

Funding: making applications

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This factsheet is part of a series of three. The other factsheets are **Factsheet 7: Funding Sources** and **Factsheet 6: Funding: Overview**.

Before making applications there are steps to go through in preparation. They are described in **Factsheet 6: Funding: Overview**. Once you have gone through these steps, you are ready to make applications.

The application process itself has several stages:

- 1 Contact funders;
- 2 Read the guidelines;
- 3 Read the questions;
- 4 Write the application;
- 5 Provide all additional information;
- 6 Address the application.

1 | Contact funders

The first thing to do is contact each potential funder for more information. If you have a phone number, use this first. You can save yourself time and effort by giving the potential funder a call to check that you are eligible for these funds. You can usually get hold of guidelines and application forms this way (though you might need to write, with a stamped self-addressed envelope) or you could try having a look at their website, if they have one. You should also check with the funder about submission dates for applications and check how they process applications so that you can try, as much as possible, to fit in with them.

2 | Read the guidelines

You now have another chance to check that your organisation or project is eligible for these funds. Points to check are:

- Do you have to be a registered charity?
- Is your group organised in the right way (do you need a constitution, management committee, etc?)
- Can the funds be used for what you need to spend money on (equipment, wages, etc)?
- Is your organisation or activity in the list of exclusions?

With the guidelines, you will usually get notes on what the funder particularly wants to fund their aims or priorities. You need to make sure that your project helps the funders to meet their stated aims in some way. Try to pitch your application on that basis. This means that you highlight the aspects of your organisation that best meet the funder's aims.

3 | Read the questions

If you are applying to a Trust or Foundation, there may be no application form and you only need to write a letter. However, the guidelines will list the points you have to put in your letter, so the following information still applies:

Before beginning to write, read through the whole form or list of questions. This will give you an idea of what should go in what section. Information about your organisation should be presented as the funder wishes. They ask specific questions, and want answers to each question in the right section, not other, inappropriate information.

4 | Write the application

Make drafts

You are likely to produce several versions of your application before the final version is ready. To do this, make copies of the application or write the text on a separate sheet. Show drafts to colleagues or advisers to get their feedback.

Sell yourself

Before you begin to write, remind yourselves that throughout the application, you have to keep certain things in mind. In general, you have to show funders that

- Your organisation and project meet their funding aims;
- There is a real need which you can evidence;
- Your project effectively meets this need;
- You are capable of managing the money properly;
- You cannot do the project without financial assistance.

As you write, keep in mind the funders priorities. Keep saying how you meet them.

Sell success: be positive about your achievements, show yourself in a good light. Be honest about difficult issues, but show a positive side where you can.

Answer all questions fully

Each question asks for certain pieces of information make sure you answer all the questions they ask and don't add in anything that isn't necessary. This point may seem obvious, but one of the top reasons for rejected applications is simply that the questions are not answered.

Use simple language

Funding decisions are usually made by a group of people in a meeting. They will have a pile of applications, a lot of reading to do in a short time. So make your writing clear, simple and to the point. Do not use jargon where everyday words will do. Describe your work in your own terms. Use short sentences; make your application attractive to read.

5 | Provide all additional information requests

A prime reason why applications are turned down is because additional information that was asked for has not been sent. Funders usually ask for:

- A constitution or set of rules;

- A budget;
- Some kind of accounts.

There may be more – read the guidelines and application form to check. Funders may reject your bid immediately if you do not send everything asked for.

6 | Address the application correctly!

Last but not least, a point that may seem small but which is very important - who you send the application to and how you address them. You may well be sending your application directly to the person who decides on your grant, and the first impression is crucial.

It is vital that you get right the name, title and address of the person and organisation you are applying to. Getting them wrong suggests that you do not care about your relationship with the funder, and are sending out lots of applications without taking the time to research funders properly. Getting these details absolutely correct gives the impression that you are a well-organised group with good, basic communication skills – the kind of group funders like to support. You have already improved your chances of success, before the funder even reads your application.

Further help

Ask BVSC Helpline

0121 678 8888
askbvsc@bvsc.org

Development Agencies website

Links and information for developing voluntary and community organisations.
www.birmingham-da.org

The Charities Information Bureau

01924 239063
www.fit4funding.org.uk
info@fit4funding.org.uk