

What are funding sources?

Extramural funding may come from a variety of sources including industry, private donors, commodity groups, federal, state, and non-governmental agencies and others.

Why is funding so important in Extension?

The outreach, education and research expected of Advisors and Specialists all require funds. Expenses can range from renting meeting venues, printing material, producing videos, buying research supplies, paying for research assistance or attending conferences. These expenses are usually beyond the scale of what UC ANR provides.



Extramural funding is
critical for every aspect of
extension

How do you develop funding sources?

Realize that obtaining funding, especially for larger multi-year programs, is about building relationships and thus takes time.

- **Start with Clientele Needs.** The number of funding opportunities can seem overwhelming. Be efficient with your time and energy by narrowing your focus based on your needs assessment. Think of the big picture of your whole program, and how individual projects and grants move your program forward.
- **Talk to Peers and Mentors.** Ask advisors and others in extension who work with similar clientele how they fund their research. Learn the advantages and drawbacks of different sources of funding, in terms of timeframes of funding, allowed expenses, chances for success and requirements of reporting.
- **Build Rapport.** Get to know the key stakeholders in your field before you go looking for money. Figure out common problems that you and these agency or granting entity are trying to solve. These stakeholders may be direct sources of funding, may partner on projects, or may know other sources of funding. Learn the limitations of different funding sources and understand how this fits into your whole program. Will a funder support travel (National or international if needed) to share research results? What large equipment might be used for later projects?
- **Start Small.** Early in your career, while you are still establishing your credibility and competency, you'll likely need to partner with more senior researchers and develop smaller projects with narrower, short-term goals. Collaboration with an established investigator can allow the development of a relationship with a granting agency as well as an understanding of the nuances of experimental technique for that subject area. Although it may be easy to just work in your areas of previous research, sometimes more funding may be available in another field. So consider beginning small and build your competence and reputation in that additional field.

- **Writing Proposals.** Governmental agencies and NGOs often call for a pre-proposal and invite back a smaller group of applicants to accept a full proposal. Commodity groups often skip the pre-proposal step and ask for full proposals. Track out ahead of time when these proposal calls will be released by talking with colleagues and stakeholders. Whereas submitting “cold” proposals may result in a grant, the odds of success increase if the parties know one another and have a shared understanding of current topics or questions that need more knowledge for resolution. This is when rapport building pays off! But if you don’t know the funder, it’s not too late. Ask questions and research the funding before submitting your proposal to understand shared values and goals. Ask colleagues to share copies of successful grants they have written to the same funder in the past.
- **Write with Precision.** Proposals need to go beyond a generic approach. Look into the grant review process. Will your grant be reviewed by administrators, academics or practitioners in the field?¹ Adjust your language accordingly. But always offer very specific language demonstrating detailed background knowledge of the science of the proposed research, where the boundaries of knowledge lie, an understanding of the techniques required, and how the anticipated project outcomes will further the goals and objectives of the granting agency.
- **Establish Credibility and Competency.** Do good work producing high-quality results. Keep funders involved throughout the course of the grant by inviting them to meetings or field days, sharing educational materials created and acknowledging their contribution whenever possible. Take pictures and collect testimonials to be sure you are documenting your impact with visuals, in addition to hard numbers. Produce a robust project report. Peer-reviewed publications can spring from an excellent project report, but often it is the report itself (oral and sometimes written) that is of most interest to the grantor. Show how you have attained, or better exceeded, the goals and objectives of the project. Remember to tailor your reports to your audience.
- **Provide Suggestions for Future Research.** In your report, include a section on suggestions for future research. Show how your project has increased knowledge and where the new boundaries are. Give examples at a conceptual level of future studies and briefly explain how these would advance agency goals.
- **Just Ask (politely, with credibility and vision).** Once you’ve established your reputation as someone who achieves results sometimes getting funds is as simple as asking. This is particularly true of various donors funding. It could be a small ask, like asking if any of your clientele would sponsor coffee, donuts and room rental for a meeting. Or as large as scoping out work you want to achieve but can’t find funding for, and sitting down with private companies who have a stake in the success of that work.

¹ Commodity board proposal are reviewed by growers and processors. If I spend too much time on chemical reagents and which statistical test, etc, their eyes will have glazed over too much to understand the value of the work. So, “very specific *technical* language” is not always a good thing. Showing that you have done your homework is important, but how you show that varies by funder.