

Moving on
from small
grants

Briefing Paper

Where do we want to go? How will we get there?

Start with an exercise...

Draw out the structure of your organisation at the moment. So all organisations should have a box at the top saying "Board" or "Management Committee". The draw lines that show how your organisation is currently run—you may have a line from Management Committee to treasurer etc.

Once you have done that, decide where you want your organisation to be in three years time. Then draw your ideal organisational structure to meet that ideal—you should still have "Board" at the top, but then draw how you would like to have developed in three years' time.

Next—the big question—where and how will you get the money to fund your organisation. Hopefully this briefing paper will give you some ideas—but if you have a plan of where you want to be in three years, you should be able to:

- Consider the time scales for moving towards your three year plan
- Start to decide who in your organisation should have responsibility for researching, writing applications, and co-ordinating each bit of the project

Looking for funders...

This will take time, energy, a computer with internet access, a phone, some stamps, and a lot of perseverance!

Some websites to start with:

Access Funds - www.access-funds.co.uk— some excellent sections and advice, as well of details of some funders. Free trial for one week, £50 annual subscription

UK Fundraising-www.fundraising.co.uk—free website with free e-news letter, with Forums to ask questions, and news about different funding streams

Charities Information Bureau-www.cibfunding.org.uk—free website with guides to different types of funders, and loads of free advice

J4b PLC-www.j4b.co.uk free website, extremely up to date information on available streams, and approaching deadlines

RSA Rnvironment awards-www.environmentawards.net, list of hundreds of awards for environmental projects (in the widest possible sense!)

Government Funding-www.governmentfunding.org.uk, grants available from most of the government departments that give them

The Big Lottery Fund-www.biglotteryfund.org is the main source of lottery funding for community and voluntary organisations

GrantFinder-www.grantfinder.co.uk is a subscription website, but should be available free of charge through your Local Authority Economic Development Department

Funder Finder-www.funderfinder.org.uk is a subscription website but should be available free of charge at your local CVS

Grants Online-www.grantsonline.org.uk is a subscription website but with a free trail period

Practical Fundraising Association-www.companysolutions.biz offers free practical advice, newsletters and discussion forums, and you can join the association for extra perks.

So you've found some potential funders—but how do you go about approaching them? Here are some tips for writing an application that will wow the funder

Straighten up and apply right

Basic questions that need to have clear answers in your application:

1. Who are this lot and can I trust them?

This is where you need to have kept good records of what you achieved with your small grants—both numbers of people who accessed your services and events you put on, AND some way of recording your “soft outcomes” - how it changed people's lives.

2. Who are their users and what is their problem?

What is the need you are trying to meet, and do you have any evidence that it is a real need—try statistics if you can get hold of them, or other higher level strategy documents

3. Why is this important?

Remember the funder is probably not familiar with your area of work—so show them why it is important

4. What do they want to do to make life better for their users?

How will what you do improve the problem you have identified?

5. How do I know that it will work?

What activities will you undertake, and how will they bring about the results you described?

6. How much will it cost?

Be clear—the funder should be able to see the total cost of the project very clearly from your application (not just the amount you want from them)

7. Where are they getting the money from?

Is their evidence of a well thought through fundraising strategy for your project?

8. How much do they want from us?

An amount they can give—NOT “as much as you can afford”.

9. Why does this apply to us?

How does this fit in with the funders guidelines and goals, or if it is a corporate sponsor, what is in it for them if they contribute?

10. If the project is longer term, how will it continue?

Address the “year after the grant” problem—don't ignore it.

Some current “policy” issues that lie behind most funders' guidelines:

Always good to show you are addressing these

- **Disadvantage**—including the needs of groups that suffer particular discrimination or exclusion
- **Improving people's skills**—including IT, finances, inter-personal (remember, you may be doing this even though it is not the main aim of your project)
- **Access**—including access to arts, sport and health activities for those who don't usually utilise them
- **Sustainability**—is their potential for this project to trade to make money, or contract with local government in the future?
- **Geographical areas that are missing out**—check out geographical areas already identified in strategies such as Neighbourhood Renewal, New Deal for Communities, or Objective One Pathways areas
- **User involvement**—have those you are seeking to benefit been consulted about the best services for their needs? Does your project show this?

Having the right style

4 golden rules:

1. **You cannot tell them everything—you haven't got time, and they don't really care so...**
2. **Select the points that this donor is going to be most interested in-read their guidelines carefully**
3. **In general, don't ask funders to support "your organisation"...**
4. **Ask them to support the people you help or the work that you do**

Points on style:

Use the active rather than the passive tense

"We work closely with..." rather than "a partnership was formed between us and..."

Sentence length

Long sentences can be a real problem for readers because when the end eventually arrives, and it can be a long time in coming, they may have forgotten the beginning, especially when it contains many different ideas or many branches of a main idea, and even if they haven't they will lose interest and stop.

But short sentences can get on your nerves. Especially close together. It's too abrupt. No flow. Really annoying.

So vary the length to achieve balance—the average sentence length should be about 15 words.

Bullet points are a useful way to break up long sections of text

Be positive— too many applications are about "hopes" and "maybes"

Don't say

This project aims to
It is our hope that
If this project didn't happen

Do Say

We will
We expect to
This project will

Don't fill the application with gloom "If nothing is done this situation will get worse", rather say "we can make the situation much better"

Don't

- Shift fundraising responsibility—"if you know anyone else who might help" - this looks like you have no proper fundraising plan
- Make bland assertions "well attended" "massive increase" - use figures
- Assume knowledge "I am sure you are familiar with the problems of" - they may not be

Before you send it, think:

Which budget is the money coming from? Do they have money set aside for your region/ interest area? If so, make it clear that is what you are asking for.

What is their **grant range**? Have you asked for an amount they can give?

Is there any **connection** between you and them?

Does it look like a **circular**? If so, they probably won't even read it.

Criteria to aim for.....

The following are the criteria against which bids to what used to be the “Community Fund” were assessed against, but they are a very good guideline to what a lot of funders will be looking for:

The organisation is well managed and financially sound: have you kept good records of the money you have spent? Are your accounts externally examined? Can you show that you will be capable of handling a large amount of money well?

If awarded the grant the organisation would be able to manage the project: this shows the importance of monitoring any small grants you have had very carefully. Have you successfully managed anything before, and increased your capacity to deal with larger amounts through the process?

The project responds to a clearly defined need: can you statistically prove the need for your service, and show what local partners agree that it is required?

The project is additional to statutory services: if there is any way that the funder could think you might be duplicating a statutory service? If so, you must address why you are not in your application.

The project has clearly defined objectives and a thorough plan: is it clear how you will know that you have achieved what you say you will achieve?

The project budget is accurate and reasonable and is matched by realistic income projections.

The project will be monitored and evaluated against its objectives and the project plan reviewed accordingly: it is important you include a plan and a cost for monitoring in your bid and the ways you project could change if you found that to be necessary

The organisation reflects the diversity of the community and takes account of the community's needs in all of its' work: have you consulted with your service users and immediate community? Are people from all sections of the community involved in your organisation?

Beneficiaries are involved in all aspects of the project, where appropriate, and have full access to it: how are those who will actually use the service involved in its development? How will you make sure those who you wish to benefit will be those who actually access it?

Finally, do keep checking the Expanding Horizons website for details of events that are coming up to help your group, for ideas about best practice in projects, and let us know if there is anything good that your group has achieved that you want to let us know about.

Especially have a look at the “What's new –Project Support” section for regular updates of anything we have come across that might be useful to voluntary groups.



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