Community Nature Recovery Fund

Sustainable Development Fund

Top Tips for Making a Funding Application

This is not an exhaustive list or guide by any means – just a few of the things we regularly discuss with applicants and would recommend. If you have any tips of your own, we'd love to hear about them.

We are always happy to chat and answer questions!

Before you make a start on an application....	
1.	*Read the eligibility criteria and guidance notes – seems obvious but is really important.* Look to see what the Funder has supported previously. Is your organisation eligible to apply and does the project meet the programme criteria? Make sure that you know how your group is constituted – do you have an up-to-date copy of your governing document? Is what you are planning to do within its remit?
2.	If the Funder offers an initial chat at the earliest stage – take them up on it. They will be delighted to hear from you – honestly! If we ask what appear to be awkward questions, they are not meant to be! We are trying to anticipate what Panel members might ask – and they will always ask things none of us have thought of!
3.	Make sure that you've discussed the plans with your fellow committee members, trustees etc. The decision to proceed needs to be unanimous – or as close as possible!
If the Funder says that an application is worth making....	
4.	Start to get an idea of costs and identify what's needed. Get quotes together, talk to other groups about their experiences, draw up a budget. Funders are always suspicious of round figures! Make sure that you do your best to use local suppliers and contractors (although that may not always be possible) and use environmentally friendly materials.

5.	Read any Guidance notes carefully. Don't use jargon or abbreviations – keep in mind that all this will be new to the people reading your proposal. Talk to the human being who will be reading the proposal. Don't exceed word counts on forms, but don't feel obliged to fill all the space. Ask others who are not directly involved to read drafts and comment.
6.	Be honest, open and realistic. Funders do background checks and talk to each other! They look at Charity Commission and Companies House websites so can spot, for example, late returns that may indicate problems.
7.	Take time to explain clearly what your group does now – there will always be a section in a form that asks about this. Your basic aims will be summarised in your governing document, but the ways in which you deliver your aims will be wide ranging. Explain how the group started, all the amazing things you do, e.g., how many people are involved, how you make sure that everyone in your community knows about what you do, who you work with (partners).
8.	**Explain clearly what you plan to do and how you know it's needed** How do you know that what you plan is will meet an identified gap that no-one else is addressing? Who have you talked to? Have you carried out any consultation or studies? Is there any independent research or data? You'll need to be able to show this for an application of any size – from £500 - £50,000. If you are applying for a large grant, your evidence will need to be more in depth and provide convincing evidence. Explain the roles of any delivery partners. Funders will want to hear confirmation from others outside your group – not just your voice – letters and emails of support are always helpful. You don't need to write beautiful prose – bullet points will often do. *Think of it in terms of telling a story. An application for a new cooker may sound boring, but it's what happens as a result of that that will fire up a Funder! It might provide meals for people in need, make it more viable for a Hall to hire out its facilities for events making it financially sustainable, enable cooking classes for children.* Be passionate and convey your enthusiasm - it's contagious!

9.	Where will the work take place? Will you need planning consent or other permissions? These may take time.
10.	**Be able to explain clearly what difference the work/project will make.** State clearly how things will be different as a result of your work and how you'll know that it's been successful.
11.	Ask someone not involved in the project or your group to read the final draft and give you honest feedback. If a Funder offers to look over a draft – take them up on it! It's rare these days that pressing the SEND button is the end of the process. Funders want to be interactive and make sure that any project is the best it can be. KEEP A COPY!
12.	If you are successful in your application, Funders do understand that things change and don't always go to plan. There is always learning from this and it's much better to give something a go than to do nothing. Stuff happens. Keeping in touch with a Funder is CRUCIAL though – let them know straightaway if there are any problems or challenges – and let them know when things are going well too! We love hearing from you.

Don't Hesitate To Contact A Funder To Query Anything. There Are No Stupid Questions. Ask For Help If You Need It.