

Grant Writing Tips

The grants market is always very competitive and the applications with the best planning, research and attention to detail usually achieve their desired funding.

Many people think that grant writing is easier than fundraising, or they will try and find a grant and make a project concept to fit. Grant providers are usually inundated with applications and in cases where projects don't really fit a well identified need within a community they are put on the bottom of the pile.

Creating an application for grant money can be a long and difficult task but here are a few points and questions that might assist you when looking at putting a grant application together.

Eligibility

There is no point putting all your efforts into writing a grant application when you or your organisation is not eligible to apply for the grant, so make sure you read the grant guidelines carefully.

Make contact by phone with the organisation administering the grant and subtly explain the project you are hoping to achieve funding for. They may be able to tell you if your funding application will fit well within their guidelines or tell you if the grant program would be more suited to funding another part of the project. It also starts a relationship with the funding body and they may give you further information on the grant that is not stated in the guidelines.

- Questions to ask:*
- Does my organisation need an accreditation (eg does it need to be incorporated, registered for GST or have a tax deductible donation status)?
 - If my organisation does not have the required accreditation can another organisation, who does, apply on our behalf (eg sponsor your application)?
 - What has previously been funded, what are you (the grant provider) looking for?
 - Does the project my organisation is looking to complete fit within what you (the grant makers) want to support? (If the project does not, ask the grant provider whether they know of any other funding sources that may assist)
 - What is the closing date and does my application need to be received or sent by this date (do you (the grant provider) accept e-mailed applications)?
 - What is the selection/assessment process, who is involved in the selection process and what is the approximate timeframe in which my application will be assessed?
 - Can you (the grant provider) come to our environment to achieve first hand knowledge of the project? This will create an ownership situation for the people your organisation will be dealing with and will give them a better idea of your capacity to deliver.

Tips on Writing a Grant

If my organisation is successful with our application, what are the contractual obligations we will need to agree to? eg what sort of reporting processes does the grant provider require; are there marketing or publicity obligations your organisation will need to fulfil if the funding is received.

Is an audit report required on completion and who is to pay for it? Is there a draft contract that my organisation can look at?

Make sure: Grants that provide funding retrospectively are rare, so make sure your funding application is approved before you start spending money.

The Goal

Describe what you hope to achieve by implementing this project. You need to provide clear statements of what you wish to accomplish.

Consider: What are the problems you are trying to address? Make a list of goals and objectives that relate to these problems.

Who is going to benefit from this project (local community, certain population or larger region)

How will each goal be addressed within a specific time frame?

Reason/ Rational for project

Grant providers have to show that they provide money for communities or areas that really require assistance so you must demonstrate the need for your project. You must also show the grant provider that there are many people that would appreciate this project and once completed would utilise the service it provides

Consider: Provide some background detail about what events/issues lead to the need for this project.

Why do you need this project? Is the project a want or a need? Is there community support?

Why is your project important? Try to include things like surveys, statistical data, and feasibility studies.

Why is this project important in the context of the area (ie economic dependency, population losses, insufficient employment opportunity and difficult socio-economic conditions)?

Who is the project for and who are the beneficiaries?

What are the project's broad purposes (ie community benefit, tourism development, business development, employment creation, social or environmental benefits)?



Tips on Writing a Grant

Is the value of the project outcome proportionate to the funds being spent; are you getting value for money? Measure the value in social and economic terms (eg new pool will improve community health which will reduce the burden on medical infrastructure).

Do you have a business or strategic plan that has identified the project as something that needs to be done (if so included this as part of the reason for the project)? Does your local council's strategic or community plan identify the same issues your project is trying to solve?

Why do you need grant funds for your project; have you checked other funding avenues eg fundraising, other grant funding organisations, private business sponsorship or bank loan?

What will you do if you do not get the grant?

Support for the Project

A grant provider wants to help as many people as they can so obtain letters of support from people who will utilise the new project when it is completed.

Consider: The people who will provide a letter of support, will they also help with the projects development (through cash or in-kind assistance) or are they planning on using the new project regularly when completed?

The Plan

In developing a project plan you will need to describe the method in which you are going to achieve your project. Make sure you cover all the things you need to do, including achieving approvals for development, and place each in a achievable timeline.

