

Developing the long term
sustainability of our region

Grants

Step 3: Applying for the grant

Writing winning grant applications is a skill that is developed with practice. However, there are some general guidelines that you can apply immediately.

Put yourself in the readers shoes

The person who receives the application will probably read hundreds a year. Make yours stand out to this person by ensuring it:

- Is clear, structured and well-written
- Directly addresses their criteria and desired outcomes
- Gives all the information they require, without going overboard
- Draws on qualitative and quantitative evidence where possible
- Is confident!

Know the guidelines and rules

Some grants request the application to be written in a particular format or structure. Make sure that you read and understand any instructions carefully and attend any meetings or teleconferences provided.

Identify and address any issues or risks

The grant provider wants to make sure that their money will be in capable hands. Don't ignore any possible risks or issues. Rather, identify these, but develop confident mitigation strategies to address them if they do arise.

Develop a clear argument for the project need

You need to convince the grant provider of the need for the project. Draw upon data and statistics, tell evocative stories or anecdotes, and provide evidence of community support. Don't just focus on the immediate need, but describe the long term impacts of the project that may extend beyond the immediate region.

Avoid politics

Make sure that your grant application is apolitical. Even if you don't agree with the grant providers approach or policies, keep this out of the application. Get another person to read it, as sometimes tones can be misconstrued.

Show them you are best positioned to meet the need

As well as establishing the need for the project, convince the author that you have the best solution. Describe the organisations experiences and expertise and the partnerships you will draw upon to deliver the project. Be confident and positive, but don't ignore the risks or issues.

Assume the reader has some knowledge, but isn't an expert

Try to keep your writing intellectual by assuming you are addressing a peer. However, if you use jargon or abbreviations, don't assume the reader understands this. Include footnotes or brief explanations of technical terms where you feel they are required.

Ask someone else to read the application when you have finished!

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The components of the grant application

The below points are helpful guidelines to follow when actually writing the application:

- Check your grammar and spelling
- Use consistent formatting and fonts
- Use table, images and graphs if possible
- Label all tables, images or graphs
- Write in short paragraphs with sub-headings
- Go from simple concepts to more complex concepts
- Use consistent themes and arguments
- Don't be unnecessarily repetitive

Generally the grant provider will provide rules and guidelines for the application. Make sure that you stick to these; the following are tips if these are not provided.

Cover page and cover letter

Some funders will provide you with a generic cover sheet. If they do— great! If they don't, make sure to include one. Remember, the purpose of a cover sheet is to tell the reader all the important information about your application. It should include:

- The name of the grant provider
- The name and contact details of your organisation, and a contact person
- The amount of financial assistance requested
- The purpose of the application

Even though you have a cover page, you should also include a cover letter from the CEO or Chairman. This letter could remind the grant provider of previous conversations, relationships or successes.

Executive summary

This is the first thing the reader sees, and is therefore important to get right. The Executive Summary should tell the reader about the project in a paragraph; establishing the need, and proposing your solution. It should be engaging and make the reader interested in reading onwards. It should also help them to gain an immediate understanding of your project and desired outcomes.

Identify the issue

The purpose of this section is two-fold; to demonstrate your awareness of the problem, and to argue for the need for its resolution. The issue to be addressed should be identified as easily and straightforward as possible. Use statistics or anecdotal evidence where available, but use them only if they add value, not in an attempt to get an emotional reaction.

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The components of the grant application

Project outline

This is the most important part of the submission. Make sure that you address staffing requirements, actual numbers or targets, target audiences, reporting methodologies, Key Performance Indicators and objectives. Include any rationales for these decisions and methodologies that will be applied, as well as strategies for engagement or communication. Include a timeline or schedule for activities. Be realistic about what your organisation can achieve when setting out numbers or targets.

Sustainability

Grant providers can be wary about providing funding to organisations that will require ongoing funding. It is important to let them know that you have a sustainability plan should they not provide ongoing funding. This may not be required if the project has a specified end date. Otherwise, consider possibilities such as fundraising, memberships, events etc.

Budget

The best way to start a budget is to go through the project outline and list all the costs involved. These include staffing, equipment, consultants, venue hire, technology costs, stationery and office costs etc. When in doubt, speak to the treasurer or accountant in your organisation. Once you have developed this list, you can start to assign some figures and costs to these. The most important thing to remember is not to under-estimate! Draw upon past projects, seek quotes and speak to your accountant if required. Also, make sure that you include all costs associated, regardless of if you are asking the grant provider to fund them. They need to be reassured that you have considered everything. An example budget may look like this:

Item	Cost
Venue hire	\$2000
Food for lunches: \$150 per weekly session x 40 weeks	\$6000
Course materials	\$7000
TOTAL	\$15,000

Outcomes

This section is not about defining the project objectives or Key Performance Indicators, but rather focusing on the perceived benefits to the individuals and the community. This may include things relating to behaviour, attitude, perceptions, economical changes, environmental impacts etc. Grant providers will want reports to include some form of strategy for measuring the outcomes, so be sure to include this component.

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The grants checklist

Grant application checklist

Language

- The language is consistent, specific, accurate and clear
- The proposal is written in an active voice, is positive and is in the first person
- The proposal does not use bureaucratic language
- I have checked the document for typing errors and bad grammar

Formatting

- All the pages are numbered
- I have followed all the grant providers formatting instructions, including margins, font size, spacing etc.
- The text is broken up by tables, charts, images etc. and looks professional and inviting
- All the charts are labelled and easy to read
- If there are forms, all the blank spaces have been filled out
- All statistics and statements are referenced
- All acronyms are spelt out in full

Content

- I have addressed all items in the grant providers guidelines directly
- The proposal has a clear, one page executive summary
- I have included a cover letter that is clear and concise
- My project outline has a schedule, information on methodology, partnerships and roles
- My proposal has a clear conclusion
- My budget is accurate and adds up
- I am prepared to defend any costs included in the budget
- I have identified all risks and developed mitigation plans
- My application addresses sustainability
- My project outline specifies realistic and measurable project objectives, with a rundown of benefits
- I clearly explain processes and procedures for reporting
- I have demonstrated that my project is unique and innovative