

# ADDICTION MEDICINE FELLOWSHIP FUNDING GUIDE

**PRACTICAL TIPS TO FIND  
ALTERNATIVE SOURCES OF FUNDING  
FOR YOUR ADDICTION MEDICINE  
FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM**



DEVELOPED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



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## Background



Funding a fellowship program in addiction medicine can be challenging, with funding often coming from various sources, including the program’s department/institution, grants, endowments, state funds, and other sources. Sustaining a program often requires creative fundraising. This guide has been designed to offer practical tips and strategies for identifying and pursuing funding sources, outside of federal grants, to support fellowship programs in addiction medicine. While the guide draws on broad fundraising approaches, content is tailored to address fundraising issues that arise in addiction medicine. Tailoring is necessary because effective fundraising cannot take a “one-size fits all” approach. The approach must consider several factors, first and foremost, the nature of addiction medicine, as well as the program characteristics, number of trainees, access to potential donors, and the staff and resources available to support the initiative. While there is not one approach, there are tools and strategies that can be used to help secure funding at ANY institution.

Effective fundraisers seek to discover what is important to any potential donor and then draw upon that to encourage and support giving. This approach requires being able to look at the organization’s mission and programs through the eyes of a potential donor rather than from the perspective of those who run the organization.

### ***Why do people give?***

- they believe in the work that you are doing
- they want to give back out of gratitude
- they have had a life-changing experience with your program
- they have had encounters with people who made a difference in their lives
- they are passionate
- they want to give to those who can do this kind of work (ie, this is not an area of expertise for them)
- they appreciate the need for training and education
- they want to be part of something unique or transformational

### ***Why do corporations or foundations give?***

- giving aligns with their social mission or business interests
- They hope to improve the quality of life in their area
- employees have a connection or relationship with your program
- experience and demonstrated stewardship of resources

Throughout this guide, we offer reflection questions that may help you to clarify how you can best identify and work with potential donors. To begin:



- ➔ **What is the “mission” of your program** (consider the program aims from your Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education self-study process)? **Can you see donors aligning with this mission?**

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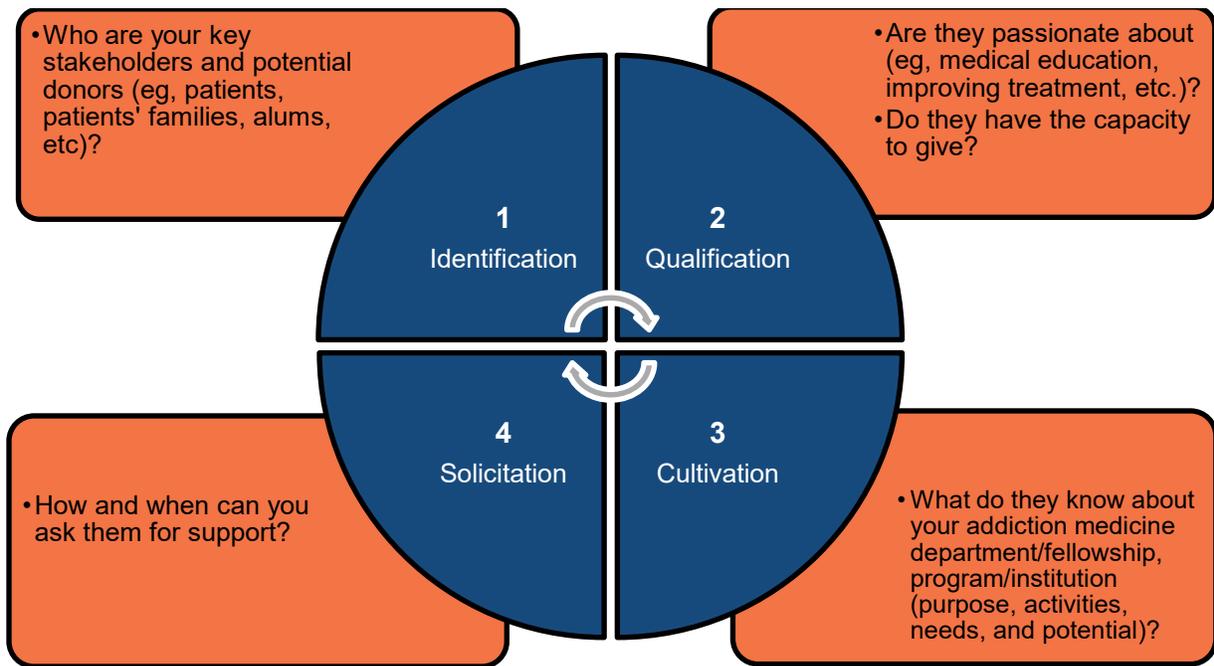
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**Developing Relationships over Time (The “Donor Cycle”)**

