

A SHORT GUIDE TO SUCCESSFUL GRANT APPLICATIONS

There is plenty of grant funding available for organisations who know how to apply for it. The following is designed to assist you in winning grants for your organisation.

Finding the right grant...

Finding the right grant to fit your project is the most important factor in winning a grant for your project. The Community Development Officer at Council can assist with this.

It is also important to think more widely about your project and what you do. For example, a sporting club is mainly there to get the team out each week, but it is also:

- Building community spirit
- Working with young people
- Maintaining community facilities
- Strengthening local identity
- Promoting a health and wellbeing (and anti-drugs) message
- Providing leadership training for young people
- Developing teamwork and communications skills
- Encouraging tolerance and understanding between people of different cultural backgrounds

This means you don't have to restrict yourself to sporting grants – you might be able to apply for funding from other areas such as health, youth, anti-drug, training and so on.

Another way to access funding is to look at developing policies that target specific problem areas such as social isolation, parenting skills or access to communication technology. This will allow you to target smaller and more specific funding bodies.

What must your project have to be successful?

Funding bodies need to know that your community has a need and that your group will be able to meet that need. Below is a list of what agencies look for:

- Projects that will have far-reaching effects in the community.
- Projects with strong backing from the community that are likely to succeed.
- Projects that provide a long-term solution rather than a short-term fix.
- A new solution to a problem that hasn't been tried before.
- Projects that are consistent with their own strategic directions (so for example for SA Government funding you will need to align to the SA Strategic Plan)

Funding bodies have little interest in funding:

- Staff salaries for the ongoing delivery of services
- Infrastructure maintenance
- Projects already commenced
- Picking up costs that are the core responsibility of someone else (eg the organisation, other government departments etc)

A huge problem is that funding bodies won't provide money to cover administration or general costs. Sometimes you can get around this by dividing what you do into bite-sized "projects" and apportion your operating costs (rent, phone and utility bills etc) across these projects.

It is very important to not be tempted into applying for funding that is not suitable for your purposes – just because it is there. Make sure that the grant conditions are a good fit with what you want to achieve before commencing an application. Talking to the grants officer can be a big help with this.

Before you write your application...

- Read the guidelines carefully and make sure you understand the criteria and the aims of the grant.
- Research the funding body and find out what types of projects they have previously funded to see if your project fits that pattern.
- If possible call the contact officer for the grants program to discuss your proposal's suitability for the program and get any tips for developing your application.
- Check the application closing date and aim to have yours submitted as early as possible.

When preparing to make a grant submission, you should have the following information ready:

- A brief summary of your project
- Project goals and objectives
- The time frame for the project
- The history of your group and general information like your ABN, details of any previous grants received etc.
- Project budgets (and written quotations for any capital items)
- List of reasons why your project should be funded

Writing your application...

Make sure you:

- Prepare a new application each time you apply for a grant. Your application must respond to the specific guidelines and criteria for each funding body.
- Answer every question on the application, even if it is to say not applicable. This shows that you have read it and understood what was asked.
- Follow the guidelines - your application may not be considered if you haven't followed the funding body's guidelines.

Most grant applications will require:

1. *A brief description of the organisation*

This is where you describe briefly your group's mandate and how you were formed. The grant evaluators want you to demonstrate how your group has been successful in meeting a community need.

2. *Your case for support*

- It is extremely important to have a specific solution to the problem and to outline how the project will be achieved and who your project is targeting and how it aligns to the funding organisation's strategic objectives.
- A simple example that illustrates the situation your community is facing allows the funding organisation to understand why your community's need is important. You should also include objective evidence to back up your claims.
- Evidence of community support is an important component of a grant application. You will need to include information on your consultation process (i.e. how you identified your community's need.) You will also need to include letters of support for the project from high-profile people in the community. These letters should outline why this project will make a difference in the community.
- Community support is also evidenced by a financial contribution. This can be "in kind" volunteer support.

3. *The project description*

In this section you should demonstrate that you have developed a creative solution to the identified need in the community. You should be able to provide a brief description of your project in one sentence. Make sure you:

- Clearly outline your project goals – A goal is usually a sentence describing what your project hopes to achieve. These goals should result in real outcomes that are easily measurable.
- Outline how you will achieve this – This should include a description of why your particular solution was chosen over other options.
- Provide an evaluation strategy – Funding bodies need to know how you plan to objectively measure the success of the project.

4. *The Budget*

It is important to include an overall budget for the project, however, you will also need to write a specific budget for each organisation you approach, that explains what elements of your budget you are asking money for and how much. The organisation does not want to have to sift through your budget to find what it is you want them to fund. Make sure it reflects the grant guidelines for that particular organisation.

How to increase your chances of winning the grant....

- Be prepared before you look for the grant – have all your paperwork and information ready so that you don't have to look for it in a rush
- Dedicate resources to finding and applying for grants – it will pay off in the long run
- Only apply to funding bodies that fit perfectly with your project.
- Research the funding body and discover what types of projects they have previously funded and the types of projects that are most likely to support.
- Talk to the funding body about your application. If you don't understand a question, ask.
- Make sure you can back up your claims.
- Make sure you have support from the wider community and your group.
- Get someone who hasn't been involved in preparing the application to read it through and make sure it meets the guidelines. The Council's Community Development Officer can help with this.
- When seeking funding, it's a good idea to gather a group that can support you.
- Make it easy for the funding body to understand who you are and what you want to achieve – and how they can help.
- Be creative in your presentation. Make it stand out!
- Outline the benefits the project will offer the community. Do your research and use statistics.
- Show how much work you are putting in. This will show the assessment panel that you are serious about this project.
- Make sure you follow the guidelines – don't give the funding body any reason to put someone else's application before yours.
- For large amounts of funding, include a risk management analysis.
- Don't give up! If you are knocked back, contact the organisation to find out how you can refine your application and resubmit it in the next round. You will wear them down eventually! Or you can recycle your application for another funding program.

Grant Application Checklist....

Once you have completed your application, make sure tyou:

- o Check that everybody who needs to has signed your application in the right places.
- o Proofread your application for spelling and grammar.
- o Check that your budget figures add up and that you have been clear about what you are asking money for.
- o Check that you have included written quotes for any capital items.
- o Check that your page numbering is consistent.
- o Check that your application is legible.
- o Re-read the guidelines and ensure you have answered every question.
- o Make sure you include all the information you are asked to include.
- o Make sure the address is correct and you send it off in plenty of time (preferably allow at least 5 days for the mail)
- o Leave yourself enough time to be able to go through and double-check your application.

Once you get the funding...

Particularly for large grants, you will need to sign a funding agreement. If possible, it is a good idea to get a lawyer to look over the agreement before you sign.

Before signing the funding agreement check that costs have not escalated between developing the budget and approval. If they have, you may be able to renegotiate the scope of the project so that the funding is sufficient. It is much easier to do this before you sign the agreement than after.

If the funding officer helped you to develop the application, make sure you contact them to thank them for their assistance. You may need their help for another application down the track!

Make sure you keep good records of how you spend the grant funding so that you can acquit at the end of the project.

Most funding bodies require a project report at the conclusion of the project. A good way of showing your appreciation for their support of your project is to send them regular updates during the life of the project and regular reports after the project has concluded. This will show them the long-term benefits of your project in meeting the community need and will increase your chances of winning another grant.