

Essential Guide to Fundraising

INTRODUCTION

These guidelines are intended to be of assistance with any application to a funder. It is understood, however that requirements will vary and funder expectations and procedures will differ: for example, many Trusts and Foundations will not issue clear eligibility criteria, deadlines or an indication of the amount they will consider funding. Some will not say when an application is likely to be considered or provide feedback when an application is declined. Larger statutory sources of funding are likely to provide detailed guidelines and criteria that must be followed at all times, often with funder application forms completed online.

CHECK that you and your funder are a good match. Do you meet their eligibility criteria? Do you have to hand all the policies, evidence and data they need? Best to find a funder that meets your criteria rather than waste time trying to tweak your organisation to fit their criteria.

TIME. It always takes a long time to complete a good bid. Get details of deadlines and plan your bid writing cycle. Some grants open only once a year, so you need to plan months in advance. Keep a record and put dates in the diary.

BALANCE. It may be better to grow and develop your organisation rather than go all out for the ultimate goal. Similarly, a mixed stream of income is often preferable than relying on one donor.

BRIEF AND TO THE POINT. Read the guidelines properly, turn in a proofread copy using the correct forms. Remember that the funders will have more applications than they can grant, on average they will have 3 mins to consider your application. Applications that do not read well, do not answer the questions, inflate the budget or bend the criteria will be quickly spotted and eliminated.

TOP TIPS

- Put yourself in the funder's shoes. What do you need to see in the application?
- First impressions. A clear summary early on gives a good impression, that you are business like and will be able to achieve what you want to do.
- Avoid use of jargon, acronyms and technical terms as much as possible.
- If your application is unsuccessful, ask for feedback and take it into account for your next bid.
- Keep a record (a simple excel sheet is good) recording grants for which you may be eligible, deadlines, application submitted and results and any notes on how you came to the figures.

11 THINGS FUNDERS LOOK FOR (FROM NCVO)

1. **EVIDENCE OF NEED.** Use data from trusted sources. (e.g. East Sussex in Figures, Sussex Uncovered) Case studies, testimonials, short videos if appropriate, brief but creative ways of demonstrating what you do.
2. **INVOLVEMENT.** Are the people you want to help actively involved in managing your project as a member or as part of the management board?
3. **CLARITY OF PURPOSE.** Ensure your aims are clearly described and that they match the fund's criteria.
4. **MEASURING SUCCESS.** Describe clearly how you will monitor and evaluate your project. Focus on quantity and quality. What are the objective measures of success, what is the added value and how will you capture an individual's experience of being involved in your project.
5. **REALISTIC BUDGET.** Accurate, comprehensive, transparent and shows value for money. Double check that figures add up.
6. **COMPETENCE.** Show evidence that you have delivered in the past. Ensure that your goals are realistic.
7. **ANTICIPATION OF POTENTIAL PROBLEMS.** Acknowledging where the risks lie and what you have done to mitigate them, shows you have thought through what you are planning (Useful tool Force Field analysis).
8. **VISION.** Why are you special? Communicate the distinctiveness of your work and your values, passion, success and potential.
9. **FLEXIBILITY AND COLLABORATION.** Funders may be impressed if you demonstrate you are willing to work with others to deliver best value.
10. **EXIT STRATEGY.** If you omit this, funders will assume you have not made plans for the ending or continuation of the project.
11. **ATTENTION TO DETAIL.** Ensure that all the questions have been answered and all necessary documentation is enclosed. Final proofreading should catch the spelling, grammatical and typing errors. Many organisations and private individuals offer a proofreading service. 3VA offers this service for free.

IDENTIFYING POTENTIAL FUNDERS

Information about potential funders can be found in the following:

- East Sussex County Council:
 - **Funding News** – a monthly digest of Trusts and Foundations with summaries of their priorities and information about how to apply
 - **East Sussex4communities** – a searchable database of funders
- The National Council of Voluntary Organisations (NCVO)
 - **Funding Central** - a comprehensive database of potential funders (local and national)
- **Grantfinder** - a commercial database available on a subscription basis and can be made bespoke to the subscriber's requirements

CHECKLIST

Grant making Body	✓
Are they the appropriate donor?	
Do their aims and objectives align with your application?	
Are you asking for an appropriate amount? What size of grant do they make?	
Timing. When is the deadline for applications? When do you need the funding?	
The application/bid	
Is it addressed to the correct person/place?	
Is the title of the funding body/stream and all the names within it spelled correctly?	
Is the application too long/too short?	
Is it presented well? Not too slick/ not too amateurish	
Is the application free from assumptions/jargon, acronyms or technical terms?	
Is it written in clear, plain English?	
Is it clear who you are and what you do?	
Is the group's legal status clear?	
Is it clear what the money is for? (What will it buy? Who will benefit?)	
Have you set out how you will evaluate the outcomes?	
Are there details of other fundraising activities?	
Does the application state whom the funder can contact for further details or clarification?	
Is all the accompanying material attached to the application?	
Has too much accompanying material been attached? (Do not include anything that is not required.)	
Are enough copies provided?	
Is the final version stored securely?	
Has a generally good impression been given of your group?	

AND FINALLY...

If your funding bid is successful remember to thank them and ask for feedback.

Build up a relationship with funders by sending them press cuttings and other information. Invite them to see what you do.

For more resources, visit www.3va.org.uk.

You can also contact us at info@3va.org.uk or on 01323 639 373.