

## Section six What makes a good application?

### 6.1 Writing the application

When you are completing an application form, it is best to photocopy the form and to fill in the details in draft first as it is likely that changes will be made when other people check it. If, like most people, you find it difficult to put things in writing, a good tip is to first explain your ideas to a friend. If your friend understands you, write down what you have said in a similar way on the application form or letter. If you cannot be clear and enthusiastic about the work you are planning to do, a potential funder will not be either!

Funders that do not use application forms will specify how they want you to approach them. Some may prefer an initial telephone call giving details of your organisation and your funding request. If a funder asks for a letter they will usually state clearly how long they want it to be.

You may be offered the chance to apply by email or to download the application form from a website and send it electronically. Some funders prefer you to complete and submit an application form online, so you may need to consider your organisation's IT capacity. See an **example Awards for All application form** at: [www.awardsforall.org.uk/docs/awardsforall\\_england\\_application.pdf](http://www.awardsforall.org.uk/docs/awardsforall_england_application.pdf)

### 6.2 Working out the cost

#### 6.2.1 Do not undercost your project

You need to work out how much money to request from the funder. You will show this in the funding application as the project budget. This will show a clear breakdown of your estimated expenditure. In many cases, organisations tend to under cost their projects because they feel that they are asking for too much. However, if you apply for too little, you will run into serious financial problems when you do not have enough money to finish the work. See the [Financial Management toolkit](#) for guidance on how to write a budget.

#### 6.2.2 How to cover core costs

Some funders prefer not to give 'core funding' (running costs, rent and salaries). One way to cover these essential costs is to divide them between different areas of work, or 'projects'. For example if you are applying for funding to produce a community newsletter, do not just include the cost of printing. Also, include the staff time and therefore, salary costs to research, interview and write articles. To cover the cost of

rent, you can divide the number of services you deliver by the amount of rent you pay. Of course this should be worked out in proportion to the room size that the service takes up and how many hours per week the service is provided.

### **6.2.3 Keep all your funding application notes**

Do not throw away any of the notes you make when working out different costs. They contain essential information that a funder may require. Also, your notes will help you remember how you worked out the costs and what you based your estimates on – because by the time you actually hear from the funder, these details may not be clear in your mind!

## **6.3 Presenting the information to funders**

### **6.3.1 Keep it simple**

The golden rule is to **keep it simple**. Funders receive many applications that are overly complicated and difficult to understand. One way to avoid this is to use bullet points, for example, to list how the project benefits the community. This will also make it easier for the person writing the funding application if English is not her/his first language. Get a friend or family member who is not involved with the project to read it and make sure s/he understands it.

### **6.3.2 How to make your application stand out**

Do not forget that you are one of many applicants looking for funding so think carefully about how you can make your application stand out from the others. Accuracy is crucial – have you checked your application for good grammar? Have you spelt the contact person's name correctly? Look at **Figure three: The 'devil is in the detail' (next page)** and see if you can spot the mistakes!.

Do not go over the top on presentation by using expensive paper or flashy graphic designs, as this will only show that your organisation is misusing limited money.

However, you can make an effort to ensure that the layout and format is well presented and easy to read. For example, try highlighting the main headings of your application in bold or underlining them. If you are typing your application, make sure the font is not smaller than 12 pt so that it is not hard to read. If you are hand writing your application, write clearly in black ink so that it is easy to photocopy.

### Figure three: The devil is in the detail

This is a common English saying meaning that detail is an important and difficult matter. Look at the following short extracts from these supporting letters and spot the mistake. There is one mistake in each letter.

Mrs Hope Dolittle  
Senior Grants Manager  
Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund  
Office of the Third Sector  
35 Great Smith Street  
London  
SW1P 3BQ

Dear Sir

Mr Nollisen  
Clerk to the Trustees  
Trust for London  
6 Middle Street  
London  
EC1A 7PH

Dear Mr Lissen

Mr Nollisen  
Clerk to the Trustees  
Trust for London  
6 Middle Street  
London  
EC1A 7PH

Dear Mr Nollisen

The London Livelihood Fund has always been a supporter of our organisation. We are grateful for the support we have had in the past and hope that you can consider this application for further funding.

### Answers:

Mistake number one is: Dear sir (addressed to Mrs)

Mistake number two is: Dear Mr Lissen (addressed to Mr T U Nollisen)

Mistake number three is: The funder in the address is not the same as the funder in the main letter. This is a serious mistake!

### 6.3.3 Meet the deadline!

Before you post your application, take a photocopy in case the funder misplaces it or it gets lost in the post. Make sure you address it to the right person – this is usually stated in the funder's guidelines. Most importantly, make sure it arrives on time. Some funding programmes have just one deadline for each year and others may have more than one. Some funding organisations decide on all applications at the date of their next management committee (MC) meeting. Details about the timing of applications will be included in the information that the funder sends you.

#### Tips for submitting a good application:

- √ Check that your application matches the funder's criteria
- √ Do not make generalised statements – try to illustrate your proposed project by using facts and figures
- √ Fill out the application form accurately, remembering to include any required documentation, for example annual reports
- √ Allow time for the approval and sign off process, for example, from the chair or another trustee from your organisation
- √ If your application is successful, remember to thank the funder and to follow any reporting criteria that they require
- √ Communicate with your funder, keep them up to date with developments, and perhaps you may have the chance to apply to them again!

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