



FUNDING GUIDE 10: Making applications for funding

Ten top tips for writing a successful funding application

1. First check you are eligible to apply (*with larger funders you can often phone and speak to the Grants Officer*).
2. Be clear and concise. Don't write too much but write it well.
3. Know your audience - but do not assume they have any level of knowledge about you and your project. Back up everything you say with evidence (*i.e. national statistics or surveys/consultations you have undertaken*).
4. Clearly state what the outcomes will be. What will change as a result of your project? Why should the funder be excited by this? (*One Grants Officer told me she reads all applications mentally asking 'So what?' throughout and often the question goes unanswered. The applicant lists all the great things the project will do (repair the roof, add toilets and a kitchen, employ a youth worker) but the funder is still left asking 'So what?' Spell out what will change because of the activities your project will undertake, and why this matters.*)
5. Include Full Cost Recovery in your budget but also detail any in-kind or community contributions.
6. Identify any potential problems or risks and how you anticipate responding to them should they develop.
7. Ask someone who doesn't know about the project to read through your applications before you submit them. Give the person the questionnaire attached. Do they understand the message you are trying to deliver?
8. If you include letters of support from local leaders, make sure they are informed and clear about the project. Provide them with a copy of the completed application form(s) so that they know how you are pitching the case to different funders.
9. Demonstrate good governance; that your organisation is well run and can (by implication) manage this new project successfully.
10. Ensure the application is in by the deadline AND includes EVERYTHING the funder requires. Sounds simple but it's amazing how often applicants trip up on this point!

How well do you all know your project?

It could be interesting to get your appeal committee to complete the boxes overleaf – and compare your answers!

Our project aims to:

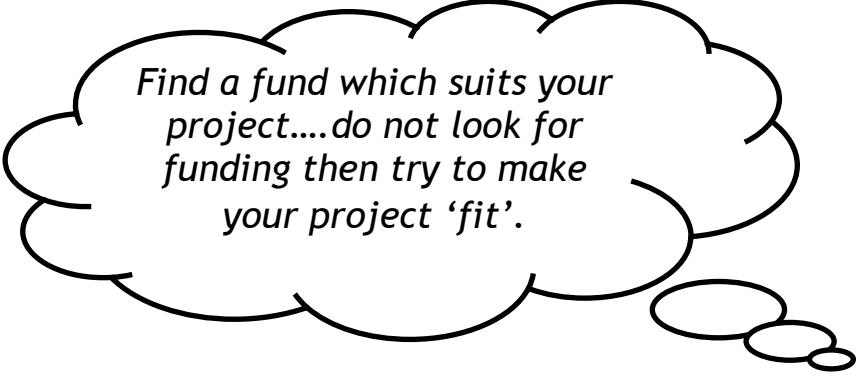
Our project will have this impact:

Our project is needed because:

How can you prove the project is required?

Here are some ideas:

National statistics
Survey/questionnaire
Case studies
Pilot project
Local strategies
Letters of support



Find a fund which suits your project....do not look for funding then try to make your project 'fit'.

Here are some examples....

Instead of writing 'Many elderly people feel isolated and our pensioners' coffee mornings offer them a place to meet other people...' try to offer something like:

'Research shows that elderly people are more likely to suffer from feelings of isolation than the general population; one in five people over the age of 65 is alone for more than 12 hours a day (Age UK Survey). We carried out a survey in our community which confirmed Age UK's findings; of our 200 respondents, over half were over 65 and of these, 34% lived alone. We offered respondents a list of possible activities to rank in order of preference and an informal weekly social gathering scored top.'

Or: *'The Area Community Plan carried out by our Local Council identified a desire from local people to raise the profile of their heritage and culture; the planned heritage centre will meet this need.'*

Aims, outcomes and outputs

When writing a funding application, you will often be asked to identify your aims, outcomes and outputs. It is therefore fundamental that you are able to differentiate between them. Outcome and output are most often confused, and to add into the jargon mix, outcomes can also be subdivided into hard and soft. It is important that you understand the difference between these both when writing the bid and when evaluating and monitoring the project.

