

FACT SHEET: Applying for grants

Applying for grant funding is an increasingly competitive process. Success rates can vary across grant giving organisations but on average only 1 in 5 applications are successful. It is therefore important to make sure you are applying for the right funds and that you give your application your best shot. Our [website](#) tells you about some of the grant giving organisations that might be of interest to your organisation. This factsheet aims to help you think about what you will need to do to write your bid.

First things first, are you ready?

Do you have a clear plan of what you would like to achieve? You should know what your aims and goals are and try to find funding that matches these. Knowing what you want to do is a better starting point than trying to create a project as a response to hearing about a funding opportunity.

Before you apply for grant funding there are a number of things you will need to have in place. The majority of funders will refuse applications from groups/organisations who do not have the following as a minimum:

- Formal governance in place (often known as a constitution);
- A bank account with two signatories who must not be related to each other;
- Regular meetings; and
- Some funders will only fund organisations with a proven track record (check their eligibility criteria to be certain)

In addition to this to increase your chances of success you should be able to answer the following questions:

- Do you know what you want to do over the next year or more? Applying for funding can take time, for some grants you can wait over 6 months between applying and receiving the funds, planning well ahead is wise
- Why are you doing it?
- Can you demonstrate a need for the project?
- Who will benefit from it?
- What will the outcomes of the project be?
- What size of grant are you capable of managing? If you are a very small group you might not have the capacity or structures to, for example, administer a European Social Fund grant. Consider the reporting requirements of the grant and apply for those that are appropriate.
- Will you need specific policies in place for this project? Do you already have them?
- Do you have the people in place in order to put your application together and then to manage the grant should you be successful?

Also think about why you are the best people to run this particular project, what are your strengths and skills that will make this project a success? Does your organisation have a unique selling point that will appeal to funders? Is there another organisation that you could work with to deliver this project?

Scoping your project and understanding local need

Research your project thoroughly. This will take time but will ensure you are developing a project

that is formed on local needs and wants. It will help you to identify the best way to carry out your project and will result in a better chance of long term success. An application with a well thought out project built on local needs, which is to be delivered in the way local people want, will stand out.

You may want to consider if there are any partnerships you could form. Many grant opportunities wish to see groups/organisations working with partners. This brings different skills and experiences to the project so try to get partners on board early in the scoping phase. Also consider what is already happening locally, if you plan to offer something similar is there really a need for an additional project or how would yours differ and complement other local initiatives?

Establishing need can be done through both the inclusion of data and engaging with the local community. Many funders will ask what consultation you have carried out with local people to form your project ideas, this is an important aspect of demonstrating local need. You can get the views of local people in a variety of ways, for example surveys, this could be face to face or perhaps postal, surveys could be left in a public building or you may be able to set up an online survey for free. Other methods include focus groups and talking to people at other local groups or events. In addition to this including statistical data gives funders a clear indication of the local picture, it will tell them about the local population, who they are, their economic status etc.

Understanding local need will help you to establish who your target audience will be for your project, you will need to be able to demonstrate what you know about them in your application, for example this could be their age, gender, disability, their needs or their geographic location.

Useful sources of data include:

- A variety of local facts and figures including census data, population characteristics, economic profile, health data and the indices of deprivation can be found on the council's [Facts and Figures](#) page
- Documents supporting the case for social action amongst young people are available at [#iwill](#)

Planning your project

When preparing to write your application you will need to know what you want to achieve and how you are going to achieve this. A good way to start to think about this is to consider the problems you are trying to address. This will help you to identify what causes the problem and what the effect of this problem is on your community. For example, the problem may be social isolation, this may be caused by a lack of facilities, nowhere to play safely and no opportunity for adults to meet. The symptoms of this problem could be adult health deteriorating through isolation, children not being occupied and becoming bored, lack of community spirit, vandalism and an increase in antisocial behaviour.

Once you know the problem you are trying to address, in this case social isolation, it will help you to identify your aims, these are the changes or benefits you are trying to achieve for your beneficiaries or the local environment, examples could include:

- To reduce social isolation in the older population
- To engage young people in social action
- To improve community cohesion and inter-generational relationships

Setting objectives

Once you know your aims you can start to think about the things that you can do to meet your aims and create the desired change, this is known as your objectives, examples could include;

- Running a weekly lunch club for older people
- Engaging activities with young people to identify social action priorities
- Setting up a workshop where people of all generations can do practical activities, for example woodwork, learning from each other's skills etc.

