The 3 minute guide to making a successful Funding Application:

It has been said that writing a successful funding application is like a good recipe: It's very much dependent on a few good ingredients coming together well. This simple 3 minute guide covers the basics of making a successful funding application. More information and support can be provided by Support Cambridgeshire. Simply contact info@supportcambridgeshire.org.uk

There are 3 main ingredients to a successful bid:

1: Finding the right funder (and funding scheme).

2: Filling out the application properly.

3: Providing all the information that is required by the funder or the scheme.

It's a fact: Many unsuccessful funding applications do not fail because the project or idea was disliked by the Funder. They are usually not approved because the application was *incorrectly completed*, *documentation requested was missing*, or it did not meet the *stated funding criteria.*

There will always be some factors that you (as the applicant) cannot control when you are applying for funding. Very often there will be more applications than funds available, and different funds or funders may prioritise applications differently.

To give you the best possible chance of success there are some things you can do:

Understand the scheme or fund criteria:

Why waste anyone's time (including your own) preparing an application for a fund that your project will simply be ineligible to receive funding from. Some funds can only support projects that are new and innovative; some can only fund projects within certain geographic locations, and most will not support the implementation of a statutory requirement.

Some schemes are looking for specific outcomes so be aware of what they are, and whether your project can meet these requirements. Understanding what the funding scheme is seeking to achieve can enable you to write your application and business plan in such a way as to demonstrate how your project enables the funding scheme to **achieve its own** objectives. If the funder is unclear about this, make sure you contact them and clarify before you submit an application.

Read and follow the fund or scheme application guidelines:

Quite often you will be required to include a supporting business or organisational plan, three year cash flow forecasts or audited accounts. Failing to supply the required information leads to unnecessary delays in appraising your project, which can have a negative impact if deadlines are tight. It also demonstrates to the scheme administrator that you give scant regard to their requirements. Do not fall into this trap. If Funders require certain information there must be a reason why they want it, so comply with their expectations.

Make sure that your project objectives are clear and measurable (as best as possible) and that you maintain sight of what it is that you are doing and why you are doing it!

Eligible expenditure, match funding and double funding:

Grant schemes will often fund either capital or revenue costs only, or perhaps a combination of both but at different intervention rates (per percentage of grant). Understand the funding scheme you are applying for and what it will and will not cover. Ensure that double funding does not occur.

Some funding has a maximum limit on how much public money can be given: Be careful about this as the *devil will always be in the detail.*

Some grants require match funding: This means matching the level of grant given with income from elsewhere. This can be particularly difficult for *fledgling* organisations, which have very little by way of alternative funding sources with which *to match.*

Demonstrating Need:

If all else is equal (the scheme criteria has been met and the project is seen as viable) then **Need** can be a determining factor. Undertaking some basic research can be particularly useful, especially if you can identify what is happening (or not) at a local level, what other providers are doing, and where the current gaps exist.

Think about your Unique Selling Point (or USP): How or what will you do differently. Letters of support from potential customers or clients of your project are always beneficial and can demonstrate *collaborative or partnership working*.

Increasingly, Funders need to know that you are not working in isolation, that you are aware of what else is being provided in your area, and that your project will enhance as opposed to duplicate and potentially displace existing provision (if there is any).

Sustainability:

This is one of the key issues that you need to address with any funding application. How will the project continue after grant aid has ceased? Consideration of this point is not just about funding, but the other resources required to both continue and develop the project.

When putting together your business plan or application form assume that the reader knows nothing:

Too often applications and business plans are written in a manner which assumes that the recipient has a level of knowledge about the project which they simply do not have. Avoid the use of jargon: Most applications are read by people who have no idea about your organisation, so make it sound attractive: Use plain language, keeping your answers concise and to the point, and if at all possible do not use acronyms and abbreviations (and most certainly do not use them without stating what they stand for).

Give careful consideration to how the project will be managed and monitored:

All Funders need to feel confident that your organisation can competently manage the project and the funds. Set up a clear monitoring and evaluation system. This will enable you to collect useful information about what you are achieving and when, which will be vital for possible continued or extension funding. These do not have to be complex (although with larger levels of funding they probably will be) but they do need to be relevant to the fund criteria.

Finding the right funding pot:

Whilst grant funding is reducing, there are still a number of funding pots and funding opportunities available. The trick is to seek funding to match your project, and not write your project to match the fund!

Support Cambridgeshire can assist with searching for funding opportunities, or support you through the development of a business plan or project submission.

Subscribe to the Support Cambridgeshire monthly funding alert which provides useful information on new funding opportunities. Simply E-Mail info@supportcambridgeshire.org.uk

Support Cambridgeshire has a new self-browsing funding portal called Support Cambridgeshire 4 communities. Register to search unlimited funding opportunities from the comfort of your desk:

https://www.supportcambridgeshire.org.uk/find-funding/

This 3 minute guide was developed by Support Cambridgeshire, with content taken from WIRE.

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