

Writing effective funding applications

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

For all types of application

Research the funder

- What are current priorities?
- What have they funded in the past?
- How much do they usually give?
- Use the funder’s website or if they are not online use funding directories, the charity commission’s website and annual reports

Write Clearly

- Use bullet points wherever possible and do not waffle
- Make sure your application is readable (at least point 10 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. NCVS can help with this
- The signatory or main contact should be easy to contact during the day. Display their status within your organisation e.g. chair, secretary. Ensure they understand the application, have access to all the information and are able to give informed answers
- Enclosures – What has the funder asked for? If guidance is unclear include: a detailed budget for the project, latest accounts/ annual report and governing document/ constitution 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)

- **Make sure it is complete – check and double check that you have responded to all questions or written a clear letter of application**

Filling in application forms

- Download the guidelines as well as the application form. If you have issues with this let the funder know – paper versions are usually available. Make sure you read all the available supporting information first
- Read the **WHOLE application form** before you start, do you understand all of it? What is each question is about? If you are unclear contact the funder direct or ask Newcastle CVS 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. If you have a negative response let Newcastle CVS know and we will try to help
- 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**

Writing letters of application

- Refer to the information and guidance supplied by the funder
- Be focused, write in a simple and concise way on headed notepaper (which has your charity number displayed) and sell your project to the funder using no more than 2 sides of A4
- Many funders have a preferred format. When the information is vague don't use this as an excuse to write pages about your project or a "full on begging letter" as this is more likely to find its way into the bin. Try using the template on the next page as a guide:

Letter template:

- **Letterhead** make one if your organisation doesn't already have one
- **Project title** make it relate to the project you are fundraising for
- **Summary** what do you want to do? Why? What difference will you make? How much you are asking for?
- **Background information about your organisation** when did you become a charity/ constituted organisation? Past achievements: give evidence of your track record; where you operate; what you do; why? Be concise and keep it brief
- **The problem or need** back up statements about the need for your project with hard evidence, refer to up-to-date statistics, policy documents, consultations and studies
- **Your proposal** what do you want to do? How will it work? Who will benefit? How will you use the money?
- **How will you measure your impact?** What changes/difference will your work make?
- **Why you?** Establish your credibility. Why should a funder trust you? Do you have links with established people, the local authority or other organisations? Can you demonstrate a good knowledge of other work in your area?
- **Why have you approached this particular funder?** Clearly explain how you fit the funder's priorities
- **Tell them the total cost and how much you want from them.** Where is the rest of the money is coming from. Who else are you applying to? Have you raised any money yourself?
- The **main contact** should also **sign the letter** (see information previous)

Remember

- Fundraising is highly competitive so take time to plan your work and applications carefully – focused well written applications always stand out
- Newcastle CVS has a Funding Advice Officer who can offer guidance in every part of the process, to find out more email **fundadvice@cvsnewcastle.org.uk**

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