Foundations and Trusts

- Mission-driven philanthropies
- Donate 5% of assets each year
- Great freedom in choosing what to fund,
- Focus may change from time to time

Test question:

- Your Terminal degree:
  1. MD
  2. MD, PhD
  3. PhD
  4. MD, MPH
  5. other

Demographic questions

- Children:
  1. Now
  2. In the next 1-2 years
  3. Eventually
  4. Never

Q1:

- Have you applied for any private foundation funding in the past?

Q2

Which of the following are you currently applying for:

- Private Research Funding
- Career Development Award
- Internal Private Funding
General Types

- Disease Focus (AHA, ACS)
- Large (Gates, RWJ, Kellogg)
- Family Foundations
- Charitable Remainder Trusts (Yawkee)
- Corporate charities
- Institutional donor programs

Typical Foundation Structure

- Final Approval
- Board of Trustees
- ED/ CFO
- Programs
- Investments/ Fund-Raising
- Staff
- Program Officers
- Admin
- Portfolio Managers

Special Philanthropic Roles

- Addressing the leaky pipeline in research careers
- Accelerating innovation in treatment
- Increasing research attention on conditions of interest

Types of support

- Career Development Awards
- Young Investigator programs
- Innovations / Innovator awards
- Research Grants

Beth Stevens, PhD

- 2008 Smith Foundation Awardee
- 2015 McArthur Genius award:

I am so grateful for the support of the Smith family who funded my very first grant on microglia. This allowed us to accelerate this exciting new area of research and hire my first postdoc, Dorothy Schafer, who just started her own lab at UMass Medical School.
Roles of Private Funds

- Creating new fields:
  - The Robert Wood Johnson Fdtn

- Advancing treatment:
  - Cystic fibrosis foundation

- Career development
  - Smith Family Foundation

Things to think about

- Does this foundation fund unsolicited proposals?
- If not, how do you get on their radar?
- How involved are they in your work?

Differences from NIH

- May be quite focused
- Typically smaller than R01s
- Vary in review processes
- May require some digging to find them

Topics

- The Medical Foundation – Who We Are
- The Review Process in the Foundation World
  - What Gets Funded
  - The Reviewers
  - What Makes an Exceptional Application
  - Mistakes to Avoid
The Medical Foundation - a nonprofit, Boston-based organization

- Medical Research Grant Programs........................12
- Scientific Reviewers in 2014...............................124
- Applications Received in 2014.............................636
- Currently funded researchers.............................178
- Total researchers funded (1958-2014)...............2,375
- Amount Awarded (2011-2014).....................~$62 million

Scientific Review Process

1. RFA issued in consultation with trustees
2. Applications received and screened for compliance
3. Applications assigned to Scientific Review Committee
4. Recommendations for funding sent to trustees
5. Grants awarded

Nuances

- Are institutions restricted in the number of applications that can be submitted?
- Trustee roles:
  - Do they pre-screen?
  - How often do they change committee recommendations?

What Gets Funded

- Scientific Merit
- Qualifications of the Applicant
- Relevance to Foundation Mission

Keys to success

- Read and follow the instructions
- Fit a round peg into a round hole
- Understand the review process
  - Institutional role
  - Foundation trustee role
- Pre-submission internal review

What Makes an Exceptional Application

- Scientific Merit
  - Concise review of the literature with appropriate bibliography (ask a senior researcher to OK your references)
  - Specific Aims and Methods: Logical, feasible and innovative
  - Think “Beyond”: In a brief Limitations Section, discuss how you will handle unexpected results
What Makes an Exceptional Application

- **Applicant Qualifications**
  - C.V.: Use the NIH R01 PHS 398 Form and arrange publications by peer review, non-peer review, in preparation and in submission
  - Letters of Recommendations: Send points to your recommenders about your qualifications, your research project and the Foundation’s mission

Pre-submission internal review

- Is application clearly responsive to Foundation mission and RFA?
- Is bibliography complete?
- Is scope of work reasonable?
- Are applicant credentials well-matched to intent of RFA?

The Reviewers’ Perspective

- **Reality:**
  - Reviewers are accomplished investigators who are volunteering their time to serve on Scientific Review Committees
  - Reviewers often are asked to critique applications that are somewhat outside their areas of expertise
- **Consequence:** Write clearly and have someone outside your laboratory proof your application

Reviewer perspective:

- **Competition for 16 awards**
  - 145 applications scored on 9-point scale
  - 30 chosen for discussion, all with scores below 3.0.
  - 5 of these were practically perfect
  - Result: SRC needs to nitpick to recommend 11 of 25

Big Picture

Q3: Foundation Niche

- How well does your passion / research interest fit with NIH funding? (respond 1-5 scale)
  - 1 = perfect
  - 5 = not so well
Scenario 1

- NIH is a perfect fit
  - Anticipate first award at median age 42-44
  - One R01 won’t be enough
  - Use foundations to get you there, and to supplement funding

Scenario 2

- NIH funding is imperfect fit:
  - Be persistent at finding foundations
  - Maintain a high (enough) profile to come to the right attention
  - Pursue alternative funding

Summary

- Follow your passion
- You are the only person who knows what makes a meaningful life
- You are going to succeed – but it won’t be easy