



A beginner's guide to finding funding for your project

Community organisations and charities often talk about their greatest resource being the people.

Community work is built on commitment. But more often than not, groups need to find funds to make things happen.

This Convention 2022 workshop, devised primarily for smaller or newer organisations at the start of their funding journey, included top tips from funders and those who have received funding on where to look, what to do and how to make your case stand out from the rest.

The workshop was delivered by Cathy Varley and Kathryn Roper (Locality) with expert input from Lynn Utting, Regional Development Manager at the Coalfields Regeneration Trust.

Key learnings

Make sure you're ready to receive grants before you apply

Do you have a suitable legal structure? What about receiving money – do you have access to a suitable bank account? Who from your organisation will control the money? Have you got details of any grant funding you have received previously?

Be clear about what you want the money for

Have a clear project or piece of work in mind when looking for funding – fit the funding to the work, not the other way round.

Project funding is more common than general running costs, but don't forget to include management costs in your project. Remember to factor all your costs into your budget no matter how small.

Before you start, make sure you can describe: why your project is needed; who will benefit and how; what you will deliver – outcomes & outputs; why your project is needed. Speak to others and ask if they find your answers easy to understand.

Research your chosen funder

Make sure your project is what the funder is looking for. Know what funders don't fund as well as what they do. Look at other projects they've funded to get a feel for what they like, and don't be afraid to get in touch and ask questions.

How you write is as important as what you write about

Be clear and concise. Funders read a *lot* of bids. Help them like yours by: avoiding jargon; using short sentences; using language and headings funders use in the guidance; including quotes and views from the people you help.

Securing grants: Top tips for bid writing

Tip 1: Vision

- Have a clear vision. Define it in its biggest, boldest and brightest terms.
- Tell a good story, not a long story.
- Work backwards to define which steps are needed to achieve the vision. Funders and investors need to be able to understand the change your project will deliver and how it will do so.
- Make sure your business plan is clear and concise. Show where the funding you need fits in.

Tip 2: Co design

- Ensure the people you work with are meaningfully involved in the development, design and delivery of the project.
- Value the lived experience that your community has. Ask what matters to the community who are experiencing the issues you are looking to address.
- This will provide you with valuable evidence that helps you articulate the need for the project you're looking to fund.

Tip 3: Find the gap

- Demonstrate a good understanding and awareness of other activities and services in the community. Show how your project will complement these.
- It is helpful to map what's already out there and demonstrate you know your market and the gap you will fill.

Tip 4: Explain the impact

- Focus on improving, rather than proving.
- Don't just focus on numbers.
- Impact is not always a finite or linear process. Funders understand that trust and relationships take time.
- Your project may be influenced by other factors out of your control. Show you understand this.

Tip 5 : Do your sums

- Starting a new initiative is hard enough without asking for less funding than you actually need! Work out the costs properly.
- Realism trumps modesty. Funders do not want to see you shaving off money if it potentially destabilises your chances of success.
- Be transparent in how you've come up with your costs – show your working!
- Produce a cash flow forecast with a written summary of the impact that funding will make.
- Explain your assumptions - are there seasonal fluctuations?
- Have you allowed for increased core costs as you grow?
- Include set-up times for service delivery or product sales.

Tip 6: Believe

- Funders are humans. They want to invest in people and organisations that they believe in – if you don't believe in yourself, chances are they won't!
- Use positive language “we will deliver”; “we will achieve”; “we will create” rather than “we propose to”; “we are aiming to”; “we hope to”.
- Work out the risks and the solutions to issues that might arise. Demonstrate that you have thought of every eventuality.

Grants might not be suitable for everything you want to do, so think about what other options are available. Can you generate income through what you do? Are their “traditional” fundraising events or activities you can take on? Explore sponsorship or support from local businesses. Could crowdfunding work for you? Learn about social investment – it could be useful in the future.

Resources

- General Funding Advice: ; [NCVO](#)
- Funding Databases: [My Funding Central](#) (free for small organisations)
- [Grants Online](#) (paid)
- [Funds Online](#) (paid)
- Social Investment: [Good Finance](#)
- Crowdfunding: [Crowdfunder UK](#)

[Download the slides from the workshop.](#)

If you'd like more support with any of these topics, Locality has a range of consultancy on offer : [find out more](#).