Fundraising depends on identification of donors, determining their interest and potential, cultivating relationships, bringing them on board with your mission, and “closing the deal” with a clear ask for financial support. Solicitation should always include a specific amount or a menu of options.



**Maintaining Relationships over Time (Stewardship)**

Stewardship is the responsibility for taking good care of the resources entrusted to you. It is the ongoing link between the institution and the donor as you build trust, credibility, and gratitude through donor acknowledgment and recognition. It is a strategy to keep donors close to your institution once they have given. It assures donors that their gifts will be used as they intend and motivates donors to give again and at increased



levels. The donor cycle continues because relationships are maintained. Like any good relationship, this takes work. Some ways of maintaining relationships are:

**Program Updates**—consider sending an annual update to donors and important community partners. Make the most of information that you have gathered already for your Annual Program Evaluation (APE). Consider using de-identified program data to highlight successes over the past year. This may also point to specific program needs. Send addiction medicine department newsletters and invitations to attend lectures, and other department events.

**Thank You Letters**—be sure to thank every donor, no matter the size of the gift. Do not forget to thank those who give “in kind,” with their time or with other resources. Handwritten notes are best but more important is to be prompt.

**Donor Receptions**—bring donors (and potential donors) together to thank them and help them feel a part of the program. Praise those who have given in the last year. Highlight program successes. Introduce the trainees that they have invested in and show their return on that investment by emphasizing trainee career plans and achievements in education and/or research.

**Personal Touches**—remembering birthdays, holidays, and other special milestones throughout the year will strengthen the relationship between the institution and your supporters. These can come from program leadership or as a general communication from the institution.

➔ **What is a possible plan for stewardship in your program over the next year?**

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## Needs Assessment



➔ **What are your current funding sources (e.g., GME support, internal grants, external grants, endowments)? Is this funding sustainable?**

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➔ **What resources are available through your institution, affiliates** (e.g., VA, children’s hospital, public health and community-based organizations), **philanthropy, foundations, grants?**

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➔ **Do you have a wish list that could be possible with additional funding** (e.g., fellow retreats, travel scholarships, protected time for program leadership)?

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➔ **Are you aware of any underutilized sources of funding** (e.g., philanthropy, foundations, state and local initiatives, community groups, government agencies)? **Why do you believe these are untapped?**

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➔ **What do you perceive as the greatest barriers to funding your fellowship** (e.g., structural, informational, personal, psychological)?

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## Funding Partnerships

There are several potential partners that may be helpful as you pursue funding.



### ❖ Development Office

- Secures major gifts from private, non-government sources (people, corporations, foundations)
- Connects “grateful patients/families” with philanthropic opportunities
- Works on fundable projects
- Protects each donor’s intent (ensures that gifts are used as intended)
- Helps to avoid (perceived) conflicts of interest (separates those who refer from those who raise funds)

➔ **Do you have a Development Office at your institution? If so, can you identify a contact person there? Can you arrange a meeting to discuss program needs?**

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### ❖ Community Advisory Board

1. **Build your board**—create list of potential members. Be sure to collect information about each potential member (eg, home and work addresses/the communities that they represent, areas of expertise/industry, capacity to give or to get from others). Identify the mission and overall goals of your board. Do not get caught up with the term “board”—if this sounds too formal or carries too much expectation for sizeable financial support, consider using “group” or “team.”

