

How to Apply for Funding



***A practical guide to completing funding application forms
and writing fundraising letters***



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A Practical Guide Completing Funding Application Forms and Writing Letters

This guide is meant as a simple introduction to making a fundraising application for those volunteering with, or working for, voluntary and community organisations. One of the most common concerns fundraisers express is how to produce successful funding applications. With this in mind, The Wheel has developed this document as a guide on how to apply for funding grants.

Please note:

This guide assumes that its users have already fully developed appropriate plans for the organisation and programme/project to be funded. If users have not done this yet, it is advisable to seek out assistance on strategic or project planning before starting any application. The chance of succeeding with an application, which has not been properly planned or costed, is extremely low.

This document is not meant as a guide to finding appropriate funding sources. Instead, it aims to assist fundraisers in tackling the application form or writing a letter to a range of funding bodies. The Wheel has also developed the 'Fundingpoint.ie' website, a 'one-stop' resource of funding sources for voluntary and community groups in the Republic of Ireland as a useful resource, which can help identify funders interested in funding an extensive range of activities.

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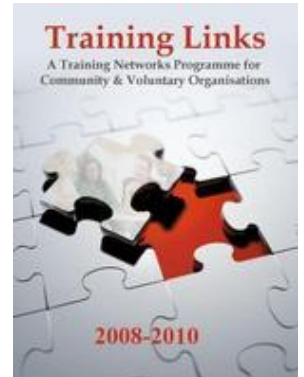
INDEX

What is a funding application?.....	4
Things to do before you start the application.....	5
Ten reasons why applications fail.....	8
Ten reasons why applications succeed.....	9
Common questions to expect and how to answer them.....	10
• Your contact details	
• What are the aims and objectives of your organisation?	
• What is the background of your organisation?	
• What activities does your organisation engage in?	
• How do you know there is a need for your project?	
• What are you applying for?	
• How does your project meet our criteria?	
• How will you monitor and evaluate the project?	
• What is the project budget?	
• Are there any in kind contributions?	
• How much are you asking for?	
• Is the project sustainable?	
Free form applications.....	19
Things to do when you have completed the application.....	22
Further resources.....	24

WHAT IS A FUNDING APPLICATION?

An application is the method by which you, the applicant, can communicate with the funding body. It is the means of describing to a funder what the need is, what you are going to do about it, how much it will cost and what outcomes you expect. Quite simply, you are presenting your case for their financial support.

Most funders, whether they are an independent grant-making trust, a corporate funder or a statutory organisation will ask for some form of a written communication before they can consider your request for funding. Only in rare instances is an application made in a different format, e.g. in the form of a video etc.



What Do Applications Look Like?

The format of applications and application procedures often vary from funder to funder. There is no standard format of application across the various funding bodies, as each funder prefers to have answers to its own specific questions that relate to its own priorities. There are however many similarities across the various funding bodies, in terms of the general information they require.

Applications fall into one of three formats:

1. Application Form: forms that have been developed by the funder, which the applicant must use to apply. Application forms can range from a simple one side of A4, to many pages long. Some funders operate a two-stage application process with a Pre-Application Form, Outline Application or Concept Letter before they invite a full application. The purpose of a Pre-Application form is to assess at an early stage if a full application is likely to succeed. It saves time and resources for both applicant and funder.

2. Letter or Report with questions defined by the Funder: instead of an application form some funders will ask applicants to answer a set of questions. These questions are usually contained within the funder's guidelines. It is often up to the applicant to determine the style of their reply (long letter with headings or covering letter plus report with headings). The funder can put a limit on the length of the letter or report.

3. Free-Form Letter or Report: other funders will just ask groups to 'apply in writing' and it is usually up to the applicant to second-guess what the funders want.

THINGS TO DO BEFORE YOU START THE APPLICATION

Before you begin to complete the form or write the letter, here are some things you should consider:

Research the Funder – Put Yourself In Their Shoes

It is important to try and understand where the funder is coming from, before you put pen to paper. The approach you take will depend on the sector the funder is from; whether they are an independent trust, a corporate body or a statutory body. Research the funder you are applying to thoroughly. Ask yourself "If I was the funder, how would I look at this application?"

Each sector can view applications with a different mentality and they will be looking from different perspectives and experiences. An independent trust can generally be more open to innovative, risk-taking and informal approaches, although this may vary from trust to trust. A corporate funder will quite often look at the bottom line of how it relates to their business. They may require more public relations and tend to fund in areas related to their business.

