

Introduction to Writing Small Grant Funding Applications

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This pack has been designed to help you prepare for and write applications for small grants to give you the best chance of success.

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Becoming grant-ready

Being prepared for grant
applications

Becoming grant-ready

Most funders will expect that you have all or some of the following in place:

Community or Business Bank Account

- Most community funders will only deposit awards into a community or business bank account and not into an individual or personal account
- The bank account must be in the name of the applying organisation or business

Governing Documents & Financial Accounts

- This is a set of rules outlining your name, purpose and how your organisation will operate
- Some funders require you to have a committee or board with at least two unrelated members
- Have a set of accounts, or a breakdown of the income and expenditure, for the past 12 months available

A plan for your project idea

- What is it that you want to deliver?
- Who is your target audience?
- Why is your project needed?
- Where and when will you deliver your project?

Insurances and Policies

- Most funders will want to know that you have the appropriate insurances in place, especially if you're planning to work with members of the public face to face
- Having a risk assessment and a safeguarding policy in place is appealing to funders. For some funders it is a requirement

Becoming Grant Ready: 'For-Profit' businesses and Sole Traders

Here are some tips of how you can become funder ready:

- Whilst there are some funding opportunities for profit-gaining businesses and sole traders, it is limited. By implementing and embracing [Corporate Social Responsibility \(CSR\) strategies](#), such as community engagement, you are more likely to attract socially accountable investors and funders
- Maintain links with key community organisations. Offer your services or any donations that you can such as taster sessions or promotional freebies at an event to support local community initiatives
- Make sure your website and social media sites are up-to-date to market your organisation. Share your community initiatives on these platforms as well as testimonials from people who already access your provision. Most funders will visit these sites to gather their intelligence on your organisation
- If you report on Companies House make sure your accounts are up-to-date

Your place in the local community

- Do you have good knowledge of the local area that you want to deliver your project in? Are you familiar with its demographics, its assets, key statistics, local groups?
- Do you signpost to or partner with other organisations in the area where interests are similar? This demonstrates good collaboration
- Have you made contact with key people in the community?
- Do you know what local networks or local groups are available in the area you want to deliver in?
- Do you have good links with other sectors in your local area and do they know about your organisation/provision?
- Have you got a clear idea of who your services are aimed at?
- Do service users know about your service?
- Do you have a range of marketing techniques that you use to get the word out?

The language of grants

Understanding the key words used in grants programmes

The language of grant applications

Here are some of the keywords that you may come across when you are exploring a funding opportunity:

- **Beneficiaries** – The people, or purposes, your project aims to work with or support
- **Budget** – A detailed breakdown of how much everything will cost
- **Capital Cost** – money for one-off purchases (e.g. equipment, building costs, materials)
- **Core Costs** – The money required for day to day costs of an organisation, including administration and management costs
- **Eligibility** – Under the funder's rules, the definition of who can apply and what for; anything ineligible cannot be funded
- **Funders Criteria** – An explanation of what the funder will fund
- **Outcomes** – The changes or benefits or 'difference' that happens for the user as a result of the organisation or project's activities
- **Sustainability** – Keeping your project or group going after funding finishes

Evidencing need for your project

How to demonstrate
demand for your provision

Evidencing the need for your project

Gathering feedback from your audience

Most funders want to see how the potential users of your service have been involved in developing your project and how their views or feedback have helped to shape it.

Here are some ways that you can gather feedback from your potential service users:



Surveys, questionnaires or interviews (telephone, online, post)



Focus groups or Informal discussions



Consultation events



Feedback, stories or testimonials

Evidencing the need for your project

Funders will also look for accurate data to backup your project proposal. Here are some types of evidence that you can collect:



Statistical information in relation to the funders criteria or targeted audience i.e. population data and the breakdown of your local area in terms of demographics



Local research. This might include things like the lack of local facilities or services in the area, petitions or campaigns, newspaper articles or local authority information



Information from local, regional and national government strategies



Make sure that your project is unique and that it identifies gaps in services in your area



Know your community, make sure you are not duplicating an already existing project/activity in the area



Partners and collaborations – Having a good working relationship with other groups and providers strengthens your grant application

Preparing your application

Planning to write your application form

Preparing to write your application

You'll be much more likely to write successful applications if you plan your activities well before you apply for funding. Here are some tips on how you could prepare yourself to write your application:

Funding criteria

- Read the eligibility criteria carefully and check that your project meets it
- Read the Guidance Notes carefully
- Make sure your project meets the funder's criteria and priorities
- Take note of the key details such as the amount of funding you can apply for and the closing date and time

Research the funders

- Visit the funders website
- Look for testimonials or case studies from other organisations that they've funded previously
- Do your mission and aims align with the funder?
- Can you find the applicant success rate in the funding round?
- Is it the right time to apply?

