



Resources for **small groups**

Applying for funding

Once you have decided what you need funding for and identified some funders who may be interested, you need to put together your application in a clear and concise way.

Some funders produce packs and require you to complete an application form. Others may give you less information and ask you to put your application in a letter. Try to write your letter to cover the points in this sheet.

What will funders want to know?

Despite the differences in application processes, there are certain pieces of information that all funders are likely to need to enable them to make their decision:

- *information about your group*: what you do already, how long the group has been in existence, what your objects are, the skills of people involved, how the group is managed, etc.;
- *information about your project*: what you want the funding for and why, what tasks you will carry out, how the project will be managed;
- *how you know there is a need*, what research you have done;
- *information about the people who will benefit from your project*: who they are, how many of them and in what ways they will benefit. Also, how beneficiaries and the wider community are involved in managing, delivering and/ or shaping the project;
- *why this funder might want to fund your project*: how you and your project fit with the priorities of the particular funder to whom you are applying;
- *any other funding you have received towards the project*, or applications you are making, or resources you will be using to deliver the project. These resources do not have to be money. They might also be staff or volunteer's time, donations of equipment, assistance from businesses etc.;
- *how much you are requesting* from them and for what items (if not for the whole project);
- *how you will monitor and evaluate the project* and what you intend to happen to the project once their funding runs out.

Certain funders may want additional information such as details of the policies and procedures you use, information about other similar or related services in your area, or details on the involvement of volunteers in planning and delivering the project. Providing the right information therefore depends on knowing exactly what each funder requires.

Funders will generally require you to send additional documents with your application. Often they will specify exactly what should be sent. If they don't, you need to limit your enclosures to relevant information, which would probably be your constitution, your most recent annual report and accounts and your budget for the project. In the case of new groups who will not have a set of accounts, it might be best to send your organisation's budget forecast for the coming year or years.

Some basic tips on writing applications

- Generally speaking, it helps if you emphasise the benefits of your project from the point of view of your users rather than your organisation, e.g., employing an administrative worker will enable you to improve the service you offer to your clients.
- Avoid jargon, acronyms, technical language, etc.
- Wherever possible provide specific numbers for members, service users etc. (e.g. say “we run a drop in attended by an average of 70 older people” rather than “we provide a drop in for older people”).
- Keep your application short, concise and logical. If you are applying by letter, address it personally to the appropriate person. Avoid using “Dear Sir/Madam”, try and keep to two sides of A4 and break down into paragraphs for each of the issues overleaf (if you can however try not to make this look as though you are answering questions).
- If possible ask for a specific amount. Avoid vague phrases such as “we would be grateful for any donation”. However you should consider what sum you would consider if not awarded all you ask for—and what makes the project unviable.
- Make sure your letter or application form is signed and that you provide all the information the funder asks for.
- Get help. Ask others to read your application before you submit it.

After submitting your application

If your bid is unsuccessful, try and find out why. You may be able to get feedback which will improve your applications in the future.

On the other hand, if you are successful, try to develop a relationship with the funder. Keep in regular contact with them, provide all the information they ask for and let them know how the project is progressing. By funding you, they have already shown that they are willing to support your organisation. Developing a relationship with the funder will put you in a stronger position for attracting further funding from them in the future, perhaps for a different project.

Finally, if you do receive a grant, remember to say thank you!

In summary

Your application should be designed to show that:

- your groups is well managed and will handle any funds it receives correctly;
- your project is a good idea which will meet genuine needs and will work; and
- you are aware of the priorities of the funder and can demonstrate that you meet them.

General appeals will not allow you to do this. Each application needs to be written specifically for that funder.

