

Step 1 – Get Funding Ready

Key Principles

'Failing to plan is planning to fail'

'Success occurs when opportunity meets preparation'

Hints & Tips! Get Funding Ready The best funding applications are based on projects which are genuinely important, reflect strong commitment, are enthusiastically supported and reflect real need. Projects which reflect the needs and desires of your organisation will usually possess these characteristics. So funding really starts with planning your projects in the context of the objectives of your organisation.

Identify Your Projects

Groups and organisations will often have several projects in various stages of development. It is good practice, both for funding applications and general organisational operation, to think about all the activities of your organisation and identify all the projects which are either happening or are being considered. This is as simple as writing a list with as many or as few items as you need.

Prioritise Your Projects

Prioritising projects helps maintain focus on the most important project(s) and can help your group remain true to its goals. All groups are formed for a reason and project activities should reflect this reason. Some projects will reflect this more than others and so some projects will be more important to your organisation than others.

Prioritising projects means you can focus effort on the most important project(s) first: every group or organisation has limited resources (time and personnel) so there is a need to focus on the most important projects first. Prioritising projects can help remind everyone of the goals of your organisation and why you are pursuing a project.

Prioritising your projects does not mean you have to rank each project in order from most important to least important; it can also be done by grouping projects as 'most important', 'important', and 'less important'.

Identify Funding Need

Funding is not always the key impediment to a project and may not always be the item needing attention first. Some projects may not even need funding to get started. So before looking for funding as the solution, first think about your project(s) to decide whether funding is needed and whether it is the next step.

'Flesh Out' the Projects

Hints & Tips! Get Funding Ready Basic project planning will provide information that will be required in completing funding applications – it makes the application process easier. It can also help speed your response to identified grant funding opportunities which may have short timeframes for submission.

The specific information you will need for funding applications will vary according to the particular grant program but some common elements are usually needed. Basic project planning will help you answer the information requirements of applications and can help you identify areas where more work is needed before you need it for an application.

Grant funding opportunities can arise with only limited time for response. While some funding programs are ongoing and will accept applications any time, many 'open' for only a limited time. New funding programs can be announced 'open' only a short time before their closing dates. You may only become aware of a grant funding program just before the closing date. Even if you are aware of a funding opportunity, other activities may mean that you cannot work on the application until nearer the closing date. Completing basic project planning ahead of time can help you to have information ready and speed your response to funding opportunities.

Develop a basic outline of your project(s) by considering the following: **What, Why, Who, Where, When, How, Whatever.....**

What?

- What is the name of the project? Give your project a name. Most applications will ask for a project title.
- What is the project? Describe your project in a few words. Most applications will ask for a short summary.
- What are the project objectives? List the key project objectives. Most applications will ask for a summary of the main aims and objectives of the project.
- What are the project 'angles'?¹ – Consider project geography (e.g. national, state, region, shire, city or regional, rural or urban). Consider beneficiaries and target groups (e.g. general community, people with disabilities, people of ATSI origins, youth, older people, unemployed etc.). Consider the project outcomes - e.g. community benefits, tourism development, business development, innovation/best practice, employment creation, sport, recreation, arts, music, agriculture.... Projects often have several dimensions or 'angles' - thinking about your project in terms of its 'angles' will help you write funding applications reflecting the emphasis of the program under consideration.

Why?

- Why is the project important? Describe what you will achieve from doing the project. What problems will it solve? What benefits will it deliver? Most applications will ask for some statement of project outcomes – the 'end results'. Consider the short-term and long-term outcomes.
- Why is it needed? - What is the problem being overcome; the benefit being achieved? Why is it important in the context of the area?

Who?

- Who is doing the project? Most applications require details about the organisation or group undertaking the project. If there is a partnership between two or more organisations the details of each will be needed.
- Who is making the application? Funding agencies will want to know about the applicant organisation². In some cases the organisation submitting the application may not be directly involved in doing the project^{3 4}
- You usually need to supply information about all the organisations involved. Typical requirements include: contact details; background/history; incorporation details; ABN details; GST status; aims and objectives; membership (number, composition); Executive Committee; other current projects (if any); recent past projects (if any); funding history (if any); future projects or activities.
- Who is the project for? Who are the direct and indirect beneficiaries? Some funding programs emphasize benefits for target groups (older people, youth/young people, people with disabilities, people from non English speaking backgrounds, small business, farmers and so on). Does the project particularly benefit any group?

