PREPARING TO APPLY FOR FUNDING

TIPS TO GET YOU STARTED

- What do you want to do?
- How much will it cost?
- Why is your project needed?
- Why is your project important?
- How will you measure success?
- Identifying your funder or funders.

Define what you want to do and source the right funder.

Completing funding application forms or submitting a proposal for funding will be easier and more likely to be successful if you do some planning in advance.

Draft a plan:

- Be clear from the outset as to why you need funding. This decision and clarity will focus your application and help your organisation or group to identify and decide which funder or funders are most suitable for your project.

- Funding organisations and government departments want very specific information about what you want to achieve. Funders will need specific information regarding how funding will be spent and what you hope to accomplish. It is likely that you will need different people within your organisation or group to help complete the application form and therefore it is important to involve others from the beginning.

- It is also good to involve different people from your organisation or group in the planning stages so that you can gather as much information regarding the costs associated with the project.

- Different funders will provide funding and grants for different types of activities and projects. For example, some funders will only provide funding towards employment costs, others will fund construction or equipment costs, and some will provide money for specific activities and supports. As a result, you may need to divide your project into smaller sub-projects or think of different ways of completing your project. In this way, your plan may include several applications to different funders for different parts of your project.

- Funding becomes available at various times. Some funding is made available each year, whilst other funding only becomes available every 2 to 3 years. Planning ahead will ensure that you do not miss funding opportunities.

Planning for funding should start at least 12 months before your activities or project are about to start.

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What is your project, what do you want to do?

It is very important that you have a very clear description of what exactly you want to achieve.

For example: You want to support young people between the age of 16 and 29 with a disability to gain employment. You will need to know exactly what is involved in achieving this goal.

- How many young people will be involved? Will it also involve their family members?

- How will you engage with these young people?

- How will you involve employers?

- Are there other organisations that will be involved in supporting these young people?

- Are partner organisations required?

- Who will organise and deliver the activities?

- What specific supports and activities will be offered to these young people?

- How will you know that your activities are making a difference?

- Where and when will the activities take place?

How much will it cost?

Every funder will want to know how you plan to spend the funding which is granted. You will need to make a budget detailing everything that you will need to pay for during the project. Make a list of the items. *For example:* venue hire, transport, employee/salary costs, training materials, publicity, insurance, office space, equipment, heat and lighting, rent etc.

In preparing your costs, the following is important:

- **Accuracy.** You need to base your costs on real and current costs. *For example,* use quotations from reputable suppliers and take advice from specialists and experts. **You need to find out what is the real cost of every item. Don't forget items like insurance, telephone, IT costs and general running expenses.**

- **Do not underestimate the costs.** Try to include everything that you will need in order to undertake the activity. You do not want to commence a project and be unable to complete it. Funders will be concerned if you have underestimated the cost of your activities or project. It is also important **to be realistic and do not over estimate costs.**

- **Do you have funds or income that you can contribute to a project or activity?**
  Not all costs may be eligible for funding and some funders may expect your organisation to make a contribution towards the costs. This is called co-funding or match funding or part funding.

Why is your project needed?

Funders want to know what is the need or problem that you are trying to address. Think about the people who you are aiming to support and assist.

- Why have you chosen to do this project or provide specific activities?

- Are you providing a service or activity that currently doesn't exist in your area? Ensure the project will not duplicate what another organisation is currently doing in the area.

- Are you enabling people to access a service, that for a particular reason, they currently cannot access?

- Why is the service or activity currently not being provided?

- Are there facts and figures from independent pieces of research that might support the need for your project or activity? Can you provide any evidence? For example, a survey, a consultation or a review?

How does your project or activities meet the needs you have identified?

Why is your project important?

Funders are very interested to learn and understand the difference your project or activities will achieve. This is often referred to as the results or the outcomes of your activities. **Think of all the differences your project or activity can make, no matter how small.**

What is unique and special about your project and activities? Are you the only organisation providing the activity or service or support? Is your approach unique or special and have you evidence of how successful your approach is? Has your organisation specialist expertise?

How will you measure success?

Funders will require you to provide information and evidence to show how your activities or project is making a difference. Think about processes that you might be able to undertake to show this. *For example*, counting the number of people involved, consulting and surveying people about the difference the activities have made to their lives, gathering feedback at events or activities, discussing the project activities with staff, volunteers and the Board of your organisation. You should outline how you will be mindful of any data privacy and GDPR requirements.

Identifying your funder or funders

There are many different funders that give grants to community and voluntary organisations. It is important that you identify which funding programme or funder is best suited to your project or activity. You do not want to waste time completing an application form only to be rejected because your project or activities are not eligible or do not meet the funders' requirements.

- Research the funding opportunities for your sector or activity.

- **Carefully read the guidelines provided by the funder,** which will outline what types of activities, costs and organisations are eligible to apply for money. It is important that you understand what kind of things they will fund and what things they will not fund. Examples of where you might find this information is, on the funders' website, at information events and in local newspaper advertisements.

- Talk to potential funders and ask questions if you are unclear. Ask for feedback on previous applications that may have been unsuccessful.

- Talk to other organisations who have been successful in receiving funding for similar activities and projects.

Important points for consideration:

- **How much money will the funder give?** What is the size of the grants that are available? When does the grant have to be spent by? Do I get any funding in advance or do I need to spend the money first and claim the funding afterwards?

- **Timeframes:** When is the deadline for applications? How long before I will get a decision on my funding application? Does the funding timeframes have an impact on the delivery of my project or activities?

- **Take a note of the information that a funder will require.** *For example,* details of your board, your income and expenditure, governing documents e.g. memo and articles of association, or constitution or trust deeds; your organisation or groups procedures and policies, your tax numbers and company registration number.

- Remember that no matter how good your project, your activities and your organisation or group are, **you will only receive a grant if what you propose fits with the aim and objectives of the funder or funding programme.**

- Funding programmes and schemes are generally competitive, so be prepared and make sure your project meets the funders' criteria.

- If you are applying to multiple funders for different aspects of the same project, make sure that you can demonstrate that you are asking for funding for very different parts of the project.

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

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Pobal
T. 01 511 7222
F. 01 511 7981
E. enquiries@pobal.ie
www.pobal.ie
@Pobal