

Prospect Research Source Guide

Defining Prospect Research

The Association of Prospect Researchers for Advancement defines prospect research as the process of discovering and evaluating prospective donors, and their interests, relationships, inclination to give and philanthropic capacity to inform and support an organization's fundraising strategies and outreach efforts.

Why conduct research?

- Sets down institutional memory so that donor and funder relationships can be continued beyond any single individual's contacts
- Provides information about particular prospects and donors to give an overall picture of their capacity and their interests
- Helps set strategy for cultivation and solicitation
- Helps prioritize the most promising prospects

Prospect research has a role to play in every role of the relationship management cycle:

- Identification – locating information
- Qualification – analyzing information
- Cultivation – interpreting information
- Solicitation – applying information
- Stewardship – applying information

What research aims to uncover about a prospect:

- Ability (Capacity to give)
- Linkage (Affiliations to the Action Coalition or partner organizations)
- Inclination (Likelihood to give)

What research should reveal about an individual:

- Biographical information
- Company information

- Past philanthropic giving
- Wealth indicators
- Foundation affiliations
- Affiliations with the Action Coalition and/or similar organizations

What research should reveal about an institution (corporation or foundation):

- Company history and information
- Past philanthropic giving
- Giving guidelines and priorities
- Individuals in executive and board leadership positions
- Financial information (for foundations and public companies)
- Affiliations with the Action Coalition and/or similar organizations

Research information that is available:

- Indications of wealth
- Stock holdings of public company insiders
- Salaries of top public company employees
- Real estate values

Research information that may be available:

- Biographical information (business history, age, family information, personal interests)
- Donations (political, charitable)
- Affiliations (nonprofit, corporate, foundation, family)
- Assets (i.e. boats, airplanes)

Research information that is not available:

- Bank account information
- Non-insider stockholdings
- Private investments

Resource Websites for Research

Search Engines

Often the best way to begin researching a prospect is through a simple web search. Search engines like Google, Yahoo and Bing can unveil information about the prospect, recent news, their past giving and other information, helping you determine how you might focus more in-depth research.

Social Media

Social media sites can provide insight into a prospect’s biographical information, affiliations, connections to others and other interests. Search sites such as LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter for your prospect’s profile.

Foundation, Nonprofit and Corporate Information

For foundation and corporation prospects, the following websites provide information on past gifts, giving guidelines and financial information.

Source	Information Available	Payment Required?	Website
NOZA database	Past grant information	Foundation giving info free Corporate giving info requires subscription	www.nozasearch.com
Foundation Center	Basic funder profiles, in-depth profiles and tools (foundations and corporations)	Basic profiles free In-depth tools require subscription	www.foundationcenter.org fonline.foundationcenter.org
Guidestar	Financial statements for foundations and other nonprofits Names of board members and key staff leaders Compensation for k	Free with registration	www.guidestar.org

Individual Donation Information

The following websites provide information on charitable and political giving from individuals.

Source	Information Available	Payment Required?	Website
Federal Elections Commission	Political donations	Free	www.fec.gov/finance/disclosure/norindsea.shtml
NOZA database	Individual giving backgrounds	Requires subscription	www.nozasearch.com
Million Dollar List	Information on \$1 million+ gifts from individuals	Free	www.milliondollarlist.org

Company/Stock Information

The following websites provide information on companies, including basic business profiles, stock performance, SEC filings .

Source	Information Available	Payment Required?	Website
Yahoo Finance	Basic business information, news and stock info	Free	finance.yahoo.com
SEC Filings	Federal filings (search by company or individual)	SEC.gov free Edgar and 10wizard paid	sec.gov/edgar/searchedgar/companysearch.html www.edgar-online.com www.10kwizard.com
Hoovers	Detailed profiles and reports on companies	Portions free	www.hoovers.com
Dun & Bradstreet	Comprehensive information on public and private companies	Payment required	www.mergentmddi.com

Newspapers and Magazines

Search newspapers and relevant magazines for news about your prospect. In many cases, recent news will be available for free but older archived news may carry a per-article or subscription fee. Target your search for news that provides insight into capacity (such as business dealings), philanthropic interests (gifts

or linkages to other nonprofit causes) and biographical information (marriage announcements, deaths in the family, etc.)

