

## Tips for Making a Phone Call to a Foundation

1. Check the foundation's website first. Familiarize yourself with the foundation, their mission, funding priorities, grant procedures, past grantees, etc. Review the list of staff to find the program officer or appropriate person to call. A large foundation may have a program officer for each interest area they fund—education, health care, etc.—while a small foundation may have just one or two people who handle everything.
2. Call the appropriate person and introduce yourself. Identify the school/district you represent and your position. Explain that you are aware that the foundation has a strong interest in supporting education, but you want to make sure your project aligns with their current funding priorities. You want to find out if they will “consider” or “entertain” a funding request, not if they will fund it. The staff person may have some influence over funding decisions, but he/she usually does not make the final decision.
3. Discuss your intended request in terms of a *project* or *need*, not in terms of purchasing a Renaissance® product. Remember, Renaissance programs are the *tools* to assist your school/district in accomplishing educational *objectives*, they are not the objective itself.

For instance, you might say:

*We want to help 100 students in grades four and five improve their reading scores by one grade level, as measured on our standardized reading tests.*

*We plan to establish an after-school math tutoring program and recruit parents to attend a tutoring workshop.*

These are just examples. You may want to be more or less specific. In framing your request to reflect a school or student need, talk about what kind of change you want to see happen.

4. Answer the foundation officer's questions accurately and honestly. If there is something you don't know, tell them you will be glad to get back to them with more information. Clarify and confirm any information you are not sure about regarding the application process. If the application process is not fully described on their website, ask if they have a standard application form or if a narrative proposal is sufficient. They may ask you to send them a letter. If so, write a one- or two-page letter summarizing the request (need, goals, objectives, budget, etc.).
5. Leave a positive first impression—show enthusiasm, confidence, and commitment concerning your students. Unless the person wants to talk longer (which is a good sign), thank them for their time and, if appropriate, indicate that you will be following up with a request.