking process with an application and deadlines. This is usually only open to local organizations. If they have animal welfare as an area of interest you should definitely be working with them to apply for funding. Call the program officer and ask what kind of animal welfare programs they like to fund—spay/neuter over foster programs, for example—what their average grant size is and any other pertinent information to help you develop a competitive application.

Even if they don't have animal welfare as a stated interest, call them and talk to them and see if any of your programs and services could qualify. Get creative and think about the ways your work helps people if they don't typically award grants to animal welfare organizations. Increased adoptions lead to healthy people, especially seniors and children; low-cost spay/neuter or pet food pantries help underserved communities or low-income households.

**Other Opportunities.** Often, community foundations have Match Days or Big Gives, where the CF helps local nonprofits raise funds either for a special day or for a specific campaign. To be eligible, nonprofits usually just need to register with the CF. Participating in these types of opportunities are great ways to show your local CF that you are engaged and enthusiastic about the ways they are helping their community.

Bottom line: every CF is different and handles their philanthropy in a way that is tailored for the community. The most important thing to do is get to know the staff and the ways your organization can help the CF fulfill their mission.