- **National news sources** such as the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, CNN or even just news.google.com can be a good source for information about prominent individuals, companies and foundations. The Chronicle of Philanthropy (www.philanthropy.com) also can be a good source for news about recent major contributions, grantmakers' priorities and similar information.
- Search **local news** in the prospect's market, including the major daily paper, any local business journals and any business or society magazines that may contain information profiles of prominent local leaders. If possible, search in the market of a prospect's winter/summer home as well.
 - Many markets' business journals are housed under the umbrella www.bizjournals.com. These publications regularly produce annual lists of top local businesses with significant financial information as well as lists such as "40 under 40" that recognize local leaders.
- **Magazines and specialty publications** within your prospect's field may be a source of news about individual and institutional prospects. Familiarity with the latest trends and general news in fields of interest to your prospect can also be helpful in understanding how best to build or advance a relationship with them.

In addition to the targeted sources above, the following websites provide consolidated, archived news from various sources. Most are fee-based.

- <http://www.highbeam.com>
- <http://www.proquest.com>
- <http://www.factiva.com>
- <http://www.lexisnexis.com>

Real Estate

Search real estate sites to determine your prospect's property holdings and to estimate the value of homes for which you have an address.

- Search the tax assessor's website in your prospect's market to review property records, including estimates of value and historical sales information. The site www.pulawski.net includes links to many tax assessor databases across the country.
- **Dataquick.com**'s national property database provides access to property records, with the depth of information varying by subscription level.
- General home sales sites such as www.zillow.com and www.trulia.com are good sources for estimates of property value. These are available for free, but you must have your prospect's property address(es).

Data Mining Resources

The following sites offer other in-depth research capabilities for a fee.

- Lexis-Nexis (www.lexisnexis.com) archives newspapers and journals, legal data, securities information and real estate data.

- WealthEngine (www.wealthengine.com) includes access to a range of asset-related databases in addition to wealth screening services.
- ResearchPoint by Blackbaud (www.blackbaud.com/analytics/research-point) provides in-depth prospect research capabilities and screening services.
- Equilar Atlas (atlas.equilar.com) provides data on executive compensation and stock information as well as networking connections among corporate executives and board members.
- Muckety (www.muckety.com) maps connections among executives and corporate board members.

Other Sources

Use the following sources to find other types of information on your prospect:

- **Legacy.com** provides a database of obituaries that can be of use for researching family background.
- Basic address and phone number lookup is available at www.whitepages.com.
- Search a prospect's college or university website (including their alumni association if accessible) for information on "news and notes" that the prospect may have provided, profiles from the university and prospect giving to their alma mater.
- Websites and annual of a prospect's known charitable affiliations can offer insight into their past giving. Press releases may include a specific gift announcement, and annual reports will typically indicate what level gift the prospect has made in the previous year as well as whether the prospect has committed to a planned gift.
- Salary information is not available for all prospects, though executive compensation is typically available through SEC filings for publicly traded companies and compensation for key executives at nonprofit organizations will be included on IRS filings (available through www.guidestar.com). For other individual prospects, you can use general salary trends to estimate compensation based on the individual's title and sector at sites like www.salary.com and www.bls.gov/ncs.

Compiled Links

The following sites include additional compiled resource links for prospect research:

- www.nudevelopment.com/research/bookmark.html
- indorgs.virginia.edu/portico/home.html
- www.stanford.edu/dept/ood/research
- www.usc.edu/dept/source
- www.wheatoncollege.edu/Tools/ProspectResearch

Sample Research Profile (Individual)

Prospect Name

Insert Photo Here	Home Address	Home Phone
	Business Address	Business Phone

Biographical Information / Family Information

Business Information and Background

Affiliations and Memberships

Assets

Philanthropic and Political Giving

Foundation Information

News and Notes

Capacity Rating

Strategy

Sample Research Profile (Institution)

FOUNDATION/COMPANY NAME

Contact Information:

Board Members:

Background:

Limitations:

Purpose and Activities:

Program Area(s):

Fields of Interest:

Geographic Focus:

Types of Support:

Application Information:

Financial Data:

Additional Location Information:

Selected Grants: