



Bid writing tips

A good bid is a fully thought out proposal not just the first draft of an idea.

A proper bid is the result of more thinking, more discussion and more research.

Do you know your own organisation well enough?

List the exact legal status such as Charity, Community Interest Company, Trust etc., how many years you've been in existence, the numbers of employees, board members and volunteers, the qualifications and experience of those people, annual income and annual costs, quality marks or industry standards that have been awarded, governance policies such as safeguarding for children or vulnerable adults, examples of delivery of similar projects by your own organisation in the past.

Reserves

A reasonable level of reserves is seen as a sign of good management, with many organisations aiming to have around 3 months of income as reserves. Many funders will ask to see your reserves policy. That policy should address: Why you need reserves? What level of reserves is appropriate for you? How are you going to build up reserves if necessary? How are you going to monitor your progress?

Volunteers

If people freely give you some of their time, it's a point in your favour. You're saving the cost of having to pay people to do the work. You may also be giving volunteers training opportunities and transferable skills. Always let funders know the extent and value of the work done by your volunteers and what the volunteers themselves gain from their involvement. It is worth putting in the effort to fully describe your volunteer support.

Community support

If you can generate income or other support from local people and local businesses, then you are demonstrating the popularity of your project. Always let funders know the revenues you get from donors and the approximate value of other benefits in kind that you're receiving, as they don't appear in your accounts. Even if you could afford to buy your own brand-new computers, it is a much better story to say that a local business gave you their two-year-old ones free.

Supporting the project

To directly support your project, assemble the following:

- Your constitution
- Your annual accounts
- Your annual reports
- A list of trustees, patrons or vice-presidents.
- A detailed plan for the project
- A detailed budget for the project
- A background briefing on the need for the project
- Architectural drawings for a new building
- Case studies or examples of what the project can achieve
- CVs of the key personnel involved in the project
- Job descriptions of new posts being created
- A fundraising plan of where you intend to get the rest of the money
- You need to demonstrate that you have thought through all the facets of the project
- Legislation, insurances, health and safety, best practice, costs, etc.

Detail required

A bid for equipment needs to show:

- How often it will be used
- What insurances are required
- How much will that insurance cost
- What maintenance is required
- How will the maintenance be carried out
- How much will that maintenance cost

Standard funding bid

It is useful to prepare a standard 2-page A4 funding bid plus a 1 page budget. You should aim to have an application which is just as effective in plain text as it is with complex typefaces, text boxes, tabulations and graphics.

Use simple statistics

One or two key statistics can do more for your case than a whole page of words. Try to find some memorable statistics that support your project.

TERMINOLOGY

These are the main terms used in the charity funding world. Need is the term used to describe a problem or issue. Aim is a brief statement of the overall purpose of your project.

Many applications are disappointingly vague about what they will do and how they will measure progress. Your application should be:

Specific:

- your outcomes need to be tightly defined and relate directly to the need you have identified
- explain what you are doing, why, where, how much it will cost and what will be done by who

Measurable:

- you need to be able to measure the change or improvement that your work brings about
- You need to record information at the start, during and at the end of the project

Achievable

- given the capacity of the organisation in terms of people and finances

Realistic

- capable of being achieved with those resources and within the timescale

Time-bound

- set within specific time periods

Provide evidence of need > Equipment is needed because

Organisational Strengths > We are best placed to deliver this project because

List all the reasons why you are the best choice of organisation

Outcomes & Impact > Once the club is running

Monitoring and evaluation > The club/having access to equipment will achieve

Budget > The equipment will cost

- Despite having a one-page budget, summarise the main costs.

60 funders' questions:

YOUR PROJECT

- What community does the applicant wish to serve?
- What will the beneficiaries receive?
- How they will benefit?
- How has the applicant analysed need?
- Has the applicant defined the problem clearly?
- How will the organisation make a difference?
- Has the applicant shown what difference will be made?
- Does the programme work?
- How long will it be before the project can demonstrate an impact?
- How does the applicant see the problem?
- Are the activities well thought through with clear processes?
- Has the applicant set out why, what, where, when and how?
- What are other agencies doing in this area?
- What other strategies are in place?
- Will the applicant work in partnership with others carrying out similar work?

OUTCOMES

- What outcomes are proposed to be achieved through the project?
- What evidence is there that the scheme is the best way of going about things?
- What is the project's exit strategy?

WIDER IMPACT

- What is innovative about the project?
- Can the innovative aspects be replicated in other situations?
- If the project isn't innovative why does the application merit a grant?
- How does the organisation propose to disseminate any practical experience and lessons learned from the project?

YOUR ORGANISATION

- Why is your organisation running the scheme?
- Why are you the best placed to run it?
- Have you supplied details of your organisation's training and past experience?
- Does your organisation have the resources such as finance, staff, volunteers, buildings and material?
- Does your organisation have the expertise such as track record, knowledge, quality assurance and training?
- If not, where will these skills come from?
- Does your organisation have a clear management structure?
- Does the application have the support of the senior people in the organisation?
- Has your organisation complied with its constitution?

FINANCE

- Have you supplied your latest annual accounts?
- Do they give a picture of a well-run viable organisation?
- Are there high balances being carried forward?
- What are the major sources of income at the moment?
- Will these sources continue?
- If not, what is being done to secure the organisation's future?
- Is the budget realistic?
- What proportion of the total required is being requested from the funder?
- Where will the balance come from?
- Have other applications already been made?
- Have any been successful?
- Are any pending?
- When will the outcomes be known?
- Does the budget for the project balance income and expenditure?
- Does the budget represent value for money?
- What happens if the whole budget is not raised?
- Will it be possible to function on less?
- Will plans have to be adjusted?
- Will you still go ahead?

- What will happen when the funders grant runs out?
- Is there a strategy for obtaining continuing funding?
- Will the project become self-sufficient or terminate at that point?
- When are the funds needed?

DOCUMENTS

Have all the documents required been submitted such as constitution, health and safety policy, equal opportunities policy, business plan or service plan?

THE FUNDER

- Does the applicant's approach to the problem fit with the funder's priorities?
- Do the activities meet the funder's grant criteria?
- Does all the above tie up into a coherent whole?
- Are the statements made justified by supporting evidence?
- Is there a chain of reasoning which links all of the above together?
- Have areas that are in tension or appear contradictory been explained?