WRITING A FUNDING APPLICATION

This factsheet provides general guidelines and tips to help you make a successful application for funding.

Preparation

It is very important that you read the application form and guidelines carefully to get a clear understanding of what the funder wants to achieve and what they need to know about your project and organisation.

Find out the following:
- What are the funder's priorities?
- What are the eligibility criteria?
- What are the selection criteria?
- What costs are eligible?
- Are there budget limits or rules that must be adhered to?
- What is the timeframe for submitting your application?
- What supporting documents or other information are required?

Ask questions if you are unclear. Attend information workshops for applicants. Most funders have a helpline or contact for enquiries.

Be clear about your project or planned activities. Be realistic and truthful about what you plan to do. Planning for funding will make completing an application much easier. Use our factsheet "Planning to Apply for Funding", to help you.

Be descriptive: Write your application as though the person reading it knows nothing about your planned project or actions. Don't make any assumptions.

Plain English: Use short sentences and avoid acronyms and jargon. Remember that you are describing what you do to someone who does not know about your organisation.

Plan your time: Give yourself enough time to gather the information you need to complete the application or prepare the proposal. Ask others for help if you need to. **Make sure you note the closing date and time for applications and know how the application should be submitted.**

Proofread: When you have completed the application, ask someone to read it. Ask them to check that it meets the application guidelines, check the budget is correct and that there are no spelling mistakes.

Brevity v Information Overload: Many application forms have word limits or maximum pages and this can be very challenging. **Write it all out in the first instance, identify your key relevant information, summarise and then start completing the application form.**

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Preparing the costs and the budget for the application

Preparing costs and a budget is one of the most challenging and time consuming tasks when making an application for funding.

GETTING STARTED

- Find out how much funding you can apply for. Most funders will indicate the size of the grant which is available. Prepare your budget based on the limits provided.

- Understand what type of expenses you can apply for. For example, employee costs/salary costs, venue hire, materials, training fees, overhead costs such as rent, light and heat, insurance and ICT costs; equipment or building construction costs; professional fees e.g. architect or legal fees.

- Read the guidelines to see how to prepare the budget. For example, is it an annualised budget or a total budget?

- Some funders require an organisation to make a contribution towards the total cost of the project. For example, a funder may ask that you pay 10% of the total costs. This is often called co-funding, part funding or match funding. Most funders will ask you to provide evidence that you have co-funding or match funding in place e.g. a bank statement showing the 10% in cash, a letter or contract from another funder or a loan agreement from your bank or credit union.

TIPS

- Prepare a realistic and accurate budget i.e. find out what the exact costs will be. Most funders will ask you to explain how you arrived at each cost. Get a quotation if necessary. If you are applying for employee costs, ensure you have the total costs included such as employers' PRSI and pension contributions, for example. Provide the funder with information on the salary scales and travel and subsistence rates for your organisation. Remember to consider the administration costs for a project or programme of activities e.g. management or co-ordination costs, telephone and communication costs, publicity and marketing expenses.

- Round your costs to the nearest euro.

- Only include costs for items which are clearly identifiable and which are necessary for the project or to carry out the activity. Do not include the cost of venue hire for your community hall, if you are the owner of the community hall, for example.

- Check your totals before submitting your application.

THINGS TO KNOW IF YOU RECEIVE A GRANT

- You will be required to retain all receipts and invoices for a specified period of time e.g. up to five years. In some cases you may be required to submit these to the funder.

- You will be required to follow public procurement guidelines for the purchase of goods and services. For more information on public procurement please go to the following website: **https://www.etenders.gov.ie/generalprocguide.aspx**

- You must ensure that there are no "conflicts of interest" in relation to the purchase of goods and services. For more information go to the Charities Regulator website for Guidelines for Managing Conflicts of Interest. The website address is: **https://www.charitiesregulator.ie/media/1417/managing-conflicts-of-interest-may-2018.pdf**

Questions which are generally asked on funding application forms

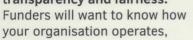## ABOUT YOUR ORGANISATION, EXPERIENCE AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Funders want to establish the credibility of your organisation. They want to understand what your organisation is about i.e. what activities, services or supports you currently deliver and who benefits from your work. They will want to know the sources of income your organisation has and your expertise and track record in managing and delivering your activities. Identify which of your activities and / or supports or services are most relevant to the application e.g. if you are seeking funding to deliver a training programme, then describe training programmes that you have recently delivered and the results of the training.
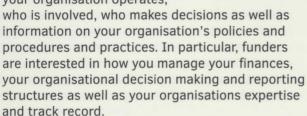
It is a good idea to have an up-to-date short overview of your organisation prepared for funding opportunities.

