

How to ...write a funding letter



Introduction.

Many funding bodies, (especially trusts and foundations), do not produce application forms. Instead they require applications by letter, which outlines details of the organisation/project requiring funding. Getting the content and structure of your letter right can be time-consuming, however it is certainly worth taking time over as a good, well thought-out letter can make the difference between success and failure.

Before you write the letter

Ensure you have the concept of the project right:

Remember, it can be difficult to get funding for very innovative ideas (funders tend to be conservative).

Are you happy with the name of the group/project?:

Is it meaningful, memorable & pronounceable!

Know who you are writing to:

- Funders dislike obvious circular letters. They want to see that you have made a particular effort to write to them. Adapt the letter as much as possible to meet the interests of the particular funder.
- Find out as much as you can about the funder and ensure you know what it is they actually fund (**most funding applications fail because they do not meet the basic criteria of the funder!**)
- If possible ensure the letter is addressed to a specific person. Avoid Dear Sir/Madam.

The Letter:

- Clear, concise, readable and grammatical
- Preferably two sides of A4 only

Don't work alone, take time to write it, don't try to re-invent the wheel and don't be frightened to share information.

The Content:

Take the reader through the organisation's/project's aims, background, outcomes, delivery and resources available. Keep the content as straightforward as possible and remember, **you may understand the work of the organisation and the jargon it uses but will the funder?**

Aims

What will be achieved?

- Who will benefit? (Key target group(s)/ geographical areas)
- How will they benefit?
- How much do you need & for what purpose? (**be specific**)

Background

- Context? (Your project relating to government policies, well researched needs etc)
- Why do this? Can you prove there is a need?
- Have you done your research?
- Why does the organisation want to do it?
- Who else is doing similar work (and is there a need for all of you to be doing it!)

Outcomes

- What are the key objectives? (are they SMART objectives? i.e. Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timetabled)
- What are the key - quantitative and qualitative - targets?
- What's the end result? (Exit strategy?)

Delivery

- Who will do the work? (management committee, staff, volunteers, users?)
- How will the project be structured? (main activities, milestones with dates)
- Where will activities happen? (specific locations, geographic coverage)
- When will the project start and finish - and is this flexible? (produce a timetable)
- How will the work be monitored and evaluated?

Resources

- People?
- Things?
- Money raised and needed?

Offer to provide the potential funder with a budget. This gives them the confidence that you know what you are talking about.

And finally....

- Ask someone not involved in your project to read the letter - do they understand everything you are saying?
 - Don't forget to offer to provide the funder with further information if they require it.
 - Ensure you meet application deadlines

Suggested Reading

Writing Better Fundraising Applications— Michael Norton

The Complete Fundraising Handbook—Sam Clarke

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