

Writing a good funding application

helpful tips



So you want to apply for funding: possibly for an event; to deliver a new service; or to make improvements to a community building so it better meets the needs of service users. Follow these simple tips and hints to give your application the best possible chance of success.

- **Preparation and planning are key** - do your homework. A strong application will be well thought out, properly planned and demonstrate a 'bottom up' approach (driven by local need). Are you ready? Are the necessary structures, systems and people in place in your organisation which will help your project to succeed?
- **Ask the question** - does your proposed project match the criteria of the funder? You may have the best idea in the world, but if it doesn't meet their criteria you are unlikely to succeed.
- **Have you demonstrated the need for the project?** This is a really important part of your funding application and in a competitive funding environment it is well worth investing the time to make the strongest possible case. A good application provides evidence of need, demonstrates that you have talked to other community groups in the area and to your potential service users. Community consultation is invaluable and can be a useful weapon in your armoury.
- **Are you best placed to deliver this project and can you show this?** Why is your community group the best organisation to deliver this project? Local knowledge and a thorough understanding of your community is vital to the successful development and therefore delivery of a project (whether it is a community of need, or geographical community).
- **Number crunching** - firstly, do your numbers actually add up? Check your budget thoroughly and make sure there are no errors. Whilst a funder is unlikely to reject your application just because of a mistake, it certainly won't help your case. You would be amazed at how



often groups make simple errors like this.



- **The importance of a strong budget** - the budget is every bit as important as the narrative in your application. A robust and well-written application will have a budget which is thoroughly researched and properly costed. Funders will also look closely at the cost per beneficiary. Whilst most funders will expect your project to represent 'good value for money' there can be exceptions, but you will have to make a good case for them.

Suppose you are proposing to deliver an intensive, tailored, one-to-one service, it is likely that this could be costly to run. But what if you were also able to demonstrate that you had delivered a pilot project and one of the outcomes was that this pilot actually resulted in a significant cost saving for another more expensive service - this throws an entirely different light on things doesn't it?

- **Keep it simple** - you may have the best idea in the world but unless you can communicate this effectively and well you are likely to fall at the first hurdle. Keep your sentences short and make sure the language you use is clear and to the point.
- **Passion for the project - let it sing** - most projects are developed and delivered by people with a passionate commitment to their community, often seeking to address a hitherto unmet need. Try to ensure that your application captures some of their passion, dynamism and enthusiasm. Applications are assessed by people not robots; if you can pique the interest and enthusiasm of the assessing panel, the battle is half won.
- **Answer the question** - make sure you answer all the questions in full and provide all the information requested. The person assessing your application is likely to be working within a framework and will include checklists. If they ask for information which you don't provide your application may be deferred or rejected.
- **Before you submit the application, ask someone who is unfamiliar with your organisation and work to read your application and explain it back to you, if they've got it you're on the right track.** Never assume that the funder is familiar with your organisation, the work you do and the issues in your local community.