Grant Writing

Brisbane City Council

Dedicated to a better Brisbane

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Welcome and thank you!

All three levels of government (Commonwealth, State and local) as well as other bodies such as banks, insurance companies and philanthropic trusts offer grants to eligible not-for-profits.

(A philanthropic trust or foundation is an organisation set up to make grants to fund various purposes).

Accessing grants from all sources usually requires an application process. While different grants may have somewhat different requirements from the application, most require the components outlined in the sections to follow.

Unincorporated associations

Most, if not all, grants are only available for incorporated organisations ('incorporated' means being set up as a legal entity. This is usually as an incorporated association, not-for-profit or for-profit company, or a cooperative)

If your organisation is not incorporated, you will need to find an incorporated association that agrees to be responsible for the funds that you are applying for i.e. that they are spent legally within the terms of the funding agreement, and that the project operates legally and ethically. This arrangement or relationship is typically referred to as an "auspice"

As there is a risk to the auspicing body, not all organisations will agree to take this role. Neighbourhood Centres or peak bodies may be open to discussing it. If you do find an auspice, it is strongly recommended that an auspicing agreement be developed and signed by both parties to outline who does what and who is responsible for what.

General grant writing tips

The following general tips also apply to the majority of grant applications.

Tip #1 Make sure you're eligible to apply. Read all of the eligibility criteria before starting an application.

Tip #2 If there is a phone number available, call the funding body before applying. They will often give you an idea of whether your project is eligible or not - very helpful knowledge before you spend hours preparing an application.
A phone call also gives you the chance to ask for clarification on any questions you're not sure how to answer. If you're lucky, they may even let you know which questions will be weighed most heavily during the assessment process.

Tip #3 NEVER change the format of a grant application. Funding bodies hate it.

Tip #4 Don't use fancy language just for the sake of it. Keep your grant applications clear and concise.

Tip #5 Make sure you answer every question. If you really don't think a question applies to you, write N/A

at a minimum.

Reading the guidelines

Invest time BEFORE you start writing a grant application to make sure you meet ALL of the eligibility criteria.

There are two reasons for this:

1. You don't want to get part way through your grant application and then realise you don't meet all of the eligibility criteria. It's a complete waste of time.

2. Funding bodies don't want to receive applications that don't meet their criteria. Submitting an ineligible application is a good way to frustrate funding bodies. **You want to build relationships with funding bodies, not annoy them.**

So here are the top tips of what you should watch out for when reading grant guidelines:

- You have the right organisational status (e.g. you are an incorporated body)

- Your project/program meets the funding body's priorities for that round. Priorities can change from one round to the next, so don't assume that just because your project was eligible last time, it's going to be eligible again.

- You are based in the right geographic area

- Whether partners are required or optional

- That you can deliver the project/program in the required time

- Whether there is a co-contribution required (either cash or in-kind)

- That you can manage and acquit the grant funds you are applying for

- That you meet both the applicant criteria and the project/program criteria. These two elements are different, so check both sections of the guidelines.

On top of that, if a funding body says they want to fund innovative approaches to a particular issue, make sure you draw on the innovative aspects of your project. **Your aim should be to make your project line up directly with the funding body's aims for that particular grant round.**

Give funding bodies insight into a project they would love to fund. Share your passion, show how your project aligns with their priorities, and prove how you can deliver a successful project.

One last tip – The importance of your website and social media

Did you know that taking a look at your website and socials is one of the first checks a funding body may do on your organisation?

These platforms show that your organisation is active and provide a quick way for funding bodies to verify what they read in your application.

Make sure your website is clearly laid out, has up-to-date content and showcases your work and that your Facebook, Instagram and / or Twitter accounts have current and dynamic posts.

Grant application components

The application form for a grant may not look exactly like this or use the same terms, but these are the four elements that need to be included in just about every grant application:

What is the issue requiring action?	Project Description
Explain why this project is necessary.	This is the nuts and bolts of what your action or solution to the issue is and how it will be implemented.
Budget	**Organisation Information**
Provide a financial description of the project plus explanatory notes.	Outline the history and governing structure of your organisation; its primary activities, audiences, and services.

1. Issue / needs statement

This section needs to be succinct yet persuasive. Present your arguments logically in a manner that is impossible to be misunderstood. As you are putting your argument together, remember the following points:

- Decide which facts or statistics best support the project

- Give the reader hope

- Decide if you want to put your project forward as a pilot

- Determine whether it is reasonable to portray the need as acute

- Decide whether you can demonstrate that your program addresses the need differently or better than other projects that preceded it

- Avoid circular reasoning.

