

# Funding Advice Bureau

## SYFAB guide to...

# Making a good application

When you apply for funding, essentially, you are selling your project idea to the funder. You can improve your chances of getting a grant by taking the time to write a good application. It is important to assume that the funder doesn't know anything about your group or your community so you need to explain why funding your project would be a good use of their money. There are lots of groups who are competing for the same funding so it is important that you:

- apply to appropriate funders
- argue a good case
- present your application well.

Funders often want to fund specific pieces of work rather than core costs or general donations. Projects are discrete pieces of work with clear aims and outcomes that can be measured. In many cases, you can make your work much more attractive to funders by packaging up your work into specific projects. This might be a programme of activities, a piece of equipment, or a new worker.

### Step 1 – Identifying potential funders

Many groups try to get grants by sending a general appeal letter to lots of funders. It's a waste of time – most of those letters end up in the bin without being read. Instead, you should take the time to identify funders whose priorities fit with the type of work you are doing. Then you can tailor your application so that your description of your work fits with the funder's priorities.

SYFAB provides free online funding information to help you find sources of funding for your organisation easily and quickly. You can keep up to date with the latest funding opportunities using our Funding News website and email service, and you

can find possible funders for your activities with our funding search page. Go to [www.syfab.org.uk](http://www.syfab.org.uk) for more information and to sign up.

Once you know who you're going to apply to, find out:

- If the funder has guidelines for applicants. If so, read the guidelines carefully, pay special attention to any information about eligibility, or the criteria the funder uses to make decisions.
- How the funder wants you to apply. Is it by letter or application form? If there is a form then get a copy as soon as possible. Also, do you submit your application by post or email, or online?
- If there are any deadlines for returning the application. If so, you need to allow yourself enough time to write the application.

It is OK to send several applications for funding the same project, as most trusts will often give only a proportion of the bids (and some will turn you down). Ensure that each application is personally addressed, and makes reference to the trust and its priorities, to show you have read the guidance.

You may be asked whether you are applying elsewhere – it's OK to say yes; funders may agree between themselves to fund different aspects of your bid.

If you are lucky enough to be offered more than you need, ask the surplus funder whether you can use the money on a different project. They would often rather you do that than give the money back, but you MUST get their permission.

## Step 2 – Preparing to make your case

The more information you have prepared in advance, the easier it is when it comes to writing your application. Good preparation will mean that writing your application will be a matter of choosing the right information and presenting it in the right format for each funder. You can gather and prepare the following information:

### i) about your group

You will need to provide some, or all of the following information:

- A summary about what your group does; its main purpose and aims. This could be based on your 'mission' statement, or the aims from your constitution.
- Your legal status. Do you have a constitution? Are you a registered charity? Are you a limited company?
- The people involved in your group – numbers of paid staff, committee, volunteers and your members.
- How long you have been going. What other work you have done? Where are you based?
- Evidence of your management and financial skills and experience.
- A statement about why your work is important; why funders should want to support you; why your group is best placed to do what it does.
- What funding your group has received (now and in the past) and who funded you.
- Any recent growth in your organisation or in the demand for your services.
- You may be asked to send copies of your last annual report, accounts, and any other relevant material such as press cuttings, photographs, leaflets, survey results, quotes from users.

### ii) about your project

(When funders talk about your 'project' they mean the thing you are asking them to fund)

- A project title. Try to think of a snappy title for your proposal.
- A summary of the project proposal. In a few clear sentences, spell out what you are applying for and how much it will cost in total.
- A description of your proposal. What you intend to do to meet the needs you have identified; how you will

go about it (your methods); what it will achieve (your objectives). Outline the timescale and how you will measure its success (your evaluation methods).

- Your project budget – a breakdown of the costs involved. It is important that you ask for a specific amount of money. If you are only asking for part of the costs tell them where the rest is coming from.

### iii) problems and needs you want to address

You may think the answers to this are obvious, but you have to be able to prove that there is a need for your service. Funders will want to know what the problem is and what their money can do to help. So for example, rather than just asking for money to buy a minibus for your group, explain the problems that a minibus would help to overcome. Funders want to know that the problems are real and solvable, and that their money will make a difference. You need to provide facts and figures or quote research documents to support your case. Think about what you need to know about the area or people you serve to help you make your case. You may need to conduct your own survey to demonstrate need and lack of provision.

The **Office for National Statistics (ONS)** is the Government's survey organisation and its main producer of official statistics. They compile data on their website from various sources such as the National Census. You can search for statistics within specific geographical areas.

