

THE FUNDAMENTALS OF GRANT WRITING

A 'how to' on writing a compelling grant application



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Are you ready to apply for funding?

Are you applying for funding to fulfil a need, solve a problem and create real outcomes?

Many people think that getting a grant is an easier solution than fundraising or may try to invent a project concept to fit funding guidelines. Unfortunately, this is not an effective way to obtain funding. To put things into perspective, about one in four grant applications are successful. Only the best will make it through, so it is important to make sure your application stands out.

To develop a quality application, you will need people with time, a great deal of patience, attention to detail and the determination to see the process through to the end. You will also need skills (or access to people with them) for gathering research and data, writing, and budgeting.

This is where this booklet will be most useful, helping you to:

- Identify which grants will support your project
- Research and collect background material for your proposal
- Clarify the components of grant applications
- Learn to write an effective application
- Have confidence in the final result

We may be able to offer you further assistance in these areas or provide a list of consultants with the expertise to help you get the application up to scratch.

If your first application for funding is not successful, keep trying. You will continue to improve.

We wish you every success and hope this booklet is effective in guiding you to success through the grant seeking process.

Why apply for grants?

Grants enable you to:

1. Effect change
2. Build community capacity
3. Create opportunities for people
4. Assist you or your organisation to meet your aims
5. Upgrade items and purchase what your community needs

GRANT WRITING

A good funding application will clearly state the following:

- Who will benefit?
- How will they benefit?
- What is going to happen?
- Where is it going to happen?
- When is it going to happen?
- How it will happen?
- and
- How much will it cost?

Before you begin you should know all of this in order to successfully communicate this in the application.

CHOOSING A FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

There are hundreds of grant opportunities out there. Match what funding is available and when; writing a grant application in a rush rarely works. Make sure you find grants that align well with the future direction of your organisation or practice. Find out the 'how and why' and a bit more about the funding provider to ensure it's a great match.

To be successful you must:

- Research what other projects the grant provider funded and clearly show that you know that you are approaching the right program.
- Show the grant funding body how your project fits with the grant program
- Check your eligibility – do you need to be a registered charity, not-for-profit entity, sole trader, incorporated or unincorporated – do you need auspicing?

If you need to fundamentally change your project to suit the provider, then it is not the right program for you. Keep looking!

GRANT PROVIDERS

- If you write a great application that meets the aims and objectives of that program it will be so much easier for them to assess
- Seek honest feedback about your proposal/application before you submit it. This is crucial to you targeting the criteria for the grant and knowing that you are on the right track.

Mornington Peninsula Shire has launched a free online service that enables individuals, businesses, and community organisations to easily identify and access funding opportunities from local, state and federal governments as well as philanthropic grant programs.

Visit the Funding Finder at: [Mornington Peninsula Funding Finder \(grantguru.com.au\)](http://grantguru.com.au)

You can also sign up to [GrantConnect Homepage: GrantConnect \(grants.gov.au\)](http://grants.gov.au) which is a centralised publication of current Australian Government opportunities.

GRANT WRITERS

Although you can write many grant applications yourself, the difficulty of some may lead you to seek the assistance of an external professional.

GrantGuru have developed a list that allows you to find a grant writer with the right skills and industry alignment to suit your organisation. You can connect with grant writers all over Australia with expertise across a variety of grant programs and industry sectors. How much it costs you to engage a writer is between you and them.

WHO PROVIDES GRANTS?

- Government (Commonwealth, State, Local)
- Community organisations
- Private sector – e.g., Telstra (Grants vs Sponsorship)
- Philanthropic foundations – e.g., Myer Foundation

There is often potential to seek multiple grants for the one project but make sure that you speak with grant providers prior to starting the application.

PROJECT PLANNING

Failing to plan is planning to fail

Writing an application for a well-planned project is much easier than seeking funding for a project with incomplete planning. Some grants will require that you outline a project plan. This does not need to be a complex Gantt chart, though they are great if you can do them, but rather a timeline of when each section of the project will occur, who will deliver each section and the expected outcome of each deliverable. A simple chart such as the one on Page 5 will be helpful for the assessors.