Applicants dealing with statutory organisations and European intermediary funding bodies have often found application processes and contact to be more bureaucratic and difficult than other sources.

Check and Confirm Eligibility

Make sure you are not wasting your time. If you suspect that you are ineligible or are unsure of your status, contact the funder first, rather than spending time on an application that is never going to get past the first post. Treat this as a priority as it may mean you need to amend your governing document or apply for charitable status before an application can be made. This can often take some time.

Choose the Appropriate Writing Style

Funders are used to receiving applications for funding so a well constructed persuasive argument is the best way to convince rather than a begging letter or hard luck story. Equally applications ought to communicate a sincere conviction that the project will make a real difference.

A balance also has to be found between including too much information and not giving enough detail in applications. Aim for concise and clear statements. Avoid jargon that neither you nor the funder will understand. Avoid referencing to much additional material if the funder expressly states it only wants the application form.

It is always better to summarise and refer to the availability of more information than stating "See attached report".

Very often the application form is the only information the selection committee get to see, so make sure this has all the relevant information. Do not assume the funder knows everything or even anything about your project or your organisation.

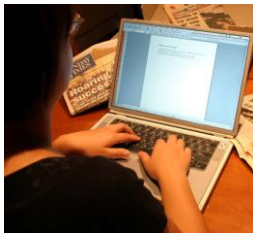
Also, do not assume that any additional attachments will be provided to all those tasked with judging the suitability of the applicant.

Prepare Your Project's Reference Material

Have to hand the information about your project you will need to complete the form. Some of the documents you may need are:

- (i) Organisation's Governing Document (e.g. memorandum and articles of association, your constitution etc)
- (ii) Annual Report and Accounts
- (iii) Project Plan
- (iv) Project Budget
- (v) List of Committee/Board Members
- (vi) Related Policy Documents
- (vii) Job Descriptions
- (viii) Evidence of Need

Check Forms and Guidelines



Make sure you have the funder's latest policies, guidelines and application forms. Try to get documents in an electronic format e.g. Word or Adobe Acrobat where possible. The form can also sometimes be scanned from a hard copy into word or adobe and used as a template.

Word processing your application is recommended. It is likely you will need to make several applications or at least work through several drafts of the same application. By typing the information, you can use it again and again. Typing the application also allows you to cut and paste information from your project plan and other sources.

You are also able to edit and restructure information using this technique. Also remember the funder has to be able to read the application, so make it easy for them.

Recruit Helpers

Don't complete the form on your own unless you have to. Get a colleague to assist or delegate tasks to volunteers and committee members. For example, the budget could be prepared by the Treasurer or Finance Officer of your organisation.

Schedule Time

It is important to set aside time when you cannot be interrupted and when you can focus your attention on making the application. Don't feel like you have to complete the whole form in one session.

It may be possible to break the form into three sections if it is heavy going:

- Session 1: Organisation Details and Contact info
- Session 2: Project Aims and Objectives, Activities and Outcomes, etc.
- Session 3: Project Budget

It would be good practice to record the key dates of the funders you have shortlisted. Important dates to include might be the deadline for receipt of applications, when the committee meets and when you might expect an outcome from your application. If you chart this on a wall planner, it may help you plan your application strategically and get a clear idea of when you can realistically expect any funding if you are successful. It also helps you to coordinate multiple applications to funders.

Assess the Form

Assess the form, question by question, to see what information the funder is looking for. If you have any doubt about what is required, phone or email them (if they allow this). Check to see if the guidelines give help on filling in the form.

If you think there is a duplicate question on the form be aware that there is probably something that you are not interpreting correctly as the funder is unlikely to asking for information to be repeated in different parts of the form. If this happens to you, phone or email them for clarification.

TEN REASONS WHY APPLICATIONS FAIL

It is helpful to be aware of the reasons why funders reject applications so you can try to avoid these pitfalls:

- 1) The applicant is not eligible for reason of its legal form, lack of charity status, size or geographical remit.
- 2) Projects are not well planned.
- 3) Applicants do not present their project clearly and concisely on the application form.
- 4) The applicant fails to demonstrate that they meet the criteria or asks for something the funder will not fund.
- 5) Applications are made without monitoring and evaluation processes in place.
- 6) The budget is problematic and/or unconvincing financial management procedures.
- 7) The applicant misses the deadline.
- 8) The form is incomplete or illegible.
- 9) The application enclosures are incomplete, inaccurate, out-of-date, contradict the application form or are simply not enclosed.
- 10) The applicant is asking for too much.