Website:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/help/localstatistics>

You could also check out our Funding KnowHow resource 'Sources of Statistical Information'.

### iv) your group's track record

Your reputation and track record is very important to any potential funders. As well as looking at the particular project you want funding for, they will also want to know that they are giving money to a competent organisation with the ability to manage the money, people and project.

You need to provide evidence that your project will be a good use of the funder's money. Here are some ways to prove your competence and show your credibility:

- Show evidence of your recent successful projects. Your past projects are the best proof of your competence. If you already receive support from other funders this will give new funders an indication that you are worth supporting.
- Show evidence of recent successes and achievements. Impartial comments from users or any

press or media coverage will show support for your group and your work.

- Provide statements or quotes from your supporters to show that they value your work. Can you provide references? (Some funders ask for these.)
- If you are a member of, or affiliated to a larger organisation like a national charity, include details.

## v) the impact you make

Many funders now are less interested in the activity you provide, and more interested in the difference it makes to people's lives. Funders talk about impact, or outcomes. They want to know the change that the activity brings about. If you run a lunch club for older people what do they get out of it? It could be:

- They socialise more. Loneliness was recently highlighted as a major cause of health problems
- Better diet – they have access to a nutritious cooked meal at least once a week
- More active – if they walk to the session, or if you run gentle exercise sessions while they are there, they will be doing more exercise
- Managing their health better – if you have talks about diabetes, falls or other health advice, it may reduce demand on the health service.

Think carefully about how people will benefit from your activity, and how you could demonstrate it. This could be as simple as asking them to complete a short survey, or keeping track of people taking up training.

## Step 3 – Putting together an application

When you apply for funding you will either write a letter or use the funder's application form. In both cases you will have to write clearly and concisely to convey all the information the funder needs without making your application too long. The details of the information that you have to provide are the same but the format will be different.

### What to include

Check what each funder needs to know, and select it from the information you have collected.

If you are filling out a form, the questions will determine what they need. If they ask you to write a letter, you need to put together information that sets out:

- Who your group is, and your track record. Make sure you send a copy of your accounts if asked
- What the project is you want them to fund, including the need for it, the difference it will make, what you will do, how much it will cost, and how it will work
- The reason(s) why they should fund you. How does your proposal fit with their funding policies? You will need to emphasise different aspects of the work for different funders. For example, some may be interested in you because you are working in their geographical area, others, because the project falls within their area of interest, such as young people.
- Why are you special – maybe no-one else in the area is doing the work, you have come up with a new approach, are offering a very cost effective solution, or have strong backing of the community? Think of a 'USP' (unique selling point) for your project
- Information about which other funders support your work. If other funders have supported your work, it reassures potential new funders that you will spend their money wisely.
- The details of someone in your group who will be able to answer questions about the application.

### Make sure your application is:

- Short and to the point. Don't go into unnecessary detail but do make sure you give enough information to allow the reader to understand your area of work, what you want to do and why it's worth funding.
- Attractively presented. Don't make your application look too flash or it will seem like you waste money. Also, make sure it doesn't look like a circular or it won't be read.
- Divided into short paragraphs to make it easier to read, with a font size no smaller than 10
- Free of jargon and abbreviations. Use straightforward, plain language to avoid misunderstandings. You know your own field of work very well but the funder does not.
- Factual and specific. Don't use general phrases such as 'We are the busiest advice centre in the town' – everyone will try to claim that. Instead, give Numbers: '470 new clients attended our weekly open advice sessions during the first six months of this year.'

### Example of an application

Here is an example of a short application letter. It should give you an idea of how a letter can be written containing all the information you need to give.

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Eastwood Environmental Volunteers  
7 Newtown Road,  
Rotherham S64 1PD  
Tel: 01709 830200

Ms B Greene  
Smith and Jones Charitable Trust  
Snodgrass Accountants  
2 High Street  
Doncaster  
DN11 3XZ

3<sup>rd</sup> January 2022

Dear Ms Greene,

I am writing on behalf of the Eastwood Environmental Volunteers to ask for the support of the Smith and Jones Charitable Trust for our work. We are requesting a grant towards the costs of replacement tools (total amount needed £460), which fits the environmental priority of your trust.

Eastwood Environmental Volunteers have been operating now for 5 years. We are run by a voluntary management committee made of local residents. We have our own constitution (enclosed as requested) and bank account. We are all volunteers, and regularly have around 25 - 42 people from the community attending our community allotment project. There is no other group in our area that works with local people in an outside setting, or who has an allotment open to everyone.

