

Quick guide to applying for funding

This document is designed to provide advice to organisations when applying for grants and financial assistance. Applying for funding is becoming increasingly more competitive so it is imperative that you make your funding application as strong as possible to give you a best chance of success.

Below is a list of 10 handy tips to help you write the best possible funding application.

1. Get to know your funder

Prior to starting an application thoroughly read the grant scheme guidelines and check your organisation and project is eligible to apply for funding. Every funding body and grant programme has its own unique set of criteria and priorities, so take time to read through the application packs to ensure you understand what the funding body is most interested in supporting.

2. Talk to the funding body prior to completing an application form

It is always a good idea to talk to the funding body prior to applying. Most funding bodies will have grants officers or staff who can advise and assist with queries. If there is anything you are unsure about in the application form or application process, contact the funding body and discuss it.

Funding bodies in the main are keen to advise and assist applicants and can often provide handy tips or pointers. Funding bodies are keen to spend their money so do not hesitate to contact them should you have any queries.

3. Allow plenty of time

All funding schemes will have deadlines. You are far more likely to write a stronger application form if you start work early and take your time. Funding applications that are put together in a hurry to meet a deadline are more likely to have errors and/or could omit crucial information.

4. Complete the application form in full

When completing an application form be sure to answer all the questions. Application forms which are incomplete may be delayed, or in some cases rejected, so care is required to ensure all sections of the application form are completed in full. If signatures are required, please ensure relevant committee members have signed the form in the appropriate places.

It is a good idea to have the application form proofread by someone else to check for errors or omissions prior to submitting.

5. Use plain language

Avoid overuse of jargon or large words when writing your application form. Be precise and explain clearly what you are planning to do. Do not make your application difficult to read for the assessing grants officer or funding body. Instead try to get them onside with a clear, concise application form that has been written in plain English.

6. Ask for the amount of funding you need

Make sure you apply for the amount of funding you need, and that it is within the scheme's criteria. As applying for funding is competitive, there is a temptation to apply for less than you need to match your application appear more attractive to funders. Alternatively, there is a temptation to apply for more than you need to include those "nice to have" items in your project.

You should already have an accurate idea of project costs having sought quotes or by checking prices with suppliers. Therefore, please avoid both scenarios above and request the amount of funding required to undertake your proposed project.

7. Make sure the funder is a good fit with your project

Avoid trying to fit "square pegs into round holes" when looking for potential funding sources. When applying for financial assistance it should be needs led, and not funding led. Trying to adapt your project to make it fit with the funder's criteria or priorities is unlikely to be successful, so only apply to the funding bodies that provide the best chance of success.

8. Show how you project will "make a difference"

Most funding bodies will want to find out after the project if it has had any impact, achieved positive results. This is often referred to as "outcomes" so when developing your project and application form give some thought as to how you can evidence its success. You should capture project success in terms of quantity i.e. attendances, client numbers or service levels, but also in terms of quality i.e. feedback, evaluations or case studies.

9. Check out governance details

It is important that the applicant uses its legal name when applying for funding. Funding bodies must guard against fraud or mistakes occurring so will carefully check the applicant's name.

Your organisation's legal name will be detailed on its constitution or governing document and should be the same name used on other documents such as bank statements or annual accounts. Please ensure the name on your organisation's documents match the name used in the application form. Failure to do so could delay your application, or in some cases cause it to be rejected.

10. Ensure contact person is available

It is important that whoever is detailed on your application form as the contact person is available to discuss it. Following receipt of an application form, funding bodies may get in touch to check details or request more information.

Therefore, please ensure the person listed as the point of contact is happy to be contacted, and is also available. For example, if they are likely to be away on holiday or cannot be contacted during office hours you may need to consider using another person as the contact for your application form.