With your objectives identified you can work out your outputs, these are the activities that will take place and they measure your objectives, this will also help you to start budgeting, examples of outputs are:

Objective	Output
Running a weekly lunch club for older people	1 session of 3 hours per week for 52 weeks of the year
Engagement activities with young people to identify social action priorities	1 session per week of 2 hours for activities and engagement 1 session per week of 1 hour of direct social action
Setting up a workshop where people of all generations can do practical activities, for example woodwork, learning from each other's skills	Workshop open 3 mornings and 2 afternoons per week

Identifying outcomes and ongoing project monitoring

The end goal of your project will be to produce desired outcomes in your target audience, these are the changes or the effects on people as a result of taking part in your activities (objectives) and you will need to identify these in your bid. Examples could include:

- Older people have developed social relationships that extend beyond the lunch club
- Young people have increased community pride and actively take ownership of their community
- Young people have learnt new skills and all generations have a better understanding of each other and the value each brings to the community

Many funders will also ask you to explain how you are planning to evidence the outcomes of your project, doing this is important because it demonstrates to funders how successful your project has been. Check the grant guidance document, some funders will work with you to identify how you will monitor and evaluate your projects or the expectation may be that you will formulate this.

Monitoring allows you to explain what is happening in the project. You will need to decide how you are going to monitor your project, when, and what systems you will use to collect the information. Your funder may give guidance as to how regularly they want you to provide monitoring information.

You will also need to consider if you want to monitor your project more regularly in order to ensure you respond effectively if the project needs to adapt to meet your aims. When monitoring it's important that you establish your baseline, this is what the situation was at your starting point and it will help you to measure how far you have come. Your monitoring activity should allow you to demonstrate:

- Whether you are doing what you say you would do (if not there may be valid reasons for this but you should demonstrate what these reasons are and work with your funder to establish whether this is acceptable)
- What difference you are making

You can monitor your project using a variety of techniques, some may be carried out during day-to-day activities and others may require more thought and planning, for example:

- Your attendance register gives quantitative data on who attended when
- Questionnaires or evaluation forms, these may, for example, be used to rate the overall effectiveness of the project or you may seek to devise a wellbeing questionnaire at the beginning of the project to be recompleted by attendees at various points throughout the project
- Interviews with individuals or focus groups with multiple people
- Log of compliments and complaints received
- Observing and recording progress on an individual basis and where appropriate on a group basis

If you are successful it is important that you put systems in place to collect your monitoring information and ensure that it is accurately recorded.

Project evaluation

At the end of the project you will need to carry out an evaluation, this is different to monitoring as it seeks to explain why things have happened as opposed to simply explaining what is happening. It is an important tool as it allows you to celebrate successes alongside documenting and exploring what didn't go so well. Evaluating why something didn't work gives valuable insight into what you could do differently in the future and develop your ways of working. It is important information for many funders as it can be used to form the basis of their future funding activities. Evaluation involves analysing the data and evidence you have collected throughout your project.

Finally, once you have mapped out your aims, objectives, outputs, outcomes and monitoring requirements you will be able to start listing your inputs, these are the things that you will need to run the project. For example, you might need equipment, training, staff, office equipment, equipment to deliver the project, development of policies and procedures etc. Establishing your inputs will help you to prepare your budget.

Budgets

Most funders will expect you to include an accurate budget in your application, if there is a multiple stage approach to applications some funders may accept a rough budget in the first application stage but will expect a fully developed budget in your final application.

The budget will tell you how much your project is going to cost. Start by writing a list of everything you will need (your inputs), this should include things such as staff costs, volunteer expenses, room hire, insurances, stationary, travel costs, training, marketing materials, equipment, internet etc. Monitoring and evaluating your project in order to feedback to your funders may also require resources, such as staff time, stationary, consultation events etc.

Don't leave the budget to the last minute, this is an important part of the application, give yourself plenty of time to reflect on what you have included and consider what might be missing, if you underestimate you could end up with a shortfall in your budget and if you over estimate your project may not appeal to funders.

Base your budget on full cost recovery, this means recovering all costs associated with the project, both direct (cost of running the project) and indirect costs (also known as overheads – costs to the organisation in supporting the project to run, e.g. this may include management costs).