Where?

- Where will the project be implemented? (State, Shire, town, site, office). Some funding programs will have geographic restrictions; nearly all will require details about where the project will be implemented. For building projects you will often need to provide details of the site (Real Property descriptions)
- Where will its impact extend to? (National, State, region, shire, local area, office).

When?

- How long will it take to implement? - When will it start? When will it finish? Most funding applications will require information about when you expect to start and finish the project.

¹ Jargon Explained! **Angles** - Angles are different ways of looking at a project. Most projects will have a number of 'angles' and different angles can be emphasised (within reason) to reflect the emphasis of a particular funding program.

² Jargon Explained! **Applicant** - The 'applicant' is the party submitting the application.

³ Jargon Explained! **Sponsorship** - Where one organisation acts as the applicant for another organisation or group doing a project this is called 'sponsorship'. The sponsoring organisation takes financial and administrative responsibility for the administration of the application and the conditions applicable to any funding granted. This is most commonly done where the group wishing to undertake the project is not incorporated or would otherwise not be able to directly receive a grant.

⁴ Jargon Explained! **Sponsor** – An organisation submitting an application on behalf of another party. A sponsor is usually used to satisfy applicant eligibility criteria.

- What could happen to change the schedule? Consider the likely application assessment period when determining start date. Consider possible delays in project implementation and, for funding applications err on the cautious side. Funding agencies like to see you complete your project according schedule; so if you think there is a possibility of delays it is better to plan for the 'worst-case' scenario in your funding application.

Hints & Tips! Get Funding Ready If your project is large or complex consider developing a detailed schedule and timeline diagram showing start and finish dates, and key 'milestones' between.

Hints & Tips! Get Funding Ready Unless your project consists of a clearly identifiable stage building on an earlier stage, projects which have already commenced are often ineligible for funding. Virtually all grant funding programs exclude applications for 'retrospective funding'⁵ - projects which have already been completed are nearly always ineligible for funding.

How?

- How will it be implemented and/or operated? What are the logistical issues? Are there any special skills or resources needed? Most funding applications will seek evidence of your ability to effectively carry out the project and (if applicable) your ability to manage the project once completed.
- How much will it cost? How much funding is needed? How much cash is available? What is the value of 'in-kind' resources available⁶? Most funding applications will require a project budget showing costs and sources of funding. Include all cost items and include all cash and 'in kind' financing sources. Costs and sources should balance once the amount of funding you are seeking is included.

Hints & Tips! Get Funding Ready Funding agencies want to know that their money will be 'well spent'. An important aspect of this is demonstrating that your organisation has the capacity to do the project. In doing your project planning remember that when you ultimately write your application, you should try to convey that your group has the necessary skills and ability to manage the project during and after implementation and that you have the resources to actually do it.

Whatever?

- Make a note of anything else which you believe may be relevant to the project. Make a note of anything that may need to be checked or investigated further.

Congratulations! You're now 'Funding Ready'!

You're ready for Step 2 – 'Finding Funding'!

FundAssist Quick Guide to Successful Funding Applications - Part 2: Finding Funding

FundAssist is a leading consulting firm providing expert funding assistance services to local governments and community groups throughout regional Australia.

We can help you in all aspects of the funding process at whatever stage you need help – whether it is planning your project(s) and your funding strategies, identifying applicable funding programs, developing funding submissions and briefings promoting your project, preparing grant applications, or completing project management and reporting requirements after you have received funding.

Our funding services have assisted many clients with a wide range of projects.

Contact us to find out how we can help you.

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⁵ Jargon Explained! **Retrospective Funding** – Funding for items which have already been purchased or project elements that have been completed. That is, you usually cannot make an application for an item which you have already paid for – even if you did so in anticipation of gaining grant funding to cover that cost item.

⁶ Jargon Explained! **In kind** - A term referring to resources which are donated to a project which, if not donated, would have to be purchased (e.g. cash costs). For example, if your project involved hiring a new staff member and you were able to supply office space in your building for that new staff member, the value of the rent that would have to be paid if you could not provide that office space is the value of your 'in kind' contribution.