

GRANT WRITING TIPS



These tips have been compiled from a range of sources to help you put together a funding application: From the initial planning to what to do when your application is successful. Outback Arts can help you through this process from project ideas to advice and grant writing assistance. Give us a call on 02 6822 2484 or email on admin@outbackarts.com.au

The following information is offered in good faith to assist individuals and organisations to prepare applications. It is compiled from various sources and is based on many years of experience by Regional Arts Development Officers and others. Our thanks to all those who contributed to this guide.

1. Why and what do you need funding for?

Before trying to find the right funding program, it is important to be able to articulate just what you're trying to achieve and a rough idea of the resources needed. Funding programs are increasingly competitive with strict guidelines and selection criteria. They generally will not support retrospective activity nor provide 100% of funds required for a project and they may not fit in with your timeframe. It may be that seeking sponsorship or undertaking fundraising is a more effective way of getting what you need. (Even if you proceed with applying for a grant, there is often an expectation of income from other sources such as fundraising and sponsorship).

Research and plan what you are proposing to undertake, before preparing an application.

2. Find the right funding program

There is an extensive range of funding programs offered by federal, state and local governments as well as philanthropic bodies with different objectives and eligibility criteria. It is important to match your project to the most appropriate program and this can only be done through research and investigation. Get on the phone or the web and talk to staff, get hold of annual reports and media releases which include listings of previous grant recipients and projects, keep an eye on the papers for advertisements of grant rounds.

Some of the best links for funding programs are:

NSW Government: www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au

Federal Government: www.grantslink.gov.au

Community: www.ourcommunity.com.au

3. Get the guidelines and read carefully

Once you've identified the right funding program, obtain a copy of the

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guidelines and read carefully. It may be that the project you're considering will need some modification to better suit the objectives of the program. Co-funding (grants from more than one source) is generally favourably viewed so consider if different parts/stages of the project can be supported by other programs.

4 . Leave yourself enough time to do the application

Don't underestimate the time needed to complete the application properly, particularly if audited statements, business plans and letters of support are required attachments. Most funding programs have at least one round per year although this varies (NSW Heritage is once every 2 years). It is often better to wait for the next round and take the time to prepare a strong application than try and meet the deadline in a rush.

5. Make contact with the program officer

Most funding programs are generally managed by a particular member of staff within an organisation. Make contact and introduce your project to ensure you are applying to the right program, ask questions, find out whatever you can about program priorities, decision making process, amounts previously given and endeavour to establish a positive relationship with the person involved.

6. The application form

Now it's time to grapple with the detail of your project. Read through the application form and get a sense of the information required. Most applications will require a project description, objectives, background, timeframe, personnel, logistics, budget and evaluation strategies.

THE BUDGET

It is always recommended to start with the budget as it requires a whole lot of questions to be answered – who will be employed, for how long, at what rate, what venues will be needed, how will the project be marketed, what are the likely production expenses etc. With a detailed budget worked out, it is much easier to provide specific answers for other sections of the application. Make sure the income and expenditure totals are balanced so that if there is a loss or a profit, it can be explained. It is essential that the budget balances. Income can be shown in-kind as well as in cash and from various sources. It must then also be accounted for in the expenditure side. For example is a venue is to be provided by Council at no cost, show it as an expense as well as in-kind contribution from Council. You may receive in-kind support for promotion, for transport for refreshments – demonstrate the source and the value as well as the cost. The Budget will also assist you to manage

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the project/program down the track when decisions have to be made that may fall outside the budget allocation. Make sure the budget is realistic.

7. Start early on support material

Support material might include: Letters of support, plans, drawings, media clippings, visual material, quotes, certificate of currency and incorporation. Most applications either allow for support material or specifically request it. If letters of support are required from other organisations it may take more than four weeks to obtain such a letter from a volunteer group which only meet monthly. Don't underestimate the importance of support material or how long it may take to acquire. Ask early, ask nicely and ensure people have the right information to supply what you require in time.

8. Back to the application form

Try to ensure your responses on the form are as clear and concise as possible – simple language and no waffle. Don't presume that the funding panel will know anything about your organisation or issues for your community so endeavour to provide a context for why the project is significant. The challenge here is to make sure your argument for the project addresses the funding criteria. It's not about why you want the project to happen so much as why they should support it in terms of the stated criteria.

9. Get someone else to read it and comment

This is a really useful way of ensuring you've presented the information in the best possible way. Do they have a clear picture of what is being proposed, why it is needed and how it will be managed? Most writing benefits from editing which will generally improve and strengthen your proposal.

10. Make sure you read all the instructions on the form!

- If the form says don't use more space, don't refer to attachments and don't bind or staple, then don't.
- Clarify if the funding deadline is the date that the application has to be received or is the date that it can be postmarked.
- Some programs request a specific number of copies to be lodged and make sure you retain at least one copy for your own records.
- Some applications can be lodged electronically (not many) but most require a signature which necessitates a hard copy.
- Include a covering letter which can also provide one last opportunity to include supportive information not covered in the application.

11. If at first you don't succeed...

As stated in the beginning, funding programs are competitive and you may

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not be successful in the first instance. However, you are certainly entitled to ask for feedback from the program manager. The information you get will vary from program to program but you should be in a position to gauge whether it is worth revising the application and lodging in a subsequent round.

12. If you do succeed...

Your contract, evaluation and acquittal: There's nothing quite like getting that letter indicating your project has received support. After some well earned celebration, you will be required to sign a grant deed or conditions of funding agreement that details your obligations in accepting the grant including acquittal arrangements. Essentially, you will be expected to account for all financial dealings, report on activities and importantly, but often overlooked, acknowledge the funding source in all promotional material.