TEN REASONS WHY APPLICATIONS SUCCEED

It is also helpful to be aware of the why applications are successful:

- 1) The organisation makes an application.
- 2) The need for the project is strongly evidenced and the applicant convinces the funder that it is the best placed organisation to tackle it.
- 3) The applicant chooses the most appropriate funders to approach.
- 4) The applicant researches the funder intensively before an application is made.
- 5) The application is received by the deadline – fully completed with up-to-date annual report and accounts, governing documents, bank account details and all other relevant enclosures.
- 6) The applicant has an amiable working relationship with the funder through the application process.
- 7) The application stands out against other applications for the same pot of money and the funder can see what it is getting for its money.
- 8) The budget is accurately costed, sources of match funding are in place and the applicant asks for a realistic amount from the funder.
- 9) The applicant has good governance, management, administration and financial procedures in place.
- 10) The applicant has a good track record in delivering funded projects.

COMMON QUESTIONS TO EXPECT AND HOW TO ANSWER THEM

Your contact details

The first and usually the easiest part of the application asks for your group's name, address and telephone/fax numbers. However, think carefully about who it is that acts as the main contact for the application. A fundraiser may fill in the form but usually it should be the Coordinator/Manager, Director or Chairperson who takes responsibility for the project and they should sign the form and keep a copy.



The Manager or Chairperson (usually elected from the applicant organisation's user or client group) should show a significant interest in the application. Ensure that whoever signs the form knows and understands the application thoroughly. There is nothing worse than submitting a well-presented and well-argued application, only for the funder to discover that the contact person is vague about the project.

Also think about the possibility of adding a second contact person if the first in command is unavailable.

What are the Aims and Objectives of your Organisation?

Typical Questions:

- **Aims and Purposes of Your Organisation?**
- **What are the main activities of your group?**
- **Give a brief summary of your organisation**

Aims are defined as a statement expressing the purpose of the group and what it wants to achieve. It tells everyone why the organisation exists and the changes it wishes to bring about.

Another way of looking at aims is that they are your group's ultimate wish, which rarely changes over the course of your group's lifetime.

A common mistake is to confuse the organisation's aims with the project's aims and vice versa. Be sure you are answering the question that is being asked – not the one you are expecting them to ask.

Example: Mullingar Youth Association aims to improve the quality of life young unemployed people aged between 18-25 years within the locality.

Objectives are statements about how the organisation will achieve its aims, or how it will effect change. Think of them as clear, definable steps towards your end aim. . It is recommended that you test your objectives with the acronym 'S.M.A.R.T.E.R.' that is, your objectives should be statements that are: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timebound, Evaluated and Reviewed.

Example: Between September 2005 and August 2006, the Mullingar Youth Association will provide a work experience placement service for young unemployed people, by negotiating with local employers for ten work experience placements to be made available every three months.

What is The Background of Your Organisation?

Another frequently asked question is what is the background of your organisation. This question seeks to establish how and why it was set up and how is it governed and who by?

Background information on your group may cover a range of areas. It can include:

- how and why your group was set up
- how it is run
- what geographical area it covers
- what ethos it is based on
- what support it has within the community.

Always check through the rest of the application to see what other information is requested later. Perhaps the funder will ask you in more detail how you work with your users. Maybe the funder will ask you a more specific question about evidence of how your group is supported by the local community. You want to avoid duplicating answers because if you end up doing this it is often because you have misunderstood the question.

What Activities Does Your Organisation Engage In?

If an application form asks about your organisation's 'activities' then the funder is interested in what you are currently doing. This allows them to put your proposed project in context. Give the funder an idea of the type and breadth of work that you are currently capable of.

You do not have to go into every detail of what you do, but just enough to give the funder an overview of your work – but do quote real examples.

Example: The Mullingar Women's Action Group currently operates a number of projects for women between the ages of 18 and 25 years in the area. These include an Education and Training Programme at both introductory and intermediate levels.

