

Funding: Writing effective applications

A well thought out and focused application will always stand out. Allocate 80% of your time to planning (use the Connected Voice information sheet “Are you ready to fundraise” as a guide). Use the tips below to help improve your funding applications.

All types of application

- Research the funder – What are their current priorities? What have they funded in the past? How much do they usually give? Use the funder’s website for guidance.
- Use bullet points wherever possible and do not stray from the point.
- Make sure your application is readable – at least 10 point size text in an easy to read font e.g. Arial
- Do a draft first then have someone from outside your organisation comment on the draft copy. Connected Voice can help with this.
- The signatory or main contact should be reasonably senior and easy to contact during the day. Display their status within your organisation e.g. chair, secretary. Make sure they know about the application and have access to all the information they might need and are able to give informed answers to questions.
- Enclosures – What has the funder asked for? (they differ!). Make sure you include all of it with the application (a common complaint from funders is that applicants send in incomplete applications). If guidance is unclear include: a detailed budget for the project, your latest accounts/ annual report and your governing document/ constitution (unless you are a registered charity) but keep it to a minimum (you can mention that other supporting information is available on request eg an evaluation).
- Keep a record of when applications are sent and the outcome – it helps when planning future applications. Also many funders restrict how soon you can reapply.
- Always respond quickly if you are asked for more information.
- Always say thank you / acknowledge receipt if you are successful and make sure you send monitoring reports in promptly (if you are unsure of any of the requirements, always check before spending any of the money).

Filling in application forms

Read the Applicants Guidelines or FAQs carefully before you even begin the application. If you have issues with doing this online, do let the funder know – paper versions are sometimes available. Make sure you read all the available supporting information first.

Have all your necessary attachments or enclosures to hand first. (See the Connected Voice information sheet Are you ready to fundraise?)

Read the WHOLE application form before you start, make sure you understand all of it and what each question is about. If you are unclear, contact the funder direct or ask Connected Voice for help. If you only seem to be able to fill out and view a page at a time ask the funder if there is a way to view the whole thing first. Or complete a dummy form, but DO NOT press send.

Answer the questions asked – do not include information that is not relevant to answering the question. Use the amount of space allowed / maximum word count as a guide to how much detail to include – don't write extra unless invited to.

Remember you need to give a clear, compelling and full case for funding your idea or project

Tips for writing letters of application

Refer to the information and guidance supplied by the funder.

Be focused, write in a simple and concise way and sell your project to the funder

Many funders have a preferred format. When the information is vague don't use this as an opportunity to write page after page about your project.

Set proper time aside to make a decent application – even though this may mean closing your service for half a day. This is an investment in the future – without funding, your service may not be able to run at all

Always approach a funding application optimistically. If you anticipate rejection, this will unconsciously come across to the funder reading it.

Fundraising is highly competitive, and it is worth taking time to plan your work and applications carefully – focused well written applications always stand out.

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