In the next few modules we're going to start talking about how to actually get our programs funded. I want to say a few words about thinking about the funding process before we move into more specifics about what funders look for, and how to pitch our program to potential funders.

Topic 11: Finding Funders (6:19) [Watch Online]

The cardinal rule of grant seeking, and the message that I really want to get across in the next few modules, is to not chase after funding. It's actually really, really easy to do and it happens a lot in the program world. We've talked about this actually in one of the very first modules of this class. When we talked about the ways that programs get planned and what the starting point is. It's not uncommon for an organization to start thinking about or planning a program in response to an opportunity to get funded to do something. Often funders actually have a lot of power in terms of setting the direction of public health or any programs in general. It's really, really important as someone who's thinking about the planning process and thinking about looking for funding, to not be in the position of developing a program in response to the opportunity for funding, to not be chasing after the money.

It's really important because we don't want to lose focus on the work that we're actually trying to accomplish and the abilities and strengths that our organizations actually have. One of the reasons we talked about defining organizational mission envision statements, when we were talking about goals, objectives, and indicators, was to be really clear about that direction for the organization. It's really easy if organizations chase after funding to experience what we call, " mission drift." That they start taking on projects that are not well- aligned with the mission of the organization. It's also a place that we don't want to lose focus on, our core values, and our core skills. In the last module when we talked about doing things like appreciative inquiry and SWAT analysis, we're really trying to build on the existing skills and capacity of an organization. That doesn't mean there's an opportunity to look for funding in new areas and to build new skills and capacities, but we're probably going to be the most successful in implementing programs that are well aligned with the values, mission, and vision, and core existing skills of an organization or of a program. Ideally what we want to be doing is looking for funding that matches both the community need, as we discovered through the needs assessment process, and the work of the organization in terms of its existing mission and vision and its existing capacity.

That's going to be a much stronger match in terms of a potential funder then the chasing after a funder paradigm, which, unfortunately, we see all too often in the program planning world.

Think about how to find funders; there's actually a lot of research that goes into it. It's really important to know about and learn about potential funders. More than just what they put out their RFP, but to spend some time on their websites looking at other programs they've funded, talking to people how they work, what their area of interests are. Learning about a wide range of potential funders is probably the first step in thinking about how we're going to find funders for our particular programs that we're planning.

We're going to be looking at both our geographic community, and thinking about who the funders are in our geographic community, but also really wanting to tailor our pitch to a specific funder.
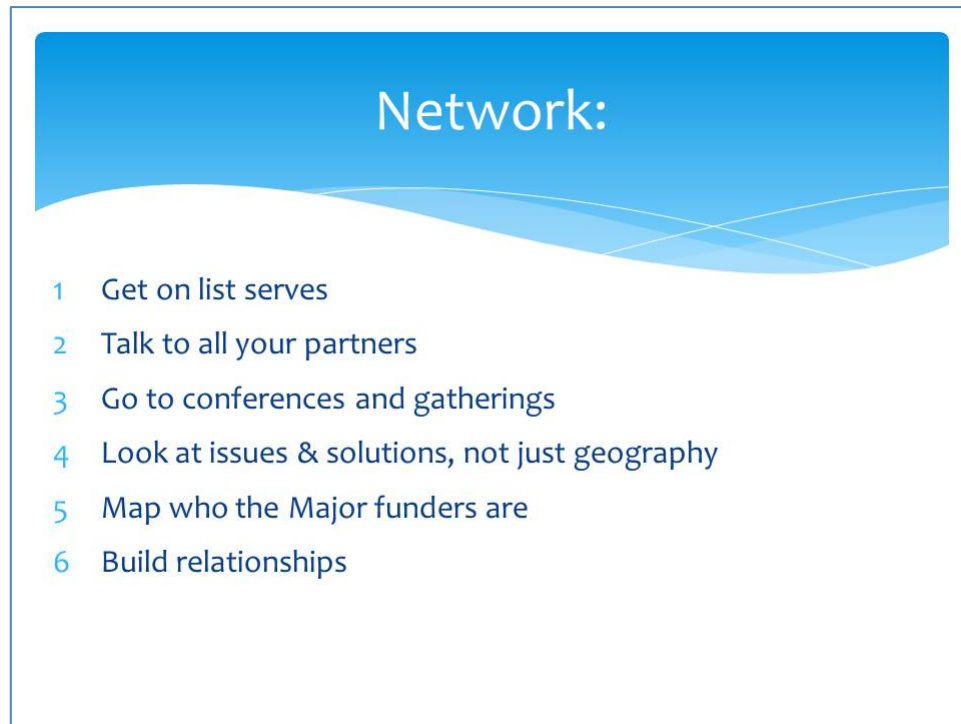
Networking is obviously a really important piece of identifying potential funders, so thinking about list serves, whether it's list serves for our organizations, list serves in a larger community, list serves around issues. Talking to all of our partners, people who we know are doing similar work, and thinking about who funds them and the work that they do can be helpful to identify potential funders as well. Obviously going to conferences and gatherings is a really important place that we can share learning and knowledge in the field, but it's also a place that we can network and consider potentially exploring new funding opportunities.

It's helpful to think about the problem or the issue or the type of solution, not jut the geography. It's not just who funds in our region, but who is it who's really setting the bar for this field. Who's doing really innovative work? Who's funding innovative work around obesity prevention or diabetes prevention or environmental changes for public health problems? Really thinking about both the issues and the solutions, not just the geography, in terms of who our potential funders might be. Sometimes it's helpful just to map out who the major funders are in a particular given field.

Whether or not we are in a position to be able to apply for funding from them at this point in time. It's helpful to know who the major players are and it can actually help us to think strategically about the funding we might aim for in a long term way, even is it's not something that we're going to aim for immediately.

Relationships, relationships, relationships, you can never underestimate how important those relationships are. It's not just that the relationship is about getting us information about who the

funders are, but building those relationships and bridging those relationships opens many, many doors for potential new programs that we might be involved in planning.

As we move through the next couple of modules, I'm going to ask you to spend sometime on the School Public Heath Library website, looking at their grant and research information. Potential explore the Foundation Center website or some other online resources about locating and identifying funders. Then you're actually going to need to identify some potential funders for your community project. You may already have ideas about that based on the organization you're working with and their current or previous or other work. You also want to look at what the bigger picture of funding opportunities would be, and then identify some funders that might be a potentially good fit. In the next module we're going to hear from funders about what they think is important in the program planning process. Then we'll talk about tailoring messages to funders through things like letters on intent and elevator speeches.