The introductory level includes courses encouraging women back into the classroom, from numeracy and literacy to personal development and IT. The intermediate programme enables women to increase their skills through courses such as 'setting up your own business', financial management and marketing.

Local women see this intermediate level as their preparation for further and higher education and employment. Each week 75 women from the Mullingar area attend these classes.

How Do You Know There is a Need For Your Project?



Funders look for clear evidence of need for projects they intend to fund. Notice the change of question from wanting to know about the organisation to wanting to know about the project. You should seek to make a clear distinction between the two in your applications.

How do you know the project is needed?

Usually the 'need' experienced by a community, whether geographical or issue-based, is the main reason behind wanting to do the project. 'Need' covers things such as unemployment levels, lack of educational achievement, levels of illness, or high levels of teenagers on probation, etc.

In order to demonstrate the extent of the 'need', it is often useful to cite **statistics** from a recognised source e.g. "60% of all young men between the ages of 20 and 25 have been unemployed for over two years".

Relying solely on statistics will not portray the complete picture and current context of your project. Try to bring in a 'human' aspect, attempt to convey to the funder what life is like for one of your group's users. **Short quotes from clients** such as "My reliance on prescription medication causes more problems than it solves" can get your message and the need for your work across quite quickly and acutely. Perhaps even a case study would add to the understanding of the needs you are tackling.

Do some homework. Think about any research you have done into the issue. Maybe you have carried out **surveys**, sent out **questionnaires** or held **public meetings**. Perhaps you are using research carried out by other groups or agencies such as the HSE, universities etc. Always let the funder know that you have done your homework!

From the needs that are identified, you can begin to develop desired 'outcomes' or, where you want to be when the project is successful. More and more funders are moving to an outcome model of funding, where they will fund organisations to achieve outcomes, rather than merely succeeding on delivering outputs such as "number of people attending the course". The outcome will be expressed in more emotive terms such as "people are empowered to make decisions regarding their own welfare".

Example: Meadow View, a large housing estate on the outskirts of Mullingar, has experienced ongoing economic and social deprivation over the past two decades. Educational achievement in the area is low with 75% of the population leaving school with no formal qualifications.

There is a correspondingly high level of unemployment within our area. The Meadow Vale Health and Social Services Trust regards the area as having the highest level of teenage parents (one in eight parents are aged 16-19 years) and the highest level of single parent families (20% of all families) in Ireland. The Residents' Group consulted with representatives from both the Mullingar Town Council and local social welfare office, both of whom supported the idea of a community welfare rights service.

What are you Applying for?

Funders want to fund solutions to problems. Saying you are applying for "a computer" or "a salary" focuses only on the cost you need funded. An alternative is to say: "for a project to alleviate the problems experienced by young people in our area" which is closer to a better answer as it responds explaining the needs you are seeking to target. However, answers like this can be difficult to grasp.

We recommend that you give your project a distinctive name. Something like "Stronger Leaders" will quickly and concisely describe the activities of the project. For some funders, a snappy title may be even better.

You should be clear about who your project will benefit and how they will benefit. How are you going to be working with them? Will it be through a counselling service, a family outreach service, education classes or drama workshops?

Normally when the funder asks you what you want the grant for they are expecting a clear description of exactly what that project will be doing. Perhaps in the first two months the worker will be setting up a mother and toddlers' group, in the third month they will organise training courses for young people in the area.

How Does Your Project Meet Our Criteria?

One of the most important questions on any application forms relates to how you project meets the funder's criteria.

Funders will almost always ask how your project fits with their policy or criteria. How you answer this is fundamental to the success of any application. Your aim in answering should be to convince the funder that you meet their criteria and are a priority application. This is best done by directly addressing their criteria in your answers. You ought to explain how your aims will help the funder meet their aims; how your priorities are their priorities without deviating from your own project's desired outcomes.

Describe how your project meets the current funding theme

Example: The Foundation aims to: "to give more people, especially youths between the ages of 12 - 18, the opportunity to enjoy the richness and diversity of the performing and visual arts and to experience high quality work. In particular: proposals which expand and improve arts provision in parts of the country less well served than others, for example through touring."