- *Who in your outer circles has a passion and commitment for your program?*
- *Who can give of time, talent, and treasure to help your program?*
- *What is their capacity to contribute financially either as an individual or through connections to organizations, foundations, or others in the community?*
- *What are your expectations from members in terms of individual giving and outreach? (remember, not all members may be able to contribute financially yet may have an important role in program leadership and vision)*
- *What might be other responsibilities and/or activities of this group beyond fundraising?*

2. **Identify your staff**—to create and sustain a thriving board you need to have the staff and leadership to support it.

- *Who will communicate with board members? How will they communicate with each other?*
- *Who will schedule meetings, create agendas, and plan other logistical needs?*
- *Who will ask members to join the board?*
- *Who will develop governance (eg, terms, leadership) and expectations for board members?*



3. **Train your board**—members need to be “in the know” and they need to be able to give an elevator speech. Share with them your successes and struggles, go to them with program problems, use them as a sounding board, and give them the information they need to have meaningful conversations with potential supporters.
4. **Sustain your board**—boards can be a lot of work. It takes hours to plan meetings, schedule lunches, create presentations, etc. Make sure that board members and staff know their perspective and contributions are valued. Celebrate program success regularly.

 **Do you have a network of people in your community that would be interested in serving on a Community Advisory Board?** Consider a diverse group that includes grateful patients and/or family, former fellows, clinicians (practicing and retired), community volunteers, business leaders, higher education leaders, treatment center representatives, and other non-profit leaders with interest in addiction medicine.

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 **Do you have administrative support to build, train, and support this group? Who is this person? When will you contact this person to start building your board?**

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### **Community Agencies**

Many hospital-based addiction medicine fellowship programs are actively seeking to expand and enhance their educational offerings. Likewise, community-based addiction treatment agencies, including outpatient recovery centers, residential treatment facilities, and harm reduction organizations—are eager to benefit from the expertise of fellowship-trained physicians. These partnerships can align missions, elevate care standards, and offer visibility and marketing opportunities for agencies within the academic and healthcare communities.

#### **Building Educational Partnerships**

Collaborations between academic institutions and community addiction agencies can be mutually beneficial:

- Fellowship programs gain access to diverse clinical settings and populations.



- Agencies benefit from cutting-edge training, staff education, and potential recruitment of highly skilled physicians.
- Joint initiatives (eg, co-hosted training sessions, community outreach, or research projects) can strengthen both parties’ missions and public profiles.

**Development and Institutional Oversight**

It’s essential to work closely with your institution’s Development Office or other administrative officials to ensure that gifts and donations are properly accepted, credited, and aligned with institutional policies. For agencies or corporate donors, there may be a desire for a clear return on investment—such as public recognition, naming opportunities, or measurable community impact—beyond the goodwill of the gift.

While some may express concern about potential conflicts of interest or perceived “kickbacks,” transparent and mission-driven partnerships can be structured to acknowledge community support ethically and openly. For example:

- Naming a fellowship position after a foundation or donor
- Publicly recognizing agency support in academic publications or events

**Navigating Industry Relationships**

Relationships between academic medical centers and the healthcare industry, especially pharmaceutical companies—require careful attention due to concerns about conflicts of interest. These concerns often stem from practices where physicians receive gifts, travel, or financial support from companies that may benefit from their prescribing or clinical decisions.

To address these concerns:

- Follow institutional and national guidelines for ethical conduct.
- Ensure all partnerships are transparent, documented, and mission aligned.
- Consult standards issued by organizations such as the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) and relevant industry codes of ethics.

