

How to apply for grant funding

Introduction

Charities and small groups and organisations regularly raise money from grants made available from a huge variety of funding providers. Providers could be local authorities, community trusts, the Lottery, regeneration initiatives, private or public companies and private trusts.

All providers have things they will give money for and things they won't, have application deadlines and maximum sums of money they will give. Often they will also restrict their spending to certain areas or certain groups of people in the community and they often have only a certain amount of money they will give away each year.

If there is a project you would like to find funding for the chances are there is a funding provider out there to suit your needs, all you have to do is find them! A key thing to remember is that funding providers **want** to give away their money, that's why they exist. However there is a lot of competition for that money and, as a group, it is important that you stack the odds in your favour. If you then apply determination, you **will** be successful.

Before you apply

Be a group a funding provider can trust

The vast majority of funding providers will only give funds to charities or organisations with charitable, not-for-profit, objectives. This means that you must have a 'governing

document', such as a constitution, that states this and shows that you are a well-organised democratic group/organisation with a committee to share responsibilities. You must also have a bank account in the group's name with at least two signatures required to withdraw money. Some funding providers do give to individuals as "community champions" who are not part of an organised group.

An alternative is to be a group affiliated to a charity or similar so that you can raise funds in its name i.e. it submits the application on your behalf. The advantage of this is that you don't have to be as organised or manage the money if you raise it successfully – and it is less time-consuming. The disadvantage is that if the objectives of the "parent" organisation do not quite match the requirements of the fund you are applying to, but you do, you may not be able to apply.

It is unlikely that a group applying for grant funding for the first time will be successful with an application for a large project and/or for a large sum of money. This is because, as a group, you cannot demonstrate that you have good financial and project management skills. These are core requirements for handling large grants. The bigger the grant the more hoops you will be required to jump through and the more safeguards are put in place to make sure the money is spent properly. It is better to apply for a small grant first and prove you can deliver a project to budget and on time. If you do want to apply for a large sum of money 'first time' then try and find a partner or parent organisation that has experience of managing money/projects to make the application with you.

Make sure you have a good project

- 1 Have you carried out consultation locally – can you demonstrate you are acting on behalf of your community and their needs?
- 2 Have you got permission and support for your project from the landowner or the person that may have to maintain the project in the long-term? Get this early on. It may save you a lot of unnecessary work.
- 3 Is there a partner you could be working with? Often different groups working in partnership demonstrates local need and support and allows for the sharing of responsibilities for a successful project. It is common for groups to work closely with their local authority and often they can act as ‘bankers’ or project managers.

Work out accurate project costs

- 1 Have you got quotes for the work you want to do? Have you got them in writing? This isn’t always necessary with some grants but it is for most. Check if in doubt.
- 2 Get realistic estimates based on similar projects if you cannot get quotes.
- 3 Have you written down a budget – income, expenditure and the timing of expenditure?
- 4 Rule of thumb – what you ask for initially shouldn’t change more than 10% through the implementation of the project. Often, your project simply cannot be allowed to go over budget.

Think about ‘match funding’

- 1 Do you have any funds you can commit to the project? A funding provider may rightly ask questions if you are asking for money and you have some sat in the bank.
- 2 Would it be better to try and fund the project from a number of sources? Some funding providers prefer to work this way and getting one funding provider on-board demonstrates the ‘robustness’ of the project and the credibility of the organisation making the application.

Find the right funding provider(s)

The rule of thumb with all fundraising is to find the funding provider whose criteria most closely matches your project. It is useful to get in to the habit of looking at your project in a number of different ways to hunt for potential providers. For example, a project in which “schoolchildren are going to design and help build a sensory garden in their local park” may fit the criteria of funding providers that are concerned with children and young people, the environment, education, communities or disabled people. All or some of these may be willing to provide funds for such a project.

If you are looking for funding for long-term or multifaceted project then you can think about breaking it down in to smaller projects that will more closely meet the criteria of a range of different funding providers. However, be careful as some funding providers do not like to fund ‘part of a project’.

Community information

It is important to demonstrate that your project has local support. However for a project that is designed to meet the needs of, or will benefit, people that can be commonly regarded as experiencing social exclusion and/or discrimination you will also need to find national or regional statistics as evidence of this. Some funding providers will only fund these groups or ‘deprived’ areas and will ask you to provide statistics to show you meet their criteria.

The best place to look for this information is online. The following websites should give you the relevant information:

- Go to the Bristol City Council website – www.bristol-city.gov.uk - and do a search for “Census 2001”.
- Go to the governments national statistics website – www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/default.asp or www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/

Working out a budget

It is important to accurately and clearly display the costs of your project to a potential funding provider. Providers may specify how they want the budget in your application to be presented but if that isn’t the case, then the simple table format shown below would be ok if asking for all funds from one funding provider.