We aim to involve a wide range of local people in our outdoor projects. We work closely with the local youth club and community centre in recruiting volunteers. We have been involved in many local projects over the years, including the creation of a community allotment, where all age groups come together to grow fruit and vegetables, and create a green space to enjoy.

In June 2021 we undertook a consultation in the local community to ask them what issues they faced that we might be able to address. Out of 50 responses, 45 identified either poor diet, lack of exercise or being isolated as a problem for them. 98% of the feedback from the consultation said that they would like to continue the community allotment, and would like to grow more vegetables, to encourage the tasting and cooking of different types of fruit and vegetables. Each month we post meal ideas on the allotment notice board featuring the seasonal fruits and vegetables we are growing to encourage healthy cooking at home.

We have received one-off grants in the past from the local authority and have raised some funds through sponsored events to cover our running costs. We also donate surplus produce to the local food bank.

Eastwood is in Rotherham East, which is in the worst 10% of deprived areas in the government's Index of Multiple Deprivation ([English Indices of Deprivation 2019](#)). 71.2% of the population in Rotherham is overweight or obese, nearly 10% higher than the national average. There is evidence that a higher rate of deprivation can lead to more people developing mental health problems and obesity, one study found that people who were obese were 55% more likely to develop depression and people with depression were 58% more likely to become obese ([Healthwatch Rotherham](#)). The outdoor projects that we organise encourage physical activity and exercise in an enjoyable way, as well as helping people to grow their own fruit and vegetables, which they can take home to eat.

Giving the local community the opportunity to work on environment projects, especially the community allotment, allows them to get outside in the fresh air and work together, which brings the community together. It also allows people to learn about and care for our local community environment, making our village a nicer place to live.

One of the attendees said “before coming to Eastwood Environmental Volunteers I could not afford to eat much fresh food as my benefits do not stretch very far. When I come along to the allotment I have a laugh, everyone is really friendly. It feels great to pick something that has grown that you have planted. It’s even better that we get to take it home to eat it too. My kids love trying the new recipes using what we have grown together”.

We have now got to the point where we need to replace our stock of tools for planting and harvesting the fruit and vegetables. It is important that we provide the tools for the projects as many of our volunteers are unemployed and couldn’t afford to provide their own. If we can get new tools we can continue our community allotment and other environmental projects. This means the local community can keep coming together and growing healthy food. Our project encourages people to exercise, socialise, and eat healthier food. These are all key elements in good mental and physical wellbeing, and will improve the quality of life for local people

We have a lockable cabinet in the community centre where the tools will be stored and they will be covered under the community centre’s insurance.

The total amount we need is £460 made up as follows:

	£
5 spades at £20 each	100
5 forks at £20 each	100
2 rakes at £14 each	28
1 bill hook	22
1 wheelbarrow	29
1 pair loppers	24
2 tarpaulins at £10 each	20
5 bowsaws at £14.20 each	71
20 pairs work gloves at £2.40 each	48
1 pair waders	18

Total £460

Please let me know if you need any further information or would like to visit our project. We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

*Janet Muddey*

Janet Muddey  
Chair, Eastwood Environmental Volunteer

## Some points about applying by letter:

- Letters should be on your headed paper (if you have any)
- Keep your letter to two sides of A4 and attach relevant supporting evidence (unless told not to)
- Make sure it is addressed personally to the named correspondent of the funding body. Never write Dear Sir/Madam. Always find a name and check the spelling.

## Some points about applying by application form:

- Answer every question on the form. Don't leave a question blank.
- Don't answer by saying 'see attached' and appending lots of extra documents. The reader will usually base their judgement only what you say in the answer box. If they've got 30 applications to read, they are looking for concise answers.
- The application form is all that will be considered. Don't send a letter when there is an application form, and be careful too about sending a covering letter, which contains information that should be in the form.

## Step 4 – Sending your application

Before you send off your application take a copy for your own records. Keep a list of which trusts you have applied to, and the date.

Get someone from outside your group to read it through and check it is clear and that you haven't missed out any obvious points.

Many small trusts won't acknowledge your application, or even tell you if you have not been successful, so don't get upset if you hear nothing back. Some larger ones may give you feedback on unsuccessful bids, which can be very helpful.

South Yorkshire Funding Advice Bureau  
Telephone: 0114 261 5141  
Email: [enquiries@syfab.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@syfab.org.uk)  
Website: [www.syfab.org.uk](http://www.syfab.org.uk)

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