Funders will, in many cases, want to see some concrete or empirical evidence that the need or issue exists. You can source this evidence from a range of places, such as:

- Community surveys, focus groups, or workshops

- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data – www. https://www.abs.gov.au/

- Brisbane City Council Community Profiles - https://www.brisbane.qld.gov.au/about-council/governance-and-strategy/business-in-brisbane/business-opportunities/brisbane-community-profiles

- Findings from other groups' research e.g. universities, large NFPs, etc. Google Scholar is a great search engine to use for University research - https://scholar.google.com.au/

2. Project Description

This section needs to address four main areas:

- Project objectives
- Methods
- Staffing / project administration
- Project evaluation

(a) Project objectives

Project objectives are what you plan to achieve by the end of your project. This might include deliverables and assets, or more intangible objectives like increasing confidence or knowledge. Your project objectives should be attainable, time-bound, specific goals you can measure at the end of your project. There are at least four different types of objectives to consider:

1. **Behavioural** — A human action is anticipated.
2. **Performance** — A specific period within which a behaviour will occur, at an expected proficiency level
3. **Process** — The manner in which something occurs is an end in itself.
4. **Product** — A tangible item results.

(b) Methods

By means of the objectives, you have explained to the funding body what will be achieved by the project. The methods section describes the specific activities that will take place to achieve the objectives. It might be helpful to divide our discussion of methods into the following: how, when, and why.

How: This is the detailed description of what will occur from the time the project begins until it is completed. Your methods should match the previously stated objectives.

When: The methods section should present the order and timing for the tasks. It might make sense to provide a timeline so that the readers do not have to map out the sequencing on their own. The timeline tells the reader "when" and provides another summary of the project that supports the rest of the methods section.

Why: You may need to defend your chosen methods, especially if they are new or unorthodox. Why will the planned work lead to the outcomes you anticipate? You can answer this question in a number of ways, including using expert testimony and examples of other projects that work.

(c) Staffing / administration of project

You now need to devote a few sentences to discussing the number of staff, their qualifications, and specific assignments. Details about individual staff members involved in the project can be included either as part of this section or in the appendix, depending on the length and importance of this information. Note that "Staffing" may refer to volunteers or to consultants, as well as to paid staff. Describing tasks that volunteers

will undertake can be most helpful to the proposal reader. Such information underscores the value added by the volunteers as well as the cost-effectiveness of the project.

For a project with paid staff, be certain to describe which staff will work full time and which will work part time on the project. Identify staff already employed by your non-profit and those to be recruited specifically for the project. How will you free up the time of an already fully deployed individual?

Salary and project costs are affected by the qualifications of the staff. Delineate the practical experience you require for key staff, as well as level of expertise and educational background. If an individual has already been selected to direct the program, summarise his or her credentials and include a brief biographical sketch in the appendix. A strong project director can help influence a grant decision.

Describe for the reader your plans for administering the project, especially if more than one agency is collaborating on the project. It needs to be clear who is responsible for financial management, project outcomes and reporting.

(d) Evaluation

An evaluation plan should not be considered only after the project is over; it should be built into the project. Including an evaluation plan in your proposal indicates that you take your objectives seriously and want to know how well you have achieved them. Evaluation is also a sound management tool. Like strategic planning, it helps your organisation refine and improve its program. An evaluation can often be the best means for others to learn from your experience in conducting the project.

3. Budget

Every grant application you submit will require a budget. Here are some budget development tips:

- Provide realistic estimates
- Make sure the 'income' and 'expenditure' columns add up
- Build in a small contingency amount for unexpected costs/price variances
- Attach competitive quotes
- Try and show funding from other sources
- Ensure there is a contribution from your organisation (financial and/or in-kind)
- Have a financial sustainability plan for the project after the funding has ended.

When you prepare your budget, make sure that it matches up well with your project description. There needs to be a clear connection to the activities that you are proposing to undertake, and what you will spend the grant money on.

Finally, many grant making bodies have exclusions in their funding criteria, for example they will not fund salaries. Remember to carefully read the grant guidelines to make sure the funding body will fund your proposed activities.

Your budget may be a simple, one-page statement of the project or program's anticipated income and expenditure. Alternatively, it may be a more complicated document with notes explaining particular aspects.

Expenses: Prepare a list of anticipated expenses for your project or program. Show whether the expenses are one-off (or non-recurrent) or will be ongoing (recurrent). Some funding bodies also differentiate between Salary related expenses and Operating expenses. Common or standard recurrent expenses include:

- Wages
- Wages on-costs (Superannuation, workers' compensation, holiday and sick pay, etc.)
- Mileage
- Postage
- Telephone

- Electricity
- Stationery / office supplies
- Repairs and maintenance
- Insurance
- Consultants
- Staff training
- Advertising / promotion

Budget narrative: If your budget is straightforward this may not be necessary, but if there are unusual line items or items requiring some explanation, this is a useful addition.

