

Top Tips: on writing a good funding bid

1. General guidance

- Target your funder carefully. Ensure that the funder's aims and objectives and eligibility criteria fit with your bid. You will be more successful if you find the right funder whose aims and objectives fit with your project rather than tweaking your project to fit the funders aims.
- Completing your application will probably take longer than you imagined. Some grant programmes are open only once a year so you will need to start planning several months in advance.
- Be realistic. It may be better to grow slowly and develop in the direction you want rather than to go all out at once for what you might want to achieve.
- Carefully read the funder's application form and their guidelines on how to apply and also establish what other information they need. You must remember that there is a lot of competition in applying for funding, so your application needs to be as good as possible.
- Applications need to be easy to read and concise. It is worth remembering that the person assessing your application will have many applications to read and will have little time to read reams and reams of extra paper.
- Funding organisations have finite resources and decisions will reflect an assessment of the relative merits of different applications, the overall balance of demand and the funds available.

- A good way of working out what to say is to put yourself in the funder's shoes. Imagine you are the funder – one of the trustees or a member of the grants panel. What would you want to know?
- A clear summary early on gives the impression you know what you're doing, you're business-like and will be able to achieve what you set out to do.
- Avoid the use of jargon, acronyms and technical terms as far as possible.
- If your application/bid is unsuccessful, ask for feedback so that you can avoid any mistakes or shortcomings next time.
- Keep notes of which bodies you have approached, when you approached them and what the result was.

2. Ten things funders look for (according to NCVO)

1. **Evidence of need.** Funders want projects that meet a genuine need and you need to have evidence of that need and show how their money will help to improve things.
2. **Clarity of purpose.** Ensure your aims are clearly described. What are your goals and how will you achieve them? Ensure that your application directly relates to the funders own priorities. Provide a clear project plan outlining what and how you will deliver, including how you will monitor and evaluate your project.
3. **Measuring success.** How will you measure the impact of your work and what constitutes a positive outcome?
4. **A realistic budget.** Budgets should be realistic, transparent and take into account any costs that may be incurred in the course of your project or work. Ensure that you are delivering value for money and that your figures add up.
5. **Competence.** Proving that you can deliver is crucial. Ensure that your goals are realistic and demonstrate competence by showing what you have achieved in the past.
6. **Acknowledgement of potential problems.** Acknowledging where the risks lie and what you have done to mitigate them shows that you have thought through what you are planning.
7. **Vision.** This is an opportunity to communicate the distinctiveness of your work and your values, passion, success and potential. Why should they choose to fund you against other bids?

8. **Flexibility.** If you operate in a particularly competitive area, don't underestimate the virtues of potential collaboration. Funders may be impressed if you demonstrate that you are willing to consider working in partnership with others in order to deliver best value.
9. **An exit strategy.** If you make no mention of what you will do when their money runs out, funders will assume either that you haven't thought about it or that your default exit strategy is to come back and ask for more. Neither of these options will impress potential funders.
10. **Attention to detail.** Ensure that all questions are answered and all necessary documentation is enclosed. The final application should be free from spelling and grammatical errors and you should ensure that you meet the deadline.

3. Guidance on budgets

The funder needs to know that the money will be spent efficiently and that your group can handle money properly.

They will want to see a proper budget and be reassured by it.

The budget must be:

- Clear
- Comprehensive
- Arithmetically correct
- Realistic
- Not over inflated
- Show other funders involved (including in-kind support)
- Appropriate

Keep your budget working notes in case the potential funders ask questions on how you came up with the figures.

4. Checklist

Once you have completed your funding bid you should look at it anew in a critical manner.

It is also a good idea to ask someone else who has not been involved with writing the application to check through it before its final submission. HAMSVA offers this service to any member group at no extra cost.

The following is a list of questions that you should ask yourself as you read through the application.

The grant making body:

Are they the appropriate donor?

Do their aims and objectives align with your application? (If not, it may make more sense to find a more suitable funder)

Are you asking for an appropriate amount? (What size grants do they make?)

Is the timing right? (When do they need the application by? When do you need the funding by?)

The application/bid:

Is it addressed to the right person/place? (check that the address where the application has to be sent has not changed)

Is the title of the funding body and all names of the people within it correctly spelt?

Is the application too long or too short? (check guidelines given)

Is the application too glossy / scruffy? (too glossy and it may indicate that you do not make the best use of your funds, too scruffy may indicate lack of attention to detail and unprofessional)

Does the application contain jargon, acronyms or technical terms? (avoid these wherever possible)

Have you ensured that the application is written in clear plain English?

Is it clear who you are and what you do?

Is your group's legal status clear?

Is it clear what the money is for? (What will it buy? Who will benefit?)

Have you satisfied any request for information on how you will evaluate the outcome?

Are there details of other fund-raising activities?

Does the application state who the funder can contact for further details or clarification?

Is all necessary accompanying material attached to the application?

Has too much accompanying material been attached?

(Do not add anything that is not required. Assessors will not have the time nor the patience to look at unnecessary additional information. Remember, they are looking at whether the information you provide meets the necessary criteria.)

Has a generally good impression been given of your group? (business-like or well-meaning but woolly?)

5. Finally...

If your funding bid is successful remember to thank your funder.

You could send them your annual report or any press cuttings associated with the project they have funded.

You could even invite them to come and see what you do.

It is important to build up a relationship with funders so anything that can be done to improve communication is important.

For further information please contact your local community co-ordinator:
communitymidsussex@msva.org.uk