

Funders for Lesbian and Gay Issues

Funders for Lesbian and Gay Issues, an affinity group of the Council on Foundations and the National Network of Grantmakers, retained FowlerHoffman in November 1999 to conduct research on incentives and barriers to foundation funding for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) projects and programs.

Research activities included in-depth interviews with foundation leadership and successful grantseekers, a survey of program officers and a review of public opinion polling, as well as a communications capacity assessment of Funders for Lesbian and Gay Issues. The research findings informed the development of a strategic communications plan and materials to help Funders for Lesbian and Gay Issues achieve its goals of raising knowledge, awareness and support for LGBT issues and increasing funding for LGBT projects and programs (currently, less than 0.3% of annual philanthropic dollars are awarded to non-HIV/AIDS related programs and projects affecting these communities).

A major component of the plan involves a targeted direct mail effort aimed at tying LGBT issues to foundations' specific program areas. The first such mailing focused on LGBT youth issues and was mailed to program officers and directors of youth development and related program areas. The mailing included an issue brief detailing the challenges many LGBT youth face every day, programs designed to support LGBT youth, and the ways in which grantmakers can make a difference. Also included was a piece authored by a foundation president on the value of funding projects that benefit LGBT youth, as well as a profile on a grantmaker that has successfully integrated funding for LGBT youth programs and projects into its existing funding areas.

These materials were also offered to LGBT youth-serving organizations around the nation as a tool to help in their grantseeking efforts. FowlerHoffman developed a series of tips to help organizations "localize" the materials so that they would be of greater interest to local funders. To date, Funders for Lesbian and Gay Issues has received numerous requests for additional copies of the materials.