 **Do you have existing educational partnerships with community-based treatment agencies in your area? Is a financial partnership possible? Are there other untapped agencies?**

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## ❖ State and Local Initiatives

State and local governments, public health departments, and community organizations can be valuable sources of funding for addiction medicine fellowship programs. Support may come through:

- State budget appropriations for workforce development in behavioral health.
- Public health grants targeting opioid response, opioid settlement funding, harm reduction, or integrated care.
- Partnerships with hospitals and clinics to co-fund training positions.
- Collaborations with academic institutions and community agencies to align missions and share resources.
- Loan repayment or stipend programs for fellows serving in underserved areas.

These initiatives help expand access to care, strengthen local addiction treatment infrastructure, and build sustainable training pipelines.

### Strategic Considerations

- Engage early with state and local stakeholders to align fellowship goals with public health priorities.
- Demonstrate impact by collecting data on patient outcomes, community engagement, and workforce retention.
- Leverage institutional support from development offices and government relations teams to navigate funding applications and compliance.

➔ **Do you have existing partnerships with these agencies in your area? Is a financial partnership possible? Are there other untapped agencies?**

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## ❖ Program Alumni

Maintain relationships with program graduates by inviting them to graduations, social events, and other program milestones. Send them regular updates on program changes and achievements;



consider using de-identified selections from your Annual Program Evaluation to highlight important program successes and growth areas over the past year. Include clear appeals for financial support. Below is a sample letter to program alumni.

Dear Dr. «LAST\_NAME»:

Summer means warm weather, celebrating graduations, and beginning the process of selecting the next group of students, residents, and fellows. As we welcome the next generation of trainees, I want to take a moment to update you and highlight our incoming and outgoing fellows.

<<Insert information about past and current fellows here>>

We also want to invite you to invest the future by making a gift to the Addiction Medicine fellowship program. You are a vital part of our past and future and we hope that you will consider supporting our fellowship experience. You, more than anyone as a past fellow, understand the importance of this training for the future of our field.

For your convenience I have enclosed a gift form and return envelope if you would like to invest in our program with a philanthropic gift. I have asked our development officer, <<insert information here>>, to follow up with you in the coming weeks. Feel free to reach out to them directly at <<insert contact information here>>. We would love the opportunity to tell you more in person if there is a time convenient for you.

 **Do you maintain a roster of fellow graduates with updated contact information? Prepare an annual update letter with a clear appeal for support.**

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## Fundraising Scripts

So, how do you identify potential supporters? They often identify themselves—and when they do, you need to be ready! Do you know the answer to these questions?

*“What can I do to help?”*

*“How can I support your work?”*

*“How can we make sure no one else goes through this?”*

*“How can we thank you?”*

Consider using the **STAR** protocol to help make your case:

**Situation** (“Currently we have...”)

**Task** (“We need...”)

**Action** (“With support we can...”)

**Result** (“Success looks like...”)



**➔ Practice Your “Elevator Speech” for supporters using these STAR prompts:**

**Situation**—Well, currently we have...

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**Task**—We need...

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**Action**—With your support we can...

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**Result**—Then our program will...

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We hope this guide has been a useful resource in helping you to think about fundraising for your addiction fellowship program. Some additional resources are below. Good luck!

## Resources

- The Academic Leaders's Guide to Fundraising - [https://advancementresources.org/app/uploads/2019/09/e-Book\\_ALeaders\\_Guide\\_Fundraising\\_170106.pdf](https://advancementresources.org/app/uploads/2019/09/e-Book_ALeaders_Guide_Fundraising_170106.pdf)
- Association of Advancement Services Professionals – [www.advserv.org](http://www.advserv.org)
- Association of Donor Relations Professionals – [www.adrp.net](http://www.adrp.net)
- Burke, P. *Donor-Centered Fundraising*. Chicago: Cygnus Applied Research, Inc.; 2003.
- [www.supportingadvancement.com](http://www.supportingadvancement.com) (free resources, including sample documents)