“A” Park Project

Expenditure	Amount (£)
Capital costs (inc. installation)	
swings	6,500
climbing frame	7,750
seating	1,200
footpath	2,500
litter bins	450
Sub total	18,400
Revenue costs	
landscape architect <i>(6 days at £250/day)</i>	1,500
project worker <i>(5 days at £150/day)</i>	750
meeting venue <i>(6 meetings)</i>	120
Photocopying of related documents	50
Sub total	2,420
Overheads	
public liability insurance	250
Sub total	250
Total costs (inc. VAT)	21,070

Costs are commonly divided between:

- **Capital costs:** usually one-off items needed to deliver a project such as items of play equipment, park/street furniture, footpaths, walls etc.
- **Revenue costs:** running costs for the project – typically staffing costs to deliver the project and admin costs, consumable materials, publicity, travel, rent for premises etc.
- **Overhead costs:** ongoing costs for your organisation eg heat, light, insurance.

There can be a degree of interchangeability between revenue and overhead costs. How you separate then depends on what you are applying for. If you want to apply for all non-capital costs that specifically relate to a project

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then include them under revenue. Overhead costs would then be those ongoing costs that are unaffected by the project – e.g. insurance, telephone and all costs not relating to the project e.g. meeting room costs to discuss other business, normal postage and photocopying expenditure etc.

As most community groups apply for funds for a specific project then the budget is easy; include all those that related directly to the project, leave out those that don't!

If you are looking for funding for a particularly large project that is going to take time to deliver or to spend large sums of money then you will need to show expenditure over time:

“A” Park Project

Expenditure	Amount (£)					
	April	May	June	July	August	Total
Capital costs (inc. installation)						
swings	0	0	6,500	0	0	6,500
climbing frame	0	0	7,750	0	0	7,750
seating	0	0	0	1,200	0	1,200
footpath	0	0	0	2,500	0	2,500
litter bins	0	0	0	450	0	450
Sub total						18400
Revenue costs						
landscape architect (6 days at £250/day)	500	500	0	250	250	1,500
project worker (5 days at £150/day)	0	0	300	300	150	750
meeting venue (6 meetings)	40	20	20	20	20	120
photocopying of related documents	0	0	25	25	0	50
Sub total						2,420
Overheads						
public liability insurance	50	50	50	50	50	250
Sub total						250
Total costs (inc. VAT)	590	570	14,645	4,795	470	21,070

Ten tips for a successful application

- 1 Fundraising is about people, when dealing with a grant provider you are dealing with a person:** Make sure you know who you are talking to – names, addresses, genders. Avoid jargon unless you know the funding provider will understand it.
- 2 Tell the truth:** Funding providers look at projects and budgets and allocate grants all day every day – assume they know more about it than you do. If you are working too hard making your project seem something it isn't to fit their criteria, they will spot it! Having said that it is common to make projects flexible so that they can be adapted to different funding providers.
- 3 Be realistic:** Don't pretend you can change the world with £5,000. Funding providers will know if you are overstressing what you can deliver and will simply think you can't manage projects or budgets very well.
- 4 Apply to the right fund!:** Make sure you know what the funding provider's objectives are and relate your application DIRECTLY to those objectives. Repeat their words and phrases to emphasise connections.
- 5 Demonstrate support and need for your project:** Show that your local community wants the benefits the project will bring. Demonstrate need by researching statistics if the funding provider needs to concentrate spending in certain areas or on groups of people.
- 6 Sell the benefit as well as the problem:**
 - 33% – Write about the problem/issues you want to resolve;
 - 33% - Write about project details – costs, time, people and activities;
 - 33% - Show the benefits to that particular funding provider – show you can deliver and satisfy both your needs and their needs.
- 7 Be professional:** Make sure your presentation is good and your figures are up to date. Make sure you know when deadlines are and that you meet them! If they ask for information, provide it.
- 8 Be clear what you are asking for:** Especially if applying for only part of the total project costs, make it clear what the funding provider is paying for and what the benefits will be.
- 9 Be persistent:** If you are turned down, find out why. Is it a complete no or are there things you could change to be successful?
- 10 Say thank you...**

... whether you are successful or unsuccessful. It is **important** to recognise the funding provider's contribution to any successful project.

Don't...

Some DON'Ts when fundraising:

- Don't send speculative mailshots or circulars – they will probably be thrown away.
- Don't make general appeals for funds.
- Don't send lots of additional material unless the funding provider asks for it – or you have asked if it is ok to send it.
- Don't make assumptions that the funding provider knows anything about you or your work.
- Don't recycle text from previous applications without thoroughly going over the content – information out of context is easy to spot and suggests a lack of commitment and thoroughness.
- Don't send in an application to a provider without being absolutely sure of the suitability of your project for that fund. If in doubt, phone up and ask!
- Don't send an application without thoroughly checking the accuracy of your budget figures first.