Activity	FY1								FY2							
	Q1		Q2		Q3		Q4		Q1		Q2		Q3		Q4	
Stakeholder consultation including BLC	■	■	■													
Planning permission				■	■											
Commissioning of artist/s	■	■	■													
Plant list developed				■	■	■										
Concept design approved					■											
Construction of artwork										■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Preparation of wall										■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Installation of graphic												■	■	■	■	■
Installation of artwork													■	■	■	■
Planting													■	■	■	■
Comms plan developed											■	■	■			
Smoking ceremony and launch														■	■	■
Maintenance schedule																■
Evaluation and acquittal																■

GOVERNMENT JARGON MADE SIMPLE

Words such as **Output**, **Outcome**, and **Objective** are commonly used by grant providers. Only use this jargon if you can apply it in the correct context.

Objective: Issue or problem that you want to overcome OR what you want the project to achieve

Output: what the money will be spent on

Outcome: The result, impact, or benefits of the project - these must be specific, measurable, and realistic.

PLANNING PROCESS

Step 1: Define the project (what)

Step 2: Identify the need (why)

Step 3: Identify the people (who)

Step 4: Define the process (the how and when)

Step 5: Add meaning to 'place' (where)

1. WHAT? Define the project

Know your project

- What is the scope of the project? What is going to happen?
- What will the project produce? (outputs)
- What will the project contribute to your community? (outcomes)
- What is the purpose of the project (Objectives, bigger picture) Objectives could be community benefit, tourism development, economic development, creation of jobs, social or environmental benefit.
- What are the risks?
 - What are the risks associated with the project? (financial, social, seasonal)
 - Is there anything that will prevent the project from coming to fruition? (likelihood)
 - What are the mitigation strategies for overcoming these risks? (risk management, back-up plan)

2. WHAT? Identify the need

- Why does the community need this project? (want vs need)
- What are the current limitations of the community?
- Is there evidence of community support?
- What benefits are you hoping to achieve?
- Why is it important in the context of your area/region?
 - Tip: use facts such as economic dependency, population decline, insufficient employment opportunities, insufficient opportunities for social cohesiveness, and difficult socio-economic conditions.
- Is your organisation best placed to address the challenges/needs? Or are there others who are better placed?

3. WHO? Identify people

- Who will be the key driver/s?
- Who is the project for and who are the beneficiaries (target groups)?
- Is anyone else doing something similar in your community or elsewhere?
- Can you strengthen your application by partnering with another organisation?
- Is your organisation an incorporated body or do you need to be auspiced by another body?
 - Auspice: In a funding context, an auspice is an organisation who manages grant funding on your behalf. For example, a small community group with limited resources may use a larger Not-for-Profit Organisation (NFP) as their auspice. The larger NFP will receive and manage the grant funding, with the community group undertaking the actual project work.
- Who will manage the project?
- Who are your staff/volunteers? Do they have the right skills and experience? What happens when they are no longer around?

4. HOW AND WHEN? Define the process

- Is it a one-off project, or do you really need ongoing funding?
- How will it be implemented and/or operated? e.g., Steering committees and management structures, internal or external)
- Are there any special skills or resources needed?
- How will you ensure accountability for the project? (You must define roles and responsibilities)
- How will you know when you have achieved what you set out to do and how will you measure the outcomes of the project?

How much to ask for?

- How much will the project cost?
- How much cash and in-kind resources are available? (committed vs. expected)
- How much funding is needed? (Generally retrospective funding is not available)
- Have you thought of everything? (insurance, auditing, on-costs for wages)
- Are your costs realistic? (too high? too low? contingency?)
- When do you need the money? (Do you need a lump-sum payment, or could the payments be spread over two financial years?)
- Does the project represent good value for the grant provider?
- How will funds be managed?

TIP: Make sure that if you are asked for quotes/invoices that they add up to the amount that you are asking for. Funders need to know where their money is being spent and what your contribution is.

A well-designed proposal budget follows the foundation's required format, matches the application narrative, and establishes that your funding plan is sound and achievable. To accomplish this, provide a financial outlook that's accurate, supports a clear need, and reflects a healthy and sustainable funding strategy. Where possible, take it a step further by demonstrating which expense(s) will be supported through the grant.

If you can do this in the application, attach a spreadsheet that clearly defines who pays for what.

