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Writing a funding application

Writing a letter of application or filling in an application form

This sheet includes general guidelines for writing funding applications, how to write a letter of application and how to complete an application form.

There is also a glossary at the end to help you to untangle some of the jargon funders use.

You will be much more likely to write successful applications if you plan your activities well before you apply for funding, and if you choose the right funder to apply for. Use our information sheet on *Planning a funding application* to help you with these before you start writing applications.

General guidelines for writing funding applications

- **Always keep your project plan in mind**. Don't get carried away and commit yourself to a project you won't be able to run even if it sounds better in the application.
- **Write in plain English**. Use short sentences and avoid acronyms and jargon. There is no need to use formal or flowery language. Remember that you are describing your work to someone who has never met you or seen what you do. See our information on *How to write clearly* for some more tips.
- **Be specific about what you plan to do.** For example, rather than saying "we will run sports activities for children", say "we will run weekly football sessions and weekly hockey sessions for 8-11 year olds over a six month period. Each session will be 2 hours long and will be attended by 15 children."
- **Focus your application on the funder's priorities.** For example, imagine your group runs a dance project for local people: if you are applying to a funder that prioritises projects which help people keep fit and healthy, focus on the fact that dance is good exercise. If you are applying to a funder that prioritises projects which promote arts and music activities, focus on the art and music element of the dancing.
- **Provide evidence that your work is needed.** See our website section on *Useful research for fundraising* for some links to sources of evidence and people who can help with research.

Brighton & Hove City Council

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- **Include all the information the funder has asked for and any additional information or documents they require.** Missing things out might mean your application gets rejected automatically.
- **Take extra care to meet the deadline.** Late applications will not be considered, even if they are fantastic!
- **Make your budget as specific as possible.** Get quotes for everything you will need to pay for, so that it is accurate.
- **Do not include any non-specific items in your budget**, such as "contingency costs" or "miscellaneous".
- **Do not apply to more than one funder for the same costs at the same time.** If you are successful in both applications you will end up having to turn down one of the funders. This could damage your chances of getting funding from them in future. The only exception to this is applications to very small trusts. It sometimes makes sense to write to several trusts for funding for the same costs, as each one may only be able to make a small contribution towards these costs.

Writing a letter of application

If a funder has a standard application form, use it. If not, you will need to write a letter.

There is a sample letter below. If you are writing letters to local businesses to ask for donations, you will also find our information on *Fundraising from Local Businesses* useful.

Focus your letter on the aims and criteria of the organisation you are applying to, and how your project or activities fit into these. Do not send standard letters. Your letter should be:

- On headed paper.
- Addressed personally to the named contact for the funding body.
- Short and to the point. Keep your letter to two sides of A4. Focus on providing relevant information about your group, what you want to do, and why it fits into the priorities of the funder.
- Written in plain language. Do not use jargon or abbreviations.
- Signed by a member of your group who can be contacted for further information.

Some funders will tell you what to include in your letter. If they don't, use the following list as a guide. Have a look at *Planning a funding application* for more help with preparing this information.

- Your project title if you have one.
- A summary of the project, and how much money you are applying for.
- An introduction to your group including your aims, key achievements to date, support from other bodies.
- A clear description of the project or activities you are planning.
- Why the project is important and how it will benefit its users.

- A summary of how you will monitor and evaluate the project. See our information sheets on *Reporting to a Funder* and on *Monitoring and Evaluation* for more tips on how to do this.

Finish the letter with an offer for them to contact you for more information.

You should attach the following documents to your letter:

- Project budget, including all the costs of the project, which bits you are asking them for funding for, and where the rest of the money will come from.
- Bank details for your organisation.
- A governing document (e.g. constitution / trust deed / memorandum and article of association).
- Your most recent accounts.

We have information on *Budgets for community groups*, *Constitutions* and several information sheets on looking after your group's money and getting your accounts independently examined.

Sample application letter

Below is an example of a letter of application to a funder. Remember, your letter must be specific to your project and specific to the requirements of the funder you are writing to. This is just to give you some ideas about how to structure it.

Your name and role
Your organisation's name
Address
Date

Recipient's name
Job title
Organisation
Address

Dear Jane Bloggs

KidsClub Application for AN Other Fund

We would like to make an application for £1000 from the AN Other Fund. We are a group of local people in Anytown, and we have recently set up a community group running free sports activities for children in the area.

We were mainly inspired to start the club because some of our children often get into trouble at school, and don't find it very easy to make friends. We have 16 parents involved, plus 6 other local volunteers. Over the last four months we have run weekly activity sessions in the park, which have been attended by over 40 local children.

We formally adopted our constitution on 10th July 2012. This is enclosed. Our aims are:

- Provide a safe, fun environment where all local children aged 7-11 are welcome.
- Encourage children to take part in physical activity and develop healthy habits and lifestyles.
- Provide a fun focus for parents and children to play together and forge relationships with other local families.

- Provide particular support for families whose children struggle with school, or have difficulty making friends, by linking children up with individual one-to-one volunteers who support them to access the sessions and build friendships with other children.

We have begun our activities in the summer months. By borrowing equipment from a local primary school, and running our sessions in the park, we have kept our costs very low.