Your aim may be to set up a Youth Theatre Group in your town. You could express this in your application as: We are aiming to give those who are experiencing lack of opportunity to enjoy the richness and diversity of performing and visual arts and experience of high quality work by establishing a Youth Theatre Group in the disadvantaged areas of Inner City which will:

- A: train young people in performing arts, acting, dance, lighting, direction etc.*
- B: bring professional theatre actors, directors and technicians to train young people and perform in the community.*
- C: encourage local schools to get their pupils involved with the project.*

If you find that you have to change your project's aims and objectives so much to meet the funders criteria that it is barely recognisable, then it is worth asking yourselves is it worthwhile making the application at all. You may get funding for

work that isn't a priority for your organisation. This is known as "mission-drift" and is symptomatic of an organisation which is "funding-led" and not strategically addressing its primary aims and objectives.

Define and communicate the reasoning or rationale behind your proposed project. Why do you think it will be successful? Is it based on another group's project? Are you replicating a successful model? If so, let the funder know. If the project has been successful for one group, the chances are it will be successful for you too and the funder will be more receptive to it. Your proposed project is therefore a safer risk. If it is a totally new approach, then explain why you think it will work, start it out as a 'pilot' project and again some funders will welcome such innovation.

How Will You Monitor and Evaluate the Project?

A common question asked by grant-makers as part of the application process is how you will monitor the success of your project?

Most funders will ask for projects to be self-assessed and will want to know how successful (or not) their investment in a project has been. That is, the applicant will state up front how it plans to assess the project, collect the monitoring information and conduct the evaluation of the project. If the monitoring and evaluation processes are included at the project planning stage, this becomes much easier to answer.

How will you know if your work has been successful?

For larger projects an external evaluator may be brought in to assist with the project's evaluation or to provide an independent eye.

What is the Project Budget?

For almost every application you make you need to be able to provide an itemised budget for your project. The budget will form the basis of the costs you request from the funder. Regardless of what you ask the funder for - you will need to fully cost the project and include every possible expense.

It can be very helpful to use budget line item descriptions that are linked directly to what the project activity is about. For example, instead of 'salaries', 'print/design' and 'postage' as line items, you could write "production and dissemination of 4,000 factsheets on 'Improved Health Outcome for People with Disabilities' to 4,000 in the target group." (That, in turn, can be shown to be broken down into 'salaries', 'print/design' and 'postage', as well as 'project management' if deemed necessary).

Funders will not pay for items retrospectively, ie. they will not back date a grant for items purchased or salaries already paid. You need to wait to hear if you have been successful before any expenditure for the items requested can be made.

When applying for funding to cover capital build and equipment, you will need realistic estimates and quotes. For salaries, you are recommended to include the full costs to the organisation, i.e. include employers PRSI. For overheads, it is necessary to detail how you have calculated the costs, for example from previous bills or costs in similar projects.



If you are budgeting for a project, which lasts for more than a year, you will have to take inflation and general cost of living increases into account. Staff salary increases, potential increases in electricity, telephone charges and even stationery all have to be budgeted for. Also if you are applying for a project that is due to start several months away, will prices have changed during that ten month period?

More funders now recognise the importance of supporting core costs of the projects they fund. It is vital that organisations include all the costs in their budgets and negotiate where possible with funders over the real costs of projects they are delivering. This means including a portion of costs like rent, phone, electricity etc, using an allocation formula that is clear. For example, if the proposal calls for adding a staff person to a group of 3 people for 12 months, it is legitimate to take the annual cost of the rent for the office for those three people and allocate 24% of it towards the cost of the project that the new person will be working on.

When you are budgeting for your expenditure, think about how much funding you can raise yourselves. Jumble sales, ballots and functions all seem to be a lot of work for very little money, however they are important as they demonstrate an element of self sufficiency and also show that your work has community support.

It is often transparent to a funder that an organisation is overestimating costs or is too ambitious in its expectations. Only apply for funding for the work you have the capacity to do. Only apply for the actual costs of the project. Don't assume that if you need €10,000, you need to ask for €15,000 because the funder will never give you the amount you ask for. If you present a realistic budget and can account for your figures, there is no reason to believe a responsible funder will not award the full amount, subject to their grant conditions.

Are There Any 'In Kind' Contributions?

On the 'income' part of your budget, remember that some funding bodies may accept volunteer hours as a community contribution known as a contribution in-kind as match funding. Match funding is where a funder agrees to fund only a percentage of costs and expects funding to be 'matched' from other sources.