Consider: What is the project and what will it do to meet every problem that you have identified as an issue?

Where will the project happen (include local council and town site, and be reasonably exact)?

Where will the project cover (will its impact extend nationally, state wide, regionally, council area or local area)?

If you are planning to build or renovate have you got local council development approval? Who owns the land you are building on do you have to sign a lease for the use of this land (you will need to provide lease documentation)?

Who are the people who make up the working group/or steering committee?

What skills do you need to implement the project?



Tips on Writing a Grant

What needs to be done first, middle and last, these can be considered as milestones (eg project manager hired, ground preparation completed, pool concreting completed, painting finished, shade umbrellas put in).

Put a timeframe with your plan by adding start and finishing dates to all the milestones. Be realistic!

Start date – make sure you have left enough time for your grant application to be assessed, remember you cannot start spending money before your grant application is approved.

Completion date – funding contracts usually add an extra month to your completion date as a precautionary measure (just in case the builder breaks his arm on a skiing holiday right before he intends to start work on your project).

Outcomes

Government departments are focused on outcomes as these define the long-term results from the project. It is important that the outcomes noted can be measured as you will need to address these in the evaluation of the project.

Consider: What are the outcomes for each beneficiary of the project

 How can each outcome be measured (survey, number, quantitative data)?

 When will you take the measurement (4 months, 3 years)?

 Do not underestimate the value of surveys, discussion groups and interviews to provide information.

Budget

All grant providers want to see exactly where there money is going to be spent and what you are going to put into the project also to complete the project.

Include: Any money your organisation has saved for the project and where it will be spent.

 Funds from other grants you have applied for and where these will be spent

 In-kind assistance you have been offered (voluntary labour or donated materials) and where these will be applied in the project

 Recent quotes from tradesmen and/or contractors.

Use the following budget sheet to estimate your costs and allocate funding.



RDA-Riverina

Tips on Writing a Grant

Consider:

Some grants will only fund part of your project, so identify which cost components best fits within what the grant guidelines main focus.

Present a clear, concise budget that is outlined in such a manner as to pass the scrutiny of both a public accountant and someone qualified in the area you are working.

Don't inflate the size of your request in the hope that even if it is cut it will still meet your needs.

All budgets have to be accurate and completely justified otherwise it will appear that no thorough research has been completed (make sure all your quotes are current).

Don't include miscellaneous or sundries budget category. Small expenses should properly be allocated for supplies, transportation, photocopying or similar category.

Beware of including minimal costs for letterhead, postage, photocopying and utilities, if not essential to project operations. The funding body could perceive these expenses as part of normal operating costs and view relatively trivial line items as artificial benefit information.

Use only whole numbers (no cents) with proper formatting: \$1,234 (not 1234).

Cost Item	Estimated Cost (\$ GST Exclusive)	Funds sought from THE GRANT (\$ (GST excl)	Other Funding Partners / Applicant Contributions		
			\$ (GST excl)	Type (cash/in-kind)	Name of funding partner or self funding
Wages, salary and superannuation	\$	\$	\$		
Labour on-costs	\$	\$	\$		
Consultant/ Contractor	\$	\$	\$		
Travel	\$	\$	\$		
Materials	\$	\$	\$		
Equipment Hire/Lease	\$	\$	\$		
Utilities (water, electricity	\$	\$	\$		
Audit	\$	\$	\$		
Evaluation	\$	\$	\$		
Other Costs	\$	\$	\$		
TOTAL (\$)	\$	\$	\$		



Project Sustainability

A grant provider wants to make sure that after the project is complete that you do not need to make further grant applications to keep achieving the projects outcomes.

- Consider*
- What are the risks associated with the project?
 - What could happen to prevent the project from coming to fruition?
 - What are the ongoing costs and how will you pay for them (rent, electricity, water, maintenance, wages, insurance)?
 - Who will be managing the new program/facility? Do these people have the necessary skills and knowledge?
 - Who will be responsible for the project (ie be the proponents of the application, receive the money and be responsible for the results)?
 - Have people committed to using the new program/facility, how often will they use it and how much will they be charged to use it?
 - While the project is in development is the organisation/group still able to achieve an income?
 - What does the organisation need to do to make the results of the project last?
 - If you are building on land that is privately owned how will you guarantee that the owner of the land will not sell after the project has been completed?

