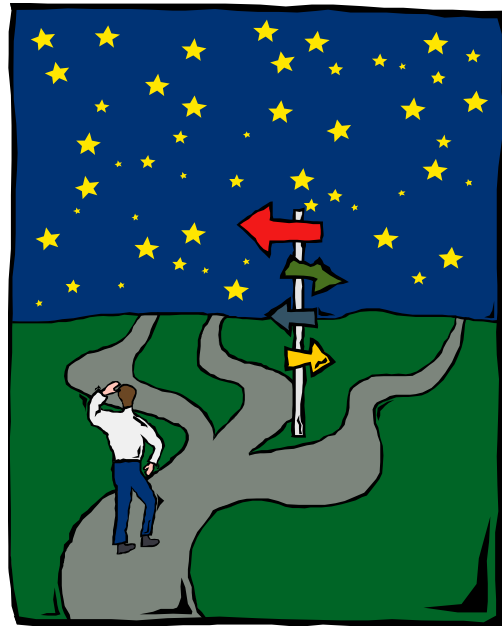


## Understanding the Funder

Understanding the application process from the funder's point of view will put you at an instant advantage in your quest for funding.

The Funders Priorities:

- To distribute all the funds in the budget
- To account for funding decisions to the Trustees
- To get the best results (outcomes) from the funds



Decisions by funders are not personal. They have to judge where to allocate a limited amount of money amongst a large number of applicants. They often receive a large proportion of funding bids that do not meet the objectives of that Trust or Foundation. All of these have to be read and replied to. Similarly, a large number of applications are incomplete, in that all of the required information and supporting documentation is not provided. It can therefore be a breath of fresh air to a fund administrator or grants officer to receive an application which corresponds with their aims and provides the information they need to make a decision. It will therefore give you an advantage if you:

1. Research the right funders to approach
2. Provide all the information they need to make an informed decision (remember though to keep your application concise)

It is also worth remembering that fund administrators and grants officers will have managed a large number of grants and amassed specialist knowledge in their particular area of grant giving. This means that they understand what sort of activities work and achieve the outcomes that they want. They also know how much money it will cost to deliver a project or service. Many funders publish



their recent grants so you can compare the cost of your application with others they have funded.

A good application - from the funder's point of view...

1. Meets the aims/objectives of the particular funder - Demonstrating this clearly early in the application will help the funder see that you meet their aims and avoid an early rejection.
2. Reliable/realistic bid - You need to demonstrate that the project or service will be able to deliver what it aims to achieve. Don't be tempted to over inflate your outputs or outcomes in order to impress the funder. Projects take longer to get established than most people think.
3. Realistic costings - Remember that most funders have experience and knowledge of how much it costs to deliver services. In developing your project budget, use your own experience of actual costings as a basis. If this is a new activity for you, why not look for other organisations doing similar work, and ask them how much they are actually spending. The voluntary sector is a great place to ask for this sort of help from others. You may be asked as part of your assessment for a detailed explanation of your budget and how you arrived at the estimated costs. It is also worth remembering that as many applications flounder because not enough money was asked for as those that asked for too much.
4. Reasonable timescales - from the funders point of view, they only have a limited amount of funding to spread around what is a very large number of applicants. They don't want to limit their ability to fund other applicants, or different types of activity because all of their available funding is committed to long-term, ongoing, activities.
5. Avoid uncertainty or risk - this doesn't mean that innovative projects are unattractive to funders - the opposite is often true. However you do need to consider whether a reliance on external factors to make your project work needs to be subject to a risk analysis. For example, what if you cannot get people to take up the service you propose? How will you deliver the outcomes you claimed in the application? In this example, a risk analysis may suggest that you first ask your beneficiaries if it is a service which they would use,



and then propose other actions, e.g. publicity, in the event that actual demand is less than expected.

6. A Good Track Record - by the organisation in delivering services and projects will reassure the funder that you are able to deliver what you propose. For smaller organisations, without a track record, it will be difficult to go out and attract large grants. First developing a track record in successfully delivering activities is therefore essential. So, start small, and learn lessons from each project you take on.
7. External Recommendations - the support of others for your proposals will add weight to your proposal. Particularly if the support comes from people who would be expected to understand the local situation and know about your group. Council Officers, Health Workers, elected Councillors and MP's, or senior staff from other local groups, are all worth approaching. Many of them would take an active interest in your proposals and can offer valuable support. They are often willing to put pen to paper and write a letter of support which can accompany your application.
8. Exit Strategy - What will happen to the activity when the funding runs out? You may decide that you will simply stop delivering the service, or integrate the work into your other services, or that you will need to obtain continuation funding to continue the work.

The Exit, or Forward Strategy, for activities or services beyond the life of a grant is often a difficult problem to deal with. The best approach is to actively consider this within the planning phase. Aim to build in sustainability to the work from the outset. Here are some ideas...

- Make it a part of your project to train other workers, or volunteers, or your beneficiaries, to continue some or all of the work after the grant ends.
- You might consider making it part of your project to train other suitable people to deliver the activity you propose, e.g. people from other community groups, local residents, council or health workers.



- Consider setting up a social enterprise to provide an income once your grant ends.
- Use the grant period to develop materials and information that can continue to be used after the grant ends with minimal financial outlay.

Having a realistic exit strategy is always attractive to a funder because they can see that their investment will have an impact far beyond the life of the grant.

The funder will probably need you to provide additional materials such as your Annual Report, Constitution and Accounts. This is so they can verify your existence as a charity, that your proposed project or activity is within your charitable objects, and can assess your financial situation. Ensure you include all of the requested information with the application.

Finally, the people deciding your application do have to refuse many of the applications they receive. Don't take it personally if you don't succeed. In deed, it is worth writing to thank them for their consideration and express the hope that they will be able to support your work in the future. Those deciding who to fund do not get many letters like that and it will most likely be remembered.

And, if you are successful - write and say thank you, and make sure that all monitoring reports and other returns are sent in on schedule.