

Making a Good Application – Hints & Tips

Raising funds from external sources is about selling your ideas to someone who has the means to help you make them happen. Before you start writing letters and filling in forms, there are a number of questions you need to ask of the scheme/project.

How do you know there is a need for your project?.....Do you have the support of your members, users and community?.....What difference will the project make?.....What makes it unique?.....What are the impacts and intended outcomes?

Be Prepared – Do your Research

- Research potential funders and read their funding criteria. What are their main objectives and what motivates their grant making and priorities?
- Who do you approach and how do you ask? Do they encourage personal contact or is everything available on their website?
- What is the method of application? – A letter or application form? – Are there any deadlines?
- Do they favour capital or revenue grants?
- Make sure you will be able to answer any questions about the scheme if asked by the funder.

Making Your Case

Think about the following information before you start form filling.

- Your selling points – the importance of the scheme/project.
- Facts and figures to support your ideas – provide evidence of need.
- The track record of the organisation – what resources/services do you already provide.
- Evidence that you can carry out the proposed work.
- Good presentation

Application Letters

- **Be positive** – Trusts want to fund projects that are likely to be successful so try to get across how valuable the project will be and how it will meet the needs (or a specific need) of the community.
- **Be concise** – Do not write more than 2 sides of A4.
- **Be confident** – try to show that you have already raised some money – ideally at least 25% - 30%
- **Do your research and be specific** – tell the trust about your project and how it fits their funding criteria. Tell them how much money you need and what the money will be spent on. Check exactly what information the trust want you to send with the application e.g. accounts, business plan etc
- **Address your letter to a specific person** – Never use 'Dear Sir/Madam', always find out who the named contact is. (The information provided by Support Services in Manchester from the Trust Funding Website always lists a named contact)

You will need to tailor applications, so that you highlight the aspects of your project which fit the criteria of particular funders - NEVER SEND GENERAL APPEAL LETTERS.

Application Forms

- **Read** the guidelines/funding criteria.
- Make a note of any **supporting material** required by the funder – and don't forget to enclose it when you send the form.
- **Practice** writing your application on a photocopied version of the form.
- **Answer** every question. If you can't, explain why.
- If the form is available on the internet, complete it online and email it. Otherwise, use black ink or type your answers and send it to the named contact.
- **Check** the deadline for returning the form. Late applications will be ignored.
- **Photocopy** the completed form before you send it off.

Assessing your Applications

- If possible ask someone from outside your group to read through applications to check that it is clear, succinct and that you haven't missed out any obvious points. Support Services in Manchester will read through Landfill Tax Credit Scheme applications and provide feedback.

And finally.....what is so important and special about you and why should anyone want to support your work?

As a church we sometimes have to overcome prejudices and prove ourselves, and the services we provide, to secular funders.

- Build up your credibility by inviting funders to come and look at what you do and what you need to do to meet the requirements of your users and community.
- Make the most of personal contacts. Do any members of the congregation know the trustees of local charitable trusts? Do you have contact with any local companies who may wish to support your project?
- Make sure you differentiate between your religious aims and community/public benefits while maintaining equal opportunities and access for all.