Funding resources

There are many organisations, books, people and websites out there to help you find funding for a particular project. If there is one activity you do not have to do in isolation it is fundraising. Whatever project you want to fund there is someone out there that has experience of doing something similar that you could talk to and numerous ways to help you find funds and get going. Just some of the resources are:

Hands-on:

If you are a VOSCUR member - you can use a computer, to get online, set up email accounts for your group. Use Microsoft Office software to do admin, or use **FunderFinder** to help your funding bids etc.

Contact the Voscur office:

Tel. **0117 909 9949** to book a morning or afternoon session or email: **info@voscur.org**

A-Z of Funding - An annual guide to regeneration funding sources across the UK. Produced by Regeneration & Renewal Magazine cost £2.95 **www.regen.net**

Web-sites:

Who's Who in Funding Across Bristol City Council – a guide to Bristol City Council officers who offer funding or advice around funding to community and voluntary groups.

This is available online at:

www.bristol.gov.uk

Other Funding Initiatives in Bristol – A guide to other funding initiatives in Bristol is also available – for an online version go to **www.bristolregeneration.org.uk** and follow the link on the left hand side for “Other Bristol Funding Initiatives”.

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There's a new web-site with information on the different government funding streams available to the voluntary and community sector.

Go to **www.governmentfunding.org.uk** for info on funding available from:

- Department for Education and Skills
- Department for Health
- Home Office
- Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
- Government Offices for the Regions

The site allows you to register to receive free funding updates by email and lets you search for suitable funding sources for your project! It's still being developed, but is a useful source of information.

- **Access Funds** aims to provide the latest funding information from Central Government, National Lottery, devolved governing bodies, EU and quangos. Access Funds has a range of services to help you fundraise. These include email services, training courses, directories of funding programmes and guides to funding. This service costs £50 per annum for voluntary/community groups and offer a free 7 day subscription so you can 'try before you buy'. **www.access-funds.co.uk**
- **Grants online** is a handy subscription site with directories of funding, broken down into Government, European, lottery and trust funds. It also includes a news-feed on new funds and approaching deadlines and links to funders' websites. Again can be accessed for 7 days on a free trial basis. Costs start at £100 + VAT for voluntary and community groups. **www.grantsonline.org.uk**
- **Grantfinder** is an online database of funding providers that is constantly updated. It allows you to build a profile of the project and organisation which is seeking funding and generates reports on potential funders,

which can be emailed or printed off, containing more information about the funder, what their priorities are and how to contact them. Subscription to this web-site is quite expensive, but the City Council subscribe to it, and you can arrange for a search to be run for your project, and the results emailed to you. Find out more at: **www.grantfinder.co.uk**

- **It's Your Space** is primarily a website resource to inspire local people to apply for funding to transform a community space including parks or gardens on their doorstep. It gives links to a variety of funding sources and advice on applying, and gives many examples of local people who have already taken things into their own hands. It encourages people and organisations to sign up to the Manifesto for Better Public Spaces and explains the essential ten ingredients that make a great public space. For more inspiration and information visit: **www.itsyourspace.org.uk**
- **Cleaner, safer, greener** - On this site, you will find information on subjects such as abandoned vehicles, litter and graffiti as well as information about projects, ideas, information, research, campaigns or training that could make your area greener. **www.cleanersafergreener.gov.uk**

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Software:

FunderFinder has two types of software available for People In Need (PIN) and Groups In Need (GIN).

FunderFinder (GIN) helps grant-seekers to build a profile of their organisation and the work they do, which can be matched with the criteria used by funders.

FunderFinder contains information about 4,500 funders, both trusts and foundations, which make grants to charities and voluntary and community groups. A search produces a list of funders which can be saved, exported and printed out. GIN gives details of where to find further information about each funder found, **but doesn't provide addresses or policy guidelines.**

This software is available to buy for an annual fee which starts at £150 + VAT, although VOSCUR run free FunderFinder sessions for members on Friday mornings, with Rebecca McDougall. You can book one of the three 50 minute slots on Fridays – 9am, 10am or 11am.

email: info@voscur.org
or phone **0117 909 9949**

web: www.voscur.org/funding

FunderFinder (PIN) helps to identify possible sources of funding for individuals – again you have to buy this software. Alternatively, Connexions have the software available and are able to run searches for you over the telephone. Call on **0117 907 4448** (Connexions are concerned only with supporting young people under 19 years of age).

Apply yourselves is a Windows only software program from Funderfinder that helps to write a grant application.

The program is free and can be downloaded from <http://www.funderfinder.org.uk/applyyou.php>