

APPLYING FOR FUNDING



What should you consider before making a funding application?

- 1. Get a copy of the criteria and guidelines** for the scheme to inform the way your application needs to be progressed (these are generally downloadable from the Internet or you can request a hard copy directly from the funder). Use the website to find out as much as you can about the scheme before you start writing your bid.
- 2. Check your eligibility carefully** before you apply. Funders are quite prescriptive in the type, size and geographical location of organisation they will support. They may also elect to fund specific thematic areas e.g. children and young people, ex offenders, adults with learning disabilities etc. They may just provide capital or just revenue funding or they could provide a mix. They may also have a requirement for 'match funding' e.g. they pay 80% and you have to find the remaining 20% from other sources or from 'in kind' support. They may also only offer loans which need to be repaid.
- 3. Check the contact details** for more information. Is there someone you can talk to about your proposal before you apply to avoid spending unnecessary time developing something, which may not be eligible.
- 4. Make sure you understand the established system your funder has applied to their applications process.** Do they want you to send them hard or electronic copies of the bid (or both)? Do they want copies on disc? Do they want you to include any other relevant information (e.g. copies of audited accounts or a separate business plan)?
- 5. Make sure you understand the monitoring and reporting requirements** of your funder so that you can successfully draw down any funding you have secured. Don't assume that all funders will have the same requirements if you have applied before, they don't.
- 6. Think about your own internal financial management systems.** Are they robust enough to carry out this role? Can you strengthen them in any way through training and/or investment? Are there other organisations you can speak to or learn from that have carried out or are carrying out similar roles?



How should you go about completing your application form?

- 1.** Spend time reading the criteria for the funding scheme carefully. Follow this to the letter, as this will dramatically increase your chances of success.
- 2.** Read and digest the guideline notes **before** completing the application form.
- 3.** Check the deadline for submission. Have you sufficient time available to write your proposal?
- 4.** Check who needs to sign the form, make sure they are available when you need them.
- 5.** Make a list of all the information you need to collect to answer the questions.

- 7. Think about the amount of work the application will require** and who will do the work, bearing in mind that the development and submission of your bid (and often business plan as well for larger applications) should not be under-estimated, as it can be onerous and time consuming. Have in mind too that if you are successful, you will then have to deliver the project, report its activity and financial spend and sometimes also complete an evaluation report. Capacity is therefore a key issue that you need to take into account right at the beginning so that appropriate contingency actions can be taken.
- 8. Have you got someone within your organisation who can carry out the role of Project Manager?** If not, you may want to consider applying for additional funding to recruit one, either to the same or another funder.
- 9. Think about the timescale of your bid, can you meet the deadline?** Are there any other major pieces of work within your organisation that will need to be completed at the same time? When would the funding actually arrive in your organisation's bank account bearing in mind that you cannot be paid retrospectively for the work you do? Is it going to cause cash flow problems?
- 10. Would your proposal lend itself to partnership working** with other organisations to strengthen it? Have you considered whether your organisation is best placed to assume the role of accountable body or whether your partner organisation/s may be better equipped to assume this role?
- 11. If you do decide to develop a partnership approach, can you clearly define the services or activities each partner will be delivering?** To whom? For what cost? Over what duration? To what purpose? This will be needed to draw up formal partnership agreements in the event that your application is successful.
- 12. Make sure that you have considered your 'exit strategy' for the project.** This is a plan for when funding for a project comes to an end. Will you perhaps gradually introduce charges for your service to make it sustainable by the end of grant support? Will you be applying for further grant income and ensure that any best practice learnt is transferred? Or, is your project intentionally time limited?

- 6.** Answer all questions in full. It can help to 'drop the guidance notes' into the answer boxes and answer each point one by one. That way, you will not only be certain you have addressed all the issues, but the funder will find your application easier to read.
- 7.** Be very clear about what your project is seeking to do, how you intend to do it, why you need to do it, what difference it will make and how you will know if you are doing it well. Your proposal should be clear and easy to read, as well as credible and convincing.
- 8.** Be equally clear about how your project will be managed, monitored and reported on if you are successful.
- 9.** Be precise in preparing a detailed budget based 'full cost recovery'. Excellent guidance is available on the BIG Lottery website or you can talk to SUSTAIN's Community Development Officer, Manjit Johal on **0121 711 3148**. It helps to use Excel to do this as it reduces the risk of miscalculating.
- 10.** Ask someone who is not familiar with your project to read the application to see if it makes sense to them. Preferably get someone who is familiar with the applications process and ask them to also refer to the guidance notes to ensure that your proposal is compliant with them.