Can you quantify the number of hours that volunteers give to your work each week? If you had to pay people for this work, how much would it cost? Whatever your answer, whether it be the equivalent of €200 or €2,000 per week, it is an important measure of how much your community supports and values your group and its work.

Always let funders know what other bodies you have applied to or have received support from. Getting your first letter of support is usually the most difficult stage. Other funders will not be put off by the fact that somebody else is already supporting you. In fact they will be reassured and more likely to follow suit.

How Much Are You Asking For?

Usually located in the last part of the budget section, the grant request section is sometimes overlooked.

It is easy to confuse project costs with what you are asking the funding for. Rarely does all the funding come from a single source. Tell the funder in this section how much funding you need from them, what the funding will pay for (salaries or equipment) and over what period of time. Then provide a list of where else you expect money to come from and what has already been secured.

Is the Project Sustainable?



When a funder asks is the project sustainable they want to know how you will fund the project beyond the amount of money they will provide.

When a funder asks how you will sustain the project you have really only two options:

1. that the project will finish at the end of the grant period and
2. that the project will secure funding from other sources.

For option two it is recommended that you include expected sources of other revenue. This may be through specific trusts, corporate or lottery funding. It may be through income generation which builds through the life of the project.

Very, very rarely will any project be sustained by being 'mainstreamed' into government expenditure. This is an unrealistic expectation and funders will not buy it unless you are a long way down the line of negotiation with government funders and have the paperwork to prove it.

The best approach is answer this question by saying you will implement a fundraising strategy. A Fundraising strategy should show how you plan to realistically access the diverse range of fundraising options open to the voluntary and community sector across grant-makers, the general public and earning.

FREE-FORM APPLICATIONS

It is quite common for a grant-maker to ask an applicant to "Apply in Writing", with little or no further guidance how to do so. The Wheel recommends the following as a template to putting together a written application.

Try to limit the main body of a free-form application to three A4 pages (both sides) unless a shorter (or longer) application is specifically requested. Shorter is often better than longer. Always use a word processor or typewriter. Use short sentences and avoid jargon. And always, always check your spelling!

Covering Letter

A covering letter should be a summary of:

- your group/organisation
- your project
- your application
- budget
- grant request
- your previous contact with (or support from) the funder



Always write to another person by name (how do you feel when you receive a letter starting 'Dear Sir/Madam?'). Check to see that you are writing to the right person (get their job title if possible) and that you have spelled their name correctly.

The covering letter should be on your group's headed paper. The headed paper should have your CHY number (if any), your Company Registration Number (if any), your address, telephone/fax numbers, and email address.

End with the offer to send the funder further information if required and an invitation for them to visit the project. Include your title and evening contact details too if suitable.

Main Application

- Background to your work (two paragraphs)
- Why and how did your group start?
- What is your group aiming to do?
- Who is currently involved?
- How is the group run and what sort of work does it do?

- What sort of support do you have within your community?
- How many people do you work with?
- Where are you based? What geographical area do you cover?
- What previous successes have you had?

Background to your area or client group (2-3 paragraphs)

- What are the needs of your area or client group?
- Can you back up your case with facts and figures?
- How do you know that there is a problem?
- How long has this problem been there?
- Has anyone else tried to do anything about it?
- Why did they fail?

Project rationale (1 paragraph)

- Define the reasoning behind your project
- Why do think this will work?
- Is it based on anyone else's work or experience?
- Why are you the best group to carry out the work?

Project (3-4 paragraphs)

- What is the name of your project?
- Can you summarise the work of the project in a couple of sentences?
- What does the project aim to achieve?
- Who will your project benefit?
- How will they benefit?
- What type of work is involved?
- How long will it run?
- Who will operate and manage the work?
- How will you know that it has been successful?
- What will happen at the end of the project?
- Can anyone else benefit from the project's work?

Budget

- How much is required to run the project?
- Have you broken the budget down into headings?
- Have you included hidden costs, eg insurance costs?
- Have you included inflation costs for 2/3-year projects?
- How much can you raise yourselves?

- Who else have you applied to?

Grant request

- How much are you requesting from the funder?
- If you have a shopping list of items, what do you want them to support?

Enclosures

Most funders ask that groups submit a copy of their constitution and their most recent audited accounts. Occasionally a copy of the most recent annual report is also requested. Some funders refuse to accept any additional information at all.