Example:

Funding body		Applicant		In kind
Item	cost			
Fitted container	\$ 63,000	Bunurong Land Council fee	\$ 1,500	
Artist fee interior	\$ 8,000	Admin		in kind \$2000
Artist fee exterior	\$ 6,000	Project management		in kind \$4000
Vinyl wrap	\$ 2,000	Lighting track and lights	\$ 3,000	
Accessible ramp	\$ 2,000	Hanging track system	\$ 750	
Transport	\$ 4,000	Projector	\$ 1,000	
		AV (speaker plus wiring)	\$ 2,000	
		Vinyl wrap installation	\$ 2,000	
Grant request	\$ 85,000		\$ 10,250	\$6,000

When?

- When will the project start and finish?
- How long will the project take to complete/for how long should it be staged?
- Are there any seasonal issues with your project?
- If voluntary labour is used – how much time are volunteers able to give?
- If specialist skills are needed – are those skills available during the expected project timeframe?

5. WHERE? Add meaning to place

- Where will the project be located? (Local municipality, town and site, be reasonably exact)
- Will the project's outcomes extend state-wide, regionally or remain within the municipality and local area/community?
- What do you know about the target area/demographic group? What information can you find to justify that your project meets local needs? (Council/committee documents/records etc.)

IMPORTANT

Your application is not all about you, it is also about your grant provider

When applying for grants, remember to think in the shoes of the grant provider:

- What is the priority of that organisation/agency?
- How does your project fit with those priorities?
- What are some examples of projects they have previously funded?
- Is the amount you are asking for within the realm of the provider? - Upper & lower limits, percentage of project cost.
- Target and tailor your application accordingly.
- Never, ever, just change the names of the grant providers when applying for multiple grants simultaneously. Also check support letters to ensure they have the correct funding body noted.

Once you have done your research and have selected the funding round that you wish to apply for, log on and check in advance what you need to provide. Usually there will be a button that allows you to download the blank application so that you know what questions you will be asked to respond to. The best way to start is with a word document and transfer the questions over. Make sure that you are aware of the word or character count. Many an applicant has been frustrated by writing 2000 words only to find that it is 2000 characters, essentially 1/3 less.

Most applications will require the following:

Title of project: usually up to 50 words. Make this as punchy as possible

Brief overview of project: usually around 200 to 300 words, this is your elevator pitch. Remember that assessors are looking at anywhere between 20 and 100 applications so make yours stand out by having a short, memorable description of what the project is. The goal is to pique the assessor's interest and encourage them to continue reading.

Detailed version of the project

A compelling narrative is the most effective way to interest a reader. Seminal cognitive psychologist Jerome Bruner's theory suggests that people are 22 times more likely to remember a fact when it's presented as part of a story. You need to provide them with a cohesive narrative that sets your application apart from others. Talking too much about problems (as opposed to solutions) can give your proposal a negative vibe. Remember, a real person is going to read your proposal, so you want to do everything you can to instill positive emotions, much like in storytelling. Plus, grant makers want to know **how** you're going to accomplish your objectives even more than **why**. Try to not have too much emotion in the application, you may be very passionate about the project, and this should come across, but in a businesslike manner.

Some foundations can be very specific about page length, page margins, typeface, etc., be sure to follow the specifications. They may not make sense to you or seem important, but grant makers have their reasons, and not adhering to their requirements may result in your application being sidelined. Don't go to all that work just to have your proposal rejected because of not following the guidelines.

This table provides an example of good and bad applications-

Poorly Written Application	Well-written Application
A lot of share farmers aren't given information on what to feed adult animals and their young to keep them healthy. We will run classes on animal husbandry to help educate the under supported that we work with.	With funding support from XX Foundation, Org X will provide a series of 10 hour-long classes over five weeks focusing on nutrition for healthy animals for up to 25 share farmers. Classes will be run by a qualified animal husbandry specialist with a focus on improving production.
Comments: The first example is too general. The second example provides a lot more detail that leaves no question in the readers mind on what the project will specifically do.	

There will usually be a question around your capacity to deliver the project. Ask yourself what do you or your organisation do exceptionally well that sets you/it apart from the rest? Give examples of past successes and how you managed those projects. List the key people and their experience and how they fit in to the project.