Make sure that the information you provide matches what is on your website or in your Annual Financial Statements or Accounts or Strategic Plan.

GOVERNANCE AND FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Governance is about decision making, accountability, transparency and fairness. Funders will want to know how your organisation operates, who is involved, who makes decisions as well as information on your organisation's policies and procedures and practices. In particular, funders are interested in how you manage your finances, your organisational decision making and reporting structures as well as your organisations expertise and track record.

Pobal has best practice guidelines to assist non-profit and community organisations in relation to good governance. These guidelines are available to download from the Pobal website. **https://www.pobal.ie/managing-better-toolkits**

Charitable organisations from 2020 will be required to report to the Charities Regulator on their compliance with the Charities Governance Code. The Charities Regulator has provided a Governance Code Toolkit with guidance and templates to assist charities and their boards to meet these standards. **https://www.charitiesregulator.ie/en/information-for-charities/charities-governance-code**

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Describing your project is critical to your funding application.

A good approach is to:
- Summarise your project in a few sentences at the start i.e. who, what, where and when

- Provide some background information or reason why your project has come about;

- Describe the key actions you are going to deliver and, include some key objectives and timelines;

- Describe what is unique or special about your project.

- Outline any partners or stakeholders who will be involved in or who support your project.

The level of detail required is generally dependent on the amount of funding you are seeking. For example, a short paragraph will suffice for a grant of €1,000 however a larger grant of €100,000 will require significantly more detail.

It is important that the information you provide about your project is concise, factual and realistic. Remember you are explaining your project to someone who knows nothing about your organisation or the project.

WHY IS YOUR PROJECT NEEDED?

It is vital that you describe why your project is needed. For example, "there are 2,000 older people living in our catchment area, who do not have access to a car or public transport. The purchase of a bus is vital to provide a rural transport service for our older inhabitants, so that they can attend medical appointments, shop and attend social events."

Include information or evidence on how you identified the need. Make sure the information you provide is not out of date. Examples of evidence include: a community survey, an independent report or analysis of statistics from the Central Statistics Office, a previous project evaluation, photographs. Make sure you can produce this evidence as sometimes funders require you to submit a copy of the evidence with your application.

Tell the story. Sometimes it is a good idea to provide a concise case study or real life example of the need to be addressed.

It is important to clearly describe why you want or need to undertake your project.

WHAT WILL YOUR PROJECT ACHIEVE?

It is important that you clearly **identify the benefits** of your project to individuals, to your area, your members or other organisations. **In some cases the funder will refer to these benefits as outcomes.**

For example, if you are providing an accredited training course, one outcome might be "improved work-related skills and confidence" for participants.

You may also be asked to provide the **outputs** of your project. These are the results which occur as soon as an action is completed.

In the example of a training course, the immediate outputs would be "the number of participants on the course" and "the number of participants who achieved accreditation".

It is important that you tell the funder what you hope to achieve with your project. Make sure that these are realistic and achievable as you will be asked to give a report to the funder on the achievements and results of your project.

Providing clear outcomes and outputs will help to show the funder **the value for money** of your project.

Completing the application form

Below are some basic guidelines for completing an application form:

- **Read each question carefully.** Make sure that you answer the question. Use the application guidelines to assist you.

- Be clear and concise in your answers.

- Keep in mind the funders criteria when you are preparing your answers.

- **If the application form is online** it is a good idea to:

  - Log-on to the relevant website and setup your user name and password as soon as possible

  - Check that you can access the online application form and be clear on the process for submitting the application form. If in doubt the funder will generally have a helpline you can call or e-mail. Don't leave questions until the closing date.

  - Prepare the application answers on a Word document or similar, so that you can share them with others and make changes as you go along.

- Ask someone else to read your responses before you submit your application.

- **Check the closing date and time that the application form is to be submitted.** <u>Generally late applications are not considered.</u> If it is an online application process, you will not be able to submit your application form after the closing date and time.

- **Check that you have attached all the documents required,** do not include any attachments that you have not been asked for.

- Ensure the contact person for your application has a copy of the application form and that they will be available to answer any queries from the funder.

- **Keep a copy of your completed application form.**

Top Tip: Ask for feedback from funders, including those who have not approved an application.

If you are applying for funding being managed by Pobal please get in touch (details below) and we will be happy to help. Do try and attend one of the information events that we hold when new schemes are launched. We always have a Frequently Asked Questions section on our website for every new funding scheme.

Best of luck with your applications and remember help is to hand from Pobal!

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