

MAKING A FUNDING APPLICATION

There is more to raising money from trusts and companies than just writing to every address you can find. The following information should make you think about what actions you can take to improve your success rate in applying for money.

Is your group well run?

Groups which are generally 'well run' tend to be more successful in their fundraising. Funders have more confidence that properly-managed organisations can use a grant from them effectively. Companies in particular like to be associated with organisations that are businesslike in their approach.

- Can your organisation's management and financial structures cope with any grant that you may receive?
- Do you have the support of your management committee to make an application to funders?
- Is your organisation a registered charity?
- Is your registered charity number on your headed paper?
- Does it have accounts that can show the income and expenditure of your organisation?
- Is there a business plan in existence for your organisation?
- Does it have clear aims and objectives for the next 3 to 5 years?
- Does it have a budget? How can you tell that you really need this money?

Why do you need the money?

Funders receive a great number of applications. Many of them, however, do not explain or prove the need for the work that they want to do. You may need money to carry out a project, but why is that project necessary?

- Do you have evidence that there is a need for your project?
- Have you explained clearly what the issue is?
- Can you supply facts and figures to the funder showing what level of demand exists?
- How many people/groups have you assisted in previous years?
- How many extra people will you be able to assist if you receive a grant?

Are you asking for the right amount?

- Have you costed out your project thoroughly?
- If you are going to employ staff, are they going to be paid according to the work and responsibility that they will have?
- Have you included National Insurance, pension, travel and management costs etc?
- If you are seeking support for large capital items, do you have at least two estimates to include with your application?

Know the funder

It is crucial to find out as much information about a funder **before** making an application. It will be useful to find out the following information, either from the various trust guides or, if possible, from the funder direct:

- Do they have a set of guidelines and/or application forms available? What information do they require in an application, eg budgets, job descriptions, a business plan?
- How much is normally given for each grant, and how much is given each year? Would they tend to give the amount you are asking for?
- When is the next deadline for applications? When will you know the decision? Is that soon enough for your project?
- Do they prefer to fund capital or revenue projects?
- Do they fund your type of project? Will the funder be prepared to fund these costs?
- Do you fit their criteria or will it be a waste of your time, and theirs, applying?

In some cases, funders are happy to discuss your proposed application informally over the phone before you present it. This can normally clear up any questions you might have and allow you to assess whether it is worth putting in the application. **But be careful!** Some funders don't like any informal phone calls, so read any guidelines first.

Putting everything on paper

There tend to be three types of funder:

- those which have application forms
- those who request lots of written information (but have no form)
- those who only require a short application in the form of a letter

There are also a great number of funders that can fall into two or more of the above categories. Therefore, writing a good application that includes the information that you want the funder to know, whilst also including the information that they require, takes time to achieve. Don't expect your first draft to be the final copy.

Useful tips

- Take photocopies of the application form **before** trying to answer any of the questions. Find time to sit down and read each question carefully. Use your photocopies to plan your answers and only fill in the original when you, and your management committee, are happy with it. Preferably type your application, but if this is not possible, complete in capitals using black ink. Stay away from jargon and difficult-to-read fonts.
- If possible, address your application to a particular person, rather than just the organisation or a named post, eg The Secretary.
- Explain clearly the project and its aims. Does it have a name? Is it a new project or has it been running for a number of years? Some funders will not understand what some groups do, so you might want to include a basic introduction to your organisation's work.
- Have you shown how professional your group is? What awards have you won?
- How many people do you assist? How many staff and volunteers do you have? Are there any users on your management committee?
- Give an idea of what other sources of funding you have, and what other amounts of money your group has managed effectively. Many funders do not like to be the sole supporter of any one group for fear of them becoming too reliant on that funding. Many prefer to help a group that has a number of supporters.
- Try not to tell a funder that without their funding, the project would fail. Having a positive attitude about your project and incorporating that into your application will make it a more attractive proposition.
- Why should they fund you? Point out how your project fits within their criteria.
- State how you will know that you have achieved the aim of your project. How will you monitor and evaluate the project so that you can show the funder value for money?
- Once you have written two or three applications, you will find that some information can be recycled for future applications, with only a few adjustments. It is also worth learning how to use mail merge on your computer, so that you can personalise applications quickly.
- Keep the application short and to the point. It is very easy to write something about your work, but many people will tend to repeat themselves, and include irrelevant information. Only the largest funders have any paid staff able to read applications in full, and even then they will not always have time to read the accompanying information in detail.
- If there are no application forms and no guidance on what information is required, keep the main application to about two sides of A4, less if possible.
- If the project's financial details are complex, summarise them in the main part of the application, and enclose the full breakdown as an appendix.

Before posting your application

- Get somebody who knows very little about the application, and your organisation, to read it and see if it makes sense to them. Check for any spelling and grammatical mistakes as well!
- Have you included the details of your organisation's contact person? Would a covering letter from the Chair of your organisation be appropriate?
- Have you included all the necessary supporting information, eg annual report, accounts, publicity material, etc?
- Are you sending too much information for that size of funder? Do they **require** all the information you want them to have?
- Finally, take a photocopy for your records. This will help if the funder asks questions about your application. It will also save you time when writing another funding application. You won't have to start from scratch.

Always say thank you to a funder

- If they don't give you money this time, they might next time!

And last but not least:

**Contact CVS - Mid & North Beds
on 01234 354366
for any help you may require in making
a successful funding application**