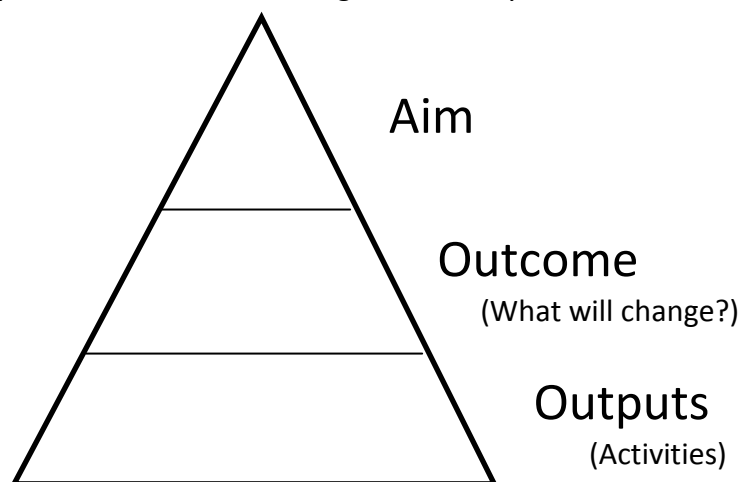
Outcomes: these are also sometimes called impact assessments. Outcomes measure the **difference** that has been made through the project. For example: *'Through this scheme, 50 people have given up smoking.'*

Outputs: sometimes useful to consider in terms of a production analogy, these are the tangible activities that have happened during the project. For example: *'Through this scheme, 100 people attended a course about the dangers of smoking.'*

Hard outcomes: these are the tangible differences that have been made as a result of a project which are measurable. For example: *'Through this scheme, 50 people have given up smoking.'*

Soft outcomes: these are sometimes incidental to the hard outcome but are nevertheless positive differences which have been made during the life of the project. For example: *'Through this scheme, 50 people have given up smoking and have increased self-confidence as a result.'*

It might help you to think about this diagrammatically:



Consider the examples in the table below and discuss whether each one is an example of a hard (measurable) outcome, a soft outcome or an output (activity):

Statement:	Outcome or output?
500 young people will attend our project	
Young people will have increased confidence	
Young people will be able to work as a team and be more employable	
Creating positive relationships between parents and children, increasing self-esteem and aspirations	
Young people will receive advice on careers	
260 young people will have the opportunity to go on holiday	
36 young people will be more independent as a result of the summer scheme by October 2001	

Checking the application form

Be sure to spend some time checking the application form. Most funds are considerably over-subscribed and therefore any failure to complete the form correctly could mean that it is thrown out at the first hurdle. Some funders will provide a checklist with the form; go through that to ensure you have fulfilled all the requirements. If you're not sure about something it is better to phone the grants officer to double check rather than to hope it will be ok!

Another useful technique is to ask a couple of people who know nothing or very little about your project to read over it and see what they think. Provide them with a questionnaire such as the one and see how far you are delivering effectively the message which you want to deliver.

Monitoring and reporting

So often a successful funding bid is seen as the end of the process, whereas in fact effective monitoring and evaluation is paramount. Monitoring and evaluation can help you prove you have achieved your anticipated outcomes, can help you learn from less successful elements, can make your project more sustainable and can help you with future grant applications.

Some funders will have specific monitoring and reporting requirements. Make sure you know about these before you start your project because you may need to do some kind of base-line survey so that you can measure what has changed.

Some funders may want to visit and see your project in action. Be proud of this, and don't be afraid to admit any mistakes; often funders are only too glad to learn from projects so that they can help other projects to succeed.

Even if you don't have to report to funders, do carry out your own monitoring so that you know yourselves whether your project achieved what you intended. Be clear what indicators you will use to evaluate success before you begin. You may find you achieve outcomes you did not expect too.

It's also worth keeping a file of newspaper cuttings and photos of events, feedback from beneficiaries, short case studies and progress reports throughout the life of the project. If you collect these along the way, you will amass some good evidence of what works and what doesn't which will really help future funding applications. It will also remind you of different stages of your project's achievements – it's amazing what you can forget!

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These Funding Guides have been developed by a "Good Practice" group of the National Stewardship Committee of the Church of England and are intended to support your church's fundraising. They are available on-line at www.parishresources.org.uk/funding or at www.churchcare.org.uk/funding.php

Questionnaire for people reading your funding application

What were your general impressions (circle any of the words that apply and add your own)?

positive interesting professional friendly credible clear logical muddled confident
well-argued reasonable boring tired cynical opportunistic too long too short sloppy
needed too glossy type too small type too big pompous spelling mistakes apologetic
depressing untidy vague complacent too informal full of emotional blackmail
full of jargon inspiring has clear sections convincing too demanding grovelling
committed easy to read patronising comprehensive

What would you say the project is trying to achieve?

Why is the project needed?

Is there anything about the project you do not understand?

Are there any ways you think this application could be improved?

Any other comments: _____

Thank you very much.