Northumberland CVA

Writing to a Grant Making Trust

A number of funders do not have an application form and require you to write a letter of application. This factsheet provides hints, tips and guidance on putting this letter together, it is not intended to be a template for writing a letter.

Research

Before applying for a grant you need to thoroughly research the grant making trust in order to give yourself the best chance of success. Some of the ways to research the trust include:

- Trust's Website, Application Guidance, Accounts & Annual Report and Promotional Material
- Entries in FINE Guide, Funding Central and any other funding information you can find
- Charity Commission website and Open Charities website (www.opencharities.org)
- Direct contact with the trust administrator through email, telephone or at an event

It's a good idea to get a general feel for the trust and the type of project and organisation it supports but in particular you should research the following:

Exclusions

If your project, beneficiaries, type of organisation, geographical area or income level specifically exclude you from applying then don't waste your, or the trust's, time.

Criteria

Some trusts have very detailed criteria, others have broad areas of interest. You need to know what their criteria are and how your project meets them.

Financial Information

How much in total does the trust award? What is the average grant? What is the maximum and minimum? Are grants over a number of years or only one?

History & Background

How and when was the trust set up? Who was / is the settlor or donor and where does the money come from? Who are the existing trustees and do they have links to your area?

Application Procedure

What are the deadlines for applications and do they accept applications at other times? What is the maximum length of letter? Do they have certain pieces of information that they need to be included in the letter? Do they want additional information such as accounts / annual report?

Presentation

- If possible, print on headed paper and use good quality paper
- Use a clear font, minimum 12pt
- If hand-writing the letter, make sure it's legible
- Use a spell-checker but make sure it is set to English UK not US spelling
- Get someone to check your grammar and spelling
- Present your organisation and project in a positive light
- Make sure what you have written makes sense
- Don't use jargon, buzz words or slang

Introduction

If the trust has a named contact, address the letter to them.

Tell them why you are writing to them, i.e. "We are writing to request support for…."

Give a brief summary of the project and the beneficiaries you will be supporting. The summary is important as the trust administrator will probably need to provide a summary to the trustees, so if you can provide it for them it ensures the trustees see the information you want them to.

Standing Out from the Crowd

You've researched the trust you are applying to. Is there any link between your organisation or project and the trust? For example, is your organisation delivering a service that the original settlor had an interest in? Is your project based in a geographical area that is linked to the settlor?

Is there anything about your organisation or project that could impress the trust? Have you won any awards? Have you achieved a quality standard? Are your management committee all users of the project? Are you a new group? Have you been established for a long time? What has been the impact of your work within your beneficiary group?

Personal Stories / Case Studies

The trustees who make the final decision on your letter of application are unlikely to have personal experience of the issue you are trying to address but they are human and will relate to a personal story of the difference your project makes.

Like any good story, your letter should have a beginning, middle and end:

- **Beginning** – Their situation before they got involved in your project
- **Middle** – How they are / were involved in your project
- **End** – The difference getting involved made to them as an individual

If you can use a quotation from a real person, even better!

Detailed Description of Your Project

- Describe the project's overall aims

- Describe how the project will operate

- Tell the funder how you know the project is needed, including any evidence of need

- Describe the difference your project will make to users and how this fits with the funder's criteria.

Costs

- What is the total cost of the project?

- Provide a summary budget.

- How much funding are you requesting from this funder?

- Does the project require any match funding?

- Give details of how you intend to raise the rest of the funding for this project?

- What will happen to the project at the end of the funding?

Monitoring and Evaluation

- How are you going to show that your project is a success?

- You need to measure the number of people your project works with and the difference it makes to them.

- You can get lots more information from our ['Monitoring and Evaluation'](#) factsheet

Background to your Group

- Briefly describe your group and what it does

- The group's key aims

- Group structure including number of trustees, volunteers & staff

- How long you have been in existence

- Why you are best placed to do what you do

- Your charity / company registration numbers (make sure returns are up to date)

- Affiliation to umbrella bodies etc.

Finally

Remember to finish off your letter by thanking the trust for considering your request.

Getting further support

If you would like someone to check over your letter before you apply, please contact Northumberland CVA on 01670 858688 or email enquire@northumberlandcva.org.uk