

Six steps to a good application



You have developed an idea for funding and even found the funding programmes to apply for. Now all that is left is to figure out what the funder wants from you. While some funders may vary in their requirements, our experience has shown that there are six steps you can take to develop a good application.

Before we start – what is a project?

By project we mean the project, programme, initiative, group or work for which you want funding from us.

Step 1 - Be clear about the difference you want to make

Funders want their grants to make a difference to the lives of people.

Therefore it is not simply enough to talk about the people that you will work with and the services you will provide. You also need to show the difference that your project will make to the people you plan to benefit.

When developing your application, think carefully about what you want people to take or gain from your project.

You may also find it helpful to think about what these changes would look like if they were achieved.

The changes your project will make are often referred to as outcomes. When developing your outcomes there are some steps you can take to make them as strong as possible. Make sure that they are specific. They should relate to the aims of the project and the people that the project has been designed for. Your outcomes should be measurable, so that is possible to gauge their impact. Good outcomes are also both achievable and realistic – they must be possible to bring about. It is also

important to set time-scales for your outcomes to be completed by. Some outcomes can be achieved on a monthly or yearly basis, whilst others may come about on a one-off date.

To help you define your outcomes, you should read our guide “Explaining the difference your project makes”, which is available from our website.

Step 2 - Establish a strong and clear need for your project

Funders need to see that there is a specific need for your project, and that the need can be demonstrated. It is useful to think about three issues:

1. What is the need that your project will address?

This may be a lack of facilities or specific opportunities in an area, or a demand for a service that is not being met

2. How will/have you identified this need?

This could be through research, through evaluation of current services, or through direct consultation with people.

3. How will your project address this need?

For example, have you consulted with the group of people the project is aimed at to ensure that it is tailored to their needs? Have similar projects in other areas of the UK been successful? Are you using a tried and tested method of delivering the project, or do you have a new approach?

Your evidence of need should relate directly to your proposed project, and should be in proportion to the size and scale of your project.

THESE ARE FACTS

Step 3 - Plan your project accurately.

Funders like to see that you have thought practically about how your project will be delivered. You must clearly outline the activities and services you will provide in order to achieve your projects aims.

Your application should show:

- ▶ What you are going to do.
- ▶ How you are going to do it – including the resources you need to do it.
- ▶ When you will do each thing you need to do.
- ▶ Who will be responsible – both for individual activities and for the overall management of the project.
- ▶ How you will know you have done it.

Step 4 - Cost your project accurately

In addition to planning the activities you will carry out, we will also expect to see that you have carefully costed them.

You will be expected to provide a detailed breakdown of how much you need for each service or activity, and also how you arrived at these amounts.

For example, if you wish to buy IT or office equipment, it is advisable to provide quotes and estimates to back those amounts up. Similarly, if you want funding for salaries, provide us with the salary scales used to calculate the amount.

Step 5 - Manage your project well

All funders like to see that projects (and money) will be managed sensibly. Therefore it is important to demonstrate that your project will be managed well.

You should be able to demonstrate that the people involved in your management committee have the skills and experience required to deliver your proposed activities. It is always important to demonstrate that there are sound procedures in place (and in use) regarding the election of your committee and the conducting of meetings.

It is also important to show that there are sound procedures in place for handling your group's finances.

If you plan on employing staff, you will also need to show sound employment procedures, taking into account equal opportunities and other relevant legislation.

Step 6 – Develop a plan to sustain your project

Funders provide grants for fixed term periods, and their priorities change. If you are awarded funding there is no guarantee that this will continue indefinitely.

It is wise to think about how you can make your project sustainable in the long term. Sustainability can cover a number of areas. The most obvious one is financial sustainability. Once the grant you are applying for has ended, how will the project be financed? Will you look for other funders? If so, who, and how? Do you have any plans to generate your own income?

Sustainability can also be gauged in terms of the impact your work will have. Do you plan on having your project or service mainstreamed? Will you develop links with other organisations in order to ensure the impact of your work is incorporated in to other services or systems? Will your work complement national or local government priorities?

If you do not plan on continuing your project, do you have an effective exit strategy? Have you thought about the impact on your service users? What other services or projects exist in the area? Similarly, what sort of impact will it have on other organisations and service providers?

Your application should tell us who in your organisation is responsible for planning the future sustainability of the project. You should demonstrate that you have a plan in place with clear timescales, review points and measures of success.

Finally...

You can contact your local Council for Voluntary Services (CVS) or local authority funding officer, for advice and guidance on a range of issues when planning your project. Details of these organisations are available from the applicant help area on our website www.biglotteryfund.org.uk