Writing with purpose

- Have a clear understanding of your project & how much funding you'll need
- Plan the structure of your writing and what detail you'll include in your application before writing it
- Allocate yourself plenty of time to write your application and ask someone else to proofread it

Budget clarity

- Detail gives confidence so clearly break your budget down as much as possible
- Only ask for what you need
- Explain why you need the items you are requesting and how they will be used in your project

Common questions

Anticipating what questions are
found in grant applications

Common questions/sections in a community funding application form

- **Eligibility check:** Complete any checks before you apply.
- **Start and end date of project:** dates should be compliant with what the funder has stipulated, e.g. the minimum and maximum delivery time
- **Main contact and secondary contact details:** both of these contacts should be involved with and accountable for the project and grant
- **Organisation details:** These usually include the address, phone number, type of organisation and registration number
- **Social Media Link / website address:** By providing this information the funder can do their own research on your organisation
- **Sustainability of the project / projects next steps:** Demonstrate how you propose to keep your project or group going after the funding finishes
- **Partnerships/Collaborations:** will you be working alongside another organisation to make the project happen and who have had the same amount of involvement or input into the project proposal and play an important or integral role in the project

Common Questions/Sections in a community funding application form

- **Monitoring and evaluation:** Explain how you will measure impact, including what tools or methods you will use to gather the information. Ensure that this is relevant to the type of grant you are applying for
- **Marketing and promotion:** Consider whether you're utilising the right or most effective methods to promote your project
- **Budget breakdown:** Be clear and break down the budget as much as possible.
- **Other funding/sources of income for the project (including in-kind):** If you have match funding make sure you declare this. You can also mention your in-kind contribution and provide an estimated sum of how much that would be in monetary terms
- **Declaration:** Be sure to declare any conflict of interest
- **GDPR/Data Protection statement:** A generic standard statement made by the funder in relation to their data protection policies which you will usually tick or sign for. Ensure that you read this carefully

Structuring your application

Who will you deliver to and who will deliver it?

- Be specific about your target audience/s
- Include the number of direct and indirect beneficiaries
- Describe if you'll be targeting people from protected characteristics
- Will there be volunteers or sessional workers supporting your project

What are you planning to do with your project?

- Activities you'll be delivering and how you'll do that
- Is it a new or existing project?
- The changes your project will bring in your community/for your beneficiaries

Where will the project be delivered?

- Provide details of the venue(s) that you'll be delivering from and which area it is in
- If your project will be delivered in multiple venues highlight this
- Ensure that the project is being delivered in the area(s) that the funders have highlighted as a priority

Structuring your application

When will the project be delivered?

- Include a start and end date
- Tell the funders what day(s) and time(s) you propose to deliver
- Describe how many sessions you'll deliver and over how many weeks
- Tell the funder how long each session will be

Why is the project needed?

- Provide detail of how you gathered feedback from the target audience and the method that used to collect this feedback
- Indicate where you have spoken to key people or partners in the area
- Provide relevant key facts, findings and statistics about the local area

How are you the best organisation to deliver?

- Explain who you are
- Describe your organisation's main purpose and objectives
- Indicate what relevant qualifications you have to deliver the session
- Indicate that you hold the right insurance to deliver public facing activities
- Highlight your USPs to the funder and explain why you are best placed to deliver

Top Tips for writing your content

- **Refer to your governing document/constitution** when introducing your organisation
- **Build your credibility** and highlight your strengths
- **Be specific about the problem** and provide evidence that your work is needed
- **Be very specific about what you will do** and how you will do it
- **Be clear, precise, and positive** and use short sentences, avoiding acronyms and jargon
- **Take care to read each question** carefully before answering it
- **If there's a word count** stick to it
- **Always check the deadline** and other key details
- **Give yourself enough time** to do a bit of extra research
- **Link your project** as closely as you can to the funder's priorities and keep their guidelines and criteria in mind
- **Only include information** and attachments that have been requested by the funder
- **If the form is online**, write your answers in another document that you can keep and refer back to.
- **Check the funders position on using Artificial Intelligence (AI)**. Whilst AI is welcomed by many funders be mindful that your responses aren't generic and unrealistic. Funders still want to see authenticity
- **Include all the information** asked from you and avoid missing out questions
- **Ask somebody else** to check your form

Common reasons for rejection

Eligibility

- Organisation not in the required area
- Not the right structure or level of governance
- Project seems unrealistic for the size of the organisation
- The necessary requirements are not in place
- Not enough information about the organisation
- Not recommended by other funders
- Not demonstrating community need
- Budget requested not eligible

Application Form

- Project isn't clear or aim of the project isn't evident
- Application doesn't follow directions, e.g. word count
- Missing information or questions unanswered
- Project period doesn't match funder's grant cycle
- Budget isn't clear, correct or detailed enough
- Items requested are not reflected in your project
- Organisation didn't meet reporting requirements from previous grants

Other

- Not met the priorities
- Provision isn't evidence led
- Project could cause harm or conflict
- Duplication of activity detected
- Other funders have aired concerns
- Budget doesn't reflect the project or isn't cost effective
- Not enough evidence of sustainability
- Competition is tough and grant funding is limited

Unsuccessful applications

What to do when an application is unsuccessful

What to do when an application is unsuccessful

We do understand it can be disheartening when an application is rejected but don't take it personal, it's almost never a reflection on you or your organisation, nor is it a reflection on your project idea.

Here are some tips on what to do if your application is unsuccessful:

- Leave it for a few days and then revisit it
- Don't burn bridges with the funder or its associates
- Ask for feedback from the funder if they haven't provided it
- Review what could be amended or implemented, in line with the feedback
- Look at other funding streams that may be available
- Ask if you can apply again after amending the form and implementing the feedback
- Request an appeal if you feel that the decision was incorrect

Finding funding

Where to find sources of
community funding

Finding Community Funding

Funding opportunity sources

Here are some website addresses where you can find funding opportunities:

[Funds Online](#)

[GRANTfinder](#)

[My Funding Central](#)

[Grants Online](#)

[Charity Excellence](#)

[360 Grant Giving](#)

Your local Council for Voluntary Services