Once you have a full list of all the items you require to run your project establish how much each of these items will cost, ensure you have some time to research this so that costs are accurate. Where specialist support is required, for example in the case of building work you will need to seek quotes. You may be asked to submit copies of your quotes with your application, check the grant guidance to ensure you submit all the requested documentation. Remember, funders are inundated with requests and want to ensure that their money is well spent so if your budget is over estimated they may choose to give their money to another applicant. Your budget will need to detail the cost over the lifetime of the project so where costs are weekly or monthly multiply these to get your budget over the entire length of the project. Budgets do not have to appear complex, most funders will supply their own template, if they don't a simple template such as this should suffice;

Item	Cost	Total amount
Room hire	£50 per session for 40 sessions per year	£2,000
Volunteer training	£250 x5 volunteers	£1,250
Laptops	£200 x2 laptops	£400
	Total	£3,650

Some funders will ask for “match funding”, this is an element of funding they expect you to contribute to the project, i.e. they will not fund 100% of the project costs. You may be able to achieve match funding from your own budget, from fundraising or perhaps another successful bid. Some funders may also accept funding ‘in-kind’ this is something that you can offer to the project that won't require resources from the projects budget, for example this could be use of a room, use of equipment or staff time. You will need to attach a cash value to in-kind funding in order to be able to demonstrate the value of this contribution. Read the grant guidance to identify what level of match funding is required if at all and consider whether you can meet this. Where there are multiple stages to the application process you may not need to have your match funding confirmed in your initial application but this may be expected by the time you submit your final application.

Writing the application

- ALWAYS read the guidance, this will tell you exactly what the funding body are looking for and will help you to decide whether this is the right grant for you
- Plan and prepare! Get a copy of the application form as early as you can, this will help you to understand what the funding body want to know. If the form is online many funders will offer a paper version, download this so that you can prepare your answers
- Give yourself plenty of time to prepare your answers, consider each answer and ensure your response is clear and covers what they are asking
- If you are working in a partnership make sure you are communicating well about who is responsible for completing each piece of work
- The funder doesn't know what you already do so consider whether anything you are saying needs further explanation. Your application must clearly describe your proposal so that someone with no knowledge of it understands what you are trying to achieve.
- Remember you are selling your project!
- When using acronyms ensure that you include what this means the first time you use it.
- Use definitive language such as 'we will' instead of 'we anticipate', 'we envisage' etc.
- Use the active voice, i.e. 'we will hold weekly workshops' rather than 'workshops will be held weekly'
- Share your application with others for advice and proof reading, they may notice something that you haven't. If they have little knowledge of the project you are planning they will be able to comment on whether your application clearly describes and sells your project
- Make sure you go back to the grant criteria and review your application against it, are you proposing a project that meets the criteria?
- Make sure you have all the supporting documents that the funder has requested
- Even if you've written your application and all that's left to do is upload it to the website don't leave it to the last minute. Grants have strict deadlines, funders receive more applications than they are able to support and will not accept late submissions. Even if you think you have plenty of time on the final day to submit the application consider that things outside of your control can impact on your plans (your computer might crash, the website might crash etc.) so try to submit your application before the final day where possible.

Following your grant submission

Once you have submitted your funding application funding bodies may respond in a number of ways. You may receive an email or written acknowledgement so keep this safe for all future reference should you need to track progress with your application. Sadly not all funding bodies provide feedback to unsuccessful grants but if they do, always take up this offer because it will help to make a successful application next time.

If your grant is successful the funding body will often provide you with documentation and terms and conditions of their grant. Read these carefully and if they ask you to include their logo or name in any of your project's marketing make sure that you obtain this information from them and include it on all posters, advertising, press releases etc.

Always keep the grant funding body updated with progress of your project. If they haven't provided you with information about how they expect to hear about your project's outcomes ask them for this as well as any monitoring forms that they want you to use.

Finally, when your project starts don't be worried if you discover that something isn't working and you wish that you'd done something else instead. If hindsight has shown you that a different output works better than the one that you said that you'd do contact the funding body and explain this to them. As long as alterations to the way that you run your project are relatively minor and do not have major budgetary impact, most funding bodies will accept changes to your project and may offer you some further help to ensure that your project runs smoothly.

Good Luck!