Add support material such as images, letters of support, relevant websites etc. Many grants are not funded because the assessors have not been able to develop a good understanding of what the project is or the capacity of the applicant. Most grant makers will specify what to send, and it's not necessary to send more than they request, even if you think it will win you an advantage. Again, it's important to follow the rules. Grant makers are reading a lot of proposals, and they may view extraneous material as an annoyance.

Make sure you have somebody working with you on the application or at least have someone check it before you submit it. If they can't understand the project, then the assessor will not be able to either.

The eight most common reasons for an unsuccessful grant application

1. Not following the guidelines

Not following the funder's guidelines, including formatting, page limits, and submission requirements, can result in your proposal being rejected very quickly.

2. Lack of clarity

Failing to clearly articulate the problem, goals, and outcomes of your project can lead to confusion and a lack of understanding by the funder.

3. Inadequate research

Researching the funder's priorities, guidelines, and preferences is a must. If you don't it can result in a proposal that does not align with the funder's interests and this is an automatic fail.

4. Lack of planning

Develop a clear and feasible plan for achieving your project goals and aims. If you don't it can make your proposal seem unfocused or unrealistic.

5. Weak budget

Failing to develop a realistic and detailed budget for your project or program can make it difficult for the funder to understand how you will use the grant funds appropriately.

6. Insufficient evidence

Failing to use data and evidence to support your proposal can make it seem less credible and less likely to be successful.

7. Poor writing

Poorly written proposals, including those that are unclear, overly complex, or contain errors, can make it difficult for the funder to understand your proposal and diminish your credibility.

8. Lack of engagement

Failing to engage stakeholders in the development of your proposal, including community members, partners, and other organisations, can make your proposal seem disconnected from the needs and interests of the community you are serving.

ACQUITTALS

If you are successful be prepared to provide interim and final reports (acquittals) to the funding provider to keep up your end of the agreement. It is easier to capture data and feedback along the way rather than try to pull it together once the project is over. Evidence of the success of the project can be numbers of attendees, marketing materials (with the funders logo of course), images of the projects, written feedback through a survey and any publicity that has been generated through print or online. You will generally have twelve months from the time of receiving funding to providing the report.

The acquittal report may ask you to demonstrate:

- What you did during the project
- What the key achievements or results of your project were
- Whether any of your plans changed since your initial proposal
- What broader impact your project had or continues to have and
- How you spent the grant money

A great place to begin your acquittal is to look at what you were going to do in your initial (and successful!) application. You now have the benefit of having done the project, so can provide detail under the headings adapted from the original proposal.

Here are some common questions to answer as part of an acquittal report:

“What were the outcomes and achievements of your project?”

What were the highlights and key achievements of your project? This section can also be a great place to use statistics to demonstrate impact.

“What have you learned or what would you do differently?”

This is an opportunity to reflect on your project and celebrate the success.

Things like:

- Audience reactions, feedback from participants,
- Which things worked, and what things, with the benefit of hindsight, might work better in the future.

If some things were challenging you can mention this too, and focus on how they were an opportunity for learning and development

Important Note

If you need to change your project considerably from the original application, you must contact the Grant Manager, prior to implementing the change.

“How did the project change (if at all), from your initial proposal and plan?”

Don't worry if your project has diverged slightly from its original plan. This is a normal part of conceiving, executing, and reflecting on projects. Describe any differences, making sure that there is a sense of equivalence in the proposed and then actual course of events.

Support material for your acquittal

Financial You will be required to keep evidence such as receipts to demonstrate the expenditure.

Statistics can provide a quick and powerful snapshot of the impact and results of your project. It is a good idea to collect statistics such as attendance numbers, publications completed etc.

Documentation Don't forget, a picture is worth a thousand words! Make sure you get good images that capture your project.

Remember, if you don't acquit your grant then you may not be eligible to ask for further funding.

UNSUCCESSFULL?

It can be disappointing to not be successful but if a project was worth an application in the first place, it may be worth reviewing and reworking.

- If you can, learn why your application was not successful, and whether the program would accept a revised application in another round.
- Keep an eye out for more suitable grant programs.

Be realistic....

- Are you really the best person/organisation to be delivering this project/program?
- Are other people/organisations already doing this?
- Are there partners you could be working with?
- Is your focus too narrow? Or too broad?
- Have you involved the right people?
- Do you have support for your project in the community? (Did you provide letters to prove this?)
- Was your application clear enough to others? Do you need help in revising the application?
- Did you advocate clearly for your project?
- Is it too ambitious or not ambitious enough?

