



FACT SHEET 11

Tips for Successful Funding Applications

This fact sheet aims to give organisations helpful suggestions on how they can improve their funding applications.

Improving Grant Applications/Letters of Application

- Be clear;
- Be concise;
- Answer all questions fully;
- Avoid using jargon and make sentences short where possible;

Top Tip: Funders are inundated with applications for support, so your application needs to be written clearly, legibly and in a language that is easy to understand. It is also important to have a USP – something that will make your application stand out from the others! – without overstating your case. These people have limited time to assess applications and are unable to read the endless pages of information sent to them.

- Letters of application should NOT be longer than 2 sides of A4;

Top Tip: Make sure that your letter is addressed to the correct person within the organisation. Do NOT send a circulation letter “to whom it may concern”, as otherwise your letter will more than likely end up in the bin!

- Read the funders guidelines thoroughly to ensure that:
 - your project or organisation is eligible before applying;
 - you know how to apply;
 - you know when to apply;
 - your project is targeted to the interests of the trust you are applying to;

Top Tip: it is advisable to make direct contact with the funder to discuss the proposed project (e.g. by telephone or at a local Funding Fair, etc) before wasting your time on an ineligible application;

- Make sure you have sufficient evidence to support your application and that this evidence is as current as possible;

Top Tip: When researching the need for your project it is essential that you gather some hard evidence to support your application, e.g. results of local (regional) questionnaires & surveys, minutes of meetings, letters of support, etc);

- Ensure that you have a comprehensive and realistic budget for your project (see Fact Sheet) and that you have not under-estimated;

Top Tip: for most funders, it is essential that your budget contain some element of financial support for training.

- Send applications well before you need the money, showing to funders that you are a forward thinking organisation, that researches and plans projects well in advance;

Top Tip: Funders do not like to retrospectively fund projects or fund those that have not been planned in advance. They prefer to fund projects, which have been well researched, have a good evidence base and are sustainable.

- A covering letter will give you the opportunity to summarize your project for funders, whilst selling it to them and making them want to read your application. You may also be able to include brief information in this letter that you were unable to fit in the application;

Top Tip: Ask for objective feedback from colleagues or funding advisers on your application, as “two heads are better than one” and they may see something that you have not considered.

- Be prepared for a phone call or a visit regarding your application. It is thus essential that you keep a copy of each application and subsequent enclosures (to each funder) in an easily accessible file;

Top Tip: It is essential that you keep records of funders approached; when you approached them and results of applications. This will enable you to plan who to go back to and when.

- Ensure that you choose a referee who is fully supportive of your project and organisation. They should be able to speak freely and confidently about the work of your organisation and about the project in question;

Top Tip: it may be advisable to provide the referee with some organisational literature including a business plan, annual report, etc and a copy of the project application.

- Always say “Thank You” to funders. They too like to feel appreciated.

Top Tip: Send them copies of publicity regarding the project, especially success stories. Invite them to come and experience what you do or invite them to be get involved in other areas of your organisation (e.g. the AGM). Although they only have limited time, they may wish to accept an invitation as a way of experiencing first hand how the project/organisation is developing.

- Keep in regular contact with funder(s). It is important to nurture this relationship, so that you can raise any problems, celebrate any successes and openly discuss possible continuation funding.

Top Tip: Many funders are unable to continually support organisations although they may be able to offer some financial support and would like to where the rest of the support will come from.

Information for the Application

Funders will only consider applications that fit with their policy and guidelines. They may also look to see if they have funded something similar in that area, so ensure that you are prepared to support the need for your particular project.

In order to ensure that your application is as good as it could be, you must be able to answer **yes** to all these questions:

- Is the information you are sending:
 - Relevant to the application for support?
 - Enough to help the funder make a decision in favour of your project?
 - Clear and concise?
 - Exactly what they asked for?
- Does your application tell the funder:
 - Who you are and what you do?

Top Tip: use headed paper. This should also include your charity registration number (providing you have one).

- What the need for the project is?
- What this project aims to do, for whom and where?
- How this project will deliver an effective and efficient service?
- How the project relates to other clients/the local community/groups (where appropriate)?
- How much you want from them and for what?

Top Tip: Ask for a specific amount of money, as it will give the funders a better idea of the size of grant to award. It may be advisable to also include a “shopping list” so that funders can choose to support a particular piece of equipment/area of development within the project according to the size of grant they are able to award.

- Why they should support this project?

Top Tip: Funders are looking to support cost-effective projects (being cheaper is not necessarily better), with a well-prepared budget, from an organisation with the skills and experience to effectively and efficiently manage resources and finances and the ability to communicate well with them.

- What will happen afterwards?

Top Tip: funders like to know how you intend to fund your project after the grant period ends or how you intend to close the project. An exit strategy is required (Fact sheet)

Further Support and Advice is available from Cumbria CVS Locality Offices in:

Barrow: 72-74 Scott Street, Barrow-in-Furness, LA14 1QE. Tel: 01229 823144

Carlisle: 27 Spencer Street, Carlisle, CA1 1BE. Tel: 01228 512513

Eden: 6 Hobson Court, Gillan Way, Penrith, CA11 0DT. Tel: 01768 800350

South Lakeland: Stricklandgate House, 92 Stricklandgate, Kendal, LA9 4PU. Tel: 01539 742627

West Cumbria: Community Resource Centre, 12a Selby Terrace, Maryport, CA15 6NF
Tel: 01900 819191

Visit **Cumbria CVS Website** at: http://www.thirdsectorcumbria.org.uk/support_CumbriaCVS.html

Cumbria CVS Training Course information

Is available on our website: www.thirdsectorcumbria.org.uk/support_cumbriacvs_training.html
Tel: 01900 819191