Our weekly sessions have become very important to those involved. One parent said "Taking part in KidsClub means that my son has had a chance to make friends. He is sometimes bullied at school, and finds it hard to socialise. KidsClub has made him much happier and this has helped his confidence and he is now even enjoying school more."

We want to provide a continuous experience for the families involved, and get more people involved. For this reason we would like to run indoor activities from November 2012 - April 2013.

We are applying to AN Other fund for £1000 to cover the costs of hiring a sports hall for weekly activities, plus three swimming sessions and one Christmas ice skating session.

We will provide feedback forms after every activity.

We are also requesting money to pay for printing leaflets, to publicise the project to more families. Our bank details are: Anytown Bank Account Name: Anytown Kids Club Sort Code 010101 Account number 09010901

We have enclosed a copy of our constitution, and a bank statement. Please see below a budget for our project, showing how we intend to spend the money we have asked for.

We do not yet have annual accounts, as we have not been running for long enough. We will get our accounts externally examined at the end of the year. Since setting up our bank account in August, we have received £47 in donations from supporters. We have spent £36 on equipment hire, refreshments and publicity. We have been able to access a free meeting room at a primary school. Our current bank balance is £11.

Please don't hesitate to get in touch if you would like any more information. Thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Your full name (Chair)

Budget

Hall hire (for 24 weeks, at £20 per week)	£480
Swimming sessions x3 (for 40 children £1.50 per child per session)	£180
Christmas ice skating (for 40 children, at £5 entry per child, and for 10 adult volunteers at £8 entry per adult)	£280
Printing and publicity	£60
TOTAL	£1,000

Completing an application form

When you complete an application form follow these basic guidelines:

- Take care to read each question carefully and make sure your answers include specific information that is relevant to the question. Use the jargon buster at the end of this sheet to help you understand the questions.
- . Give yourself enough time to do a bit of extra research to ensure you can answer all the questions fully.
- Be clear, precise, and positive about your group and your proposed project.
- Keep in mind the funders' guidelines and criteria when you are answering the questions.
- Do not include any attachments that aren't specifically requested by the funder.
- If the form is online, write your answers in a Word document or similar, so that you can save them as you go along and share them with other people in your group.
- Ask somebody else to check your form thoroughly before you send it off.
- Keep a copy of your completed form.

What to do if you are successful

If you are offered a grant, the funder will often request further information or paperwork before they give you the money. Send this to them as soon as possible, and make sure you meet any deadlines they set for you. Failure to do so could mean you don't get the grant after all.

Read through the terms and conditions of the grant carefully. What items have they agreed to fund? Do they specify any other conditions of how the money is to be spent or handled? What kind of monitoring information do they want? How do they want it presented?

Make sure you have a system for monitoring, and start this as soon as your project or activities begin. If the funder asks you for a report, make sure you send it to them in good time, including all the information they have requested. Even if you are not asked for information, it is worth writing to funders to let them know how your project is going, and highlighting any particular successes.

Jargon busting

Beneficiaries: people who will benefit from your project.

Capital costs: items or equipment you need to buy, build or repair. These might include items for your group to use, such as bicycles or computers, or repairing or renovating a building.

Evaluation: everything you do to consider how your project is going.

You can do it on an ongoing basis – for example, by having a discussion at a committee meeting about how things are going. You can also do it at the end of the

project, by looking back and thinking about what went well and what you would improve next time.

It is important to remember what you were aiming to do at the beginning of the project when you are doing an evaluation, so that you can check to see whether you are doing what you set out to do. You can use information you gather as you are running your project, (monitoring), to help you to do your evaluation. This is why the two are often referred to together as monitoring and evaluation. Together they mean gathering information about how your project is going, and then looking at it and assessing what is going well and what could be improved.

Evidence: facts and proof that back up your claims. When applying for funding, evidence will be needed that the people your project is for are facing particular needs or problems which you project will help overcome. When reporting to a funder who has given you a grant, you may need to provide evidence that you have done what you said you would do. This could include survey responses, registers of attendance, photographs and receipts.

Indicators: the things you will measure to find out whether you are achieving your outcomes and outputs. For example, an indicator of whether you are achieving the output above might be "the number of children attending cookery sessions". An indicator of whether you are achieving the outcome above might be "responses to children's quiz about healthy eating".

Match funding: funding from more than one source for the same project. Some funders will require this.

For example, they might say "We will give you half the cost of your project, but only if you can raise the other half from another funder".

Monitoring: the methods you use to find out how your project is going. They might include taking a register of participants or doing a survey of your members.

Outcomes: the benefits that happen as a result of your work. They are the reasons for doing your project.

For example, if you are running a children's cooking project, an outcome could be: "local children have a better understanding of healthy eating and nutrition".

Outputs: what you actually do to achieve your outcomes.

So, in the example above, an output could be "running ten cookery classes for twenty local children". When funders ask what your outputs will be, they are asking what you are actually, specifically, going to do.

Qualitative data: information about what people think/feel/experience etc., about your project.

Quantitative data: information that you gather through your monitoring about things you can count, such as the number of people attending.

Revenue costs: things you need to pay for that are not physical objects or buildings. They include salary costs, refreshments, volunteer expenses, venue hire and publicity.