Do not include anything that could act as a substitute for your application. Do not make the mistake of submitting a very detailed development plan with a covering letter demanding money. Having a development plan shows that you are forward thinking but a funder will expect you to summarise the relevant bits for the application.

A funder will only have a short time to look through your application. They will not have time to watch that video of your youth group in action. If you are applying for funding for a post, the funder may want to see a job description and/or personnel specification.

Do not overload the funder. A constitution and annual accounts may be all that you need to include. Mention that there are other publications and if the funder is interested they will come back to you.

Postage

Do remember to post the letter and send a stamp addressed envelope for the grant-maker to return to confirm receipt of the application. Many funders will not spend their own resources on acknowledging an application given the quantity they receive.

THINGS TO DO WHEN YOU HAVE COMPLETED AN APPLICATION

Know What Happens to It

So what happens to your application after you put it in the post-box?

Funding bodies have different levels of administration around applications. Some will have a very small staff compliment (if any) to process the applications and therefore correspondence or contact with them is very limited or indeed prohibited. Larger organisations will be more open to contact and often welcome queries from prospective applicants. Either way you should be prepared for the funder to contact you for more information. This contact can be in writing, by telephone or occasionally in person. You may have to supply more information in order to be considered which may entail additional and time consuming work.

Know How it is Progressing

It arrives through the funders letterbox... or does it?

Not all funders will acknowledge receipt of applications so it is recommended that you include a stamped addressed envelope for the funder to return on receipt of your application. Alternatively, a call to the funder to confirm the application has arrived will give you some reassurance.

Some funders will date stamp the application as a proof of when it has arrived. Your application will then be assessed against the funding criteria. In most cases completely ineligible applications will receive a 'Thanks, but no thanks letter' early on.

A grants officer, secretary, freelance assessor or trustee will assess applications that do appear to fit the criteria. This is often done using a scoring matrix with different questions weighted according to importance. It is at this stage that an applicant may receive a telephone call or visit from the funder. The grants officer, secretary or assessor may compile a report on your application in preparation for presentation to their committee.

The trustees, grants committee or selection panel will sometimes see only a summary of your application together with a member of staff's report or recommendations. The selection panel of a smaller funder may see the full application but enclosures may or may not be available to them.

If in doubt, ask for advice – either from the funder when available or from a funding adviser. Try to get somebody from outside your group to read over your

application. That way poorly communicated ideas and mistakes can be dealt with before it goes before the funder's critical eye.

Keep Records of Correspondence

Keep a copy of the application and all the enclosures you have sent in one file. This is very important for follow up calls. It tells you exactly what information you have sent the funder and is also essential should personnel change and someone else has to follow up applications that have been made.

Keep a file of information you have collated in developing the application. If papers are kept in a logical format it will be easier to follow up later. It all adds to the credibility of your organisation, when interrogated by funders if you are able to answer their questions quickly and accurately. So keep to hand all the quotations, budget estimations (how you calculated these), reports you have referenced, information you have sent to partner organisations, etc.

Also keep records of all correspondence, verbal or written with the funder. Funding bodies have been known to lose information.

Make other Applications



Remember to start the whole process again with other funders. You may need partnership funding and it is never a good idea to put all your eggs in one basket. It is also easier at this stage to put together another application as most of the work has already been done.

Further Resources

Sign up for the free monthly Fundingpoint Newsletter, including the latest fundraising news, events and funding scheme deadlines:

<http://www.wheel.ie/funding/subscribe-newsletter>

The Wheel's fundraising training workshop covers the essentials of how to write successful funding applications, including explaining what funders look for in applications and how you can stand out from the crowd:

<http://www.wheel.ie/content/training-events-calendar-2010>

Fundraising Ireland is the network for fundraisers in Ireland:

<http://www.fundraisingireland.ie>

Visit the Activelink website for general news relating to the community and voluntary sector in Ireland, including funding sources:

<http://www.activelink.ie/>

The Irish Fundraising Handbook – in addition to listing details for hundreds of funding schemes, the handbook includes guidance on fundraising practice, charity regulation, tax exemptions and much more:

<http://www.create-ireland.ie/projects-and-initiatives/publications.html>

The Ireland Funds - an international charitable organisation operating in 12 countries and has raised over \$300 million for worthy causes in Ireland. Publisher of the invaluable 'Philanthropy and Fundraising Toolkit':

http://www.irlfunds.org/ireland/toolkit_pay.asp