If you decide a budget narrative is needed, you can structure it in one of two ways. You can create "Notes to the Budget", with footnote-style numbers on the line items in the budget keyed to numbered explanations. If an extensive or more general explanation is required, you can structure the budget narrative as straight text. Remember though, the basic narrative about the project and your organisation belongs elsewhere in the proposal, not in the budget narrative.

'In-kind' support: Many grants either recommend or request a co-contribution from an applicant. 'In-kind' support is often accepted as an alternative, or additional, to a financial contribution.

In-kind support includes the donations of goods or services that you may receive towards a project. Often, an organisation or group contributes to a project with their own resources, which may reduce the amount of actual dollars needed. But this doesn't deny the fact that these contributions would had to have been paid for if these donations didn't exist.

As an example, a football club might need new uniforms which includes a new logo design, purchase of the uniforms, screen printing and shipping of the finished products. The total cost would normally be $2,000, however a graphic designer associated with the club has offered to do the logo design for free, and the local accountant has offered to pay for half of the uniforms. This brings the shortfall to $1,200, which is all that needs to be requested from the grant provider. The $800 contributed through the club is the 'in-kind' amount.

A common in-kind contribution that is often overlooked is project management. Don't forget, even though your fundraising committee member might volunteer all of their time organising a project, chasing up workers and completing reports, this doesn't mean their time isn't worth anything. Make sure you think

about ALL of the costs associated with a project before adding up your in-kind contribution.

4. Organisational Information

What the funder is looking for in this section is evidence that your organisation is able to achieve the project objectives and manage the project successfully. Information that may be useful to include in this section includes:

Tell the reader when your organisation came into existence; state its mission, being certain to demonstrate how the subject of the proposal fits within or extends that mission; and describe the organisation's structure, programs, and special expertise.

Discuss the size of the Management Committee of your organisation, how Management Committee members are recruited, and their level of participation. You should include a full list of Management Committee members as an Appendix. If your organisation is composed of volunteers or has an active volunteer program, describe the function that the volunteers fill.

Provide details on paid staff members, if you have any; include the breakdown of full-time and part-time staff and their levels of expertise.

Describe the types of activities in which your organisation is involved. Briefly explain the assistance you provide to the community. Describe the client group you serve, any unusual or special needs they have, and why they rely on your organisation. Cite the number of people who are reached through your activities.

Tying all of the information together, cite why your organisation has the particular skills and abilities to undertake the project that you are applying for funding for.

In a final paragraph or two outline how you think the community will look after the completion of your project or if your program is successful. State how your program or project will continue when / if the funding ceases.

Support material

This can include:

- Letters of support from the community (don't forget to get one from your Federal and State member as well as your local Council representative)
- Studies / needs assessment that highlight the need for the project
- Supporting literature from interstate or overseas

Grant acquittals

For non-recurrent funding, most funding bodies will require that grant monies be acquitted within a pre-determined length of time. There will usually be a set format that this is to be done in, and will require that you report on:

- Outcomes achieved

- Evidence that the organisation has expended grant funds as approved by the funding body. This will be through either audited statements of expenditure and / or provision of original receipts from suppliers or contractors.

- Evaluation of the project and its benefit to the applicant organisation and the community generally.

Useful resources

Available grants

Grant Connect - https://www.grants.gov.au/

This is the Australian Government's grants information system. It provides information on current and forecast grant opportunities.

Queensland Government Grants Finder - https://www.grants.services.qld.gov.au/#/

This is the State government hub for grant opportunities and information that may assist your application.

The Grants Hub - https://www.thegrantshub.com.au/

A website that assist you to find a grant that links with your proposed project. It also contains many grant writing tips, many of which have been included in this resource. A subscription costs at least $29 per month, but there is a 14 day free trial.

The Funding Centre - https://www.fundingcentre.com.au/

This is ourcommunity.com.au 's site to assist with identifying and applying for grants. They charge $125 per year to access all resources, but there are many free resources on the site.

Philanthropy Australia - https://www.philanthropy.org.au/

The peak body serving a community of funders, social investors and social change agents working to achieve positive social, cultural, environmental and community change by leveraging their financial assets and influence. They charge $110.00 per year to access their directory of funders.

Grant writing

Community Grants Hub - **https://www.communitygrants.gov.au/** Under the "Information" tab, click on "Information for applicants" to find Information and fact sheets for people and organisations interested in applying for community grants. See particularly **https://www.communitygrants.gov.au/information-**

applicants/what-makes-good-grant-application.

Legal implications of grant funding

Justice Connect NFP Law - https://www.nfplaw.org.au/seekingfunding