Above all, do not criticise the decision of the funding body in a public manner. You might be tempted to post the rejection email on social media, but this is unprofessional and could impact the funding body's opinion of you or your organisation.

And finally....

Be resilient, it is highly unlikely that any individual or organisations are successful every time they apply. So, learn from the feedback you have been given, review your initial application, speak to a program manager and work through the information provided in this guide and you may well be successful next time.

A by no means definitive list of potential funding sources. Check regularly as dates and requirements often change.

Source	Program	Closing date	\$ funded
Federal Government	Homepage Community Grants Hub	Various	various
Vic Government Multicultural Grants	support communities to: celebrate and share their culture and traditions. build social and cultural connections, community partnerships and leadership. improve multicultural community infrastructure. better engage and support newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers	Various	\$50K
Creative Victoria	Various – support for artists and the community. Festivals, exhibitions etc.	Various	From \$5K to \$100K
VicScreen	VicScreen invests in the development and production of film, television, online, virtual reality and digital games projects and offers incentives for production, post-production, animation, visual effects and games	Various	Various
Cultural Fund Grants - Copyright Agency	for Australian writers, journalists, editors, publishers, picture book illustrators, cartoonists, graphic novelists, English and literacy teachers, and visual artists.	April	10 -30 K
Business Victoria Local Living Grants	Community organisations and councils can apply or infrastructure projects, while smaller investments of are available for minor upgrades and maintenance to facilities	September	20- 200K
Harold Mitchell Foundation	funds programs in health, education and the arts for registered charities only		Up to \$10K
VicHealth	Communities- support for festivals and arts		From \$10K to \$60K
ANZ Community Foundation	Supports small to medium sized projects run by charitable organisations		Variable
Bendigo Bank	Community projects	Ongoing	Variable
Ian Potter Foundation	Community-arts, education, environment, health	Variable	Variable
Telstra Foundation	Invitation only but do provide free crowdfunding on Chuffed and online workshops through the Fitzroy Academy		
Ross Trust	Community projects – ageing, disadvantage, environment, equipment, marketing, training, volunteers	Ongoing	\$10K

Telematics Trust	Support innovative ICT projects	June	Up to \$50K
Australia Council for the Arts	Various levels of funding for arts projects, governance training, performing arts, touring music/ art exhibitions/ performing arts, digital skills for gaming, arts and disability, circus	Various	Dependent on program
Besen Family Foundation	aims to assist these communities to build capacity and community connection and to achieve long-term change towards a better quality of life. Registered charities only.	August	Up to \$10K
Virgin Australia sponsorships	Arts and cultural related events	EOI	
Sidney Myer Fund & The Myer Foundation	Projects that engage with the community to promote a just, creative, enlightened, caring and sustainable Australia.	Various	Dependent on program
John T Reid Trust	Aged & palliative care, Arts & cultural heritage, Community & social welfare, Education and youth support, Environment, Health support.		
Freemasons Foundation Victoria	specific programs and initiatives in the areas of health projects, community development, education, Indigenous programs and the arts.	July	\$5-50K
Screen Australia	to support the development, production and marketing of Australian screen content, as well as for the development of Australian talent and screen production businesses.	Various	Various
National Library of Australia	Preserve/access significant cultural heritage	June	\$10K
Dep't of Veterans Affairs	Veteran & community grants to improve wellbeing of veterans	Various	Up to \$50K
Dep't of Planning and Community Development	Community Development Grants	Latter part of the year.	From \$5K to \$ 2 million
Department of Industry, Science and Resources	Entrepreneurs' Program – Accelerating Commercialisation	ongoing	\$50 - \$1M
Department of Industry, Science and Resources	Boosting Female Founders Initiative	May	\$100 – 480K
Department of Families, Fairness and Housing	Pride Events and Festivals Fund – Celebrating Diversity and Connection	July	Max \$10K
Dept. of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts-	Live Music Australia -provide support to the live music sector, with a focus on music focused festivals presenting original Australian live music acts	November	Up to \$100K

While we endeavour to keep the material and information provided in this booklet up to date it is of a general nature only. You should not rely upon this information as a basis for making business or any other decisions. Any reliance you place on such material is therefore strictly at your own risk.