

## Writing Successful Funding Applications

First of all you must identify the correct source of funding for your project. Then you must get your project well known.

To write an effective proposal you have to communicate well and to do that you need to use the right language. There are three common linguistic mistakes made by fundraisers:

### *Assuming shared values*

It is dangerous to assume that people mean the same thing as you do just because they appear to use the same words. Don't assume the reader knows what you are talking about.

### *Being lazy*

It is important to generate unique selling propositions for the project. You must try to talk about your project in a more immediate, focused, or exciting way than other similar projects.

### *Using complex language or jargon*

KISS! - Keep It Straightforward and Simple. Use the jargon in the 'Grants aims' section to answer the questions.

The assessor marks the form using criteria. Extract the criteria and then provide proof that your project fits the criteria - use statistics if possible.

### Three Key Proposal Elements

1. The statement of NEED
2. The ACTION you propose
3. The COST

### 1. The NEED

The need statement is perhaps the most important part of the proposal as it alerts the funder to *what needs to be done* in a clear and understandable way. There is a temptation to ask funders for money directly e.g. a youth organisation may require a minibus to help with their work. No funder wants to provide a minibus without knowing how it is going to be used and be of benefit to the group. The *need* is that many unemployed teenagers do not have the confidence, transferable skills or self esteem. The minibus should not be mentioned until you have described the need you are addressing in detail. A good Need Statement should follow a number of rules:

1. It should focus on outcomes not inputs.

2. It should be precise. Broad, sweeping, bland or abstract statements do not deliver a powerful message. Use hard facts, statistics and evidence to prove a point.
3. Focus on the specific problems that the funders want to address.
4. Talk passionately about your project describing the problems faced by your users or explaining the benefits the project would have to people.

## **2. The ACTION**

Your response to the need is all about the actions you will take to eliminate, or ease, the need. Like the need the Action proposal should be specific and tangible.

Talk about the *results* - the way in which people's lives will be changed by the project. Explain how the problem can be addressed and the need eliminated. The tools are the specific things that will be done to get the results (e.g. buying a minibus, building a bridge). If the results and tools get confused in an application it can cause problems of understanding and clarity for the reader.

You need to take the funder through a logical process that has three parts:

1. Help them understand the NEED
2. Describe what the project will accomplish in terms of RESULTS.
3. Then describe the TOOLS needed.

## **3. COST**

A good budget contains the following elements:

- How much is needed for staff costs, overheads, capital items etc.
- How much you've already raised or had pledged, and where this comes from.
- If appropriate, a statement of other sources that are likely to agree to support the work.
- A monetary value placed on the in kind support that has been received (materials, volunteer time etc).
- If appropriate, allowance for issues such as depreciation, inflation, salary increments, VAT, contingencies etc. This is especially important if the funding proposal is for more than one year.

It is generally accepted that it is much harder to raise money when none has yet been committed, but it is relatively easy to raise money once the bandwagon is rolling. If you can demonstrate that you have already raised funds, this self-confidence will inspire funder confidence.

## The Covering Letter

This should include:

- A description of your organisation
- The need you seek to address, what makes your project special?
- The action you intend to take
- How much the work will cost, how much you have already raised, who else is funding you and how much you are asking for.

The summary should be no more than one side of A4.

## 10 Steps to a successful application

1. Have a summary of the project in the covering letter (4-6 lines long).
2. Introduce your group/organisation. How you do your work is important.
3. Set the problem out clearly. (Why is this not covered by statutory bodies?)
4. State the solution. Give the short-term and long-term objectives of the project. State any partnership relationships, community support and volunteer involvement. Prove how your project strengthens the community (participation and empowerment are important factors).
5. Explain how the project outcomes can be measured, monitored and evaluated.
6. Give details of the project budget. Justify any money that you have in reserve and are not using for this project.
7. Give details of how you plan to raise funds for the project.
8. Explain how your project will demonstrate sustainability.
9. Establish links with their criteria and reference any phone calls you have had with them saying that they like the idea of your project.
10. Add any useful additional information

## Writing

☆TYPE APPLICATIONS IF POSSIBLE☆

1. Keep it short - edit lots!
2. Always use a confident and positive tone
3. Use simple language. Short words, short sentences and short paragraphs.
4. Use bold and highlight text.
5. Use subheadings.
6. Use facts and figures to prove everything you say (where possible).
7. Tell the human aspect of your story.
8. Presentation is very important.
9. Ring funders after they have received your application to check if they need further information.
10. Invite funders to see the project. Send photos, newsletters etc with the application.

## Readability Test

1. A 10 year old must be able to understand it.
2. Get someone to read it out loud to you. The assessor must be able to understand it after reading it just ONCE.