Credibility of your organisation

This is similar to a personal CV. The grant provider needs to know about your groups previous accomplishments to insure that you have the capabilities to complete this project.

- Consider:*
- Has your organisation been involved in a similar sized project before? Did you receive a grant for this project also? Did you complete the project on time and within budget?
 - Can your organisation provide evidence of good financial management for the past 5 years?
 - You may need to provide a list of the committee members and what experience each has.



Project Evaluation

After all your hard work how will you know if the project does what it was designed to do, helping people in need?

- Consider:*
- What will be the results at the end and when will the results be known?
 - How will you know that the project has been successful; what are the performance measures (ie number of people using facility per year)?
 - Get measurable results as they have more impact e.g. increased number of visitors or visitor satisfaction surveys.

Writing the Application

Always keep in mind who is going to read your application. Grant providers receive hundreds of submissions; assessors have to read all applications and provide a summary of the project and sometimes recommendations to the decision makers. Remember they have no idea of the project and will usually have no familiarity with your organisation or location. Think of your application like a business proposal, you have to sell it to them.

Don'ts

- Don't use emotive language, abbreviations, jargon, clichés or terminology that may confuse.
- Don't leave questions unanswered.
- Don't waffle on to pad out your application; use short sentences and short paragraphs.
- Don't dwell on the problems, focus on the solutions.
- Don't imply you have a "right" to a grant.

Do's

- Be succinct and clear in what you say in the application.
- Reinforce your need and the benefits throughout the application.
- Use statistics to back up the need for the project.
- Attach and use supporting document to back up the need for your project or identify where the idea came from eg Council Social & Community and/or Management plans, strategic plans, feasibility studies, surveys
- Get letters of support for your project, especially from those who are willing to provide cash and in-kind support. Also letters from local MP's, Council, Business groups, community groups etc.



Tips on Writing a Grant

Use the same terminology that the words in the guidelines use.

Be positive (use “will” not “might” or “maybe”) and avoid uncertain words like believe, hope, anticipate, etc.

Keep within the application guidelines word limit.

Explain any benefits that the funding body may receive.

Tailor your submission to each particular organisation you are seeking funds from.

Be aware of the appearance and readability; make sure it’s legible.

Use techniques such as paragraph headings, topic sentences, contents pages and appendices but don’t overdo the formatting.

Always have your draft submission read by another person, preferably someone not involved in your project but familiar with the grant guidelines.

Grant Jargon

Methodology:	The project plan indicating what is to be achieved and how, in chronological order.
Milestones:	Tasks which must be completed before moving on to the next stage of the project (construction of pool).
Output:	The physical results of the project; achievement of milestones (pool constructed).
Inputs:	Resources used to build/ create the project, both labour and materials.
Sustainability:	How will the project be maintained and operate into the future.
Objectives:	Give specific statements of what needs to be accomplished for the project to be successful; these should be measurable (local schools use pool for swimming lessons).
Outcomes:	The long term benefits the project will provide (improved community health, increased community activities).
Performance Indicator:	Type of measure of performance. Usually related to costs and timing or milestones to ensure the project is on track (students competing at state swimming competitions).
Performance Measure:	Real outcome from project. Identifies the actual difference the project has made through collecting quantitative data (5% increase in number of students qualifying for under-13 state swimming competitions).
Rationale:	What lead to the problem that the project is going to fix?
Viability (applicant):	You organisation skills and expertise in undertaking previous projects; also show how you have successfully managed funds for these projects.



Tips on Writing a Grant

Viability (project): Present evidence of good planning in timing, methodology and costing, particularly in terms of value for money; show how the project will be completed on time and within budget.

Writing References

Writing a submission

http://www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au/finding_funds/submissions/wrsubm.html

Writing a Funding Proposal

http://www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au/finding_funds/submissions/ptkt.html

Grant-writing tools for non-profit organisations

<http://www.npguides.org/>

Grant References

Community Builders

Grant database includes both government and non-government grants

<http://www2.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au/funding/programs/>

Our Community

Private grant database

<http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/index.jsp>

Grants Link

Federal government grant database

<http://www.grantslink.gov.au/>

